

Guess Who's Coming to the Backyard???



It's time to reconnect and enjoy some backyard fellowship. So we are bringing back "Guess Who's Coming to the Backyard." Sign up at church or scan the QR code to host or attend a backyard food and fellowship gathering on Sunday evening, July 21 at 6 PM.

Here's how it works:

Groups will be assigned randomly and you won't know where you're going or who will be showing up until the day of! We'll share a true potluck meal—just bring some "Sunday night fare" that you would like to share with your group—crackers and cheese, popcorn, sandwiches, etc. You choose. Hosts will be asked to provide a beverage and all will be asked to bring chairs and tableware. We'll spend time catching up or getting to know each other and being reminded of the beauty of God's intergenerational church. This is a great way to welcome others into our community. If you have friends or neighbors you would like to invite, include them in your "family group" when you sign up.

Introducing New Council Members

We have new council members again and want to give you an opportunity to get to know them a bit better and to hear their reflections on the charges for elders and deacons read at their installation. (The charges can be found at www.crcna.org/resources/church-resources/liturgical-forms/ordination-installation/.)

Elder Bob De Smith

I am beginning my second year of retirement after teaching English at Dordt for 35 years. I still like to read (and attend) the occasional Shakespeare play. This is the fourth time I have served as an elder. I would say that, despite that line in the charge to the congregation about the "burden of the office," each

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Each year the 4th graders at Sioux Center Christian School are asked to compose their own psalm, so this month we're sharing a few of our Covenant kids' words of praise:

My Praise Psalm

Praise the Lord,
for he has created amazing things.
Our God is an amazing God,
unlike anybody else.
He created grass that tickles my ankles.
He created leaves skipping through the air
and trees dancing with joy.
It's like an ocean of green grass,
with trees as big as islands.
The wind wants to say hi while it's blowing
in my hair.

He even created birds to praise him
by singing joyful songs of hope.

He created many things for people to enjoy:
leaves bustling in the wind.
birds singing in harmony together,
wind dancing around people,
and flowers and bushes sitting there being
beautiful.

The sun makes the plants grow,
and animals prance around with joy and
laughter.

Praise him, you people, praise him!
For our mighty God is an amazing
and powerful God.

-Louisa DeVries

My Psalm of Praise

1. Praise the Lord through all times.
2. Praise him when you are sad.
3. Praise him when you are mad.
4. Praise him when you are joyful.
5. Praise him when you are anxious.
6. Praise him when you are fearful.
7. Praise him when you are rejoicing.
8. Praise the Lord for he had mercy
on you.
9. Praise the Lord for he
will never depart from us.
10. Praise the Lord through
all times.

PRAISE!

-Sage Jewett

My Praise Psalm

The whistling of the wind, the
singing of the birds, the rustling
of the grass, the orchestra echoing
your grace, seeking your light.

The smell of grass wafting
on the breeze whispers your
promise. Your love stays
as the seasons go. Praise
the Lord in winter, fall, summer,
and spring.

God loves us to the depths of
the ocean, the end of the earth,
and to the very end of time.

The creation sings praise to You and
You remind us that when we run
away You will wait as long as it
takes for us to return.

-Julia Kramer

The Ephesian Way

Pastor Joel's Study Leave Report

Listening to scholar NT (Tom) Wright regarding Ephesians went as well as I expected. Meeting some fellow disciples at the seminar went even better than I expected. Thank you, Covenant, for enabling me to take two weeks of study leave, which included listening to a series of lectures by NT Wright in Houston, Texas. Those lectures and various conversations have led me to explore what I'm calling "The Ephesian Way."

As you may know, the phrase "The Colossian Way" flows from a ministry called "The Colossian Forum," which we have practiced five times here at Covenant. When we follow "The Colossian Way," we seek to live out the biblical teaching that "in him [Christ] all things hold together." (Col. 1:17) Seeking to stay together and hold all things together in Christ does not mean we deny disagreements or the need for decisions. It does mean we see differences as a means to deepen our discipleship. When we listen to each other's stories and exchange thoughts with respect, we can

grow closer to one another by growing closer to Christ.

My new phrase, "The Ephesian Way" seeks simply to build on that biblical truth. Paul's epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians have much in common, and NT Wright emphasizes that Ephesians gives even more emphasis to our Lord's vision of a new creation in which God is all in all. (Eph. 1:22-23) In his lectures regarding Ephesians, Wright emphasized that the Apostle seeks both unity and holiness because when followers of Jesus come and stay together with both those qualities, we help people and even spiritual powers receive a vision of God's new creation. In light of that biblical truth, Wright emphasized the church's vocation to reflect true humanity in Christ.

