

Sunday Evenings in July

July is a month for traveling, especially, it seems, for the Covenant staff and many accompanists. The elders and staff have therefore decided to take a Sabbatical from our 6:00 PM Vespers services July 10, 17, 24, and 31. We hope that you too will find ways to enjoy sabbath rest or fellowship.

There are two exceptions. On July 3 we will host the Sioux Center CRCs at Covenant with Pastor Bob Pollema preaching. And then on July 24 we would like to invite you to participate in our **Third Annual Guess Who's Coming to the Backyard Event!** This year the gathering will also include some dialogue and activities based on the Faith Practice of Hospitality. Here's how it works:

- You will sign up to attend or host the gathering. Groups will then be assigned randomly and you won't know where you're going/who will be showing up until the day of!
- We'll share a true potluck meal of sandwiches, salads, and dessert. You're asked to bring what you can to share with your group. Hosts will be asked to provide a beverage. All will be asked to bring chairs and tableware.
- We'll spend time connecting, being reminded of the beauty of God's intergenerational church, and exploring the faith practice of Hospitality.

Here is your pre-reading assignment on Hospitality from Joel Schoon, director of Faith Formation Ministries:

The New Testament word for "hospitality" is usually *philoxenia*, which literally means "love of strangers." This loving posture contrasts with another word related to strangers: *xenophobia*, or "fear of strangers." In this light, hospitality (*philoxenia*) welcomes strangers in; whereas *xenophobia* keeps strangers at a distance. So when Paul calls the early church in Rome to practice hospitality, the Spirit is teaching God's people "to pursue loving strangers."

In the culture of Paul's day, a "stranger" was anyone who was not a family member, and it even included people who were enemies. The practice often involved three things: food, lodging (or being welcomed into a family space), and protection. Hospitality's elements of food, welcome into family space, and protection are found throughout the biblical narrative. [These biblical narratives and examples of hospitality] challenge us to extend hospitality to strangers as if they were already part of our family.

So, here's one more optional assignment: consider inviting new members, visitors, neighbors or others who may be looking for

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New Council Members

We're excited to welcome new council members this month. Here's a quick introduction and some of their thoughts on serving in these roles at Covenant in light of the charges they were given in the service of installation on May 29.

June DeWit, Elder

I love words and songs and my piano and crocheting and flowers and truth and the love of God for his creation and people. One more thing—I love helping. Mostly I am happy and ready to mirror Jesus. I heard “Jesus” in words like compassionate and trustworthy. I look forward to praying with and for our Covenant family. Thank you for having me.

Shaun Stiemsma, Elder

I joined Covenant with my family shortly after starting in the English department at Dordt University in the fall of 2019. My oldest children, Luc and Elise, are now at Dordt, and Sarah and I are in Sioux Center with Clark, a senior at Unity, and Blake and Viola, both homeschooled. I was raised in the Chicago area in the CRC, and I spent the twenty years before coming here in the DC area, where we attended the Silver Spring CRC. This is my first time serving on council in any church where I have been a member, and I am both excited and intimidated to serve the church as elder. I am excited about the opportunity to “be a friend” to children, to offer “cheerful guidance to young people,” as my background in teaching makes these aspects feel natural to me, but I am particularly intimidated by the idea of being “firm and consistent in rebuke and discipline,” as this is not a natural posture to me. I am praying that I will be “completely mastered by [our] Lord” in this new role, as I know that any real use that I

will be to our church will be Him working through me rather than any work of my own.

Pam DeJong, Deacon

Dennis and I have been married nearly 44 years, 37 of which have been spent in Sioux Center as members of Covenant. Both of us are retired from Dordt, and enjoy the more relaxed pace that these years have brought. Our three children grew up in this church and made profession of faith here. One of our seven grandchildren was baptized here. We love this church and are grateful for the opportunity we have had to use our gifts in various ways over the years. This is my second term as a deacon, and reflecting on the charge to deacons makes me feel in turns inadequate, challenged, and conscious of the need to lean heavily on the strength and wisdom God provides through his Spirit. “Inspire, remind, teach, realize, minister, encourage, live above reproach, and be discerning, compassionate, and sensitive”—all while prayerfully working toward the already and still coming kingdom. I'm counting on your prayers and God's help to make me a blessing in this role.

Dwight Van Tol, Deacon

I'm Dwight VanTol and one of your newly elected deacons. Although my father grew up on a farm near Doon, I was born and raised in West Michigan and am an alumni of Calvin. Our family moved to Sioux Center 13 years ago as my wife joined the education department at Dordt. I have 5 children, the last 2 we adopted internationally and both of them came with special needs. Maria, our daughter passed away when she was 18 from complications of her condition. Our family has been involved in an ongoing ministry to improve the lives and education of special needs students in Central America, and more specifically in Nicaragua. I hope to find opportunities for

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Notes from the Deacons

The Deacons at Covenant would like to give the congregation a small mid-year report. We have had our first full deacons meeting with the newly elected deacons (John Visser, Pam De Jong and Dwight Van Tol) and have chosen Mike Jansen as chair, Ross Feikema as vicar, John Visser as treasurer and Ruth Clark as secretary. Committee assignments have Les Sybesma continuing as the Tuition Assistance/Compassion liaison, Ross Feikema serving as the Elderly/Disability and the GEMS/Cadets/Young People liaison, Ruth Clark continuing on as the Christian Education liaison, Dwight Van Tol as the SAM liaison, Dane Hibma as the Building Committee liaison, and Pam De Jong as the Worship Committee liaison.

