

Upcoming December Events...



Baby Shower for Oliver Moss

12.12 | 11:15 AM

Stay after the morning worship service to greet Micah & Sarah and shower little Oliver with gifts! Bring your gifts and leave them on the table in the fellowship hall anytime the week before or that morning and enjoy some coffee and treats as we celebrate Oliver's birth.

Interested in contributing money to a gift card for the Moss family instead? Bring money to the church office or to Len or Lee Rhoda by Thursday, December 9. (Write checks to Len Rhoda) Leave your name with it, we'll buy a gift card together, and include your name on the card.



Lasagna Dinner & Congregational Meeting

12.13 | 6:00/7:00 PM

Let the youth group feed you at 6:00! For a freewill donation, they're serving lasagna, salad, garlic bread and something sweet. Money raised will support the Christian Education Fund.

At 7:00, you're invited to participate in our Annual Congregational Meeting. Hear updates from the Council and learn about and vote on the budget for 2022.



Christmas Day Worship

12.25 | 10:00 AM

Celebrate Christ's birth with a service of worship. We'll close the service with an open call to sing the Hallelujah Chorus.



New Year's Eve Worship

12.31 | 6:00 PM

Close the year in a service of worship and reflection of God's faithfulness in the years past and the years to come.

Courier

December 2021

COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Note from the Elders

At our November Elders meeting, we committed to reading and discussing the report from the Committee to Articulate a Foundational Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality from the CRCNA. Our reasons for doing so were two-fold: the desire to read first-hand what the committee had determined and the logic behind such determinations, and to prayerfully consider what (if any) response from Covenant CRC will be submitted for consideration to Synod 2022 by the March 15, 2022 deadline.

The practice was incredibly meaningful for the Elders and we'd like to encourage as many of our adult members as possible to read the report in its entirety. The report is fairly lengthy (175 pages) so to make this easier, we are offering printed copies of the report to Covenant members. If you would like a printed copy, please let your designated Elder know by the beginning of the New Year, and we will have those available sometime in January 2022. You can also access the report online (and save a few trees!) by visiting: https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/human_sexuality_report_2021.pdf

Now, on a more personal note, as we enter the Advent season, I am reflecting upon my final 6 months serving as the President of Covenant CRC Council. I will have more to say on this in the months ahead as it has been an absolute joy to serve on Council in this role. The discussion at our November meeting was simply representative of the depth of commitment and seriousness by which the office bearers view their role in supporting the work of our church. With each annual rotation of new members, I am again humbled at the

dedication and love they have for everyone who enters the door of our church.

And yet, this is only a mere fraction of how deeply God loves each one of us. Each year at Advent I read the reflections from the work "A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants". One reflection with an excerpt from the book *The God Who Comes* by Carlo Carretto reads, "We have not earned a meeting with God because we have served him faithfully, or because we have heaped up such a pile of virtue as to shine before Heaven. God is thrust onward by his love."

When I read this I release the thriving, significance, and trying that I've been grasping for all year. God is thrust onward by his love.

May this thought of Christ guide you this Advent season as we celebrate the God who comes!

-Melina Bailey

Greetings from Australia!

Greetings from Alida and Keith Sewell to our Covenant Family. Yes, we still think of you as family, even though there are new members we have not known and others who have gone. We wish you all a blessed Christmas celebration. We have fond memories of lovely music, singing the Hallelujah Chorus, the children's Nativity play, the carol singing and everything that went with that. We wish you every blessing in Christ for the New Year.

-Keith & Alida Sewell

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Last year's Sunday School Christmas program was a "virtual" hit. Keeping within Covid guidelines, small groups of costumed Sunday School kids were recorded outside all over town as the participants in the nativity. Later everything was packaged with several real time narrators in an on-line version and/or in the sanctuary. The kids were stars.

This year's program is all in person—in the church sanctuary with the kids' prelude beginning at 5:45 on December 12.

First, you will hear solo instrumental pieces for the prelude by Sunday School children. (Let Rebecca De Vries know if you want to offer your gifts!) Next a bell choir of Children in Worship plus 1st and 2nd graders will ring out some Christmas carols. The 3rd graders will give you a hearty welcome and then the 1st through 8th graders will perform a Readers Theatre/acted out version of Barbara

Robinson's novel *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*.

