

The Newsletter

July 2024

*Glorify God in all we do,
Grow with Him daily &
Go with Him to share
His love.*

**For the Lord
is the Spirit,
and Wherever
the Spirit of
the Lord is,
There is
Freedom.
2 Corinthians 3:17**

July at a Glance

- 5: 2 pm BINGO at Sibley Specialty
- 7: Communion Sunday
- 8: 6:00 pm Elder & Deacon Meetings
7:00 pm Full Consistory will meet
- 11-14: Men's Fishing Trip
- 15: 9:30 am Faith Bible Study
3:00 pm Patience Bible Study
- 15-20: Osceola County Fair
- 17: 2 pm FRC in charge of Nursing Home Service
- 26: DeBoer/Fuoss Rehearsal/ Supper
- 27: DeBoer/Fuoss Wedding
- 29-3: FRC in charge of Meals on Wheels

*Sundays:

- 9:00 am Praise & Worship Service
- 10:10 am Coffee Fellowship Time
Sunday School is on Summer Break

*Tuesdays:

- 8:30 am Quilting Chicks will meet

*Wednesday Evening:

- Bible Classes and Youth Groups:
On Summer Break! See you in the fall!

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In the past couple of months I have thought a lot about how to begin my ministry at First Reformed. I will be starting off, a few weeks after my arrival, with a sermon series called "First Things." These messages will be designed to bring a sharp clarity to certain important issues that hopefully heads off any misunderstandings in the future about what sort of a pastor I am, and why I do (and don't do) the things I do (and don't do.) For the same reason I am gratified to have the chance to speak to you in this newsletter before I even officially begin my duties at FRC.

You might find that I am a different sort of pastor than you've been used to. You might even consider me strangely old-fashioned in many ways. That in and of itself can be a huge opportunity for the Devil to begin interfering with the Lord's work at FRC via his old, tried and true method of bitterness and anger over unmet expectations. Therefore, I hope to introduce myself here and get us started on a good footing.

Right out of the gate, I want you to know that I am, above all else, a shepherd of souls. I am relentlessly driven by that priority. That is what God called me to do. The wellbeing of your soul is my primary job. That means that other, lesser priorities will inevitably take a backseat to that one. That doesn't mean I won't work on those lesser priorities. It does mean they can't ever become the highest priority. There's a reason I'm telling you this.

For the last hundred and twenty five years in the mainline denominations, like the RCA, the pastors have by and large given up on shepherding souls because of what they've been taught at seminary. I know this from personal experience because I am a graduate of a mainline Presbyterian seminary and was formerly a mainline Presbyterian minister. The guiding assumption of many pastors has generally been that everyone is basically a good person. Sin is something built into our social structures, not an issue of personal choices and behavior. Whatever problems the good people do have can be solved by inspiring platitudes and education. There's no hell (and perhaps no heaven and maybe even no God, at least in the way we've traditionally understood him.) And so the soul doesn't really need to be shepherded because it's never really in any danger. A nice God will see to the wellbeing of all the nice people he has created.

What is needed instead, thinks the mainline liberal, is to teach the nice people of the church that they ought to do nice things for other basically nice people outside of the church. That is the essence of the Christian message, they say. Suffice it to say that it is nothing like the essence of the Christian message. Instead, it is a false gospel that has damned many.

The abandonment of soul shepherding as a core function of the pastoral ministry meant that a pastor had to find something else to fill his days with and justify his salary. And so many pastors learned to fill their days with all sorts of nonsense. Some of it was marginally useful, but much of it was a total waste of time and resources. Over time the people in the church began to accept this state of affairs and even rely on it. As the spiritual health of the mainline churches declined, many even found it to be a relief, since they didn't really want their soul to be shepherded to begin with. "Better to have the pastor making the bulletin, cleaning the men's room at the church, attending meetings with the other pastors in town, and giving speeches at the Ladies' Auxiliary than to have him bothering me," they reasoned.

