

The Newsletter

August 2024

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

FUN at the FAIR



DUNK
a
Pastor

OCMA FUNDraiser For FLOOD victims



August at a Glance

- 4-9: Pastor Brian is taking continuing education
- 4-11: Josh is gone for Residency
- 5-9: FRC is in charge of Meals on Wheels
- 6: 10am-7pm OCMA Backpack Distribution
- 12: 8-2 OCMA Backpack Distribution
- 6:00 pm Elder & Deacon Meetings
- 7:00 pm Full Consistory will meet
- 18: Communion Sunday
- 19: 9:30 am Faith Bible Study
- 3:00 pm Patience Bible Study
- 21: 12-6 OCMA Backpack Distribution
- 23: First Day of School for 24-25 year

*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!

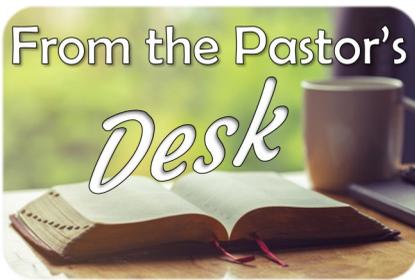
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I want to start off this month's article by saying a deep and heartfelt thank you for the kind way in which my family and I have been received here at First Reformed. The welcome gifts are wonderful, and we will be enjoying locally sourced meat products and other goodies for some time to come. Laura and I and Jordan feel very comfortable here.

True story: When I was pastoring in Sturgis, there was a new minister at the Wisconsin Synod Lutheran Church in town. He called me and introduced himself. I suggested we have lunch together. He agreed. We met at a local restaurant and ordered our food. When it arrived, I asked him if he'd like to bless it. He said no. I asked him if I could bless it for us, and he told me to go ahead, but that he couldn't participate in my prayer because I was a Presbyterian. You see, the Lutherans think that we Presbyterian and Reformed Christians are deeply mistaken on the issue of the sacraments, and particularly the issue of the Lord's Supper. We don't "rightly discern the body of Christ" (1 Cor 11:29, NKJV). Therefore he couldn't even pray with me or even acknowledge me as a fellow Christian. I was wrong about communion, it was going to send me to hell, and, while I'm sure he felt bad about that, my stubborn persistence in my errors was going to kill my soul. Needless to say we didn't end up having much of a relationship after that lunch. It just wasn't possible.

If you take a historical survey of things that Christians have debated throughout the centuries, the issue of the sacraments is probably one of the top three. A lot of ink has been spilled formulating and defending various positions, and at this point in history those positions are fairly well entrenched in the various denominations. The Catholics and Lutherans and Baptists are unlikely to change their views. Neither are we. How to understand and practice the sacraments is one of the main things that divides us into denominations. While there are certainly some downsides to that division, there is at least one good thing that grows out of it. It means we are taking the Bible seriously, even if we arrive at different conclusions about what, exactly, the Bible means on this issue.

I want to take this second newsletter article and deal with where we are going in terms of the pulpit teaching in the next few months here at FRC. The elders have asked me to do a preaching series on the issue of the Reformed understanding of the sacraments. I am of course doing what they requested. We will be dealing with the nature of the sacraments themselves and exploring other questions. We have strong and well-defined beliefs in these areas, but they are not widely understood by Reformed people. Lots of confusion abides. Not only that, the Reformed position is, in my opinion, the most difficult one to understand. So, while I am definitely going to be laboring to make these concepts easier to understand, there is a sense in which I am probably going to be stretching you a bit. That ought not alarm you. You are not unintelligent people. You can disassemble and repair complex machines. You can understand enough soil chemistry to calculate how much anhydrous ammonia to knife into your fields. You can assemble complex patterns in your quilting. You master complex concepts and technical language all the time. Let me tell you, if you can understand the basics direct injected variable valve timing engines, you can understand Reformed sacramental theology if you want to. Don't let the new words intimidate you. You can do this. I know you can.

The first sermon in the series on July 14, had to do with lawful oaths and vows, and the keeping of promises. That's because vows and promise keeping figure prominently in our understanding of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The second sermon on July 21 was an introduction to the concepts of sacramental theology. We asked the questions, "What is a sacrament?" "How many

sacraments are there?” And “What, if anything, do the sacraments do?” In the next few weeks we’re going to be further broadening our understanding of how a sacrament works in the life of a believer to help him or her, and we will be discussing baptism and the Lord’s Supper each in more detail. After that series is finished, I am going to do a series called “So Great a Salvation.” In that series we are going to explore the fuller picture of what happens when the Lord saves a person. There are some things we can see, but there are a bunch of things that the Bible teaches us are going on behind the scenes. Understanding our salvation will help us grow confident in our salvation, and in the Lord who saves and preserves his people.