The kids are stars again, hardworking, enthusiastic, bold. We have already had three 1½ hour Sunday afternoon rehearsals with almost perfect attendance. THANK YOU, PARENTS.

An important rehearsal will happen again Saturday, December 4 from 3:00 to 5:00 when we will go through the whole thing. We hope the 1st through 8th grade children can all be there. And we will practice during the Sunday School hour on December 5 and 12.

In *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, the Herdmans, six unkempt, mean, blasphemous kids come to Sunday School the day the key roles in the Christmas pageant are to be assigned and they volunteer. What happens when the naughty, nasty, and clueless meet up with the story of the pure and holy? What happens when kids who have heard the story so many times look at it through new eyes? You may shudder a little at the Herdman's irreverence, but we hope you will shiver a bit at the story's power.

Jeri Schelhaas



On December 5 we invite you to gather at 6:00 PM for a "Blue Christmas Service." This service of song, prayer, scripture and meditation will come at the beginning of the Advent season this year as we made adjustments to our evening schedule in order to host a Christmas concert on the 19th. We know that for a variety of reasons—grief, stress, loss, conflict—the Christmas season isn't always filled with joy. We acknowledge that sadness early this year knowing that our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace longs to draw near to us through-out all the busyness or loneliness, joy or sorrow.

December Birthdays & Anniversaries

4	Bernie De Wit	17	Nico DeVries Lily Wyenberg	27	George & Jo Faber Dave & Jeri Schelhaas
6	Canaan Hawley Nico Ribbens	18	Kelly & April Crull	28	Thea Wyenberg Joel & Tricia Kok
7	Elia Eppinga	21	Ruth Clark Gianni & Georgina Gracia	29	Emily Kramer Jeff & Shirley Taylor
8	Jason Wyenberg				
9	Lucas Stiemsma	22	Amelia Lappenga Shirley Matheis		
11	Ryan DeKruyf	23	Ryan & Val Zonnefeld		
12	Shaun & Sarah Stiemsma	25	Betty Vander Plaats		
14	Megan Ribbens	26	Ken Matheis Dennis Vander Plaats		
16	Kathy De Wit				



Offering Schedule

December 5

AM General Fund

December 12

AM Christian Education Fund

December 19

AM Missions Fund

December 26

AM Tuition Assistance/Compassion Fund

Thank You!

Dear Friends at Covenant CRC,

We have received your recent gift to the Legacy Plan at SCCS! Thank you! Church support for our students through the Legacy Plan is an amazing blessing and makes God's work through SCCS a transforming reality in children's lives! Your support is an encouragement in our daily tasks, and we ask for your continued prayers as we disciple God's children as they learn and live God's Story. Thank you for your support of our school and your commitment to Christian education. We pray that God will bless you and keep you in his care.

Amy Vander Berg

Sioux Center Christian School

December Scheduling



Coffee Servers

Isabel C, Sally J, Mark MC, Rog VH



Greeters

Laremy DV, Cheri H, Val Z



Ushers

Jan B, Lee M, Jeff T

Substitutes

If you are unable to serve on your assigned date for coffee, usher, or greeter, contact:

Mark C, Rob H, Rachel L,
Don TN, Del VZ, Channon V

*****Do you consider yourself a snowbird?*****
Are you planning on taking off for a month or two or for most of the winter? Please notify the office with the dates you'll be gone and I will avoid scheduling you during that time!

Courier Copy—It's up to you!

The *Courier* is issued monthly at Covenant church. If you have copy that you wish to be included, send it to the church office. Each issue is distributed on the last Sunday of the month. **Copy deadline** is Monday, **December 20** for the January issue.



Nursery

December 5

AM Mark & Cheri H, Ethan & Donna B

December 12

AM Ryan & Val Z, Luke & Sarah H

December 19

AM Rob & Megan H, Ron & Carol O

December 25: Christmas Day

AM Lee & Jenni M, Kathy DW

December 26

AM Marty & Kris VP, Joe & Erin E

January 2

AM Jeff & Sara P, Jason & Dani W

Formation Sunday Evenings

Join us for our 6:00 PM gatherings this month!

