

# Citizenship Class Offered at Covenant

The Justice and Mercy Committee was formed a little over a year ago with the mandate to research and promote congregational awareness, commitment, and involvement with respect to critical justice and mercy issues in today's culture.

Recently, our committee was presented with an opportunity that aligns well with our mandate, and we are inviting you to join us in this work. We are partnering with the National Immigration Forum to host a Civics English class, designed to help aspiring citizens learn U.S. history, government, and English, all in preparation for the citizenship exam and interview. Another anticipated natural outcome and benefit of the program is to foster meaningful connections between host organizations and their immigrant neighbors.

This 12-week course will be hosted at our church, beginning on Monday, April 7, then meeting each Monday and Thursday evening from 6-7:30 PM.

Our deep hope for this work is that it will serve as a tangible way for us as a congregation to build trust and stronger relationships with our immigrant neighbors who are seeking citizenship, and that it will cultivate a sense of connection and belonging in our local community.

Would you like to help?

We need volunteers to help the class run smoothly and demonstrate appreciable support for our neighbors. We would be delighted to have as many people from the church involved as is possible, in many ways:

Do you enjoy conversations? Help students develop conversational English skills and prepare for the interview component of the citizenship exam.

Are you comfortable with technology? Be on hand to help instructors get set up and to

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## Pastoral Group Dinner Schedule



April 6—DeWit/DeJong  
April 13—DeSmith/Van Tol  
April 27—Christians/Van Schouwen

Wondering which Pastoral Group you're in?

The Pastoral Group lists  
can be found on our website:

<https://covenantcrc.net/directory-committees/>

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assist students with downloading correct applications and accessing the online curriculum.

Do you love children? We would like to offer a nursery or other childcare options for those attending the class.

Do you have the gift of hospitality? Be a welcoming and friendly face, support students in their learning, or possibly bring a snack to share with the class.

If you would like to join us, please fill out [this form](#) indicating your intent to support this work, and what area of service would be the best fit for you. Please note that signing up does not mean a commitment to attending all or even any certain number of the classes; we will develop more specific schedules and sign up sheets in the future for evening classes and events (so, if you are planning summer vacations or are only available for a number of the scheduled evenings—no problem).

You may start to see flyers going up around town to advertise this opportunity. Please also feel free to spread the word and let others know about the class. Questions can be directed to Dani Wyenberg or Joya Breems.

Scan the code to sign  
up to volunteer



-Dani Wyenberg

for the Justice & Mercy Committee

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## Classis Lakota Meeting Highlights

Classis Lakota met at Covenant CRC in Sioux Center on March 4. With the threat of a winter storm hitting the area later in the day, Chairperson Drew Hoekema encouraged the delegates to “move fast but not rush.” Under his capable leadership the meeting was adjourned by 12:30pm. Due to the impending storm there were no delegates from Lakeview, New Holland, and Corsica.

Two ministers of the Word were granted their request to retire: Dr. Jay Shim, former professor of theology at Dordt University, and Rev. Gideon Wamala, the pastor for the Calvin CRC in Rock Valley. Classis also approved

the action of the Classical Interim Committee, with the concurrence of synodical deputies, to release Rev. Sara Hoogendoorn, at her request, from ministry in the CRC as she has now been accepted into the ministry of the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.

Classis granted the request of Jeff Santema to have his license to exhort renewed for another two years.

Considerable time was spent deliberating over some proposed overtures to synod. Two of the overtures were adopted:

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# The Hand

The hand that held  
The bowl of ashes,  
Ground and mixed with oil,  
As I prepared to impose  
The sign of dust at an Ash Wednesday service—  
That hand was covered partly  
By a flesh-colored butterfly bandage  
Protecting a row of six black  
Stitches  
At the base of my right forefinger.  
An engine kicked back,  
Yanking the handle out of my hand  
And gouging loose a flap of skin.  
I'm left handed,  
So I could dip my left  
Thumb in the bowl  
And smudge a cross—  
"Ashes to ashes"—  
Declaring to friends,  
To their children, alas,  
That they are nothing—  
They will go down to death.  
This is not news, but it hurts—  
A bit like that far-from-mortal

Ragged gash,  
A sort of arrogant, prickly smile  
Just below the inner crease  
Of my finger.  
A little smudge,  
Not an incision—  
But they are the same,  
Cutting us deep,  
Separating flesh and soul.  
I wanted to hug  
One woman who approached,  
Mary-like in her tears,  
Offering her forehead,  
Or maybe show her my stitches;  
But Lent is one of those times  
To let it be,  
To feel the wounds.  
In ten days  
Someone will tug the stitches out—  
A weird, tickling feeling of flesh  
I've felt before.  
More needed is  
The Lenten tug on flesh,  
That turns us to the only cure.

-Bob De Smith

AW, 2025

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## Designated Parking

Seeing green? Yes, soon you'll be seeing green in the north parking lot. The Building Committee agreed to provide designated parking spaces for some of our members who are ahead of many of us age-wise and/or with limited mobility. Striping for the first row of parking spaces will be green. We hope you'll help save these spaces for those needing an easier time getting into the building. Thanks for being gracious! And remember, your time will come!

