



Thanks to this amazing group of Youth Group kids who make a mean lasagna, serve it with a smile, and even wash the dishes and clean up afterward! And thanks to the “big kids” in the picture—aka Youth Group leaders, Nick Breems and Carlene Van Schouwen (and Lucas Stiemma who isn’t pictured) for choosing to hang out with them and for keeping them in line!

## Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

The best social event of the year at Covenant is "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner." Driving to church a little before 6:00 with a pan of warm dinner rolls, we get our assignment. It's an address that quickly lets you know it's out of town. Entering it into the GPS of my phone suggests that it's probably the Bajemas. Good! That means the food will be great and the hosts will be "gracious."

Driving down a gravel road in the country in the dark sounds a little ominous, but it isn't far, and the Bajemas' beautiful home, more than a century old and with its requisite history, is a welcoming site... a long front porch with lots of light. Duane greets us at the door.

Ahh... Phil and Rose Postma are already here, and there's a beautiful green salad. The flavors of a good dinner are in the air. A few minutes later Marty and Kris Vander Plaats arrive, the final members of the group, with our dessert. Duane gathers us around the table and, before we begin, asks each person to tell the group something about their family that no one knows. Did you know that Phil Postma is the middle child between two sets of twins?! I love the family stories that are told at such gatherings.

I've been to at least four or five of these social events over the years and without fail the meals are delicious. And tonight is no exception. We begin with devotions and then fill our plates with baked ziti and chicken tetrazzini accompanied by salad and rolls and finally, a delicious baked apple dessert.

Following the meal, we clear the table and play a couple of rounds of a group card game. If you really want to know somebody, play cards with them! Amazing people, we all part as friends who know and value each other in a new and better way!

A royal thanks to Duane and Jan, our gracious hosts, for another memorable evening!

*-Jo Allenda*



And a big thanks to the Guess Who's Coming to Dinner committee, Laura Janssen and Beth Vanden Berg, for planning and organizing this event! We're grateful for your work in providing a wonderful night of food and fellowship!

## From the Archives...

*A church member recently dropped off a page out of a Courier article from 1990—a “Family Spotlight” about the Brummels—and suggested it might be lovely to include it in the Courier sometime. So enjoy this blast from the past! Maybe you’ll learn something new today about Ed and Natalie!*

Ed was born in Hull and moved to Rock Valley where he grew up with his two brothers and one sister. He attended Rock Valley Christian and Western Christian schools and then went to Sioux Empire College. Natalie was born and raised in Hull; she has four sisters and one brother. Natalie went to school at Hull Christian and Western Christian.

Ed and Nat have three children. Bob who lives in Sioux Center, is a jail administrator at the Sioux County Jail. Gwen is married to Scott Weyen, and they have three daughters: Stephanie, Amy, and Katie. Doug lives at home and is employed at Hy-Vee.

Ed was in the Navy the first years of their married life. He was stationed on a ship, and when he was in port, Natalie and Bob were able to join him in California. Ed and Nat lived in Hull for 12 years, where they ran the Coffee Shop Café. They moved to Sioux Center 17 years ago. The first three years they lived here, they owned and operated 1/3 of the Auto Dine. They they purchased Siouxland Motel, which they still own and operate. Ed is also employed by Farmers Coop Fertilizer and Chemical Department. Natalie makes gift items for approximately 40 gift shops in Iowa and Nebraska. In Natalie’s spare time, she likes to quilt, attend gift shows, conventions, and workshops. Ed likes to relax by hunting and fishing.

“God has blessed us greatly even in the tragedies of our lives—our house burned in 1982 and the death of Bob’s wife in 1985. We praise him for each other, our children, and grandchildren. We look forward to the surprises he has for us in the future.”

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## Serving at Covenant

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

*We received this information about a giving opportunity to the Long-Term Flood Recovery Fund through Justice For All:*

Friends in Christ,  
As you are likely aware, our community has faced unprecedented challenges following the flooding this year. Entire neighborhoods have been devastated, homes destroyed, businesses disrupted, and lives uprooted. Yet, amidst the overwhelming devastation, one thing is

clear—our community’s strength, resilience, and hope remain unshaken. We are committed to rebuilding and restoring what was lost, and we need your support to do so.

