

Alghan Refugee Resettlement Updates

Dear congregation,

Our Afghan family could arrive in Sioux Center as early as March 11 and there's plenty to prepare. We would like to alert you to some immediate needs for congregational involvement related to the work of the housing committee. We have many/most of the furnishings needed and are now organizing how to make the move work smoothly.

As background, the house we are renting will be closed on by the owners on the morning of March 9; the family could arrive as early as March 11. Members of the housing committee have been assigned individual rooms and will be settling them on March 10.

March 9 Needs

Daytime: We would like to have a crew of people clean the house—late morning and as long as it takes into the afternoon. There are two bathrooms, four bedrooms, a kitchen, living room, family room, and laundry room, so we could use up to one or two people per room to make the task light for all. If you are willing to help with cleaning, please email John and Linda Visser at jlvisser@mtcnet.net and also copy in Len and Lee Rhoda at rhoda@mtcnet.net with your availability on that day. (The Rhodas are leaving on vacation and Vissers returning, so this helps ensure that your email won't fall through the cracks.)

Evening: We need some movers and vehicles

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Pastoral Group Dinner Schedule



March 13—Friend/Hibma
March 27—Van Wyk/Janssen
April 3—Schelhaas/Feikema
April 10—Bajema/Clark
April 24—Schaap/Rowe
May 1—Rhoda/Sybesma



Ash Wednesday
Worship Service
with Imposition of Ashes
March 2 | 6:30-7:00 PM

Courier

March 2022

COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Remember...

So, Laremy, my husband, teaches philosophy at Dordt. You may have heard of that university down the road. His mentor, Mark Tazelaar, you may have heard of him, shared a lecture with him as he started teaching a couple of years ago, a lecture he may want to include in his syllabus. It's a lecture by Walter Brueggemann entitled "Remember, You Are Dust," maybe you've heard of Walter. The lecture is on Psalm 103, Ash Wednesday—the first day of Lent, and how humans were made. Laremy shared this lecture with me as we began planning for the season of Lent at Covenant, I shared it with Pastor Joel and the worship planners, and it has given us much food for thought as we began planning worship for Lent. You can follow this link and read the lecture yourself:

korycapps.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/w-brueggemann-remember-you-are-dust.pdf

But what the worship planners want you to anticipate is that our theme for Lent this year is "Remember."

Remember is a covenantal word and remembering is a covenantal practice. Remember is a story word and we are story people. God calls his people to remember what he has done, he reminds them of times he has remembered them, and he asks us to remember his salvation story each time we meet at the table.

So, what shall we remember this Lent? May we remember:

- That we are Dust; that we are not God; that God breathed life into us and therefore we depend fully on God. (Ash Wednesday: Psalm 103).

- That God is with us. (Lent 1: Luke 4:1-13; Jesus is tempted and tested in the wilderness).
- That God is Faithful. (Lent 2: Genesis 15; God covenants with Abraham and grace abounds).
- That God is Generous. (Lent 3: Isaiah 55; buy without money; higher thoughts; trustworthy word).
- That God Forgives (Lent 4: Psalm 32; "Happy are those whose sins are covered").
- That God Brings Joy (Lent 5: Psalm 126; "Remember when God brought back the exiles...our mouths were filled with songs of joy.).
- That we must trust God (Palm Sunday)
- To Do This in Remembrance (Maundy Thursday).
- That Jesus Remembers us (Good Friday).

And every Sunday in Lent we will remember that we must trust God. Our culture tries to convince us that we are autonomous. But what Brueggemann reminds us of in his lecture is that we depend on God for life! We are creatures, "breathed on dust," who will die but who also live by the "daily, moment by moment generosity of God." This Lent, we will explore how this truth informs our praise as we gather for worship. How does it inform our thanksgiving? Our entrusting? Our confession? Our remembrance at God's table? And then, on Easter Sunday, we will explore-and celebrate-that we are dependent on God not only for life, but for new life. Christ is risen and we shall arise!