The other basic function of the pastor is often thought to be getting people to do things they don't really want to do. In this model a successful pastor is a pastor who can cajole lots of people into coming together and doing big things they don't really want to do, so that he can take credit for their labors.

I will not be following either of those models. I will be a soul shepherd instead.

It's important to note that in soul shepherding, you set the boundaries. You invite me into your life if you want, as deeply as you want. And if you don't want, I will not try to press my way in. The reason for this is simple. It's in the nature of soul shepherding itself.

Quite simply, soul shepherding is me, assisted by the Spirit of God, guided by the Word of God, helping you to learn how to change in all aspects of your being, in order to become progressively transformed into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Another name for this is discipleship. It is the way of strength, peace, sufficiency, and rest. It's the life of the easy yoke and the light burden that Jesus promises to the weary, heavy-laden soul. In this way you learn how to lay down the things that are tormenting you and making it hard to be in relationship with you- things like anger, and anxiety, and fear, and the need to have your own way. You learn from personal experience about the sufficiency of God for every issue of life and death, and that vast resources of provision and power are only one request away.

If we are even modestly successful in that joint endeavor, amazing and powerful things will happen in you, your family, the church, your workplace, and our community. God himself will show up in undeniable ways.

That's it. That's my basic job. Everything else I do is designed to support or facilitate that end. Now, obviously that is a process that requires your voluntary cooperation and some effort on your part. You've to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" understanding that "it is God who is at work within you, both to will and to act according to his good pleasure." (Phil 2:12.) So you've got to want that change. If you don't really want it, there's really nothing I can do but pray for you and love you and be present and available to you should God move in your life, and you begin to desire that change.

Keep in mind that this is not a denial of Calvinism and the Reformed Faith. Properly understood, it is the very foundation of its doctrine of salvation. Total depravity means that you can do whatever you want, but you are powerless to want whatever you want. The lost person is not able to choose Christ because, at bottom, he or she doesn't want to and can't bring themselves to want to. There's no use sugarcoating that fact or descending into nice platitudes. You will do what you really want to do. People always do in the end. Humanly speaking, the ball is in your court, and I am at your disposal. Please consider yourself cordially invited into a life of transformational discipleship, should you so desire.

I look forward to getting to know each of you in the coming months.

Blessings,
Pastor Brian

Trivia Fun Time

1. Who were the two disciples who were called "The Sons of Thunder"?
2. In order to see Jesus more clearly, Zacchaeus climbed what type of tree?
3. Who escaped from Damascus in a basket?
4. How many people were saved in Noah's Ark?
5. Who issued the decree that all the world should be taxed?
6. What was the name of the tree that Adam and Eve were told not to eat from?
7. Who foretold the 7 good years and 7 lean years in Egypt?
8. Who was the first woman judge in Israel?
9. Who was the couple that died because they lied to the Holy Spirit?
10. Who was accused of eating in the cornfields on the Sabbath?



Stewardship & Giving

Offering Summary through June 21:

- **General Fund: \$160,862.38**
Budget: 443,532.29; 36% of budget
- **Benevolent Fund: \$14,490.33**
Budget: \$68,275.23; 21% of budget
- **Building Fund offerings to date: \$1115**
Building Fund - Parsonage Updates: \$6600

Special Offering for July

OCMA Backpack Program



The Bountiful Blessings Table Is Back!!



A great way to share your abundance of garden produce, flowers, baked goods, home canned items, crafts...
(all items are appreciated)



All items donated to the table are available to take home for a free-will monetary donation.

All money collected by the end of the season will once again be donated to the Upper Des Moines Food Pantry.