In addition, we have some exciting news: we met our Christian Education obligation for the 2021-22 school year a full month ahead of schedule! We want to thank all of you for your generous tithing and giving in order to meet this obligation! Another reason this was possible was due to the congregational vote last December in which Covenant granted the Deacons the ability to direct funds more easily to the causes we knew needed support. This flexibility to disperse given funds is helping us manage accounts and obligations more easily, and we want to thank you for your trust in us with your financial gifts.

We hope you will also join us in saying a big THANKS to the outgoing Deacons: Kris Vander Plaats, Kurt Vos, and (from a distance now that he's moved) Eric Rowe. Thanks for your years of service to the Covenant family!

-Deacon Dane Hibma

New Council Members

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members of our congregation and community to join with us in serving God in these Nicaraguan neighborhoods.

John Visser, Deacon

I am happy to serve our Lord and our congregation as deacon. As a retired Dordt business prof who has been a deacon at Covenant in the past (and on our finance committee both when we purchased this building and added to it), I look forward to our next set of challenges. What I like most about being a deacon is that I am formally charged to inspire the congregation, including myself, to do (sometimes difficult) things that bring joy and order to our lives, and to do them in a way that emulates the encouragement, dignity, respect, love, and mercy that God affords us. So, I look forward to working with our Council to minister to one another, our community, and the world, doing our best to steward the churches funds, reduce waste, injustice, and selfishness, and using our abilities, wealth, and time to share each other's burdens.

Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/21-6/19/22) \$151,850	\$158,949	+\$7,099
Christian Education	(8/1/21-6/19/22) \$145,994	\$164,994	+\$19,000

July Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Linda Visser	9	Tom Clark Chris & Rin Goedhart	24	Mark & Merrill McCarthy
2	Stuart Buckingham Annemieke Lappenga Stan Vanden Berg Luke & Sarah Hawley	11	Deb DeJong	25	Dane & Rachel Hibma
		12	Jill Friend Dane Hibma	26	Pastor Gianni Gracia Samantha Hummel
4	Merrill McCarthy James & Courtney Rylaarsdam	13	Micah & Sarah Moss	28	Jacob Vander Plaats Eldon Westra
		14	Barb Schaap		
5	Mary Dengler	16	Jason & Dani Wyenberg	29	Dennis & Pam DeJong Cal & Sally Jongsma
6	Gidge Meyer	17	Dwight Van Tol Kris Vander Plaats	31	Jeremy & Kristi Hummel
8	Isabel Castelan Sabine Feikema Luke Hawley Sharon Vos	19	Justin & Melissa Bailey		
		21	Miriam Groenewold		

Thank You!

Thank you so much for your financial support of Christian Reformed Disability Concerns. Because of you, we have been able to recruit and support church and regional disability advocates throughout the Christian Reformed Church in North America and provide educational resources such as webinar series, books studies, and the Breaking Barriers newsletter. Your donations make all of this possible. We are so grateful you have joined us in the vision that in Christian Reformed Churches everybody belongs and everybody serves.

-The Disability Concerns Staff Team
(Lindsay Wieland Capel and Becky Jones)

Joint CRC Summer Evening Worship

The CRC churches plan to join together for some evening worship services this summer.

Here is the schedule:

July 3: worship at Covenant, Pastor Bob Pollema preaching

August 7: worship at First CRC, Pastor Joel preaching

September 4: worship at Bethel, Pastor Kurt Monroe preaching

July Scheduling



Coffee Servers

Jan B, Megan H, Sarah H, Tricia K



Greeters

Bob DS, Daryl H, Jason W



Ushers

Sharon D, Rachel L, Stan VB

Substitutes

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

Rebecca DS, Cheri H, Sally J,
Carol O, Beth VB, Jake VW



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, July 25 for the August issue.



Nursery

July 3

AM Ryan & Angela H, Steve & Pat C
PM Bob & Rebecca DS, Marcy H

July 10

AM Doug & Marge DB, Duane & Jan B

July 17

AM Andy & Rachel L, Alejandro & Isabel C

July 24

AM Daryl & Deb H, Mark & Lisa C

July 31

AM John & Linda V, Tricia K

August 7

AM Laremy & Rebecca DV, Barb T

Formation Sunday Evenings

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

July 3: Joint CRC worship at Covenant,
Pastor Bob Pollema preaching

July 10: No evening gathering

July 17: No evening gathering

July 24: Vespers

July 31: No evening gathering

Serving at Covenant

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

This month in this “Serving at Covenant” column, we wanted to acknowledge the Service and Missions (SAM) Committee as we prepare for a new year and are looking for a few members. Often one of the first questions is “What do you do?” or “What is involved?”