We invite you to our Ash Wednesday service on March 2 at 6:30 PM. And here are a few more things to look forward to this Lent:

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Afghan Refugee Resettlement Updates

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to gather donated items from a few locations and bring them to the house so that Thursday can be spent settling. Email Len Rhoda if you wish to volunteer to help in this way: rhoda@mtcnet.net

March 10 Needs

Committee room coordinators will be busy arranging things. We likely could use a couple of volunteers to help with such things as assembling beds, etc. Email Sally Jongsma at jongsma@mtcnet.net with your offers to help in this way.

And a Heads Up

We will need some basic clothing available upon arrival. Since we do not yet know the exact makeup of the members of our family, we ask you to think about what you might have available so that when we find out who is coming we can gather some things together quickly. If it is cold and snowy we'll also need some coats and boots. We'll be able to take them to do some shopping or to Home, Melissa's Hope Chest, or Second Chance for additional needs within a short time after arriving, but want to have some things available immediately. Once we know the number of people, genders, and sizes/ages we'll make more specific requests. This could be as late as 3-7 days before they arrive. Vissers and Rhodas will also be the contacts for clothing donations.

Thanks so much for your involvement and generosity. We'll update you as the need arises!

*-Sally Jongsma
Housing Committee*

The employment/finance team of the refugee resettlement committee invites you to consider aiding the family in learning about the responsibilities and intricacies of financial literacy and independence. There will be many unfamiliar components in which the family needs help such as setting up checking, peer-to-peer, and debit accounts, taxes, establishing credit worthiness, etc.

We are not sure if Afghan culture and the literacy of the individuals will allow a female spouse to participate in that process. Because male members of our committee will most likely not directly interact with females, having one or more women from our congregation willing to help is critical. A team effort is needed to strategize important financial literacy and independence components and then help the family achieve those goals.

If you are willing to participate in this effort, please contact Chris Goedhart (chris.goedhart@dordt.edu).

*-Chris Goedhart
Employment & Finances Committee*

Remember

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- We will be challenging ourselves to commit to memory the words of Psalm 103; we will include it each Sunday.
- We will include a time of remembering, or testimony, in each of our Sunday evening Vespers services.
- And finally our WE service on March 20 will focus on remembering as a Faith Practice.

-Rebecca DeVries

March Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Caleb Smit	11	Benjamin Ploegstra Del Vander Zee	23	Richard Eggebeen Victoria Eggebeen Mike Janssen
4	Brian Mellema Lee Rhoda	14	Mike & Laura Janssen Roger & Linda Vanden Hoek		Tricia Van Dyk Beth Vanden Berg
5	Ben Bailey			24	Channon Visscher
6	Mark McCarthy	17	Sean Hannigan	25	Emma Haan
7	Emma Mercado Castelan	19	Benjamin Groenewold Cheri Horstman	31	Brandon Hummel
8	Sara Ploegstra Brooklyn Rylaarsdam	20	Carol Apol Mark Tazelaar		
10	Jeff Ploegstra Lila Sybesma	21	Wil & Jo Alberda		



March WE Service

The postponed WE service from January is scheduled now for Sunday, March 20 after the morning service. We hope you can make plans to attend. The gathering begins right after the morning service with a shared meal provided by church. We will gather at tables in the fellowship hall and stay right there after the meal for a time of learning together through dramas, discussion, and doing.

The WE services that we plan to host over the next few months will explore Faith Practices or Spirit Habits. To learn more ahead of time, follow this link to the Faith Formation Ministries website: <https://www.crcna.org/FaithPracticesProject>

-Rebecca DeVries

Notes from the Deacons

Congregation, we simply wanted to send a "Thanks" for your financial gifts! We are meeting our budget responsibilities, we are on track with our Christian Education obligations, and we want to express our gratitude for your regular monetary gifts. We thank those who are giving physically or virtually to continue that practice.