Now, as to what that vocation means specifically for our congregational life at Covenant, I look forward to exploring this Ephesian Way with you and all members. We can all seek to practice the biblical teaching that it takes all the Lord's people "to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ." (Eph. 3:18)

-Pastor Joel

Introducing New Council Members

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time it has been a bit easier and, I hope, more grace filled. My spouse (of nearly 41 years) Rebecca and I have just finished writing through the last 25 years of Covenant's history, which was a good refresher for us on why Covenant is so special. As an elder, I hope to promote unity, grace, and active service in our fellowship, while caring for the spiritual welfare of our leadership and the body.

Elder Brad Hickey

I lived in northern California for my entire life until three years ago when I accepted a position at Dordt. I serve at Dordt as the Director of Gaming and as an adjunct theology professor. I am an enthusiastic fan of California Bay Area sports teams like the 49ers, the cold northern California coast, and I enjoy attending theatre and symphony productions with my family. I have been married to Kendra for 25 years this December and have two wonder-

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July Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Louis Postma Linda Visser	11	Deb DeJong	24	Mark & Merrill McCarthy
2	Stuart Buckingham Stan Vanden Berg Luke & Sarah Hawley Phil & Rose Postma	12	Jill Friend Dane Hibma	25	Dane & Rachel Hibma
4	Merrill McCarthy James & Courtney Rylaarsdam	13	Micah & Sarah Moss	26	Pastor Gianni Gracia Samantha Hummel
5	Mary Dengler	14	Willem Moss Barb Schaap	28	Eldon Westra
6	Gidge Meyer	15	Isaac Hibma	29	Dennis & Pam DeJong Cal & Sally Jongsma
8	Isabel Castelan Luke Hawley Sharon Vos	16	Jason & Dani Wyenberg	30	Jason Lief
9	Tom Clark Chris & Rin Goedhart	17	Dwight Van Tol Kris Vander Plaats	31	Jeremy & Kristi Hummel
10	Jones Mellema	18	John Van Schouwen		
		19	Emden Dieleman Justin & Melissa Bailey		
		21	Miriam Groenewold		



thank you

Dear Covenant church family,
We were deeply touched by the prayer support from Covenant Church after the loss of our house to fire. The beautiful quilt we received will always remind us of how God wrapped his loving arms around us through his people everywhere! Thank you so much!

-Cal & Jen DeJong

(aka Dave & Jeri Schelhaas' daughter/
Rebecca DeVries' sister)

Dear Congregation of Covenant CRC,
Thank you for your generous gifts to Resonate Global Mission! Your church's giving helps people all over the world—people who need discipleship and care as they discover their identity in Christ. Thank you for using your gifts to join with your missionaries as they walk alongside others and share about a Savior who loves them. Your partnership is a vital way that you help others experience God's restorative love. Together, we are responding to our call to bring others to Christ.

In Christ,

-Kevin DeRaaf

July Scheduling



Greeters

Jan B, Ruth C, Barb T



Nursery

Nursery Monitor: Linda V



Ushers

Verlyn DW, Andy L, Ron O



Coffee Servers

Jo A, Lisa C, Cheri H,
Lee R, Beth VB

Substitutes

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

Rebecca DS, Rin G, Jason H,
Kristi H, Jeri S, Kurt 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, July 22 for the August issue.

July 7

AM Bob & Rebecca DS, Lee & Jenni M

July 14

AM Jeremy & Kristi H, Jake & Trena VW

July 21

AM Tom & Ruth C, Duane & Jan B

July 28

AM Ryan & Angela H, Rob & Megan H

August 4

AM Dave & Emily K, John & Linda V

Formation Sunday Evenings

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

July 7: Vespers

July 14: Joint CRC Worship Service
(at First CRC)

July 21: Guess Who's Coming to the
Backyard

July 28: Vespers with Communion

Note from the Deacons

We're in the second phase of a three-year rollout for the ESAs, which means we have a better understanding and know everything we need to know, right? Well, not exactly... Yes, we have a year of experience and a better grasp of how the support process works and the various ways families receive support. However, we still don't know the percentage of families that qualify, which prevents us from understanding the full impact. This uncertainty raises questions about our Christian education support and Covenant's long-term plan.

For the 2024-2025 school year at SCCS and Unity, Covenant has decided to maintain the same approach as last year. Covenant will not provide funds to families that qualify for ESAs (\$7,826 per student) and will give \$3,627 per student to those who don't qualify. Similarly, Unity will continue with last year's decision: \$1,000 for ESA students and \$2,800 for non-ESA students.