Faith In Action for July

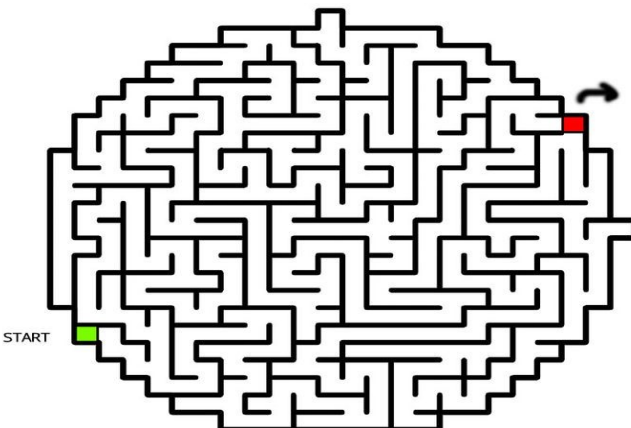
Bright Beginnings Supplies

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| *Buttons | *Crayola Washable Markers |
| *Stickers (Esp. Holliday ones) | *Crayola Crayons |
| *Q-tips | *Pony Beads |
| *Cotton Balls | *Foam Shape Stickers |
| *Sequins | *Card Stock (Colored and White) |
| *Coffee Filters | *Feathers |
| *Tissue paper of all colors | *Ribbon |
| *Popsicle sticks (regular and jumbo) | *Yarn |
| *Playdough Tools | *Sidewalk chalk |



Consistory Meeting Highlights June 10, 2024

- MMSA the request by Josh to use the church and outside grounds for Summerfest 2024 for 3 times per year. Ages 7-12 grades.



Praise and Worship Greeters

- 7: E: Mike and Mary Hustoft
C: Merlyn and Julie Janssen
W: Jeannette Juffer
- 14: E: John and Jan Juffer
C: Alan and Lacey Julius/family
W: Dennis and Dar Jurgens
- 21: E: Joanne Klaassen
C: Kevin and Laurel Klaassen
W: Greg and Deb Kusters
- 28: E: Mitch and Abby Kreykes/family
C: Pam Kruger
W: Jodene Kruse

Worship Service Nursery

Nursery is open but unstaffed
during the summer months.

Sunday School Nursery

Sunday School is on
Summer Break.
See you all in the Fall!!

Fellowship Coffee Servers

- 7: Ken and Wilma Loerts
14: Scott and Jamie Hulstein
21: Greg and Deb Kusters
28: Burt and Jan Henrichs

Children & Worship during the service



Children and Worship is on
Summer Break.
See you all in the Fall!!

Willing Hands Group

Willing Hands Group #6

will be responsible for
services during the month.

Co-chairpersons are:

- Peg/Curt Van Kley
- Rhonda/Larry Riebeling

Library Volunteers



- 7: Janice Runia
14: Pauline Van Engen
21: Leanne Van Kley
28: Marcia Van Ruler

Sportsmen's Devotional

Today's Photograph . . . I Thanked The Lord For The Picture and Experience, His Timing Was Not Random

Bible Study Verse

Ecclesiastes 3:1-4

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under Heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. (NKJ)

Thoughts

As I entered Canaan Valley State Park (near Davis, WV), a herd of whitetails caught my attention. While taking pictures of triplet spotted fawns (to send to my grandchildren), another animal watcher told me about a mink that sometimes crossed a nearby stretch of road. I laughed and thought how "random" it would be to see that wary furbearer, let alone be able to photograph him on my phone. Minks don't like attention!

Cruising down that road a little later, what should happen? The mink ran across the road, right in front of my stopped truck! I regretted being too slow with my phone camera, as he dove down into the ditch. But, then, much to my surprise, he ran back across the road and stopped for me to take the picture above! Then, he was gone.

I thanked the Lord for the great picture, and experience! His timing was not "random"!

Action Point

We know in our heads that God's timing is perfect. The problem we have, is our eyesight! Sometimes things don't look perfectly timed, in our perspective, do they?! But, as we grow in our relationship to Christ, He begins to show us, as we are willing to see and believe, what is His perfect timing. We look with different "spiritual eyes," and then we are amazed at:

What He does.

How He does it.

When He does it.

David reminds us in Psalm 103:2, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits," (NKJV). The Hebrew words literally mean, "Don't let the good things/gifts (from God) pass by, without noticing them." His timing is not "random."

God has never had a problem of anyone giving Him too much attention or credit. It's mostly less attention or credit. Let's do something about that, and be sure not to miss His timing, His blessings, and His actions in our lives. Thank Him, and tell others what He did, and how His timing was perfect!

