

Four Guys for the Birds

Steve Crull, John Zwart, John Visser, and Doug De Boer were at work in Duane Bajema's shop on a Saturday morning building wren birdhouses made from aged cedar wood supplied by Ron Oostra. The project was to make birdhouses to sell as a fund raiser for Habitat for Humanity. They gave the Saturday morning project the name of "Habitat for Habitat."

They built sixteen wren birdhouses under the direction of Steve Crull. The 8th grade Cadets, including Ben Ploegstra and Layne Vos

from Covenant, along with counselor Bryan Kooi built eight additional birdhouses that will be sold along with other items at the Centre Mall in Sioux Center and at Fleet Farm in Sioux City on April 21-26 as part of the fund raiser.

Most of the screws were put in straight, a little glue cured any mistakes, and the Society of Migrating Wrens Needing Houses gave their endorsement and seal of approval to the project and the houses made. For additional information about this project, contact Steve Crull.

-Duane Bajema



Note from the Pastor

Theology of Baseball Reflection

Did you know Jackie Robinson followed Jesus in a passionate way?

On April 15, many of us celebrated the 75th anniversary of Jackie Robinson breaking down the racial barrier in major league baseball by playing for the Brooklyn Dodgers. One reason Robinson signed with the Dodgers was that he and Branch Rickey, the Dodger Executive Director, shared devotion to our Lord. They were both devout Methodists, and that helped them discern the wisdom and power needed for their major steps in moving the United States closer to its ideal of equality.

Jackie Robinson was an outstanding athlete in many respects. He was a four-sport star at the University of Southern California, and he could fight. With such prowess in mind, Robinson and Rickey needed to discern how Robinson would respond to name calling and even attacks on a baseball field. Rickey asked Robinson what he would do if he slid safely into second base on a hot afternoon and suffered a punch from a frustrated opponent. Robinson replied that he had two cheeks, and he could turn the other cheek. Robinson was not weak; but he was meek, and with the strength of Jesus' teachings and Spirit, he opened the way for many others to follow him into not only major league baseball but also countless other expressions of vocation.

-Pastor Joel

PLIA Reflections

A number of our Covenant Dordt students went on PLIA to various locations across the United States over spring break in March. We're grateful to hear reflections from a few of them about their experiences.

Over Spring Break, I had the opportunity to drive down to Shiprock, New Mexico as a part of PLIA. To be honest, other than warm New Mexico weather, I wasn't sure what to expect. Whatever expectations I had were quickly broken. Having followed Jesus' advice in Matthew 10:10 rather than my mother's, I quickly realized that I was unprepared for the week of abnormally cold New Mexico weather (I wasn't expecting to be shoveling snow as a task!). The lack of layers that I packed, however, was quickly overshadowed by the warm hospitality of the followers of Jesus at Bethel CRC in Shiprock.

Throughout the week we found ourselves doing a variety of jobs around the community—scraping paint, landscaping and garden work, and replacing a shed roof, for example. While there is no substitute for getting to know fellow peers than working side-by-side, spending the evenings making meals together, and studying Scripture, the most memorable part of my Shiprock experience came after a morning of pulling fence-posts at Marilyn's house. Marilyn was a member of Bethel CRC and had introduced herself to us earlier in the week after the Sunday service. Since the morning was a mite bit nippy (Ok, it was actually pretty cold, but I don't want mom to know that she was right), Marilyn invited us inside and offered us enchiladas. Once inside, she

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PLIA Reflections

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began to share a bit of her story. It was quickly apparent that between the Navajo stories of her youth and her life on the reservation, there was not much her and an Anglo boy like me held in common. When the enchiladas were ready, she asked me to pray for the meal and it struck me then. For all of the differences we had—the unique pain she carried, our distinct cultural histories—the only reason that someone like me could find my way welcomed so warmly into a Navajo kitchen in northern New Mexico had to be the cross of Christ.