December 5: Blue Christmas

December 12: The Best Christmas Pageant Ever (Sunday School Christmas Program)

December 19: Cello/Piano Concert (see page 8 for more information!)

December 26: No evening gathering

Worship on January 2

This September, Covenant was approached by CRC Worship Ministries and asked to prepare a sermon and service package to share with our fellow CRCNA churches as a resource for the January 2, 2022 service. This includes a recorded video sermon by Pastor Joel and a fully scripted liturgy by Rebecca DeVries. Covenant was honored to be asked and this resource will be available to churches at the beginning of December on [The Network](#).

January 2 is just after Christmas, after New Year's and the week before Epiphany. Churches often have extra services added into their schedules at this time of year, and many pastors take time off after the holidays to spend time with their families and to rest. It's one of the toughest times for churches whose pastors are taking time off or who may not have a regular pastor to find someone to preach in their place, so this resource will hopefully be a blessing for churches throughout the denomination.

Because Pastor Joel will be on holiday yet on January 2, the council approved the use of his pre-recorded sermon that will be part of this

Notes from the Deacons

You may have noticed we have new wooden offering boxes as you enter the sanctuary. We would like to thank Del Vander Zee for designing and building these boxes for us. These boxes make it possible to give our offerings in a more secure and private contact-free way. When approached with the idea, Del was more than willing to take on the project. His craftsmanship and eye for detail really came through. Thanks again, Del!

On another note, the annual Congregational Meeting and Young People's lasagna supper is scheduled for Monday, December 13. Please plan to attend. We will be voting on next year's budget as well as hearing some other important updates. This is a great way to be informed about what is going on in our church and to have your voice be heard.

-Kris Vander Plaats

resource combined with our live in church liturgy for our own Sunday service that day. This will allow Pastor Joel to take his vacation

(Continued on page 7)

Giving Graph

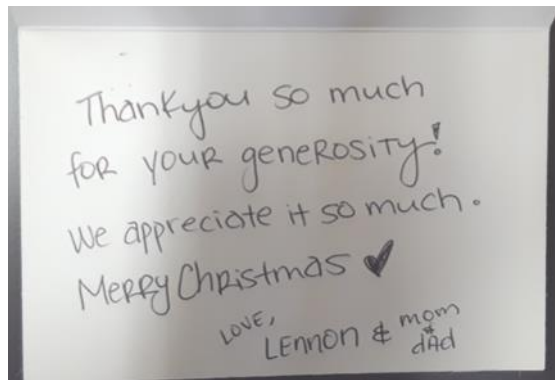
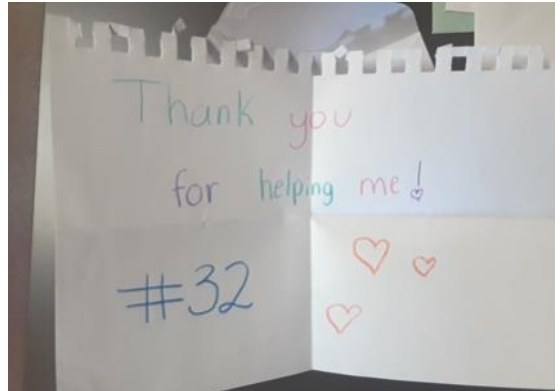
Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/21-11/21/21) \$251,067	\$224,207	-\$26,860
Missions	(1/1/21-11/21/21) \$21,385	\$17,839	-\$3,546
Christian Education	(8/1/21-11/21/21) \$52,806	\$48,432	-\$4,374

Serving at Covenant

This is part of an ongoing series about the many ways Covenant members serve in our church, our community, and beyond.

Mid-Sioux Christmas Gift Baskets

Each pastoral group is putting together a gift basket for a family in need this Christmas which will be distributed by Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc. You may have already heard from your pastoral group deacon about this project and they will be collecting money in the next weeks for the gifts. All baskets will be ready to go to Mid-Sioux by December 12. If you have any other questions about this project, contact your pastoral group deacon. Pictured here are some thank you cards that we received last year from our gift basket recipients.