We encourage those who don't have a regular giving practice to begin one. Please ask any deacons if you have any questions regarding setting up regular giving withdrawals or have any needs that we can help with.

Thanks,

-Ruth Clark

March Scheduling



Coffee Servers

Steve C, Deb H, Carol O, Linda VH



Greeters

Rebecca DS, Megan H, Marv W



Ushers

Bernie DW, Andy L, Beth VB

Substitutes

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

Pam DJ, Sharon D, Lee R,
Lois VZ, Joni V, Dani W



Thanks for serving!

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, **March 21** for the April issue.



Nursery

March 6

AM Laremy & Rebecca DV, Alejandro & Isabel C

March 13

AM Mark & Lisa C, Tricia K
PM John & Linda V, Barb T

March 20

AM Ross & Lisa F, Marcy H

March 27

AM Doug & Marge DB, Mark & Cheri H

April 3

AM Channon & Joni V, Ethan & Donna B

*Please note—we are scheduling volunteers for nursery during the evening service on March 13 since we'll be welcoming guests from other churches for the GEMS Sunday service.

Formation Sunday Evenings

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

March 6: Vespers

March 13: GEMS Sunday service (with Faith & Bridge of Hope at Covenant)

March 20: WE service (no evening gathering)

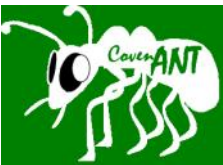
March 27: Vespers

Serving at Covenant

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

It's been interesting and a bit crazy sitting here in the office these days, watching the flurry of activity as Covenant prepares to welcome an Afghan refugee family to Sioux Center. Emails have been flying back and forth, church members have been making the rounds from house to house collecting furniture and household goods, meetings have been scheduled. And have I mentioned the abundance of emails flying around?? (Worthy of two mentions at least!)

It is good to see the body of Christ here at Covenant serving together—and I'm fully aware that I'm only seeing a small portion of what's going on. Many more are working on this project behind the scenes in ways that I'm not even aware of. One might even say the situation around Covenant these days brings up visions of busy worker ants scurrying around to accomplish their tasks. It seemed like a good time to bring in this image of the "CovenAnt" that was used in a previous era at Covenant. I would



tasks. It seemed like a good time to bring in this image of the "CovenAnt" that was used in a previous era at Covenant. I would

encourage you to talk to Ron Oostra about it—I'm sure he'd love to share some stories of Covenant serving together in the past as well!

Anyway—between all the other emails that were sent around, Verlyn DeWit sent me this quick update to share with all of you regarding the refugee resettlement effort:

“We have completed all steps of an application and have strong reason to believe we will have a family on or after March 11. This coming Saturday (February 26) the Core Committee will be assigning specific tasks. More flexible volunteers would be appreciated.”

If you want to be part of this Herculean effort at Covenant, I encourage you to go back to the “Count Me In” email that was sent out in early February. Or check out some of the needs mentioned in the updates from Sally and Chris in this *Courier*. It's not too late to jump in and offer assistance!

I found myself listening to The Porter Gate's “Work Songs” album again as I thought about the servant work I'm seeing from my office chair. The song “Christ Has No Body Now But Yours” has been running through my head. The lyrics are based on a quote attributed to St. Teresa of Avila—I encourage you to look up the whole quote, but I'll just include the

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Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/21-2/20/22) 48,592	\$53,073	+\$4,481
Christian Education	(8/1/21-2/20/22) \$93,188	\$96,912	+\$3,724

Sewing at Covenant

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shortened song lyrics here:

*Christ has no body now but yours,
no hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes with which He sees,
Yours are the feet with which He walks,
Yours are the hands with which
He blesses all the world:
Yours are the hands.*

(You can listen to the whole album here:

<https://theportersgate.bandcamp.com/album/work-songs>)

May our bodies, our eyes, our feet and hands bless and bring Christ's love and healing to the refugee family that God is sending to us.