Sportsmen's Tip of the Day

- Glassing while kneeling or sitting many times reveals a different perspective and view of the woods. Slowly glassing, moving cautiously, taking our time, will many times not only show us the game that we're hunting, but also keep us from spooking them.





Education Schedule:

- Sunday School is on break until fall.
- MS Remnant is on break until fall.
- HS Remnant is on break until fall.

Have a fun and safe Summer!!



2024 Annual Men & Boys FRC Fishing Trip

Where:

Hidden Hills Lodge in NE South Dakota

When:

July 11-14

Who:

Invite your grandkids, friends or any want-to-be fisherman for this fun filled weekend of fishing and discovering God's Creation.



Questions? Contact
Chris Wynia
or Dan Heilman

4th of July

Word Search



X	P	F	C	G	D	S	B	S	I	R	D	J	S	I
D	A	M	E	R	I	C	A	S	U	E	S	D	T	N
G	R	G	L	M	D	F	R	E	E	D	O	M	A	D
U	A	Y	E	N	F	Q	B	F	S	W	S	K	R	E
V	D	R	B	S	H	S	E	I	O	H	G	K	S	P
D	E	E	R	R	Y	I	Q	R	H	I	R	K	A	E
E	E	G	A	N	E	H	U	E	G	T	T	J	N	N
L	Y	F	T	H	E	F	E	W	D	E	U	G	D	D
I	R	S	I	R	F	D	I	O	R	A	I	F	S	E
B	W	A	O	S	O	S	P	R	H	N	H	H	T	N
E	D	A	N	F	F	E	Q	K	P	D	Y	B	R	C
R	V	A	F	D	L	O	V	S	O	B	T	C	I	E
T	P	G	U	S	A	O	I	G	I	L	E	S	P	W
Y	I	O	E	R	G	Q	W	G	K	U	W	X	E	Q
M	U	N	C	L	E	S	A	M	Z	E	E	E	S	S



America
Barbeque
Celebration
Fireworks
Flag
Freedom
Independence

Liberty
Parade
Red White and Blue
Stars and Stripes
Uncle Sam
USA

Trivia Time Answers:

1. James and John (Mark 3:17)
2. Sycamore Tree (Luke 19:2-4)
3. Saul/Paul (Acts 9:23-25)
4. Eight (Genesis 6:10,18)
5. Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1)
6. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17)
7. Joseph (Gen 41:15,25,29,30)
8. Deborah (Jud. 4:4)
9. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10)
10. Jesus (Luke 6:1-2)