We successfully paid our church contribution to both SCCS and Unity for the 2023-2024 year by the end of June, totaling \$95,880!

We are thankful for the support of ESA funds

for our Covenant members. We also appreciate the volunteers who are currently serving and those who have served on our Christian Education Committee in the past. The purpose of the Christian Education Committee is to help raise funds to support Christian education for Covenant members. If you feel you can contribute to our church in this way, we would love for you to be a part of the Christian Education Committee.

-Lee Mellema

On behalf of the Deacons:
 Pam DeJong, Rob Haan, Dave Kramer,
 Josh Van Schouwen, Dwight Van Tol,
 John Visser, Val Zonnefeld

Serving at Covenant

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

The second Wednesday in June marked the first of three summer commitments by Covenant, through the Justice and Mercy Committee, to staff the Hope Food Pantry. The summer can be a more difficult time for them to get volunteers and we're grateful for the Covenant members who were able to help.

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Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/24-6/23/24) \$163,784	\$185,908	+\$22,124
Christian Education	(8/1/23-6/23/24) \$86,661	\$104,193	+\$17,532
Refresh Building	(1/1/24-6/23/24) \$35,769	\$45,620	+\$9,851

Serving at Covenant

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Rin Goedhart describes the Food Pantry as a "well-oiled machine." "Food and paper goods are neatly arranged on shelves for easy pick up with a shopping cart. Several freezers were full of food and again neatly arranged. We were each given a job to do that meshed nicely with others. There are so many parts of the process that had been addressed before we got there. Which made me realize we were the final step in a long line of steps. It was a pleasant way to spend a few hours helping others."

Val Zonnefeld said "I really enjoyed my time serving last week and was struck that I only knew one of the individuals that came for assistance. It was good for me to see these members of our community."

Daryl and Deb Hibma found that they kept busy during their two-hour volunteer shift. "We were amazed at the amount of food donated and the number of people who stopped by to get their allotted groceries. We have so many organizations that help our community and this was one we knew of, but now we know so much more. A great opportunity to help a growing need in our area."

Hope Food Pantry is an inspiring ministry to our broader community, and we encourage you to sign up to participate on July 10 if you are able and so inclined. You will be blessed. We need five people to work from 1:30-3:30 and four people to work from 3:30 to 5:30. Email Sally Jongsma at jongsma@mtcnet.net or text 712.441.7020 to offer your services.

-Sally Jongsma

Introducing New Council Members

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ful daughters who inevitably keep me on my toes.

The charges mentioned during the installation service raised feelings of determination to take this calling very seriously and to execute it to the best of my abilities. I also feel gratitude for all the folk at Covenant and Dordt whose support and encouragement are a deep source of strength and wisdom which I will need and be able to draw from during the next three years as various challenges may arise.

Deacon Val Zonnefeld

My name is Valorie Zonnefeld. I'm married to Ryan and we have three children who all have

or will be married within this 18 month stretch. I am a math professor by day and it seems that my new hobby is wedding planner by night, although board games are a love. Covenant is where I was baptized, made profession of faith and married my love. I look forward to serving Covenant as a deacon and learning more about how deacons support the ministries of the church and "participate in the renewing of all things" as stated in our charge.

We'll hopefully hear from the other three new council members next month. May God bless and equip all of our council members as they serve our church. And may we "sustain them in prayer and encourage them with our support." (from the "Charge to the Congregation" in the installation service).

FYI

• FOR YOUR INFORMATION •

We would like to alert you to an important item in the Covenant church kitchen. It is hanging on the wall above the telephone. Know what it is?

A FIRST AID KIT!

Exciting, right? Exciting only when you need it!

The kit above the telephone should take care of most cuts and bruises. It includes:

- bandages
- gauze dressings and tape
- antiseptic cleansing solution and wipes
- antibiotic creams
- eye wash solution
- scissors and tweezers
- thermometer strips
- smelling salts
- plastic non-latex gloves

In addition to this little box we have added more! A second box of medical supplies is located in a labeled cabinet above the refrigerator in the church kitchen. This box includes:

- additional larger dressings
- instant ice pack
- ace bandages
- aspirin

- antacid (Gaviscon)
- blood pressure cuff and stethoscope
- CPR barrier mask
- extra supplies for the smaller kit

Unless you are a particularly tall Dutchman you will need a step stool to reach either of these kits. The step stool is located behind the kitchen door.

Take a few minutes to locate the kits so that in case of emergency you will be better able to be of help.

-Sue Brue



A few more pictures from our 50th Anniversary dinner... Tom, Vaughn, and Jeff (above) and Shirley and Pam (below) deep in conversation.