There are so many grounds upon which to build and maintain a relationship—a shared hometown, Dutch roots, theology, or even political affinities—and it can be easy to think that these are all a part of what makes a community a community. Don't get me wrong, commonalities do not count for nothing, but they aren't everything. And, if PLIA taught me anything, it taught me that every once in a while, it's not a bad idea to share a meal with a fellow disciple of Christ with whom you share hardly anything in common if only to remind yourself that the only commonality that really has the strength to hold us together is the Father's love in Christ Jesus.

As the meal wrapped up, one of our group members asked if Marilyn had any life-advice for young people like us. Her answer should have been expected—the weathered saint that she was: Keep your eyes on Jesus, she said, there are so many things that can distract you...rely on Christ. Good advice for anyone, I think, young and old alike.

-Rylan Bue

There's something about a cup of tea. This particular cup of chai tea, sipped on the floor of a recently furnished apartment, was the best I've ever had. Perhaps it was the way in which we had just maneuvered a couch up two flights of narrow winding stairs, or the way we were listening to a mother's story of going from school principal to living in this apartment, or the way in which we all felt immensely more grateful for the tea as we were near tears listening to the same mother explain that all the family had to eat in the last week was rice. They had just moved to St. Louis a week ago and at that point, they didn't even have a kitchen table. Thankfully, we were able to go grocery shopping with the family immediately following this conversation, and never has a bag of oranges and a box of spinach seemed so holy.

Oasis International partners with the International Institute and a handful of other organizations to provide housing, furniture, food, and services to refugees in the St. Louis area. Our main duties as a PLIA team were to prime and paint the basement, begin work on a new wall, and reorganize the basement stock. We helped load diapers and carseats, deliver furniture, clean a kitchen, and met staff involved with organizing events and classes. Dordt's fifteen passenger van got a workout driving around the city with a table, and at one point a bed. We got paint in our hair and smeared on our clothes, and dust in our eyes. But every step of the way was full of grace, and we were shown such hospitality.

Perhaps one of the most distinct memories of the whole week of PLIA was the hospitality showed to us as a team. We stayed with Extreme Faith in an old school building, and were blessed by their hospitality—the willingness to open their kitchen, hauling in a Wii

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May Birthdays & Anniversaries

2	Julian Addink	14	Lisa Feikema Carol Oostra	20	Zoey Eggebeen
3	Adria DeKruyf		Daniel Tazelaar Tom Tazelaar	22	Rowan Haan Jean Maletoungou
8	Eldon & Marcia Westra		Chris & Jemmie Dyk		Bernie & Kathy DeWit
9	Lisa Christians Len Rhoda	15	Will Breems Chris Dyk	23	Kurt Vos
		17	Meghan Vos	25	Mark & Lisa Christians
11	Eden DeKruyf John & Becky Stevenson	18	John-Patrick McCarthy Ethan & Donna Brue	26	Lewis Clark
12	Rob & Megan Haan			29	Sam Janssen Steve & Pat Crull
13	Ella Visscher	19	Aniah DeKruyf Mark & Barb Tazelaar	30	Emily Eppinga
				31	Joan McCarthy



Church Spring Cleaning Day

Saturday, April 30 | 9:00 AM

Come out and help spruce up the church!
Snacks and drinks will be provided.

Your pastoral group deacon will contact
each group with information about your
cleaning assignment.

WE Service

Sunday, May 22 | 11:30 AM

We plan to gather after our morning worship service on May 22 for a shared meal and an intergenerational WE service at tables in the fellowship hall. We will continue our focus on Faith Practices, looking at “Hospitality” this month. Faith Formation Ministries defines it this way: “Hospitality is the act of making space for guests, visitors, or strangers, and extending to them the privileges of family.” At this WE service, we’ll explore biblical hospitality and focus on how we can share food, shelter, and protection with others. If you are interested in helping to plan the WE service or have a hospitality story to share, please contact Rebecca De Vries

To learn more about Faith Practices, go to
www.crcna.org/FaithPracticesProject

May Scheduling



Coffee Servers

Natalie B, Lisa C, Jason H,
Marcia W



Greeters

Isabel C, Mark H, Dennis VP



Ushers

Ruth Clo, Dennis DJ, John V

Substitutes

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

Jo A, Paul C, Pat C,
Chris G, Luke H, Ron O



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, **May 23** for the June issue.



