

Selection of Elders & Deacons at Covenant

It is time to start thinking about council nominations again as we approach the end of the term for some of our current elders and deacons. The council has made the following adjustments to the selection process for elder and deacon starting this year.

- Many congregation members have gifts that would serve our church well as either elder or deacon. When a congregation member is nominated for both offices, we are asking that member to consider letting their name be affirmed for both offices.
- Members within the same immediate family (parent, spouse, sibling) often share gifts for serving as elder and/or deacon. If immediate family members are nominated, we invite all nominees from a family to consider serving. All family members may accept the nomination, but only one of them will serve on council, as determined by the final draw-by-lot process.
- Once nominations are accepted by individuals and affirmed by the congregation, we will trust the Spirit to guide the draw-by-lot process to select office bearers. For instance...
 - ◇ ...if two family members are nominated and affirmed for the office of elder, both of their names will be included in the draw-by-lot process. If one family member is drawn for office, the other family member's name will be set aside if drawn for a second vacant office and another name will be drawn instead.
 - ◇ ...if a member accepts their nomination for both elder and deacon and is affirmed by the congregation for both offices, their name will be included in both the draw-by-lot bags for elder and deacon. If their name is drawn for elder, their name will be set aside if drawn later for deacon and another name will be drawn instead.

The goal of the revised process is to affirm a broader group of members each year with office bearing gifts, and to then let the Spirit guide the draw-by-lot process to call members into specific offices. Let a council member know if you have questions regarding the adjusted process. Please keep our congregation in your prayers as we seek new council members.

On behalf of the Council,

-Ethan Brue

Greetings from Colorado!



Hi, Covenant family! I am spending the semester in Denver with a program called Denver Urban Semester. I love it here! My internship is with an organization called CrossPurpose which helps

our participants, which we call leaders, find sustainable employment. The staff here are so caring, and I have had many opportunities to get to know my co-workers and engage with differences (which is also a theme in the class I'm taking, but more on that later). Specifically, the ladies in my office have been incredible in helping me process my experiences with racism, classism, and privilege. It has been very valuable to have so many powerful women of color on my team whom I get to listen to and learn from. I intern with the recruitment team, so I get to do a lot of marketing work like making social media content and attending events to represent CrossPurpose. (PS: you can follow us on Instagram and Facebook @crosspurpose if you're interested!) I also make calls to potential leaders and help them through the admissions process. Recently I signed up to be a discipleship mentor, so I partner with two leaders in a six-week crash course in the Christian faith. We are reading the book of Matthew and, at the end, our leaders will have the opportunity to be baptized if they are interested.



Outside of CrossPurpose, I am taking one class called Cross-Cultural Urban Integration Seminar, which also explores



engaging differences. We have gotten the opportunity to talk to various religious leaders in the community including a Jewish Rabbi, a Buddhist monk, and a Muslim priest. My biggest takeaways from the semester have been the beauty and diversity of God's creation, as well as the ways he is faithfully working in the lives of our leaders (even if they don't always see it!). A lot of our participants come from traumatized backgrounds, so walking alongside them as they learn about their identity as valued children of Christ is very rewarding.

I miss my Covenant family and can't wait to tell you more about my adventures in Denver when I come home in May.

Joya Breems

Bottom left: Joya and her coworker, Antoinette, at a graduation ceremony celebrating the leaders who landed employment.

Top right: Joya and friends, Alex and Kristen, at the Denver MLK day march. It was powerful!

Unity in Service

This is reprinted from a newsletter we received to notify us of changes happening with ATLAS and CFE, local ministries that Covenant supports through our Spring and Thanksgiving offerings.

ATLAS of Sioux Center and Center for Financial Education (CFE) are excited to announce that they will be joining together and operating under a single umbrella.