During Advent we will zoom out and take a “God’s Eye View” of His whole plan for human history, and the place of Christ in bringing about God’s purposes for us.

In the new year we will begin a sermon series on the doctrine of the Assurance of Salvation from the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus in John 17. We will see from the scripture that we are in the care of a good, kind, wise, powerful God who wants to do good to us, protect us, and provide for us. My goal is to help you begin to see the true heart of God. Our God is a good God. You can trust him. Lots of Calvinists think God’s mean, but he’s not. In much the same way that the great powers God created in this universe (like electricity and nuclear power) aren’t safe, yet they aren’t mean. If you understand them, you can harness them safely and they can be marvelously beneficial.

Our God is not safe, but he’s also not mean. If you approach him as he commands, life with him is full of delights and blessings that will last forever. If you don’t, you put yourself in the position of a person who is wandering around in a high voltage substation, who doesn’t know what he’s doing. Sooner or later he is going to touch the wrong thing, and it will probably kill him.

I’d also like to hear feedback on the idea of me teaching a Sunday School class for the adults. I don’t want to try to drum up interest in something people aren’t interested in, but I would like to feed any sheep who are hungry. My idea is to do a study of a portion of the scriptures or a book of the Bible. My initial idea is a study of the Sermon on the Mount. Please let me know your thoughts.

It is a pleasure being your pastor. I look forward to continuing to get to know you and in order to properly serve you and love you.

Blessings,
Pastor Brian

Trivia Fun Time

1. The Israelites were bitten and healed by what creature? One was real, one was brass.
2. What was Moses brother’s name?
3. How many times did Samuel go to Eli the priest, thinking he had called him?
4. What was the name of the Queen devoured by dogs?
5. How old was Joseph when his brothers sold him into slavery?
6. What was the angel’s name who told Mary she would be Jesus’s mother?
7. How many years did the Israelites eat manna?
8. How many years did God give Noah to build the Ark?
9. Who was the father struck speechless due to his unbelief?
10. Which man had to work many years to get his bride, only to get two?



Stewardship & Giving

Offering Summary through July 27:

- **General Fund: \$197,045.10**
Budget: 443,532.29; 36% of budget
- **Benevolent Fund: \$16,942.33**
Budget: \$68,275.23; 21% of budget
- **Building Fund offerings to date: \$1655**
Building Fund - Parsonage Updates: \$6600

Special Offering for August



FRC Men's Cooking Competition 2024

More Details to be Revealed Soon!!!

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Faith In Action for August

Upper Des Moines Food Pantry

Let's help fill up the pantry!

Any nonperishable food is welcome.

Thank you for sharing!



Consistory Meeting Highlights July 8, 2024

- Motion made to move Sunday School time to 9 am and worship to 10 am. **Motion died for lack of support.**
- **MMSA** to recommend to the congregation the Alliance Reformed Church (ARC) Denomination as our destination, and to release from our current ties with the RCA.
- Pastor Brian will take continuing ed from August 4-9, 1 week in January and 1 week in June.
- Discussion was had on recording the audio portion of the sermon and broadcast to "Sermon Audio."



Back-to-school sales are already hitting the stores!

Now is the perfect time to stock up on your Operation Christmas Child Shoebox items!!

Praise and Worship Greeters

- 4: E: Dave and Sandy Lamfers
C: Arnie and Diane Langstraat
W: Mark and Melissa Langstraat/family
- 11: E: Brad and Sarah Loerts/family
C: Brian and Megan Loerts/family
W: Ken and Wilma Loerts
- 18: E: Josh and Hannah Lucas/family
C: Nick and Maria Mans/family
W: Cory and Anne Maxwell/family
- 25: E: Leona Meendering
C: Dick and Marcia Oldenkamp
W: Lyle Peelen

Worship Service Nursery

Nursery is open and staffed.

Sunday School Nursery

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

Fellowship Coffee Servers

- 4: Leona Meendering & Joanne Klaassen
11: Larry and Rhonda Riebeling
18: Ted and Eileen Schutte
25: Dave and Lesa Stofferan

Children & Worship during the service



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

Willing Hands Group

Willing Hands Group #2

will be responsible for
services during the month.