The specific focus of SAM has changed over the years, but it always involves encouraging our congregation to see service as a part of the life of the church. We support missionaries by making recommendations on the mission budget to the deacons, but also looking for ways to connect with them through letters or visits.

Historically SAM was started to support larger service trips such as the trips to Haiti 20 years ago that were big ways to come together and serve as a congregation. Smaller local volunteer opportunities with local organizations include Justice for All, Habitat for Humanity and Mid-Sioux Opportunity.

The Refugee Committee that is connected with families seeking to settle from Ukraine started as a SAM subcommittee in January of this year. We’ve also started to think more about what it means to be a neighbor and organized a few events like a block party and winter gifts for the houses around the church.

If you have an interest in learning more or to talk about how you might be a part of this work, talk with Jeri Schelhaas or Dwight Van Tol, the elder and deacon representatives on the committee.

-Eric Rowe

Sunday Evenings in July

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community, for family. If you know of others who might like to participate, just include them in your “family” when you sign up! More information in the announcements and emails to come.

See more about hospitality at <https://new.crcna.org/FaithPracticesProject/hospitality/practice-hospitality>.

And as for the DeVries family’s July plans...

When you have a child in the Fourth grade, the National Parks Service gifts him/her with a one year free pass to all national parks. Pretty great. Well, thanks to Nico, the DeVries family is planning a road trip. We will leave on July 9 and roll back into town, Lord

willing, on July 24. We hope to hit The Rockies, Mesa Verde, Bryce and Zion, the Grand Canyon and Sequoia. And then clean up and recharge at my brother and sister-in-law’s in LA. To make this possible I have requested to be granted a sabbatical and the elders have approved.

That means that during this time many volunteers who already serve the church beautifully will be asked to do just a little more. Worship planners, elders, accompanists, worship leaders. And Sara and Joel. For all of this and for the work I will pick up again when I return, I am extremely grateful.

I have a few small worship related projects and readings I hope to do while I am away. I’ll keep you updated. Thank you for this gift.

-Rebecca DeVries

Covenant's first crowdsourced poem.

If you were at the WE service on the faith practice of Wonder, you were asked to share moments when you “glimpsed with surprise just how creative, faithful, good, big, and present God is.” You answered and Dave Schelhaas turned all your moments of wonder into a poem. Thank you, Dave, and thanks to all the poets who didn't know it.

Wonder

Just a glimpse, a surprise
A bright red cardinal and a goldfinch, side by side,
On the bird feeder, right before our eyes.

Just a glimpse, a surprise for you--
In the middle of the ocean,
Mushrooms, red and blue.

This week there they were again,
at the top of those old, old bushes,
Lilacs!
purple with white in the middle.

All those perennials, how quickly they pop up
After a couple of warm days.
How do they know?

“I once saw a Bird of Paradise.”
“I spotted an owl in Zonnefeld's tree.”
“I saw Old Faithful and it really is. . . faithful, I mean.”
“Once, on a hike, we saw a huge rhinoceros beetle.”
“Once at a zoo, I saw a rhinoceros.”

I was filled with wonder when . . .
“I took my first airplane ride.”
“I read the book of Job.”
“I saw a blood moon.”
“As a child I thought about infinity.”
“I saw the Northern Lights.”
“I learned about the solar system.”
“I learned about the newly discovered black hole.”
“I saw our Prairie Aster filled with Monarch butterflies.”

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Wonders

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What variety in Creation:

the myriad varieties of plants,
bird and fish unimaginably different,
all the different high school kids,
the different races and cultures.
How different each human face is!

I was surprised by how big God is

When we went on a midnight hike at church camp,
looked up at the starry night and sang “How Great Thou Art.”
When we drove our car through a Redwood Tree.
When I took an airplane ride.
When I heard scientists talking about how big space is.
When I saw the huge pile of grain behind the elevator.
When I had my heart attack because I had to learn to let go of control and trust God.
When I had the privilege of getting to know Christians from other cultures.
When I saw my newborn daughter, lying on her mother’s chest,
looking directly into her mother’s eyes.

I am/was surprised by God’s faithfulness

When I saw an eclipse.
When I experience fellowship.
When I was cured of cancer.
When my fourteenth grandchild was baptized.

I am surprised by God’s creativity. He must have a sense of humor:

Bats, Platypuses, Birds of Paradise
Alaska, Hawaii, Doon, Iowa

And there are miracles all around us:

Transistors
DNA replication
The very spark of life in plants that seems gone: And then spring comes—Shazam!

People wanting to help people they don’t know on the other side of the world:

We set out to help Afghanis and it looks like God is sending us Ukrainians.

-Dave Schelhaas