Covenant Christian Education Fund Auction

Come one, come all to the greatest night of Covenant fellowship for a cause!

This exciting extravaganza only happens every other year, so you don't want to miss it! When else will you be able to witness engaging silent bidding wars, friend vs. friend for the best dinner date, Bajema honey in cute little bears, and reliable childcare for a spectacular price?

Returning as host and auctioneer extraordinaire, Tom Clark will fill the evening with witty banter and fabulous repartee as he garners the best bids from all those attending!

The event is scheduled for February 20 and starts at 5:30 PM with a time to eat pizza, get your bid number and peruse the amazing auction items donated by your fellow Covenant members. Bidding will begin at 6:30.

And NEW THIS YEAR... the children are invited to join in the fun at this year's Christian Education Auction. Alongside the main event, there will be a children's silent auction featuring small toys, treats, and other kid-friendly items. Children, 8th grade and younger, will have the chance to place bids ranging from $1 to $10 with payment in cash, making it an easy and exciting way for them to participate. There will also be a raffle for a children's basket, so be sure to save your allowance to get in on the fun.

So bring the family for pizza and stay for fellowship and fun as we support Covenant Christian Education.

-Val Zonnefeld & Cheri Horstman

To Submit a Donation: bit.ly/CovenantAuction	
To See Donated Items: bit.ly/4pvzmOe	

Courier
February 2026
COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

A Celebration of Ministry

March 1 marks the end of an era at Covenant with the retirement of Pastor Joel and the end of his ministry with our church family. We have been so blessed by Joel and Tricia's presence with us and will miss them here in Sioux Center, but are grateful for the opportunities and the new stage of life they look forward to in Michigan.

But in the meantime, we have an opportunity to celebrate together as we send them off on their new adventures. Pastor Joel's last Sunday with us is March 1. So here is the plan for the day. We will gather for our morning worship service with Pastor Joel sharing his final sermon with us and the church family coming together around the table. Following our morning worship, we will share a meal together. The Castelans will be preparing a feast of Mexican food for us to enjoy together. And after the meal, we move back into the sanctuary for a farewell gathering. We will spend time remembering and celebrating the ways Joel has led us as our pastor, and we will bless them as they move to the next stage of life and to the opportunities to which God is calling them.

The Covenant Occasional Choir will sing for the farewell gathering (more information to come) and there will be opportunities for kids to be participate in this gathering as well.

So we can plan for food, we would appreciate an RSVP if you plan to attend the dinner. You can RSVP on the sign-sheet sheet on the welcome table or online (https://forms.gle/ivcvDzYsY6oPnWwJ7) by **February 15**. We are suggesting a $10 donation per person for the meal (payable at the meal). But please don't let the cost of the meal keep you from attending! (If you're able to pay a little extra to cover those who can't, we would appreciate it!) The cost of the meal is more than $10, so if you are willing and able to donate more, your generosity will help cover the cost for others to attend.

-Sara Ploegstra

Pastoral Search Update

Since our last update, the Pastoral Search Committee has been working hard at contacting and talking to various prospective pastors. We began by sending letters of inquiry to pastors recommended by members of the congregation. The letter of inquiry serves as a brief introduction to Covenant—it describes our worship services and practices and includes information about our community and city. Additionally, the letter describes what Covenant is looking for in a pastor.

We also used the database of CRC ministers mentioned in the last update to look into prospective pastors, which allowed us to filter by Covenant's specifications—100-250 members, small city, Midwest, searching for a lead pastor. Because there were a lot of pastors potentially willing to serve in such a church, we then sorted the pastors by the date they started at their current church and looked into the pastors that had been in their current roles for seven or more years, just to give us a place to start. After looking through the database and listening to some sermons by promising pastors, we sent letters of inquiry

(Continued on page 3)

Evening Worship

As we say farewell to Pastor Joel and Tricia (the celebration is on March 1), we will be taking a step back from evening gatherings beginning on March 1 (Joel's last Sunday) through Easter (April 5)—Maundy Thursday excepted. We are grateful for Joel's work (along with Rebecca De Vries, our Worship Coordinator) in making our evening gatherings varied and vital. By taking a pause, we hope that we can reflect, even grieve, as Joel leaves.

What comes next? Beginning after Easter (April 5), we will meet once a month—probably on the first Sunday—for a gathering including food, fellowship, and worship. We will treat this as a trial—would this be a good rhythm for the future? The format of these services is still to be determined, but we intend that they call us together around the Acts 2 injunction (which Pastor Joel has called us to), namely that we are devoted to "the Apostle's teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." We hope in addition to hold WE services, perhaps quarterly, and we will be encouraging committees and other groups at Covenant to develop an occasional Edifying Engagement around relevant topics. We hope as well that this new rhythm allows space for small groups, Bible study groups, and prayer gatherings.

