Meet the Council

Last month we introduced half of the incoming council members and heard 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/.) This month we hear from the other three! Thanks to all of them for serving Covenant in the roles of Elder and Deacon.

Elder Terry Friend

As a brief introduction, Jill and I have been in Sioux Center 16 years. I have spent most of my career in agricultural research, having worked at Pioneer Hi-Bred for 21 years, and other companies as well. I have recently begun work at Northwest Iowa Community College as Adult Education and Literacy Coordinator. Jill works at Sioux Center Christian School as the orchestra director, and spends the balance of her time running after our local grandchildren. We have three children; Nathan lives near Woodstock, Ontario with his wife Bethany and two children; our daughter Emily and her husband TJ have two children and live just down the street from us, and Derek lives in Sioux Center and teaches at Dordt University.

As I read through the charge to the elders, I can't help but feel a sense of inadequacy. We are called to be wise counselors, compassionate shepherds, faithful in prayer, and spiritual leaders for the church. As I reflect on these responsibilities, I can think of many times when I have fallen short of these ideals. Yet I am reminded of several reluctant and imperfect servants in Scripture, such as Moses, Gideon, and Jonah. Despite their weaknesses and hesitations, God called them and achieved his purposes through them. I believe the same is true for those he calls to church leadership today. Although I feel inadequate, I am confi-

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Pastoral Search Update

The Search Committee took a bit of a break after working pretty intensively the first six months of the year. We will be regrouping and beginning the search process anew in August, following people's return from vacations and other commitments. The optimal summer window of opportunity is past, but we will begin to revisit some earlier contacts as well as seek new ones.

As you may recall, we earlier sent letters of inquiry to anyone suggested by members of the congregation. If you have new names to suggest, please send them to Sally Jongsma (jongsma@mtcnet.net) or to the church office.

We ask for your continued prayers as we move ahead, trusting that God will provide for Covenant.

-Sally Jongsma

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COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Pro Tem

A vehicle in our parking lot has a license plate that reads PRO TEM. You may know who drives it and the story behind this (lack of) vanity plate. If not, browse the lot and ask the driver. She will probably tell you something like this: *Pro tem* is Latin for "for the time being." Lest you worry that the driver is waiting to be raptured ("I'm only in this seat for the time being!"), it's originator actually had something more profound—even Reformed—in mind. We do our kingdom work knowing that it is all under the much more capacious plan of God. So the phrase has a kind of provisional sense that lets us rest in God: we do our good work and we wait.

I invoke the phrase here in a slightly less profound context: what do we do as a congregation *pro tem*, while we wait on God's leading and the Search Committee's work until a new pastor arrives? The first answer, of course, is that we keep doing what are doing: worshiping together, gathering in other ways, helping each other, learning together. As a Council we continue to be committed to pastoral care, rich worship, fellowship, faith formation, and outreach (relying on committees to flesh out this work). Thanks to all who contribute to the well-being of Covenant!

With regard to the Search Committees' work—and they are to be commended for their work so far—you will find a brief update in these pages. Keep them in prayer. There are also two specific areas I want to mention as we live *pro tem*: they are evening gatherings and communion. As to the first, please read Rebecca De Vries's update from the Worship Committee (also in these pages). And for the second, Council remains committed to weekly communion. Our road to what has become an integrated part of our worship is actually quite long—stretching back through the encouragement of three pastors. More recently, it was Pastor Joel who led us to commit to the word and sacrament ministry that includes weekly communion as well as the opening of the table to children (also a long, good road) and to anyone who it committed to our Lord. And during our vacancy, especially our regular pastors (for which we are so grateful!) have often demonstrated how the gospel message they share from Scripture leads to the Great Feast of Thanksgiving. A friend and fellow parishioner shared with me how gratifying it is for him to watch the body as it proceeds forward: he has developed a habit of praying for individuals as they walk by. Your own practice may be different, but the reminder that we are bound together on a journey, and called to uphold each other, is wonderful.