-Rin Goedhart

On behalf of the Building Committee

## Holy Week Schedule



### Maundy Thursday Worship

April 17 | 7:00 PM

### Good Friday Worship

April 18 | 12:00 PM

### Easter Sunday Worship

April 20 | 10:00 AM

# April Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Auden Mellema Marty Vander Plaats	9	Sharon Dykhuizen	21	Nathan Maletoungou
2	Brian & Barb Mellema	11	Sara Eppinga	22	Stella Ribbens
3	Rebecca DeVries	13	Gavin Ver Steeg	25	Eden Hawley
6	John Visser	15	Justin Bailey	26	Alejandro Castelan
7	Megan Haan	17	Eli Horstman Dylan Kramer Rose Postma	29	Sarah Stiemsma
8	Sam Eppinga Isla Jewett	20	Jackson Visscher Ramiro & Gaby Rangel	30	Jacob Van Tol



## Classis Lakota Meeting Highlights

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- An overture which asks Synod 2025 to end the “in communion” relationship the CRC has with the Reformed Church of America and allow for a formal means to address and seek fellowship with those congregations and pastors who have recently left the RCA. Furthermore, Classis approved sending a communication to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Committee of the CRC and to Synod 2025 regarding the current status the CRC has with the RCA.
- An overture which asks Synod 2025 to provide actionable steps of accountability toward churches and classes within the CRC who are defying recent decisions of synod.

Election of the delegates to synod rendered the following results:

- Matthew Haan, First CRC in Rock Valley, Minister delegate
- Ben Saarloos, Bethel CRC, Elder delegate
- Gerald Zwart, Inwood CRC, second Elder

delegate (in lieu of a Deacon delegate since no there were no nominees for Deacon delegate)

- Gary Maas, pastor of Harrison Community Church, fourth officebearer delegate

Classis approved the recommendation of the Classical Safe Church Team (which serves both Classis Lakota and Classis Heartland) to appoint Abby Vanden Bosch, a member of the Living Water Church in Sheldon, to serve as the coordinator for this team.

Reports were given from:

- Ron De Wit on behalf of SIMDEL Children’s Ministry, an outreach ministry in rural Togo West Africa, spearheaded by the First Sioux Falls CRC, which is looking to receive support from classis.
- Lee & Doug De Groot on behalf of Minn-I-Kota Youth Network
- Brad Meinders on behalf of Resonate Global Mission

-Rev. *Bernie Haan*  
Stated Clerk of Classis

# April Scheduling



## Greeters

Ethan B, Merrill MC, Jason VB



## Ushers

Ruth Clo, Pat C, Andy L



## Coffee Servers

Jenni B, Isabel C, Mary D,  
Shirley M, Rock MC,

## Substitutes

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

Len R, Dave S, Les S,  
Beth VB, Channon V, Sharon 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 21** for the May issue.



## Nursery

Nursery Monitor: Kris VP

### April 6

AM Steve & Pat C, James & Courtney R

### April 13

AM Bob & Rebecca DS, Nick & Jenni B

### April 17 Maundy Thursday

PM Kurt & Sharon V, Mark & Lisa C

### April 20

AM Ethan & Donna B, Andy & Rachel L

### April 27

AM Doug & Marge DB, Laura J

### May 4

AM Jason & Sara H, Alejandro & Isabel C

## Formation Sunday Evenings

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

April 6: Vespers

April 13: Vespers

April 20: No evening service

April 27: Vespers with Communion

## Note from the Deacons

To be a church that is a “Light on a Hill” we have to be the beams that shine out.

As a Deacon and a member of the Missions and Outreach Committee, I sometimes feel like I am always coming to the church with requests to give and I worry that I will hit a point where I am asking for too much. And yet worthy opportunities and requests come into my inbox every week and it is hard to just discard them into the trash can.

This spring there seems to be a lot of opportunities for us to give in many different ways and so I am giving you a list of ways you can be ray of God’s light this season.

Last Sunday we kicked off the diaper drive in partnership with Maria Magdalena church and we will continue to collect diapers or monetary funds through the end of March. Diapers can be placed in the fellowship hall under the back table and checks can be written to the Compassion Fund with “diapers” in the subject line. This is not intended to be a one and done thing though as we are committed to this partnership long term.

World Renew is ramping up their rebuilding effort in Rock Valley and Hawarden. If you would like to get involved as an individual on a regular or semi-regular basis, you can reach out to Gerry Korver (gerrykorver@gmail.com). He is the person who is scheduling local one day volunteers. If you are a larger group that would like to work every day for a week or two, you should contact the NW Iowa recovery group through Anna Scholma (ascholma@worldrenew.net). There is housing available with access to kitchens and restrooms and showers near the work sites in case you have out-of-town friends or family members who would like to join you.

