



# *Congratulations, Covenant Graduates!*



*Congratulations, Covenant graduates! May God be with each of you as you begin the next phase of life!*

## *Orange City Christian School*

David Taylor

## *Sioux Center Christian School*

Benjamin Bailey  
Sean Hannigan  
Eden Hawley  
Dylan Kramer  
Sevriena Postma

## *Sioux Center High School*

Cambri Zonnefeld

I plan to go to the University of Northern Iowa and am planning on studying Social Work.

## *Unity Christian High School*

Jonathan Breems

I will be going to Dordt and will be majoring in engineering and engineering education.

Emily Eppinga

I plan on going to Dordt to study Environmental Science, biology, and I plan to sing in the choir. I'm also managing the Dordt prairie this summer.

Clark Stiemsma

I'm planning to attend Dordt University.

Meghan Vos

Next year I plan on attending Dordt University. I plan on majoring in Education and being involved in cheer.

## *Western Christian High School*

Lauren Vander Plaats

I am planning to get my Associates of Arts degree at NCC for two years and then transfer to a four-year school after that.

## *Dordt University*

Chris Dyk

I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering with an emphasis in mechatronics. I am going to work at an engineering firm in Denver called Ironstrides as a traffic engineer. I'm excited to move back near my parents and the mountains!

Jemmie Dyk

I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Studies with an emphasis in natural resource management. I will be working at The Table Urban Farm as a garden apprentice. I'm excited to explore in the mountains!

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*Courier*

*June 2023*

**COVENANT**  
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

# The Swap Meet in Review

About 15 years ago, prompted by Pastor Herm Van Niejenhuis, a group of Covenant members formed a group called Creation Tenders. Our goals were to increase awareness of our place in taking care of God's creation and to encourage practices for the church and in the congregation that were kind to the environment. There were about a dozen of us who met regularly. We wrote some materials and carried out various projects. We put on a week-long summer Creation Care Camp for 4th-6th graders. Among other things, we helped start the Community Gardens, the city-wide recycling of electronics, increased recycling pick-up, and the Farmers Market. We even got the first denominational grant to support activities that encourage creation care. A small part of what we did was the Swap Meet. From a creation care point of view, we reasoned that we all have far more stuff than we need, and there are, most likely, others who can use those things. So—bring all that “extra” to the church parking lot and take away anything you need. Reduce, reuse, recycle.

We filled a third of the parking lot with stuff

in those early years. Many Covenant folks were retiring and in the mood to clean out. There were appliances, furniture, bikes, lawn tools, toys, household items, baby supplies, garden produce and books galore. We said “no” to clothes and once “no thanks” to the BB gun Howie Hall wanted to pass on. Covenant members got the first hour and then it was open to all. No money was exchanged, but once a local gentleman from another church, well off and a real garage sale enthusiast, picked up what he knew to be worth quite a bit and gave Ron Oostra a sizable check for Christian Ed. People who missed the event often found left-over goods stuffed into their church mail boxes the next Sunday.

One year Christian Ed/Fair Share Committee sold coffee and treats. One year we broadened the event into a harvest festival where members acquainted each other with such things as food dehydration, food fermentation, perennial propagation, a good recipe for everything-that's-left-in-the-garden soup. We sold produce baskets put together by the Christian Education Committee.

Creation Tenders eventually was encouraged to slow down because of the partisan political baggage that environmentalism can carry.

Creation Tenders is no longer. The Swap Meet rested a few years until Service and Missions (SAM) Committee saw it as an opportunity for outreach to the recent immigrants in our church neighborhood and took it up.

As we wanted, this Spring's Swap Meet was largely attended by

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# Covenant Turns 50!

Plans are being made to celebrate Covenant's 50th Anniversary! The Council put together a 50th Anniversary Planning Team, which includes Lee & Jenni Mellema, Chris & Rin Goedhart, Steve & Pat Crull, along with Rebecca DeVries and Pastor Joel.

The Team was given a mandate from the Council and had its first meeting on February

8. Plans are being made for a "celebratory event/activity" each month, beginning in August 2023, through February 2024. Former pastors have been invited to a culminating event in April, 2024, with the hope that they will all be able to attend and participate in some way. Our hope is to finalize all the dates for the monthly events soon. So stay tuned!