You have certainly noticed that occasionally elders, and not pastors, lead our communion. When we decided to participate in communion each week, we gained approval from our Classis (our regional gathering of churches) for our elders to serve communion. We do this whenever the person opening Scripture for us is not ordained as a pastor. You could call it a quirk of Christian Reformed Church Order, but it is both a reminder that elders are ordained into their role (technically, a pastor is "just" an elder with the training and ordination to pastor a congregation) and that, while we are vacant, our elders provide tangible spiritual leadership. I hope that you are encouraged by this. For myself (and for any elder who serves or leads communion) it is a distinct, and humbling, privilege to lead you in communion. May God be praised and our fellowship increase!

-Bob De Smith, Council President

Evening Worship Update

When Pastor Joel retired and we first became vacant, the Worship Committee and the Council agreed that we would not be getting pulpit supply for Sunday evenings and therefore we would not gather regularly for evening worship. At first, we decided to take a step back from evening worship until after Easter, which would allow us some time to think about how to proceed in the interim between Pastor Joel and our next pastor.

In that time we began to plan for once-a-month Sunday evening gatherings that would, as Bob De Smith wrote, "call us together around the Acts 2 injunction (which Pastor Joel called us to), namely that we are devoted to 'the Apostle's teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.'" So in April we gathered for a service of worship and prayer on the theme of creation and stewardship; in May we gathered for a WE Service on the theme of the Holy Spirit; in June we gathered for wiffle ball and fellowship at Heritage Village; and in July we will gather at various backyards for fellowship, continuing our tradition of "Guess Who's Coming to the Backyard." August is in the works. This summer, and through September, we have also been worshiping with the other Sioux Center Christian Reformed congregations on the second Sunday of each month for a joint service.

What's next, especially since the "interim" will now be longer than we had hoped or expected? The Worship Committee has some emerging ideas for ongoing occasional gatherings that help us to be Acts 2 people. Here are some of them:

- Worship at Crowne Point with some of our members living there
- Themed worship nights (i.e. Sabbath Rest, Justice & Mercy, Multicultural Worship)
- Edifying Engagements led by members of Covenant Committees (Missions and Outreach, Justice and Mercy, Senior Needs) or guest speakers or ministry partners
- WE services
- Outdoor worship service
- Prairie Walk
- Game Night

In April of 2026, the Elders, consistent with a decision made 8 years ago during our previous pastoral vacancy, decided to not continue regular evening services. They said that while they "continue to be in support of occasional evening gatherings," there would be no expectation that a new pastor would conduct regular evening services. They will continue to encourage participation in small groups, formal and informal, as well as other means of fellowship and rest.

And something else has sprung up in the interim: a group of Covenant members have started gathering occasionally to watch a Dordt Chapel service, discuss the message, and share joys and concerns for prayer. They will continue to do this on Sundays when no other gathering is planned and all are welcome to join.

-Rebecca DeVries

August Birthdays & Anniversaries

1 Marge DeBoer
Daniel & Erika Ver Steeg

2 Ruth Clousing
Jason & Tammy Lief

3 Rob Haan
Sos Maletoungou
Faith Van Schouwen
Laurey Zwart

4 Micah Dykstra
Verlyn & June De Wit

6 Ezra Landman
Lee Mellema

7 George Faber
Juliet Jewett
Jeff & Sara Ploegstra

8 Rin Goedhart
Ron Oostra
Carlene Van Schouwen

9 Ron & Carol Oostra

11 Dani Wyenberg
Robbin & Sara Eppinga
Jason & Amanda Vande Brake

12 Benjamin & Tricia Groenewold-Van Dyk

13 Kathleen Van Tol

15 Ryan & Amie Smit

16 Blake Stiemsma
Kyle & Andrea Dieleman
John & Laurey Zwart

17 Jake & Trena Van Wyk

18 Del & Lois Vander Zee

19 Steve Crull
Savannah Lief

20 Barb Mellema
Shaun Stiemsma

21 Derek Friend
Daniel Ver Steeg
John & Linda Visser

23 Chris Goedhart
John Zwart

26 Connor Visscher
Len & Lee Rhoda

28 Josiah Vander Plaats

29 Dave Schelhaas

30 Melissa Bailey
Jason Vande Brake

31 Andrea Dieleman



Remember in prayer

Please remember in prayer and visits Covenant members who are often unable to worship with us because of health concerns and those living in care facilities: Carol Apol, Ed Dengler, George Faber, Rachel Hibma, Joan McCarthy, Marilyn Mouw, Lee Plasier.