Please be in prayer with us that our worship gatherings continue to draw us closer to our Lord during our vacancy.

-Bob De Smith, for the Elders

Pastoral Search Update

(Continued from page 2)

to several more pastors. Pastors have responded to this letter in various ways, ranging from very interested, interested but… , to not interested. We also have had a few pastors reach out to us in response to our ad on the CRC Network site.

To those who responded positively to our letter of inquiry, we next sent a list of questions, giving pastors an opportunity to tell us about themselves. We asked them to think about what might draw them to Covenant and to share highlights of their ministry, as well as more practical concerns, such as time constraints they might have in this process. At this point, we've gotten responses to these questions from three pastors.

We decided that the next step in getting to know these three pastors better would be 30-minute informal Zoom conversations to put faces to names. We have done this with the three interested pastors. The conversations consisted of us introducing ourselves and talking about our experiences at Covenant followed by the pastors telling us a little more about themselves and their ministry and giving them a chance to ask us some questions. These informal conversations led the committee to invite them to more formal interviews sometime in February.

The future of our search process might look something like this: after the February interviews, probably sometime in March, the Committee will present to council a recommendation for moving forward with those still in the search process. Along with our recommendation, we will offer a substantive rationale for this recommendation. Council will then discern the next step.

-Jayden Hoksbergen

February Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Phil Postma	14	Marilyn Mouw	27	Marcy Holwerda
3	Micah Moss	15	Sanneke Kok	28	Lila Janssen
7	Wil Alberda	17	Jim Schaap Josh Van Schouwen	29	Sarah Moss
8	Genesis Rangel	18	Ryan Smit		
9	Jane Taylor	19	Dennis DeJong		
12	Robbin Eppinga Les Sybesma	24	June DeWit Micah & Jayden Dykstra		
13	Mimi Kamp				



GEMS Christmas Party







The GEMS enjoyed a Christmas party at the All Seasons Center, complete with ice skating, hot chocolate and snacks, and fun! Thanks to Mark & Cheri Horstman who made it possible for all the GEMS girls to skate by bringing the sleds! Pictured above: Julia Kramer & Cora Donahue; Top right: Emma Haan & Emden Dieleman; Bottom right: The 6th graders—including Julia Kramer, Louisa DeVries, Sage Jewett, and Claire Van Schouwen

February Scheduling



Valet

Paul/Avonda F



Greeters

Rebecca DS, Marcy H, Juliet J



Ushers

Sally J, Shaun S, Trena VW



Coffee Servers

Alejandro C, Terry F, Shirley M, Mark MC, John V



Nursery

Nursery Monitor: Erika VS

February 1
AM Michael & Adi VP, Jeremy & Kristi H

February 8
AM Jake & Trena VW, Jeff & Sara P

February 15
AM Dave & Emily K, Kyle & Andrea D

February 22
AM Tom & Ruth C, John & Linda V

March 1
AM James & Courtney R, Rob & Megan H

Substitutes

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

Duane B, Pat C, Jeremy H,
Gidge M, Les S, Stan VB

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, **February 16** for the March issue.

Formation Sunday Evenings

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

February 1: Vespers with the Unity Knightsounds

February 8: Vespers

February 15: Edifying Engagement: Jason Lief—National Immigration Forum

February 22: Vespers

Note from the Deacons

How Missions Dollars Are Used

The Deacons want to offer clarity on how Missions giving is handled and how funds are distributed.

Our missionaries are included in the church budget so we can guarantee them a defined level of support. This allows missionaries to plan responsibly and serve with confidence. These funds are budgeted and paid out of the General Fund as part of our committed support. Any additional gifts to Missions or the Missions Fund are considered support above and beyond what we have committed to our missionaries and are added to the Missions Fund balance, which carries forward from year to year.

The Missions Fund may, over time, grow beyond what is needed for normal operations. When the fund balance exceeds a threshold set by the Deacons and reviewed periodically, the Deacons will authorize a one-time distribution to our missionaries.

Those who wish to give directly to a specific missionary may do so by noting the missionary's name in the memo of their check. These designated gifts will be distributed to that missionary the next time we send missionary support, which typically occurs three times per year.

In general, undesignated or as-needed giving provides the Deacons with the greatest flexibility to steward resources where they are most needed at any given time. This flexibility allows funds to be shifted appropriately between areas such as the General, Christian Education, Building, and Missions Funds in response to changing needs, while continuing to honor our commitments.

Thank you for your faithful generosity and partnership in God's mission.