PRAY FOR GOD’S PEOPLE

1. Terry and Chrissy Ackerman; Zoe, Jaeger

2. Brian and Chelsey Alexander
Kimberlie, Riley, Brysen

3. Kim Alsip; Zoey

4. Bobby and Dee Baker

5. John and Sharon Bartels

6. Pray for our College Students

7. Pray for our Church

8. Gretchen Bartelson

9. Kaitlyn Bechler

10. Carl Berkenpas

11. Tony and Jamiey Bevers;
Elliot, Grace, Gabe, Olivia

12. Davis and Kristen Beyer; MacKenzie,
Aidan, Dawson, Easton, Kavan, Tayah

13. Pray for our College Students

14. Pray for our Church

15. Mike and Andrea Block; Michael
16. Travis and Jill Boeke; Emma

17. Jerry and Sylvia Bosma

18. Tammy Breitweiser; Andrea

19. Daphne Bremer; Dalten, Tayler

20. Pray for our College Students

21. Pray for our Church

22. Randy Bremer; Dalten, Tayler

23. Marlys Brink

24. Jerrad and Tracee Brouwer;
Grant, Carter, Madison

25. Brayden and Alyssa Bruxvoort

26. Jamie and Jennifer Bruxvoort; Ella

27. Pray for our College Students

28. Pray for our Church

29. Kailey Bruxvoort

30. Logan Bruxvoort

31. Jane Buysman

<u>College Students:</u>	Marissa Ackerman	MacKenzie Beyer	Carter Brouwer
Grace Beavers	Halle Block	Teddy Van Gelder	Andrea Leusink
Michael Block Jr.	Tayler Bremer		
Ella Bruxvoort	Madison Brouwer		
Aiden De Zeeuw	Regan Crichton		
Apiyo Harberts	Keegan De Zeeuw		Dalten Bremer
Uchan Harberts	Makya Dykstra		Natalie Klaassen
Karissa Hulstein	Maverick Elser		
	Jared Kruger		
	Emma Langstraat		
	Matthew McDougal		Grant Brouwer
	Gannon Rockman		Ryan Van Marel

BE A
Prayer
WARRIOR

Luke 21:36

Grace Covenant Ministries

[illegible]



THANKS FOR READING!

It's time again for the monthly newsletter. Until Pastor Luke left and I stepped in to help write it, I had no idea how hard it could be to do this month after month. I look forward to handing off my commitment next month to Pastor Brian Carpenter!

Preparing for my final contribution, I feel compelled to share a personal testament of my faith and devotion. Those who have followed these articles are aware of my deep-rooted Christian beliefs, my profound love for Jesus Christ, and my unwavering faith in the teachings of the Bible.

Many Christians believe this, but we have differences with others. I am a Calvinist, a descendant of the Reformation branch called "Reformed." I am committed to the creeds, the five Solas, God's sovereignty in salvation, pedobaptism, and a Presbyterian form of church government. I wasn't always. I did not grow up in the Reformed tradition; I grew up in a liberal military chapel with chaplains who told me I didn't need to believe the Bible because it wasn't true.

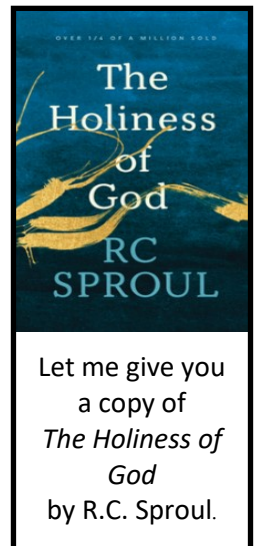
I tanked in college. I walked away from my freshman year as an atheist because I thought Christianity was a foolish emotional tradition without substance or truth. It was the late 60s, and we were also questioning the existence of truth.

Fortunately for me, God is sovereign and does not fail his elect. He sent a Reformed theologian into my world and the words of solid theologians who helped me to *re-form* my mind so that I could present my life as a living sacrifice. Romans 12:1-2 are vital verses that have informed my life for almost 55 years.

I read Francis Schaeffer's *The God Who is There* and *How Then Shall We Live?* and J.I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. I can still remember what they said, and I still quote both of these authors.

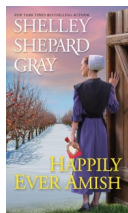
Another book that changed my view of God was *The Holiness of God* by R.C. Sproul. This is one of the most outstanding books ever written. When RC died in 2017, people who loved his work often asked each other where they were when they read this book. Ask Josh—he can tell you the same thing.

So, as a last hurrah, **I will give a copy of this book to anyone who asks me for one.** I have a few on hand and will order more if needed. Read it, I beg you! Stop me in the fellowship hall, put a note in my mailbox, text me, or send an email, and I will get a copy for you to read.

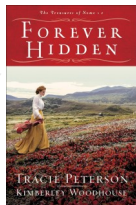


From the library--

New books are continually being added to the library, below are the synopsis of three.