Thank You!

Remember the food drive we held in May where we collected rice, beans, flour, and oil for Mid-Sioux? We recently received this note:

Covenant Christian Reformed Church:
Thank you so much for your donation of almost 270 pounds of food for our food pantry! It is so nice to be able to keep food on our shelves for those that need the help. Your generosity is very much appreciated!

Amy DeGroot

Outreach Coordinator for Mid-Sioux

August Scheduling



Valet

Marcy H



Greeters

Mark C, Carol O, Verlyn DW



Ushers

Chris G, Andy L, Kurt V



Coffee Servers

Marge DB, Ron O, Lee R,
Marty VP, Erika VS

Substitutes

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

Steve C, Pam DJ, Rin G,
Kristi H, Cal J, Channon 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, **August 24** for the September issue.



Nursery

Nursery Monitor: Erika VS

August 2
AM Marty & Kris VP, Ethan & Donna B

August 9
AM Ryan & Val Z, Jason & Dani W

August 16
AM Ron & Carol O, Lee & Jenni M

August 23
AM Mark & Cheri H, Juliet J

August 30
AM Chris & Rin G, Mark & Lisa C

September 6
AM Laremy & Rebecca DV, Marcy H

Worship Schedule

Here's what's coming up on Sundays in the month of August:

August 2 AM: Rev. Cal Hoogendoorn

August 9 AM: Dr. Gayle Doornbos
6:00 PM: Joint CRC worship service at Faith CRC, Rev. Sam Ash more preaching

August 16 AM: Dr. Justin Bailey

August 23 AM: Dr. Kyle Dieleman
6:00 PM: TBD

August 30 AM: Dr. Jason Lief

Note from the Deacons

Spring Offering Recap

The final report for the 2026 Spring Offering of Thanks has been tabulated: $13,955 for 15 primarily national and global ministries, including (1) Miriam McAuley ($2,465), (2) Tesoros de Dios ($2,430), (3) Resonate Global Mission ($2,280), (4) World Renew ($1,1675), and (5) ASJ Honduras ($1,510).

If you would like to give an additional gift (or series of gifts) to one or more of these ministries, ask a Deacon for further instructions. Likewise, if you would like to recommend a cause or ministry for the 2027 Spring Offering, drop the Deacons a note.

Thank you for participating in this opportunity for generosity. "[D]o not forget to do good and share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." (Hebrews 13:16.)

-Micah Schreurs

On behalf of the Deacons:
(Jan Bajema, Kyle Dieleman, Micah Dykstra, Mark Horstman, Micah Schreurs, Atul Shinde, Michael Vander Plaats, Val Zonnefeld)







Pictured to the right: Covenant's young (and less young) wiffle ball players got to show off their skills at our June 28 gathering at Tower Fields.

Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/26-7/19/26) $210,595	$197,680	-$12,915
Christian Education	(8/1/25-7/19/26) $124,067	$138,493	+$14,426
Refresh Building	(1/1/26-7/19/26) $41,492	$46,313	+$4,821



Some big news from Sos and Kara Maletoungou, missionaries we support in Africa:

Safe and Sound in Cameroon

The past few weeks have been quite intense as we packed, wrapped up many loose ends, and said goodbye to dear friends and ministry coworkers in Guinea. Following a smooth journey, we arrived safely in Yaoundé (capital city of Cameroon) on July 13. Praise be to God and thank you all for your faithful prayers!

Since our arrival, we've been busy navigating the many logistics of settling into our new home. We are living in mission housing on a shared compound with several other families. The boys have especially enjoyed spending their days outdoors with new friends and making full use of the soccer field! While it will still take a little time before we're fully settled, we are well on our way.

The Context of Our Relocation

Our move to Cameroon in the Central African region is the fulfilment of a direction the Lord has been confirming over many years through prayer and His faithful leading.

