

Covenant Ladies Out on the Town

On Wednesday July 17, 14 ladies gathered in the church parking lot, split up into 4 vehicles and headed North to Luverne, Minnesota.

Our first stop was the Hinkly House where we had a reservation for a tour. Mr. Hinkly was a forward thinker who, in 1892 had his house outfitted with electricity, in anticipation of electricity coming to Luverne. He was a lawyer from Iowa who set up a bank, started a quarry, produced wooden spindles and wainscoting in his basement. The house was complete with tunnels in the basement (to store dynamite for the quarry) and a trapeze in the attic for the kids to play on. An interesting place.

Lunch was at the Wildflower Coffee Boutique. Afterwards the ladies decided whether they wanted to see the Brandenburg Gallery, a military museum, history center, or wander Main Street.

It was a delightful day spent with a delightful group of ladies.

-Rin Goedhart



Courier

August 2024

COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Introducing New Council Members

Last month we were introduced to three of our new council members and this month, we'll meet the other three and 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 Nick Breems

I'm Nick Breems. I have been attending Covenant since 2005, and am just beginning my second term as elder, having previously served from 2012 to 2015. Jenni, my wife of 25 years, and I have three children, ranging from high school to recent college grad. I am a professor at Dordt, teaching in the computer science department. The words in the "charge to elders" that jumped out at me this time were the verbs: words like "bear up," "support," "encourage," and "celebrate." My prayer is that Covenant can become ever more Christlike in the way we do these things with and for each other.

Deacon Rob Haan

My second term as a deacon is already looking quite different from my first. During my first term, our church transitioned from having no pastor to having one, and my wife Meg and I went from having no kids to having two. Rowan is now 11 and Emma is now 9.

This time around, another major difference is the Christian Education Fund. It seems to me this was a much more frustrating challenge before transitioning from the "Fair Share" model to the "Legacy Fund" concept, not to mention the introduction of ESAs. I look forward to being able to consider new possibilities beyond Covenant's longstanding commit-

ments if the changes persist and there is less constant pressure with that fund!

When the Christian Education Fund was a persistent challenge, others at Covenant dreamed up a BBQ and live music fundraiser to chip away at the deficit. Pork 'n' Bands is now a highlight of the year for many college students, who speak of the event as if it's a hundred-year-old tradition. I love that this started with a budget need and led to a fundraiser that is truly unique to our church.

Despite all the work yet to be done, what gives me hope and excitement is the way this body of believers supports each other with prayer and encouragement. It's great to be part of a church family where we can lean into each other's strengths while shoring up each other's weaknesses.

Deacon Dave Kramer

I have been a member of Covenant for almost 18 years. I had the joy of being married to Emily at Covenant and seeing all of my children (Dylan, Adam, and Julia) baptized here as well. I was on the Building Committee for many years, several of those as its chair. In addition, I have been my wife's right hand man during countless Christian Education fundraisers. I look forward to serving as a deacon and ministering to the people in our church, as well as the larger world beyond our walls.

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).

Taming Gaming

Brad Hickey is currently planning on leading a 10-week adult education class in the Fall called "Taming Gaming: How to use Gaming to Strengthen Faith and Relationships in our Families."

This introductory class especially welcomes parents, grandparents, and other family members who are generally unfamiliar with video games. This class is meant to offer a stress-free and safe environment to develop a basic understanding of how to play video games and how video games might help us draw closer to

family members who love video games and to Jesus in the process. For this task, each class session will be held at Dordt's Gaming Bunker. Each roughly one hour and fifteen-minute class will include time discussing a chapter from Alan Robertson's *Taming Gaming*, as well as time for all group members to learn about and play a different genre of video game.

As this is the first time that Brad will be teaching this class, he is looking to keep this class on the smaller side so please let Brad know as soon as possible if interested.

-Brad Hickey



Grandma Alert! Grandpa Alert!

Bob and Rebecca De Smith are excited to welcome their first grandchild, Robert Cameron De Smith, to their family! Bobby was born on July 7 to Bob and Chara De Smith in Milwaukee, WI. They are elated and grateful!

-Bob & Rebecca DeSmith



Clara Bethany was born to Josh and Savannah Vanden Berg on June 30, weighing 5lbs 14oz. Stan and Beth Vanden Berg are thrilled to be great-grandparents for the first time.