We will start with the first in a new Amish series 'Amish of Apple Creek' by Shelley Shepard Gray, *HAPPILY EVER AMISH*. "Addie Byler may be Apple Creek's resident wallflower, but she knows she has a lot to offer—and much to be grateful for. Raised by her loving grandmother, she lives a life filled with good friends, and hard work. Wary of romance, Addie assumes no man will look beyond her glasses and her tendency to talk to her rescue donkey, Snickers—until the day she finds a note from a secret admirer. A prank, most likely. But then, a second note arrives... It's not that Daniel Miller doesn't like Addie, he just doesn't want to court her. She's too willful, to chatty, too odd. Yet when he learns she's been teased because she's never had a beau, he decides to send a little note of encouragement. One note leads to another. And when Addie begins replying with thoughtful messages of her own, he's struck by her sweetness and warmth. Soon, what begins as a sympathetic gesture becomes something deeper. Daniel fears revealing the truth, but with courage, faith—and a helping hand from their close-knit community—Apple Creek's most unlikely couple may find their path to happiness..."



From Ohio we will travel to Nome, Alaska in book #1 *FOREVER HIDDEN* in the new series by Tracie Peterson and Kimberley Woodhouse, 'The Treasures of Nome,' For Havyn Powell, growing up on her Grandfather Chuck Bundrant's dairy outside the 1904 gold-rush town of Nome, Alaska, offered all she needed. But now, at twenty-three, Havyn realizes the stability of her life may soon vanish. Havyn is determined to find a way to keep the family together, but her grandfather's health is declining and everyone seems to be holding secrets from one another, including the handsome, dark-haired stranger who recently arrived. John Roselli heads to Nome on a mission. On his death-bed John's grandfather asked him to deliver a box to Chuck Bundrant. This is no small task and will cost everything he has, but John is determined to honor his grandfather's wishes. But keeping his promise will forever change his life. When tragedy strikes, Havyn and her sisters have a plan of using their beautiful voices and musical talents to perform and earn money at a local roadhouse. They're an immediate hit, and it looks like the plan will save their family. But the spotlight brings with it danger, even as it serves to draw Havyn and John ever closer. But will they realize the peril before it's too late? Will the secrets that have been hidden for so long prove to destroy their happiness?"



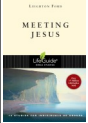
If you have been reading 'Leah's Garden' news series, by Lauraine Snelling, you will want to read the fourth and final book, *A SEASON OF HARVEST*. "Larkspur Nielson is determined to keep her family's homestead running and to fulfill their dream of starting a seed catalog, with or without her siblings' help. With Isaac McTavish back in town, Lark finds herself at odds with her own heart and her determination to shoulder the burden of carrying her responsibilities alone. But Isaac is set on convincing her that he's here to stay and she doesn't have to carry everything by herself. As a new romance blossoms between Lilac and an old schoolmate the other Nielson sisters are busy caring for their families, Lark bears more and more responsibility on the farm. When a long-feared threat returns and Lark approaches the breaking point, the life she has always dreamed of is in danger of disappearing forever."

The library is always open, visit it soon.

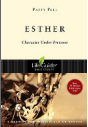
Jeannette Juffer

GROWING IN THE

WORD



Faith Bible Study, will meet on **Monday, July 15 at 9:30 am**. We will be studying lesson #13 "Jesus the Risen Lord" in our book *Meeting Jesus*. Scripture will be John 20. Jan Henrichs will be leader and Jan Harskamp will serve as hostess. All are invited! Hope to see you there!



Patience Bible Study, will meet on **Monday, July 15 at 3:00 pm**. We will be studying lesson #1 "Preparing a Place," in our new book *Heaven: Finding Our True Home*. Scripture for the lesson is John 14:1-9. Barb will lead and serve as hostess. Come for a time of fellowship and learning.



6:30pm Sunday Evening Fellowship Bible Study Opportunity!