"It's such a natural fit," says Andrew Roelfs,

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Unity in Service

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president of the CFE Board of Directors. “Both organizations are Christ-centered ministries that seek to provide help and hope to those that are hurting.” Both ATLAS and CFE were founded in 2000—ATLAS by Jerry Kieft and CFE by Jan Henryson. ATLAS was mentoring and helping with spiritual growth, while CFE was helping people with financial struggles. In 2002, CFE was invited to join ATLAS in ministry by utilizing a couple of their offices. This continued for 8 years until CFE outgrew the space and moved to their own building. ATLAS and CFE continued to partner over the years by often referring clients to each other for the services in which they each specialized. In 2022, however, CFE found themselves searching for a new director, but the board felt led to keep waiting for the Lord’s plan. In the meantime, the ATLAS staff and board began to meet and pray for the board of CFE. In that process, God began to reveal a plan for ATLAS and CFE to join together!

While the details of what this will look like are still being worked out, the future is exciting and full of promise. Amy Keahi, current director of ATLAS, will serve as Director for both ATLAS and CFE. The CFE office in Sioux Center will move into the ATLAS building so that the ministries of each can more easily work together. In addition, some board members from CFE will join the ATLAS Board of Directors to continue providing guidance and vision for these two groups.

“We’re very excited for the future,” says Kelly Hulstein, president of the ATLAS Board of Directors. “There are still details to work out, but we know this is the right course for both groups. Helping the hurting while serving as the hands and feet of Christ and bringing glory to God—that’s the ultimate goal.”

The staff and board members of ATLAS and CFE are appreciative of the support that we have received from the communities we serve. Your support is why we have been able to help so many people for so many years. We ask that you continue to financially support us as we join together to continue bringing hope to those who need it most. Just as importantly, we ask for prayers during this time of transition and transformation.

ATLAS and CFE will continue to maintain separate 501©(3) nonprofit status for operational purposes.



Grandma Alert! Grandpa Alert!



Doug and Marge De Boer welcome the birth of great-grandson Beckett Galen Kroese, son of Marcus and Megan Kroese, on

March 9. He weighed 7 lbs., 4 oz. and was 20 inches long.

-Doug & Marge DeBoer



This precious baby boy, Ezra Timothy Van Soelen, is the tenth great-grandchild for Len and Lee Rhoda. He was born Friday, March 17, in Redlands, CA, to Matt and Sarah. Grateful grandparents are Tim and Jill Van Soelen and Jim and Chris

Nydham. Despite arriving early, Ezra weighed in at 9 lbs. 1 oz.

-Len & Lee Rhoda

April Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Auden Mellema Marty Vander Plaats	11	Sara Eppinga	26	Alejandro Castelan
2	Brian & Barb Mellema	15	Justin Bailey	29	Sarah Stiemsma
3	Rebecca DeVries	17	April Crull Eli Horstman Dylan Kramer Rose Postma	30	Jacob Van Tol
6	John Visser				
7	Megan Haan	20	Jackson Visscher		
8	Sam Eppinga Isla Jewett	21	Ruben Crull Nathan Maletoungou		
9	Sharon Dykhuizen Benjamin Westfall	22	Stella Ribbens		
		25	Eden Hawley		



HOLY WEEK WORSHIP SCHEDULE

April 2 | Palm/Passion Sunday
10:00 AM Worship & 6:00 PM Vespers

April 6 | Maundy Thursday
7:00 PM Worship with communion

April 7 | Good Friday
12:00 PM Worship

April 9 | Easter Sunday
10:00 AM Worship & 6:00 PM Prayer Gathering

Pastoral Group Dinner Schedule



April 2—Schelhaas/Feikema
April 16—DeWit/DeJong
April 23—Stiemsma/Clark
April 30—Rhoda/Sybesma

Wondering which Pastoral Group you're in?

The Pastoral Group lists
can be found on our website:

[https://covenantcrc.net/directory-
committees/](https://covenantcrc.net/directory-committees/)

April Scheduling



Greeters

Pam DJ, Joan MC, Lee R



Ushers

Jan B, Mark T, Stan VB



Coffee Servers

Rob H, Shirley M, Dave S,
Kris VP, Kurt V

Substitutes

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

Donna B, Lisa C, Rin G,
Sarah H, Kristi H, Joni V



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, April 24 for the May issue.