-Stan & Beth Vanden Berg

August Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Marge DeBoer Daniel & Erika Ver Steeg	9	Ron & Carol Oostra	20	Barb Mellema Shaun Stiemsma
2	Ruth Clousing Pat Eggebeen Jason & Tammy Lief	11	Dani Wyenberg Robbin & Sara Eppinga Jason & Amanda Vande Brake	21	Daniel Ver Steeg John & Linda Visser
3	Rob Haan Sos Maletoungou Faith Van Schouwen Laurey Zwart	12	Benjamin & Tricia Groenewold-Van Dyk	23	Chris Goedhart John Zwart
4	Verlyn & June De Wit Ryan & Angela Hannigan	13	Kathleen Van Tol	26	Connor Visscher Len & Lee Rhoda
6	Ezra Landman Lee Mellema	15	Deb Hibma Ryan & Amie Smit	27	Molly Stiemsma
7	George Faber Juliet Jewett Jeff & Sara Ploegstra	16	Blake Stiemsma Kyle & Andrea Dieleman John & Laurey Zwart	28	Elise Stiemsma
8	Rin Goedhart Ron Oostra Carlene Van Schouwen	17	Jake & Trena Van Wyk	29	Dave Schelhaas
		18	Del & Lois Vander Zee	30	Melissa Bailey Jason Vande Brake
		19	Steve Crull Savannah Lief	31	Andrea Dieleman Joya Schreurs



Here is a ministry update from Pastor Gianni Gracia, pastor of Vida y Esperanza in Miami. We support this ministry with our missions fund.

Since the beginning of this year, we have embarked on a series of discipleship processes and leadership preparation across various areas of our ministry. Our theme for this year is: "Sharing the Gospel and Faith to Grow in All Areas." In alignment with this theme, we have conducted several activities to enhance our ministry's effectiveness and outreach.

- Organized two evangelism workshops to

equip members with the skills and confidence to share the gospel effectively.

- Held a workshop for music and worship directors to enhance our worship experience and ensure it aligns with our goals.
- Held monthly meetings with our team of servant-leaders for strategic planning and growth efforts
- Our annual picnic was a time of fellowship and community building. Because of our outreach program during the picnic and our church anniversary celebrations, we have welcomed three new families

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August Scheduling



Greeters

Faby A, Tom C, Lila S



Ushers

Duane B, Pat C, Laurey Z



Coffee Servers

Ruth Cla, Isabel C, Rachel L,
Dave S, Sharon V

Substitutes

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

Jenni B, Mark H, Deb H,
Rock MC, Len R, Marcia W

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, **August 19** for the September issue.



Nursery

Nursery Monitor: Rachel L

August 4

AM Dave & Emily K, John & Linda R

August 11

AM Dave & Jeri S, Kurt & Sharon V

August 18

AM Kyle & Andrea D, Steve & Pat C

August 25

AM Ethan & Donna B, James & Courtney R

September 1

AM Nick & Jenni B, Tricia K

Formation Sunday Evenings

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

August 4: No evening gathering

August 11: Vespers

August 18: Joint CRC Worship Service
(at Bethel CRC)

August 25: Vespers with Communion

Note from the Deacons

Ways to Give to Covenant: Online Bill Pay and Direct IRA Contributions

Supporting our church is now easier and more convenient than ever, thanks to modern technology and flexible financial options. Two effective methods for giving are online bill pay and direct IRA contributions. These methods offer secure, efficient, and tax-advantaged ways to contribute to our church.

What is Online Bill Pay?

Online bill pay is a service provided by most banks and credit unions that allows you to send money electronically to individuals, businesses, and organizations, including our church. It works similarly to writing a check, but it's all done online. You can schedule a one-time donation or set up recurring donations, making it easy to manage your giving.

How to Set Up Online Bill Pay

Setting up online bill pay is straightforward. Here's a step-by-step guide:

1. **Log In to Your Online Banking Account:** Access your bank's website or mobile app and log in with your credentials.
2. **Navigate to the Bill Pay Section:** Look for a section labeled "Bill Pay," "Pay Bills," or something similar.

3. **Add a New Payee:** To add Covenant as a new payee, you'll need the church's name, address, and phone number.
4. **Enter Payment Details:** Specify the amount you wish to donate and decide if this will be a one-time donation or recurring. For recurring donations, select the frequency (e.g., weekly, monthly).
5. **Confirm and Schedule:** Review the information you've entered to ensure it's correct. Then, confirm and schedule your payment. Your bank will handle the rest, sending the donation (paper check) to the church on the dates you've specified.

Benefits of Online Bill Pay

- **Consistency:** Setting up recurring donations helps ensure your giving is regular and consistent, supporting the church's ongoing ministries and operations.
- **Convenience:** You can manage your donations anytime, anywhere, without the need to write checks or handle cash.
- **Security:** Online bill pay is a secure method of giving, protected by your bank's security measures.