And lastly, Brad Hickey has brought a proposal before the deacons asking that we consider supporting Christian outreach to a community that is often overlooked. This is the community that he calls the “Online Geek/Nerd” community. These individuals may identify as gamers, or netizens—persons who find fellowship mainly in online communities. Brad has introduced us to an organization called the LUX Digital Church which seeks to bring the gospel to these folks where they are. This is a new mission field that is emerging and we are carefully, with Brad’s guidance, looking at how we can bring the Good News here. If you

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## Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/25-3/23/25) \$79,783	\$102,721	+\$22,938
Christian Education	(8/1/24-3/23/25) \$33,077	\$57,786	+\$24,709
Refresh Building	(1/1/25-3/23/25) \$17,169	\$19,773	+\$2,604

# Serving at Covenant

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



This past summer I was privileged to travel to Liberia with the One Body One Hope (OBOH) education team. I have been a member of the education committee for OBOH for over 10 years but for various

reasons have never been able to travel to see the schools and children we serve. It was such a great experience to be able to see in person the people that I have been working with and praying for all these years.

While in Liberia the team and I helped to lead a 4-day teacher training. This is the third summer that we have held this Heartland-like conference. Teachers from the schools OBOH supports from all over Liberia came to learn and collaborate. We were fortunate enough to have a key-note speaker who led the morning sessions. My job was to facilitate breakout sessions. I also prepared and led a short teaching demonstration. Since most teaching is rote memorization, our goal was to help teachers increase student participation by encouraging them to prepare an anticipatory set and a closing activity for their lessons. Some highlights from the trip included a tour of Monrovia, getting to see new buildings being built at the orphanage, trying to eat the spicy food and hearing Pastor Emmanuel tell his amazing life story in person. Another wonderful experience was attending the college graduation party of 3 former students, 2 of whom were also orphans.

OBOH supports 11 schools in the Vine School System of Christ and 1 school associated with the Abundant Life Chapel and orphanage. We train and support 137 teachers and there are 1,644 students in the 11 VSSC schools. 7 of the schools are funded and we are looking for support for the remaining 4 VSSC schools. There are many other churches that would like to open schools but we are committed to getting our current schools funded before opening any more. We are also committed to opening schools in areas where there are currently no schools. Most of the students attending VSSC schools would not have access to any education if it were not for the pastors and parents in churches who feel called to educate the children of their congregations and the surrounding areas. OBOH is committed to doing all we can to support the schools and teachers so more students have access to education.

*-Cheri Horstman*

## *Note from the Deacons*

*(Continued from page 6)*

would like to participate in supporting God's work in this new mission field, please designate your funds to go to "LUX Digital Church"

Many thanks for all you do as a congregation!

*-Dwight Van Tol*

For the Covenant Deacons  
(Pam De Jong, Mark Horstman, Dave Kramer,  
Lee Mellema, Josh Van Schouwen, Dwight Van  
Tol, John Visser, Val Zonnefeld)

# Dwight's Prize-Winning Chili



Many of you may have come to the WWW@Cov Great Chili Cook-Off in February and tasted Dwight Van Tol's prize-winning chili—and now you have the opportunity

to make it yourself—Dwight is divulging his secrets! Enjoy the recipe!

## Ingredients:

- 1½ lb beef roast (leaner is better)
- ½ lb smoked bacon diced into ¼ inch pieces
- 3 cans beans (I like red beans or pinto beans)
- 1 can fire roasted diced tomatoes with juice
- 1 6oz can tomato paste
- 1 large red onion diced
- 1 red (or yellow but not green) bell pepper seeded and diced
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and diced (optional)
- 2 cups beef stock
- 2 Tbsp chili powder (or to taste)
- 1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 or 2 cloves garlic minced
- 1 Tbsp dried oregano
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp smoked paprika

## Directions:

- I make this in a big cast iron enameled Dutch oven, but it can also be made in a crock pot or InstaPot
- Preheat oven to 225 degrees
- Put your Dutch oven on a burner on medium high and add some neutral oil like avocado
- Season roast with salt and pepper (in addi-

tion to the amount in the recipe) and when the oil just starts to smoke lay in the roast and brown on all sides. (Get it really brown and crusty to add good flavor and build up a fond on the bottom of the pot.) Remove and let cool

- Add diced bacon to pot and fry until crispy but don't burn. While it is frying dice up the roast into ½ to ¾ inch cubes
- Remove cooked bacon and drain on paper towel
- Add diced onion and peppers to pot and cook until tender.
- Add all the meat back to the pot and finish browning the beef cubes, then scoop out any excess grease.
- Add the rest of the ingredients and stir together. Put the lid on the Dutch oven and place in the middle of the oven and let cook for at least 3 hours (but all day is better), stirring occasionally.
- For a crock pot, use a frying pan to brown the meat and sauté the veggies then deglaze with some of the stock. Put everything into your crock and cook on low for 7 to 10 hours.
- For an InstaPot, sauté the meats and veggies in the pot in batches and then add the rest of the ingredients, making sure there is enough liquid so it doesn't burn. Either use the chili setting or pressure cook on high for about 20 to 22 minutes then rest for 10 to 15 minutes before releasing the pressure.
- Serve with grated cheddar cheese, sour cream, diced green onions

*-Dwight Van Tol*