-Sara Ploegstra

P.S. It would be negligent of me to leave out the fact that I haven't even mentioned another committee of people who have been working very hard on our Christian Education Fund Auction these past weeks! We're so thankful to them for taking on that project and helping all of us to meet our financial commitments in a fun and fruitful way!

Crossroads Seeking Spanish-Speaking Mentors

Many of you are already actively working with Crossroads Prison Ministry, but we recently received this communication from them and thought we'd pass it along in case any of you are able to assist with Spanish-speaking students.

We have a significant back log of Spanish language lessons in the office. Due to a growth in student enrollment and a shortage of Spanish-speaking mentors, we have a backlog of several weeks of lessons from our Spanish-speaking students. The number of weeks that completed lessons wait in our office for mentor availability has steadily increased. We have stopped actively recruiting new students until we have a better balance.

Crossroads has provided lessons and mentor support in the Spanish language for many years. We feel it is imperative that we continue to invest in this program. Currently, the updated mentor handbook and Ambassador materials are being translated. A Crossroads Prison Ministries Facebook group, The Inside Journal, and the Crossroads website are now

available in Spanish.

If you know of anyone interested in becoming a Spanish mentor for Crossroads, please refer them to the following website: <https://www.cmcarcelario.org/convertirse-en-un-mentor-a>

Here is the link to our new Spanish Facebook group. You can find student testimonies, poems, and art at the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/341451697781203>

The bottom line is that we need men and women willing and capable of mentoring our students in the Spanish language. Please be in prayer for this and consider opportunities around you that could work toward impacting this challenge.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to email us at mentor@cpministries.org.

-Doug Cuperly, Church Mobilization Director

The Reality of War

With news of Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine, it seemed timely to remember our missionaries in Lithuania and share a bit of their newsletter sent in early February as we continue to pray for them.

As children growing up in the U.S. and Canada, war felt like something in the past, or maybe something that only happens far away. But for many of our students, war is a present reality.

Talk about a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine brings this home more now than ever. We hope that Russia will not start a war in Ukraine, but the reality is that they already have. The invasion of Crimea in 2014 and the ongoing fighting in the region since that time is a reality that many of our students deal with, as they worry about the safety of friends and family. Ukraine is on all our minds right now (e.g., two of Tricia's online Ethics students asked for extensions on assignments this week while they evacuate to safer areas). Currently at LCC, 30% of our students are from Ukraine. Russia's military buildup along the border and in our neighboring country of Belarus means some of them face military conscription as soon as they graduate, but it's not just our Ukrainian students who deal with this reality.

Pinewood Derby Thanks

The Faith/Covenant/Bridge of Hope Cadets would like to thank Rev. Bob Pollema, Rev. Joel Kok, and Mr. Dave Ruter for taking the time on February 16 to judge the Cadets' cars for design and showmanship at the Pinewood Derby. Thanks also to Jim Bolkema for helping with the race itself. We appreciate your willingness to help in this way.

The region between Armenia and Azerbaijan has been in conflict for the entire lifetime of our students from those countries, and the fighting that has broken out in the last couple of years personally affects them. Our students from Afghanistan have also grown up with the reality of war, and their concerns for friends and family have only increased with the recent increase in Taliban power. Then, of course, there are the students from Iraq, Belarus, Kazakhstan...



As we seek to support and teach these students as they walk so close to the shadow of war, fearing for their families and the future of their countries, we pray that they witness the even nearer proximity of the One whose peace passes understanding.

-Benjamin & Tricia Groenewold Van Dyk

CRC Denominational Survey

Dear Covenant CRC,
The annual CRCNA denominational survey is now open to receive responses! Only one-fifth of churches are asked to participate each year. This year is your turn. This survey helps denominational leadership understand the concerns and needs of local congregations like yours. It is crucial that as many people from your congregation as possible participate. Please visit crcna.org/survey/8779 to answer the survey questions by March 31. Thank you for your participation.

-Kristen VanderBerg