****Digging into God's Word****

*Fireside Room

****The Sermon Discussion Groups are on break until fall.****



Kids away at camp this month

July 1-3

Jhase Hesse - Grand Camp
Kellan Hesse - Grand Camp
Pauline Van Engen - Grand Camp

July 8-12

Paisley Kreykes - Lodge Camp

July 15-19

Braelyn Hurlburt - Day Camp

July 24-26

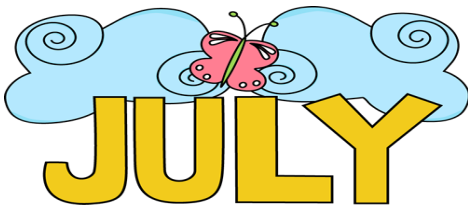
Braelyn Hurlburt - Grand Camp

July 24-28

Kalen Heronimus - Wilderness
Brynna Loerts - Saddle Up
Jaxton Loerts - Wilderness
Landon Odens - Wilderness
Logan Ver Steeg - Wilderness

Students always love receiving mail from home. If you would like to write to students who are attending camp please send letters to:

Inspiration Hills Camp, % (Student Name/Camp attending), 1242 280th Street, Inwood, IA 51240.



Celebrations

~~*Birthday's*~~

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Hannah Lucas | 20 Caelyn Hurlburt | 27 LaVon Dykstra |
| 4 Roger Verdoorn | Adelyn Hurlburt | 28 Jamie Klaassen |
| 5 Leah Ackerman | 22 Brooks Heronimus | 29 Wilma Loerts |
| 6 Aiden Ver Steeg | 23 Alivia Weg | 31 Paisley Kreykes |
| 8 Ted Schutte | 26 Bob Tiedeman | Angie Ackerman |
| 9 Jan Juffer | Maria Mans | |
| 10 Megan Ackerman | | |
| 11 Lesa Stofferan | | |
| 12 Joel Verdoorn | | |
| Mackenzie Wynia | | |
| 13 Jared Kruger | | |
| 14 Mark Hulstein | | |
| Ryan Wiersma | | |
| 16 Shelia Van Der Slood | | |
| 17 Elliot Daiker | | |
| 18 Scott Dykstra | | |
| Clark Haken | | |
| Austin Wassman | | |
| 19 Olivia Daiker | | |
| Karen Stevenson | | |

I have found
THE ONE
Whom my soul Loves
SONG OF SOLOMON 3:4

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1 Nate and Angie Buysman | 5 years |
| 9 Robert and Janice Groen | 47 years |
| 11 Nick and Maria Mans | 9 years |
| 12 Duane and Pam Vande Hoef | 50 years |
| 13 Kevin and Twila Heemstra | 39 years |
| 14 Davis and Kristen Beyer | 23 years |
| 20 Larry and Alfreda Verdoorn | 59 years |
| 21 Le Roy and Karen Stevenson | 52 years |
| 22 Dave and Jessica Mc Dyer | 18 years |
| 23 Derek and Megan Ackerman | 8 years |
| 23 Dr. Greg and Deb Kusters | 44 years |
| 24 Harvey and Marcia Van Ruler | 54 years |
| 24 Kody and Jurnea Bos | 4 year |
| 24 Tim and Jodi Kruger | 25 years |
| 25 Jon and Amy Elser | 26 years |
| 27 Mark and Melissa Langstraat | 22 years |
| 29 Kevin and Laurel Klaassen | 30 years |

Hello First Reformed Church,

What have you given God today? I get requests all of the time from people who are asking for something, and yet I ask myself, "What have I given God today?" I have spent countless hours in prayer about asking for things, however, I just recently thought about, "What have I given to God?" Now of course He does not *need* anything from us, but does He *want* anything from us? The answer is yes! He wants us to worship Him alone, live for Him alone, and to glorify Him alone. What have we given to God today? I am reminded of Mark 14:3-9 when Jesus was anointed at Bethany. I preached on this a few months ago, so I hope that you can remember the key points of that passage, but if not allow me to refresh your memory. In Mark 14:3 it explains that Jesus entered into Simon the Leper's house, this indicates that Simon was a leper whom Jesus more than likely cured of leprosy. Continuing in this passage, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, pours an expensive oil on Jesus's head, therefore anointing him. What we may not know or remember is that the contents in the flask came to 300 denarii, which was the equivalent of a year's salary. This was probably the most precious and expensive item that Mary possessed. Quite possibly, she may have even taken a family heirloom and gave it to Jesus. Which, when you think back, makes sense considering the miracle he performed for her family in the raising of Mary and Martha's brother, Lazarus, from the dead. It is safe to say Jesus had done a lot for this family.