*-The 50th Anniversary Planning Team*

## *The Swap Meet in Review*

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church neighbors. There were fewer donations than usual, but almost everything was taken away. About all that was left to be loaded into the 2nd Chance Depot truck or the back of the Wielard vehicle headed to Melissa's Hope Chest were two sets of golf clubs, a weight-lifting bench, a couple of suitcases, women's purses and jewelry, and some books on theology and Reformed thought. We communicated mostly with smiles and gestures, but we hope these folks were shown a welcoming place and were supplied with goods needed to help make a better life. Within the first fifteen minutes a neighborhood boy rode away on a really good bike the Breems had brought. His mother applauded and so did we. And at the end a young man gave Verlyn De Wit a pat on the back as he snapped up the bat and balls and snow shovel Ver had just unloaded.

We'll probably do it again and encourage Covenant members to both contribute and to take anything they need.

*Jeri Schelhaas*



As we prepare to celebrate our 50th anniversary, let's see what you know about Covenant's history!

1. What church was Covenant's "Mother Church" and where did this church meet?
2. Where did Covenant first hold Sunday services and for how long did the church meet at this site?
3. How many CRC churches were there in Sioux Center at that time?
4. How many of the 55 "Charter Members" are still attending Covenant?
5. Why did the list of "Charter Members" name only 2 women?

Answers will be in next month's Courier. Want answers before then? Talk to the Charter Members who are still at Covenant!

\*Hint: They are all over 50 years old!

# June Birthdays & Anniversaries

- |    |  |    |  |    |   |
|----|--|----|--|----|---|
| 2  | Daryl & Deb Hibma<br>Mark & Cheri Horstman                             | 12 | Sage Jewett<br>Lee & Jenni Mellema<br>Les & Lila Sybesma | 24 | Alexa Mercado<br>Tom & Ruth Clark<br>Vaughn & Becky Donahue<br>Verne & Gidge Meyer          |
| 4  | Sherri Ten Napel<br>Dallas & Carol Apol                                | 13 | Joya Breems<br>Terry & Jill Friend                       | 25 | Logan Hannigan<br>Barb Tazelaar<br>Bob & Rebecca DeSmith                                    |
| 5  | Jo Faber<br>Joe & Erin Eggebeen  | 14 | Cal Jongsma  | 26 | Rachel Landman<br>Nick & Jenni Breems<br>Laremy & Rebecca DeVries<br>Rockne & Joan McCarthy |
| 6  | Corrie DeVries<br>Naomi Ploegstra<br>Jake Van Wyk                      | 15 | Faby Addink<br>Kurt & Sharon Vos                         | 27 | Steve Holtrop & Sharon<br>Bouma<br>Jim & Barb Schaap  |
| 7  | June Brands  | 16 | Jeremy Hummel<br>Marv & Mary Wielard                     | 28 | Gaby Castelan<br>Sally Jongsma<br>Alyda Mellema   |
| 8  | David & Anna Westfall  | 18 | Dale & June Brands                                       | 29 | Ryan Hannigan   |
| 9  | Jeri Schelhaas<br>Don & Sherri Ten Napel<br>Marty & Kris Vander Plaats | 19 | Daryl Hibma  | 30 | Andy Landman<br>Mary Wielard  |
| 10 | William Clark<br>Sarah Hawley<br>Mike & Megan Ribbens                  | 20 | Ryan & Laura DeKruyf                                     |    |   |
| 11 | Amira Ribbens<br>Ross & Lisa Feikema                                   | 21 | Duane Bajema   |    |   |
|    |  | 22 | Donna Brue   |    |   |
|    |  | 23 | Isabella Hannigan<br>Stan & Beth Vanden Berg             |    |   |

## *Congratulations, Covenant Graduates!*

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## *San Francisco Conservatory of Music*

**Caleb Smit**

Caleb graduated from San Francisco Conservatory of Music with a professional certificate in Technology and Composition, following up a BA in percussion performance last year. He is currently working as an audio/video technician at the SF Museum of Modern Art.

## *Kansas State University*

**Amie Smit**

Amie will graduate with a Master's degree in Music Education in August.