Recovery is not a quick process. Rebuilding homes, restoring businesses, and providing support to displaced families requires a long-term, sustained effort. While emergency relief has been a critical first step, the path to full recovery is a marathon, not a sprint. It will take time, resources, and the unwavering support and prayers of compassionate people. Your contribution to our Long-Term Flood Recovery Fund will directly support rebuilding homes. Many people have lost everything, but our immediate need is to make sure we finish

*(Continued on page 7)*

# January Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Jenni Mellema	12	Terry Friend	26	Jonathan Breems
2	Dallas Apol	14	Becky Donahue Pastor Joel Kok Michael Vander Plaats	29	Don Ten Napel Trena Van Wyk
3	Jo Alberda Penny Donahue	16	Peregrine Groenewold	30	Amie Smit Jeff Taylor
5	Andy & Rachel Landman	18	Naomi Lief	31	Sos & Kara Maletougou
9	Lois Vander Zee	20	Jenni Breems Tricia Kok Dave Kramer		
10	Bryanna Castelan				



*Our Covenant kids once again shared the good news of Jesus' birth through their Christmas Program on December 15. Thank you to all of them for speaking, singing, and ringing out the good news!*



# January Scheduling



## Greeters

Jeremy H, Amanda VB, Trena VW



## Ushers

Wil A, Dennis VP, Martin VP



## Coffee Servers

Rebecca DS, Sarah H, Marcy H,  
Sally J, Jake VW

## Substitutes

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

Marge DB, Sharon D, Joan MC,  
Stan VB, Linda V, John Z

### \*\*\*Are you traveling this winter?\*\*\*

Are you planning on taking off for a month or two or for most of the winter? Please notify the office with the dates you'll be gone and I will avoid scheduling you during that time!

## 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, **January 20** for the February issue.



## Nursery

Nursery Monitor: Courtney R

### January 5

AM Jason & Sara H, Alejandro & Isabel C

### January 12

AM Doug & Marge DB, Mark & Cheri H

### January 19

AM Channon & Joni V, Tricia K

### January 26

AM Luke & Sarah H, Marcy H

### February 2

AM Ryan & Val Z, Laremy & Becca DV

## Formation Sunday Evenings

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

**January 5:** Vespers

**January 12:** Vespers

**January 19:** Edifying Engagement: Beatrice Shackelford will share about her experience at COP29

**January 26:** Vespers with Communion



# Note from the Deacons

With the 2025 budget approved and the end of 2024 approaching, we, as deacons, want to express our gratitude to the congregation for your generous giving. We also want to highlight two special offerings we hold each year, in the spring and fall. These offerings, which support both local missions, as well as efforts across our nation and around the world, are a true testament to your commitment and generosity.

In our spring offering, which helps support ministries across the nation and globally, we raised approximately \$5,000. Beneficiaries of these offerings include organizations like Crossroads Prison Ministries, Luke Society, Mission India, Resonate Global Mission, Tesoros de Dios, and others.

Our Thanksgiving offering, which focuses on supporting local ministries, raised around \$15,000. Beneficiaries of these include ATLAS, Family Crisis Center, Hope Food Pantry, Justice For All, Habitat For Humanity, Hope Haven, and others. Beyond these monetary gifts, many of you are deeply involved with these missions by serving on their boards, volunteering your time, and participating in fundraisers outside of the church's direct involvement. We are truly blessed!

As we look ahead to 2025, we are excited to see how God will continue to work through our church to bless others, both near and far, and we thank you for your continued support and prayers!

If you would like to know more about our special offerings, please feel free to reach out to John Visser or me, and we would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

*-Lee Mellema*

For the Deacons)



*Jones Mellema is helping himself to the good stuff at the lasagna dinner.*

## Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/24-12/15/24) \$327,568	\$324,819	-\$2,749
Christian Education	(8/1/24-12/15/24) \$19,457	\$33,310	+\$13,853
Refresh Building	(1/1/24-12/15/24) \$71,538	\$87,852	+\$16,314

## *Serving at Covenant*

*(Continued from page 3)*

placing furnaces and electrical panels in homes to keep water lines and gas lines protected, as well as provide a warm home for construction to continue through winter months. This is an urgent need and we ask for your consideration.