Direct IRA Contributions

Church members who are 73 or older with accumulated funds in a pension fund or traditional IRA (not Roth), are required to take

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Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/24-7/21/24) \$189,990	\$208,215	+\$18,225
Christian Education	(8/1/23-7/21/24) \$94,036	\$108,721	+\$14,685
Refresh Building	(1/1/24-7/21/24) \$41,492	\$50,638	+\$9,146

Note from the Deacons

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annual income withdrawals, known as Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs). The withdrawal, which is taxable, can potentially push them into a higher tax bracket.

Thankfully individuals 70½ and older with a traditional IRA have the option to reduce their taxable income by instructing their administrator to send donations directly to the church (or other charity) via “qualified charitable distributions” (QCDs). These donations can satisfy all or part of their annual RMD (if they have one), but since the money goes directly to the charity, the donor owes no taxes on the amount distributed/donated. This also lowers the taxable income reported to the IRS, which could lower the taxes owed on Social Security benefits. So, if you may be eligi-

ble but have not considered this, it would be wise to talk to your financial advisor.

By using online bill pay and direct IRA contributions, you make your giving easier and more efficient, helping to support our church’s mission with greater ease. If you have any questions or need assistance with setting up online bill pay, contact your bank, and contact your financial advisor with questions about IRA contributions. If you have additional questions, one of the Deacons can help. Thank you for your continued generosity and support!

-Josh Van Schouwen

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

Missionary News

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and made many new contacts.

- Youth and women’s discipleship meetings are held weekly, providing a space for spiritual growth, learning, and support.
- Monthly meetings for men and women in homes, fostering a sense of community and personal growth.
- Celebrated our church anniversary at the beginning of June.
- Forming a Steering Committee to guide our ministry’s direction.
- Planning a retreat with the leaders to finalize our strategic ministry plan.

As we continue to grow and serve, we face challenges and have specific prayer requests:

- New Permanent Location: We pray for a space with classrooms for children’s edu-

cation and the ability to develop various community programs.

- Health and Resources: Prayers for health and resources to expand our ministry.
- Support for the Villaroel Family: Please pray for a member of our church who has been in a coma for over two months following an accident. We are supporting his wife and daughter with resources and spiritual support, and we request prayers for his recovery and for his family during this challenging time.
- Economic Situation: Prayers for the economic situation in our city, that new ministry opportunities may arise, and that we can continue to proclaim the gospel effectively.

Thank you for your continued support which is vital for our ministry.

-Pastor Gianni, Vida y Esperanza Miami

Some Last Words...

Wednesday morning, July 24. I am looking through a pile of papers on my desk at church. It's not really my desk; it's the pastor's desk, but more often Pastor Joel uses his home office and assures me that the office at church is ours. Under a pile of magazines and old worship committee minutes I find a copy of one of Pastor Herm's sermons, maybe the last one he preached at Covenant when he came back to lead Joya Breem's profession of faith. Isaiah 40:1-11-Advent Hope.

I don't think I ever actually read the sermon. I heard it on that Sunday and found it left on the pulpit after the service. I brought it to him, and with a wink he told me to keep it. But I read it just now when I picked it up; Herm had been on my mind of course since we got the prayer request that he was in his final days. Congregation, it's good news and poetry and the whole story of God and his people, like Herm's sermons often were.

Before I finished reading the sermon, the phone rang in Sara's office. "Pastor Herm died," she told me and then emailed to you. And then I went back to reading the sermon. Here is where I picked it up—some of Pastor Herm's last words for us here at Covenant:

"Dear friends,
with ups and downs
weaknesses
failures
tears

Go—climb—see
the coming of your God

Stretch your eyes
your faith

Let there be evidence of his royal power
and his incredible gentleness.

Let there be people who continue to
witness to his rule.

Let our lives and the works of our hands
keep [stubbornly] showing his Lordship.

Don't give up—
the new creation is on the way.

Um...says who?

Says who, all of this is true?
and worth living toward?

Here: Isaiah 40:26-31."

And then Pastor Herm smoothed the pages of
his Bible and told us who.

"Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.
He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint."

Where have you seen God lately, people
sometimes will ask. Today God showed up in a
pile of papers and a hand-written sermon
which I found on Pastor Herm's desk, but
more so in God's word and in his servant,
Herm Van Niejenhuis, who put his hope in the
Lord and is now soaring and running. Or per-
haps just lacing up his skates.

-Rebecca DeVries