-Josh Van Schouwen

For the Covenant Deacons
(Kyle Dieleman, Mark Horstman, Dave Kramer, Lee Mellema, Micah Schreurs, Atul Shinde, Josh Van Schouwen, Val Zonnefeld)

Memorial Gift

The Deacons have received a $1,000 gift in memory of Bob Bielema. At the donor's request, $500 has been allocated to World Renew, and $500 has been allocated to Tesoros de Dios.

If you would like to make a memorial gift or have questions regarding how Covenant CRC or other causes we support could be incorporated into your estate plan, please contact a Deacon.

-Micah Schreurs

For the Covenant Deacons

Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/26-1/18/26) $21,786	$18,218	-$3,568
Christian Education	(8/1/25-1/18/26) $60,817	$57,613	-$3,204
Refresh Building	(1/1/26-1/18/26) $4,292	$3,945	-$347





The Covenant youth group is always up to something! In December they had a Christmas party which included some Christmas caroling and in January they held their annual Nerf gun war. (If you happen to find a nerf gun bullet around the church, feel free to slide them under the office door. We usually find them hidden in nooks and crannies around church for months after this event.) Thanks to Nick Breems and Carlene Van Schouwen for keeping them in line!

Appreciation Of Christian Reformed Worship

Esther's Composition class at Unity asked her to share a written piece of work with a broader audience, so she sent this to us to include in the Courier!

Throughout history, worship has always been a powerful statement. For me personally, I have greatly appreciated the worship that is displayed within the Christian Reformed Church. There are many varieties including general songs, sermons, choirs, and devotions which offer the congregation spiritual renewal. Worship not only builds the church but also builds stronger connections throughout the community. The praise team encourages people within the church to sing with more emotion and gratitude to God. Having passionate singers and joyful songs creates an atmosphere that allows the congregation to honor God and others within the church and community. While worshipping God full-heartedly, we cannot be self-centered, but we fully focus on the one that we are worshipping. Having open ears in worship allows God to work through our hearts for greater good. By taking notes and having the Bible open we can fight the distraction of our minds wandering during worship. By internalizing and responding to the message we can take the worship farther by incorporating it into our lives; applying the sermon is the deepest form of response. Partaking and being present in the Holy Spirit within the prayer has been an important way of worship. Inviting God's presence to empower the message will allow our hearts to open up. Prayer is a way of expressing thankfulness, lament, and adoration in worship. In conclusion I appreciate the worship that is displayed within the Christian Reformed Church. There are ways that we can individually grow our understanding and faith through worship, by doing this we can deepen our personal connection with God.

-Esther Eppinga

Books that Shaped Us



In the December 2025 issue of *The Banner*, under the headline "The Books that Made Us," five employees/leaders in the Christian Reformed Church list and describe several books that were influential in shaping their lives and their ministry/service. If you are a reader, you will find the article interesting and inspiring. It might even cause you to ask, "What books have shaped me?"

I hope so and here's why: we (a few of us readers at Covenant) would like you to name a book that "made" you, and then explain briefly why/how it shaped you. If you get *The Banner*, check out the answers that the CRC employees gave.

One of the CRC responders whose answer to the question were printed in *The Banner* was our friend and former Covenant member Syd Hielema. One of his choices was *Grace Notes* by Phillip Yancey. Syd writes,

> A publishing trend I applaud is to comb complete works of wise Christian writers and select 366 stand-alone excerpts for a year-long devotional book. My wife and I have read this compilation several times at the dinner table and been blessed every time. Yancey grasps the breath and depth of a kingdom vision and articulates it with fresh winsomeness. . . I loved using this book as a gift.

Another of Syd's choices was a novel, *Jayber Crow*, by Wendell Berry.

One of my (Dave's) choices would be *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis. In this book (which I still cherish), Lewis discusses many of the basic elements of Christian faith. But Lewis is not a Calvinist and so every so often his view on a fine point of doctrine differs from Calvinism. As a beginning Christian school teacher, I frequently found in *Mere Christianity* answers to knotty question from students. I have my mother's copy of *Mere Christianity* (70 years old), and I smile to see her occasionally penciled-in Calvinist disagreement with Lewis in the margin. Beyond that, I recognize how much I have learned about basic doctrine from Lewis. His essay on the great sin (pride) should be required reading for every Christian.

Another of my choices would be *My God and I* by Lew Smedes. This is wise, beautifully written spiritual memoir, with chapter titles like "Sour Hour of Prayer," "God and I at the Writing Desk," "God and I, Almost Friends," "God and a Grateful Old Man," and twenty-three more, Smedes takes the reader through his life and his work as an ethicist and counselor. Engaging, down-to-earth and brutally honest, Smedes explores many of the knotty problems Christians face in everyday living.

So look into your reading past and ask yourself what book or books have "made" you and briefly describe them. There are lots of models in the December 2025 issue of *The Banner*. Send your responses to dschel@dordt.edu.

-Dave Schelhaas