Your generosity can make a profound difference. Whether you contribute \$50 or \$5,000, every donation helps us move closer to recovery. And thanks to our partnerships with volunteers and other organizations, your gift will be maximized in its impact.

We understand that times may be difficult right now, but if you are able to help, we ask you to consider donating to our Long-Term

Flood Recovery Fund. Together, we can restore not just the physical landscape but the very spirit of our community.

To make a donation, you can send a check payable to JFA at 1335 Valley Drive, Rock Valley, IA 51247. Please be sure to designate “Flood Relief” in the memo. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us (712.541.3997 or rdwfrb@gmail.com).

On behalf of everyone in our community, thank you for your prayers, your generosity, and your commitment to rebuilding a stronger, more resilient future.

*-Ron DeWeerd*

Chairman of Sioux-Lyon Long-Term Recovery Group

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## *Note from the Elders*

The Covenant Elders gather on the second Monday evening of each month. As part of each meeting, Pastor Joel and the elders report on meetings with members of the congregation and with those visiting Covenant. We lift these shared concerns, needs, and joys to God through prayer.

In November we spent time reflecting on how to effectively and faithfully fill a vacated deacon position. We are grateful for those, previously approved by the congregation, who allowed their names to stand and for the selection of Mark Horstman as deacon. Each elder and deacon serves as a liaison to one or more committees which organize and help meet needs within and outside of Covenant.

In the new year, Rev Bob Drenten, serving as a Classis Iakota visitor, will meet with the full council on January 22. He and an accompany-

ing elder will “work with church council to lead the congregation into prayerful self-evaluation and prayerful planning for future ministry.” You are invited to join the meeting as an observer. More denominational information about the process can be found at [www.crcna.org/classis/church-visitors](http://www.crcna.org/classis/church-visitors).

In the book, *Bowling Alone* (2000), Robert Putnam examines the decline of civic engagement and social connectedness in the United States. Additional studies since have also highlighted the increasing trend of loneliness, often in males with few or no close male friends. As part of Covenant’s desire to foster the spiritual wellbeing of our congregation, get ready to participate in upcoming events structured to foster connections with others.

Please continue to pray for your elders and deacons!

*-Chris Goedhart*

for the Elders and Council



It's that time of year again! After a hiatus last year because of our Sanctuary Refresh project, we plan to once again be a remote site for Calvin University's annual lecture series—The January Series. Each year, Calvin invites prominent academics, educators, artists, activists, and others to present thought-provoking lectures in their areas of expertise. And we have the opportunity to be lifelong learners right here in our sanctuary.

You may notice a slight change in the series this year—it will be 10 days instead of the usual 15. This is a result of some academic calendar changes at Calvin as well as increased costs for bringing in speakers. The lectures will begin at 11:30 AM each weekday and end at 12:30 PM. And occasionally the lectures have been followed with lively discussion amongst those who are here. We hope you'll come out for these two weeks of lectures!

Here is the schedule for this year:

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**Monday, January 20**

Jonathan Eig: *King: A Life*

**Tuesday, January 21**

Todd Komarnicki: *Bravery: A Story of Elf, Sully, and Bonhoeffer*

**Wednesday, January 22**

John Inazu: *A Conversation on Learning to Disagree*

**Thursday, January 23**

Heather Templeton Dill: *A Philanthropic Approach to Inspiring Awe and Wonder*

**Friday, January 24**

Kristjan Prikk: *The Future of Europe—Should it Still Matter to American?*

**Monday, January 27**

Peter Sagal: *Front Seat at the Sideshow: What I've Learned After 25 Years of Making Fun of Everything*

**Tuesday, January 28**

Alastair Humphreys: *Adventures Across the World and Around the Neighborhood*

**Wednesday, January 29**

Reshma Saujani: *A Conversation on Pay Up: The Future of Women and Work*

**Thursday, January 30**

Michaela O'Donnell: *Life in Flux*

**Friday, January 31**

Hunter Woodhall: *They Told Me I Couldn't Walk, So I Decided to Run*

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We are excited about the line-up for this year and hope you will take advantage of this opportunity right here at Covenant! Feel free to pick up a bookmark or flyer from the table in the fellowship hall. And you can find more information about the lecture series and the speakers at [calvin.edu/january-series](http://calvin.edu/january-series).