# June Scheduling



## Greeters

Jenni B, Pat C, Jeff T



## Nursery

Nursery Monitor: Courtney R



## Ushers

Andy L, Ron O, John Z



## Coffee Servers

Ruth Clo, Rebecca DV, Luke H,  
Linda V, Dani W

### June 4

AM Luke & Sarah H, Barb T

### June 11

AM Marty & Kris VP, Ryan & Val Z

### June 18

AM Dennis & Pam DJ, Jason & Dani W

### June 25

AM Ron & Carol O, James & Courtney R

### July 2

AM Jeff & Sara P, Tom & Ruth C

## Substitutes

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

Doug DB, Megan H, Cheri H,  
Don TN, Lois VZ, Channon 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, June 19 for the July issue.

## Formation Sunday Evenings

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

June 4: Joint CRC service at Faith CRC\*, Pastor Joel preaching

June 11: TBA

June 18: Vespers

June 25: Vespers with Communion

*\*The Sioux Center CRC churches will be gathering for a joint evening service once a month this summer. This is the first!*

# Serving at Covenant

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

## A Trip to Ethiopia with My Son, Mike

We, Mike, Tad, Sammy (two men that work with Mike) and I, took off for Ethiopia on Friday, February 24. I spoke with Mike about how he got so involved in Ethiopia. Mike remembered with pain the famine in Ethiopia from his younger years and when he sought to adopt, he thought of Ethiopia. Mike and Kim adopted through Children's Home Society which was taken over by Lutheran Social Services. However, Children's Home asked Mike to take over in 2012 and the schools came under his care too. Adoption was shut down by the government of Ethiopia and that is why Mike and Kim adopted three children from Ethiopia and last one from Uganda.

MKA ministries focuses on training people to be ministers to the country. The training might be shorter than in the U.S., but it fills the need for Ethiopia. The most dramatic part of my trip was seeing the minister preach on Sunday and 8 homeless young men and two young women were baptized. The young men go through 10 months of Bible lessons before they are allowed to be baptized.

We served a meal to 95 young people who wanted to be part of the program. The women prepared the meal on a fire made on the ground in the back of the church. We had plenty of food which was bread with a tomato and meat sauce and a white and meat sauce. Afterwards we went to several young men's rooms that the ministry has given them. In one room the two men were trained as wood workers. One of these two was baptized that morning. I can honestly say that Jesus was in his heart.

The children at the two schools did not go to school before because of the government costs of fees and the need for clothing appropriate for schools. These schools that Mike took over don't charge anything. The children are given a uniform and meals. Mothers have been taught to make uniforms and are paid for their work.

There are also accelerated schools that teach three years in one year. The programs are called ALFA and are used in various countries. They use many methods that I would advocate to use in the United States. They use group work, charts, and various jobs for each person in the class. We saw two of these classes and they worked very well with students who need to catch up for a few years they were not able to go to school.

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## Giving Graph

| Fund                | Budgeted                      | Received  | Difference |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| General             | (1/1/23-5/21/23)<br>\$129,825 | \$147,685 | +\$17,860  |
| Christian Education | (8/1/22-5/21/23)<br>\$153,708 | \$151,280 | -\$2,428   |

## *Serving at Covenant*

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From Addis Ababa we went to the two villages where hunger was very apparent. We visited Hosanna and Ottoro. We were very warmly greeted with embraces and such warmth. They often very gently touched my hair. I am not sure if it was the grey or the straightness that was unique for them. We saw a bit of what they are doing and had a grand meal with the teachers from both schools. The teachers gave me two dresses and they put them on me over my clothes and took me out to greet the teachers. The spirit of the group

was amazing. They are being blessed and are not ashamed of that fact.

One evening I went to the home of my sponsored child, Aberash. She lives with her aunt and her three cousins. They very much appreciated me for being Mike's Mom. It was both pleasing to see their happiness and sad when I think of my own selfishness. The visit has made me think differently about needs and wants and I want to be part of saving, feeding, and educating these children of God.