Back in May, Hannah and I went to California where I was able to conduct my grandparents' funeral. While we were there, Hannah and I visited an antique shop in downtown Clovis. We walked in and I found a locked case with money in it, old coins and bills, and then I saw another locked box that said, "Ancient Roman Coins," so I asked to see it. I saw coins that dated back to 200-300 AD. I was able to see and touch money similar to what is talked about in Mark 14. No, I do not possess money that Jesus or the disciples handled, at least I don't think so, but I now have in my possession coins that are dated back to the ancient days. When I saw this, it really put things into perspective as to how much it would have financially meant for Mary and her family if she would have sold this ointment. Then it hit me, I asked myself, "What have I given God today." Do I give God my everything or do I give Him the leftovers? Do I actually trust Him with my life, my family's life, and even my future? These are questions that we really need to consider. Today, don't think about ways in which God could give to you, but rather, how you could give to God. There is ultimately nothing material that you could give to God. However, we can give Him our worship, our attitudes in how we treat people, and our generosity with our money, time, and efforts. We even could show Him gratitude by following His commandments.

The ultimate source of showing gratitude is not in words, but in actions. Let's not only say we are grateful, but let's show that we are grateful. This is the concept of good works found in James 1 and 2. Our good works are not what saves us, but it reveals the fruit of our salvation. It reveals that God has transformed our hearts. Today not only should we ask God for His blessing but think of ways that you can bless His name. Here is the final thought, if you are thinking, "Well, why should I have to be the one who does something for God. He's God, what can I do for Him?" There are two answers here. First, because God has commanded us to do this through worship, word, and deed. Second, it is because He is worthy of it. He is worthy of our everything. He has given us everything and so we should be willing to give Him everything as well. Don't give God the leftovers.

Blessings,
Josh

Dad Jokes with Josh:

The word "incorrectly" is spelled incorrectly in every dictionary.



Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe the Jan-April semester is already over and the May-Aug semester has just begun. Times flies by when you are busy. Last semester we both had full teaching loads and worked with a variety of students. Near the end of the semester, the Re-formed Fellowship led chapel for the entire University,

including communion, which was a nice opportunity to serve the St. Paul's community.

Every week, the School of Theology has a fellowship time which Rowland coordinates with student leaders. The opening service for this semester was a time of worship and prayer together. Our theme for this year is "Preserving Mother Earth as God's Commission," calling us all to faithful stewardship of creation. With the recent flooding, that message is hitting home here.

Jane, together with the School of Social Sciences, recently took part in a Mental Health Walk in Nakuru. The walk was part of a whole week of mental health awareness training, enhancing psychological support for others. It was a great opportunity for students and staff from all three of our campuses (Nairobi, Limuru, and Nakuru) to meet and encourage one another.

Our Tuesday Bible Study studied the book of Esther last semester. This semester we are studying the Leadership of David, reading parts of I & II Samuel. The students just had campaigns and election of new leaders so this message is a timely one: What does God desire in and from our leaders today?

On Thursdays, Jane leads a women's spiritual formation group and they just finished looking at the parables of Jesus, which is also what Rowland's preaching students will be working on this semester. Joel Schoon Tanis is coming to help with an artistic interpretation of some of the parables. Should be fun!



As you think of Kenya and our work here at St Paul's University, please pray for the following:

- Pray for victims of flooding in Kenya. More than 250 have died and 280,000 people have been displaced. May they get the help and relief they need.
- Pray for a growing awareness of mental health issues. May those who struggle know there is help available for them.
- Pray for newly elected student leaders. May all that they do be inspired by the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for St Paul's faculty members who lead worship and Bible Study, nurturing the spiritual growth of our students. May the seeds planted by this bear much fruit.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

Jane and Rowland Van Es

Thanks to everyone who helped make VBS a success!! To see more pictures from this fun week at FRC, please visit our church website Www.sibleyfrc.org



**GOOD
OLE
SUMMERTIME
PARADE!!**