Nursery

May 1

AM Luke & Sarah H, Dave & Jeri S

May 8

AM Joe & Erin E, Kathy DW

May 15

AM Lee & Jenni M, Jeff & Sara P

May 22

AM Jason & Dani W, Dennis & Pam DJ

May 29

AM Tom & Ruth C, Paul & Ruth C

June 5

AM Rob & Megan H, Jake & Trena VW

Formation Sunday Evenings

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

May 1: Vespers

May 8: Vespers (Robin's School of Dance lyrical worship class participating)

May 15: Vespers

May 22: Lunch and WE Service (after morning worship)
Dialogue & Prayer at 6:00

May 29: Dialogue & Prayer

Notes from the Deacons

The Spring Offering of Thanks

The Deacons would like to thank you for all of the generous giving that is received at Covenant. It is a great joy for me personally as a deacon to be a part of a church that honors its giving commitments and obligations so faithfully. So once again, thank you for all your generous giving!

In this spirit of generous giving, you will have received an envelope in your church mailbox for the Spring Offering of Thanks. On the sheet attached to the envelope is a list of various causes that we as Deacons are asking you to consider giving to. There are many familiar organizations that are on this list, and maybe some new ones to you as well. We

would ask you to prayerfully consider giving to one, some, or all of these groups and causes found on the list. We also realize that there are many other organizations to which our members give their time and money, so if you feel led to support those organizations or groups, please give as you are led. If you would like to see a group or organization added to our list in the future, please let us know.

We want to thank you for your generosity in the past, for your consideration to this special spring offering, and encourage you to prayerfully and faithfully continue to give of your time, talents, and money, as you are able, to both Covenant Church and these other organizations.

-Dane Hilma and the Covenant Deacons

PLIA Reflections

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for evening amusement, the newly washed towels stocked in the bathroom, and the invitation to St. Trinity Lutheran on Sunday, to name a few. Oasis, too, opened their doors. Their facilities were open for use, they enthusiastically answered any questions we had (and encouraged us to ask more), staff suggested places to visit in St. Louis, and we were treated to delicious Bosnian kebab (which, we decided, was more of a sandwich, but was a wonderful meal). Most of all, every family or individual we met while delivering furniture or volunteering elsewhere opened their homes to us, invited us back or offered us tea, or just wanted to sit and talk. That is perhaps the most memorable part of the trip—the willingness of strangers to open their homes to other strangers and invite them for dinner later when all they have is rice.

-Hannah Landman

Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/21-4/17/22) \$97,184	\$102,550	+\$5,366
Christian Education	(8/1/21-4/17/22) \$118,038	\$138,165	+\$20,128

Serving at Covenant

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

We are going to reinstate our tradition of doing a reverse offering for food and other non-perishables throughout the month of May. In addition to putting cash and checks in the offering boxes, we invite you to give in another way as well. On May 1, the Service and Missions (SAM) committee will have plates with slips of paper listing different items that are commonly needed at Mid-Sioux Opportunity. The physical item on your paper helps to give you a concrete idea of what non-perishable item you can bring in for Mid-Sioux and can remind you throughout the week and month, but don't feel tied to bringing any particular item.

We'll hand out the slips of paper on Sunday May 1, but you have all month to bring in your

donations. Look for the collection table in the fellowship hall and bring in your items anytime before the end of the month.

In the past, we've heard good feedback that our food drive has been more opportune than expected. Last year, we brought in an entire load of peanut butter and were worried that it wouldn't be as helpful and found they had just run out of it at the food pantry. We can trust that whatever items we bring will be used well.