Nursery

Nursery Monitor: Rose P

April 2

AM Nick & Jenni B, Lee R

April 6—Maundy Thursday

PM Dave & Emily K, Duane & Jan B

April 9

AM Jeremy & Kristi H, Doug & Marge DB

April 16

AM Andy & Rachel L, Tricia K

April 23

AM James & Courtney R, Daryl & Deb H

April 30

AM Alejandro & Isabel C,
Laremy & Rebecca DV

May 7

AM John & Linda V, Ethan & Donna B

Formation Sunday Evenings

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

April 2: Vespers

April 9: Prayer Gathering

April 16: Vespers

April 23: Vespers

April 30: Vespers with Communion

Notes from the Deacons

In late January, the Iowa legislature passed a bill, subsequently signed into law by Gov. Reynolds, establishing educational savings accounts (ESAs), which will enable certain families whose students attend non-public schools to have access to state dollars to pay for tuition and other expenses. For the 2023-2024 school year, any student whose family's 2022 gross income is below 300% of the federal poverty line will qualify, as well as any students entering kindergarten or who are transferring from public schools. In 2024-2025, the family income cap rises to 400% of the federal poverty line. ESAs will be available to all students in the 2025-2026 school year.

Covenant has a long history of supporting Christian education. The deacons are taking care to think about how the ESA law will affect our families, and how our congregational support should adapt to the new reality. At this point, I can share that we expect no change in our support of students who do not receive ESAs. We also want to be good stewards of the financial gifts to which we have been entrusted. To help us in this task, we would like to extend two invitations to the congregation.

First, we invite you to reach out to your pas-

toral group deacon with any questions or concerns you might have.

Second, we invite you to an edifying engagement on April 16. We'll begin ten minutes after the morning worship service ends, and expect a time of fruitful discussion about these changes and their impact on school-aged children at Covenant.

On behalf of the deacons,

-Mike Janssen

(Ruth Clark, Pam De Jong,

Ross Feikema, Dane Hilma, Mike Janssen,

Les Sylesma, Dwight Van Tol, John Visser)

Serving at Covenant

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

In early March, Dwight and I were able to spend two weeks in Nicaragua. It was such a delight to be back in this country and reconnect with our partners here. I was able to conduct a number of workshops in coordination with the Ministry of Education in various locations around the country. For the most

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Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/23-3/19/23) \$74,186	\$90,377	+\$16,191
Christian Education	(8/1/22-3/19/23) \$120,770	\$122,335	+\$1,565

Serving at Covenant

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part, these were local workshops with teachers joining from 3 or 4 different schools. However, I also had the opportunity to do a national workshop for teachers all over the country. For this workshop, there were 60 teachers present in person at the conference in Managua as well as teachers connected via livestream in over 1,000 locations throughout the country. It was a wonderful opportunity to have a larger impact and help make education more inclusive for all students.

In addition to undertaking various maintenance and repair projects around the campus of Tesoros de Dios, Dwight was also able to do a two-day workshop at the Music School in Managua on instrument repair. There is no one in country who has training in musical instrument repair, so instruments in need of repair must be sent to Costa Rica, a costly and time-consuming endeavor. Dwight provided a hands-on workshop for a group of interested students and instructors on a variety of basic repair topics. He was also able to bring several tools of the trade to the school that they will be able to continue to use in the future. They are hoping that he will be able to return and teach them additional repair skills soon as musical instrument repair is much in demand here.

We traveled to a couple different places in Nicaragua during this trip to visit schools, provide consultation, and offer workshops. One of our stops was in Puerto Cabezas. This is a part of Nicaragua that we haven't visited before. This area was hit hard by two hurricanes that occurred within two weeks of each other in November of 2020. At that time, Tesoros de Dios was contacted by the organization Nidia White to step in and help with the resulting impact on those with disabili-



ties. Nidia White is an organization committed to helping women and children affected by violence and exploitation, many of whom have disabilities. That trip showed the huge need in this area for support of persons with disabilities and Tesoros has continued their outreach work in this area in coordination with the staff of Nidia White. Our trip there really opened our eyes to the magnitude of the need in this area. In some ways, it was rather overwhelming, but we are committed to helping support Tesoros de Dios' work in this location as well.

-Kathleen Van Tol





One of Covenant's small groups gathered to decorate Valentine's Day cookies at the Hibma's house in February! The Vos and Clark kids appear hard at work!