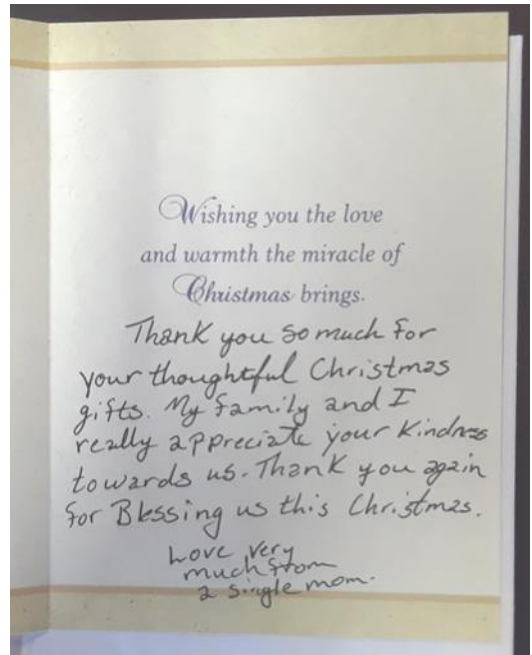
Worship on January 2

(Continued from page 6)

as scheduled and allow us to participate in this liturgical opportunity that we pray will be a blessing to many church staff and preachers in our denomination who may be strained with less time and more services through Advent and the new year.

We know it might feel a bit strange to watching a sermon on a screen that day and we wanted to give you a heads up on this decision as well as giving a bit more context as we prepare for this special Lord's Day.

On behalf of Council,
-Deacon Eric Rowe



Cello/Piano Concert

We're so excited to host a cello/piano concert as our Sunday Evening Formation Gathering on December 19! (Thomas Van Soelen is also James Rylaarsdam's uncle!) Here is the press release about the event:

Pianist Dr. Thomas Van Soelen and cellist Meghan McGuire will perform together at 6 PM on December 19 at Covenant CRC in Sioux Center. The concert will feature music from a variety of traditions, including special arrangements of Christmas carols.

McGuire and Van Soelen have been partnering in concerts since 2013, mostly in Atlanta, Georgia. McGuire's move to Minneapolis, MN prompted a change in venue. Their weekend in the Midwest will also include a Saturday night concert at 7 PM on December 18 at First CRC in Edgerton, Minnesota.

Meghan McGuire began performing at an early age, playing for Yo-Yo Ma when she was thirteen and making her solo debut with the Minnesota Orchestra at age sixteen. She has performance degrees from The San Francisco Conservatory of Music and The Florida State University, School of Music. From 1999-2016, Meghan performed extensively throughout the

Southeast including with the Atlanta Symphony, Opera, and Ballet Orchestras. Currently, she is the orchestra director at Visitation School in St. Paul, MN, and has a studio of private students.

Thomas Van Soelen has a broad musical background in strings, winds, percussion, keyboards, and vocals. His degrees from Dordt College, Florida Atlantic University and the University of Georgia include recitals in voice and pipe organ. At age 14 he began regular church music rotations at Bethel CRC in Sioux Center as an organist and pianist and began directing adult choirs at age 20. He has accompanied for the National Association of the Teachers of Singing competitions and the Palm Beach Opera Auditions, as well as for individual talent. Dr. Van Soelen has served as the Director of Music at St. John Neumann Church in Lilburn, GA since 2002 while also providing professional development and leadership coaching for public schools.

Both concerts are free to the public. The Sioux Center concert will feature a freewill offering supporting the domestic violence efforts at The Family Crisis Center.

For more information, contact Thomas Van Soelen at 678-793-5246 or tmvansoelen@gmail.com.



We will once again be hosting a livestream of Calvin University's January Series at Covenant in the new year! Mark your calendars for daily lectures on each weekday from January 10-28, 2022, from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM. You can find more information about the lecture series and the full line-up of speakers at: calvin.edu/january-series/.