We hope you'll use this special reverse offering as a reminder of the many ways that we can serve others and respond in love to Christ.

-Eric Rowe



Mid-Sioux
OPPORTUNITY, INC.

A Community Action Agency

Seeking God's Face: Forty Days of Prayer

Reprinted from *The Network* at network.crcna.org/prayer/seeking-gods-face-forty-days-prayer

You are invited. Yes, you. But not just you. The person who sits next to you and across from you and behind you in worship—they're invited too. And while we are at it, anyone connected with the Christian Reformed Church in North America is invited—and the prayers of our siblings who gather elsewhere are welcome as well. Together, all of us are invited to embark on forty days of prayer leading into Synod 2022.

When?

This forty-day prayer initiative begins Sunday, May 1, and continues through Thursday, June 9. These dates were chosen to lead us up to the start of Synod 2022—the annual gathering of the CRC. If you miss the May 1 start date, don't worry. You are free to join anytime! So you can never be too late to join in this prayer initiative.

What are we praying about?

In the simplest form, we are praying that God will lead us and that we will follow God's leading. Throughout this initiative, we will ask God to move among us. We will confess ways

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Seeking God's Face: Forty Days of Prayer

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that we are resistant to God's leading. We will take time to listen deeply and to consider how we can lean into the life of Jesus Christ together. This season of prayer invites us to lean into a listening posture, in which we are attentive to the Holy Spirit.

As a way of shaping our listening, our prayers for each week in this initiative will be guided by the following themes:

Seeking God Together (May 1–7)

We Want to See Jesus (May 8–14)

Desiring that the World Might Know Jesus (May 15–21)

Resting in Jesus and the Spirit, Who Are Interceding for Us (May 22–28)

Longing for the Fruit of the Spirit in Us (May 29–June 4)

May Your Kingdom Come and Your Will Be Done (June 5–9)

What's prompting this season of prayer?

Recognizing the significance of several discussions at this year's synod, these forty days invite us to seek God together as Jesus Christ's siblings in anticipation of Synod 2022. In May 2021, the Council of Delegates called for a year of prayer within the CRC. This emphasis fits with a larger denominational priority on cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual disciplines. Over the past year, a variety of prayer opportunities have taken place, including monthly virtual prayer gatherings and the yearlong Together Seeking God's Face initiative. This forty days of prayer initiative fits within this framework and has been particularly designed with Synod 2022 in mind.

How are We Praying Together?

Prayer prompts will be emailed each day for forty days. Each email will include a Bible reading, a prayer written by a member of the

CRCNA, and a couple questions to encourage further reflection or conversation. On a few occasions, we will read the same Bible passage a couple times in the same week.

The rich diversity of prayer in our denomination will be evident, as some prayers read like Psalms, others like conversations, and others follow formats that could fit in a formal book of prayer. A few prayers are short. Some are a bit longer. Some contain a preface or reflection that leads into the prayer. Others invite us to enter into silent prayer. Together, these prayers help us to raise our voices before God in an intentional way for forty days as delegates prepare to gather for Synod 2022.

You can read these email prompts in your personal devotion times, at a meal with others in your home, in small groups, or even in connection with worship settings. The "together" aspect of this initiative is that people across the CRC—in Canada, the U.S., and around the world—will be engaging with the same Bible passage, the same prayer, and the same reflection questions on a daily basis for forty days. Though we are physically apart from each other, we will be uniting in prayer as together we seek God's face.

So How Do I Sign Up?

You can sign up for this prayer initiative using [this form](#). Just enter your email address, check the box for the "Together Seeking God's Face—40 days of prayer" option, and click "Subscribe". You should receive a confirmation email once you have subscribed.

Are there more ways to pray with others in the CRC?

Yes! There are multiple opportunities to pray with others across the CRC. You can find more details at crcna.org/pray and at www.crcna.org/together-seeking-gods-face.