*-Pam Adams*

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## *Celebrating the Life of Thuong Lo*

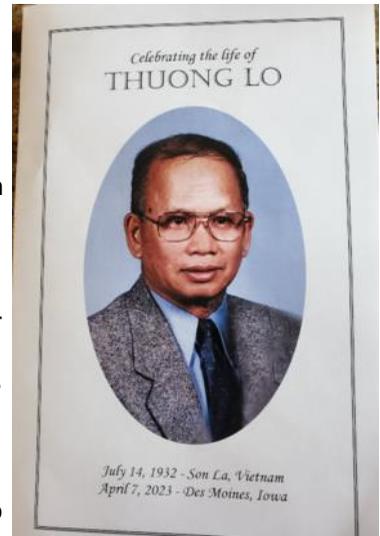
On April 12, Paul and I went to Des Moines to celebrate the life of Thuong Lo at the First Church of the Open Bible. Thuong was 90 years old.

Thoung Lo and his wife, Hien, (she passed in January, 2017) from Vientiane, Vietnam, along with their 4 youngest children Dara, Kingsada, Saybansa, and Toun were sponsored by Covenant Church in 1980, and were baptized at Covenant in 1982. Attending the funeral was different in many ways as they ALL wore ALL black and were very reverent and somber. The men and women sat on different sides, and the sons Bounlai, Saybansa, and Toun, each sat in a different section of the front row. The message by Mike Rasavanh (daughter Dara's husband) and the singing in both languages was wonderful.

Back in 1980, Covenant Church moved the Lo family into a New Homestead home and helped them resettle to northwest Iowa. It was a wonderful church effort that brought so much faith, learning, joy, and lasting love to

all of us! Many, many families helped so much with their physical needs of housing and a car to spiritual needs such as Bible studies and acts of kindness that each helped bring them into the family of God! While here in Sioux Center, Thuong dealt with a lot of shrapnel injury pain from his service in the war, so his life wasn't always easy.

Later, Covenant also helped them find and relocate their son, Bounlai, to Northwest Iowa. They shared with us that getting Bounlai here and Covenant praying and helping showed them that all the faithful prayers of



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## *Celebrating the Life of Thuong Lo*

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God's people worked, and this really helped lead them to becoming Christians! All 8 (one child had passed away in Vietnam) of their children, grandchildren, and many friends were at the funeral even though they live in Canada, Thailand, the east coast and Des Moines. It was so wonderful to see all of them, and they asked us to really thank and "tell Covenant how much we truly appreciate them bringing our family to America and giving us a good start at Sioux Center where they came to know God and believe in Christ." They commented what a different man Thuong was after becoming a Christian.

In 1989, the family relocated to Des Moines to worship and live near their family who lived there. They became faithful followers at the Asian Open Bible Church with their son-in-law, Mike Rasavanh, as pastor. The 5 children we know best are doing well! They are all responsible, loving, and successful families!

- Bounlai Lo has recently retired from his job in Des Moines and he and his wife Vivanh will move to Florida soon to be near their daughter. He also has a son in Des Moines.
- Dara and her husband Mike Rasavanh used to live in De Moines. They have gone back to Thailand to be missionaries and are

always wonderful Christian leaders of the whole family. They have 2 children in the Des Moines area.

- Kingsada and her husband Ting Leuang used to live in Des Moines, but now live in North Carolina and have 2 boys (and they have 1 grandchild) who spoke at the funeral, and they sure are going to be Christian leaders for many!
- Saybansa Lo and his wife Nina live in Des Moines and have 2 children.
- Tounechay and his wife Phay also live in Des Moines, and Toun is still the cutest, sweetest guy!

After the service we were invited to the family home in Des Moines for a meal. It was great to fellowship with many people we knew from long ago and have their special foods that we learned to love! They even sent food home with us so we could experience it again.

Many of us feel like we are a part of each other's family. They are such dear people! We heard and reminisced about many loving stories of things the Covenant family did for them along the way, and how their lives being renewed by Jesus made them into completely different people. They are so very, very thankful for each Covenant member who touched their lives.

Dara shared that Thuong's funeral expenses have been covered. Mike and Dara are missionaries in Thailand and if you would like to donate to this cause in his memory please send the check to:

Global Missions  
202 Bell Ave. D  
Des Moines, IA 50320

Please designate the check for Rasavanh Thailand Missions.

*-Paul & Ruth Clousing*