Over the past 13 years, our family had the privilege of serving in West Africa, Guinea, where we witnessed God transform the lives and practices of hundreds of Christian educators and schools. We also saw many church leaders embrace a renewed vision for partnering with and empowering schools and families in preparing the next generation through biblical worldview. During that time, The Teacher's Garden was firmly established as a legally registered Christian education resource center with a strong local team dedicated to equipping teachers for contextualized and genuinely transformative education.

Since January 2023, the scope of our ministry has expanded significantly as Sosthene stepped into the role of Africa Director with ACSI, in partnership with Resonate Global Mission. He has been serving alongside churches, schools, and families to strengthen and advance the movement of Christian education in approximately 35 countries across Africa.

Africa's regions are remarkably diverse, with significant differences in educational quality and in the maturity of Christian education movements. For example, many French-speaking countries continue to face substantial educational challenges, with average literacy rates estimated between 36% and 43%, compared with approximately 76% across many English-speaking nations on the continent.

Predominantly French speaking, the Central African region is one of the areas where Christian schooling, teacher development, and biblically grounded education have some of the greatest opportunities for growth and renewal. At the same time, the region is home to an estimated 30,000 Christian schools, along with several Christian universities that have largely been pioneered by the church. It also represents one of the largest concentrations of Christian believers in Africa.

We are deeply convinced that Central Africa is uniquely positioned to become a significant hub for the continued growth of both the church and the Christian education movement across the continent in the coming decades.

Moving Forward

Establishing our ministry residence in Central Africa is a step in obedience as we continue pursuing God's calling to equip Christian educators throughout Africa. Being based here will make Sosthene's frequent travel across the

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Meet the Council

(Continued from page 1)

dent God will equip me for this role and accomplish his purposes through me as an elder.

Elder Jeremy Hummel

Kristi and I have five children: Morgan, Benjamin, Claire, Brandon, and Samantha. Every year during the summer, we rediscover our love of hiking and exploring in the mountains, and Kristi and I try to nurture a love of gardening in the kids, to varying degrees of success. We have been blessed by the Covenant family in so many ways since we started attending in 2020.

I think the Christian walk is something like my family's summer activities, where as a family of believers we sometimes share mountaintop experiences, but a lot of day-to-day life is spent together in seemingly routine actions, like the ground-level care of a garden. I appreciate how the charge to elders does not see the day-to-day as mundane, but directs both our "pain and weakness" and our "joy" to the special attention of this family, this body, that God is forming us to be. I pray we can be a church where all of us are seen, encouraged, and nurtured.

Deacon Michael Vander Plaats

My name is Michael Vander Plaats, I am 24 and have been worshiping at Covenant my whole life. My wife Adeline and I have been married for two years and are looking forward to celebrating our son Josiah's 1st birthday later this August. I work at Interstates as a Data Analyst.

What stood out to me in the charge to the deacons is that, in addition to the responsibility to care for and serve as stewards within our congregation, there is also an emphasis that these responsibilities extend beyond the congregation into the broader community and the world. As both a lifelong Covenant worshipper and Sioux Center resident, I am excited and look forward to serving this congregation and the surrounding community.

Missionary News

(Continued from page 7)

continent considerably more efficient while also providing an opportunity to establish a new regional hub for The Teacher's Garden. Through this ministry, we hope to equip increasing numbers of teachers with biblical worldview and integration across the region.

At the same time, our commitment to West Africa remains unchanged. We will continue providing coaching, mentoring, and regular field visits to support the Teacher's Garden team and ongoing ministry in Guinea, trusting God to continue building on the strong foundation He has already established through our 13 years of ministry presence there.

Prayer Requests:

- Praise God for a smooth transition and a missionary community that has been generous and eager to help us get settled.
- Pray for God's favor and providence as we work out the logistics of shipping a container with a ministry vehicle and Sosthene's books from Guinea.
- Pray for God's ongoing protection for us. Samuel got hurt within 15 minutes of us arriving here while playing with new friends! He's mostly healed now, but we really need God's protection over us.
- Pray for God's grace and provision as we look for office space for Sos and for transportation solutions to get around town.

-Sos & Kara Maletoungou