Co-chairpersons are:

- Luella Eggink
- Jan/Ed Harskamp

Library Volunteers



- 4: Alfreda Verdoorn
11: Kathy/Joel Verdoorn
18: RuthAnn Wiersma
25: Gert Gaalswyk

Sportsmen's Devotional

Today's Photograph Be A Link In Your Family Chain To Lead Them To Christ



Bible Study Verse

Deuteronomy 4:40

Keep His decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you for all time. (NIV)

Thoughts

I live along the coast of Lake Huron where the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary is located. This marine sanctuary has some of the best preserved sunken ships in the world due to the fresh water. Over 200 preserved ships are at the bottom and a good chunk of our local tourism has evolved for those who wish to come and either snorkel or scuba dive.

The other day I was snorkeling with my daughter checking out an old shipping dock and lane, that for the most part, lies below the surface of the lake. It was a beautiful day and we could see 60 ft down to the bottom. We were checking out the fish, old posts, and other artifacts that had been left behind from an earlier time.

We had a great time exploring and contemplating all that had happened at this little port. There were quite a few clues left below the surface that allowed us to piece together the type of activity that would have been happening here. Though we didn't have all the information on this particular spot, there was enough evidence left for us to certainly get a picture.

Action Point

One day, your life and my life will probably be inspected by someone from a future generation...grandkids, great grandkids . . . a long distant relative somewhere down the chain. They are going to be looking back and inspecting the evidence of your life. I heard a quote awhile back that said something to the effect that no one can really get an accurate measure of who a man is until he is in his later years when:

- His children choose to come home to visit, that's a sign of what he invested in.
- His neighbors swing by to have a cup of coffee and visit, that says something.

The people in his community can identify that he was honest in his dealings from one place to the next, that also says something.

The evidence of what he invested in their lives will still show itself even though he may be gone.

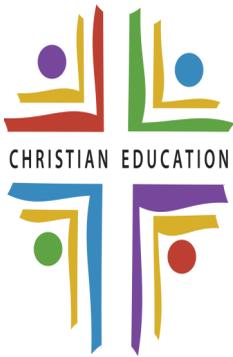
Your life is not lived in a box, and neither is mine. God expects each of us to spend our days living for Him. Someday, the evidence of your life will show itself. What will people see about you? What will God see?

The beautiful thing about God is that He chooses to redeem what has been lost. He never wants someone to stray away from Him. He is always willing to take them back to restore them to wholeness.

If you look back at the course of your life with shame today, know that God wants restoration for you. Ask Him to lead your life fully and completely from this day forward. Also ask Him to help you redeem the things in your life that you have lost. Not because of selfish gain for you, but to let them know that God has changed your life and that He can do the same for them! Be a link in your family chain to lead people to Christ!

Sportsmen's Tip of the Day

If you are snorkeling in an area, make sure to mark the area with a buoy so others who may be driving a boat have a visual signal that someone else is in the area.



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!!



 **Faith Bible Study**, will meet on **Monday, August 19 at 9:30 am**. We will be studying lesson #1, "Strength Within Powerlessness" in our new book *Depending on Jesus*. Scripture will be 2 Corinthians 12:6-10. Anita will be leader and Imogene will serve as hostess. All are invited! If you would like to join, please let us know! Hope to see you there!

 **Patience Bible Study**, will meet on **Monday, July 15 at 3:00 pm**. We will be studying lesson #2 "The Last Frontier," in our book *Heaven: Finding Our True Home*. Scripture for the lesson is Philippians 1:19-30. 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.****

Trivia Time Answers:

1. Serpents (Numbers 21:9)
2. Aaron (Exodus 7:1)
3. Three times (1 Samuel 3:4-8)
4. Jezebel (1 Kings 16:30-31; 2 Kings 9:36)
5. 17 (Genesis 37:2,28)
6. Gabriel (Luke 1:26)
7. 40 years (Exodus 16:35)
8. 120 years (Genesis 6:3)
9. Zacharias (Luke 1:13,18,20)
10. Jacob (Genesis 29:16-28)

PRAYER LIST

BE A
Prayer
WARRIOR
Luke 21:36

PRAY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

1. Nathan and Angie Buysman
2. Dave and JoAnn Calsbeek
3. Pray for our College Students
4. Pray for our Church
5. Margaret Calsbeek
6. Levi and Kira Christensen; Connor, Riley
7. Karla Crichton, Regan, Hadley
8. Dale and Marilynn DeBoer
9. Jaden DeBoer
10. Pray for our College Students
11. Pray for our Church
12. Larry and Melissa DeBoer; Kendra
13. Le Roy and Glenda DeBoer
14. Marc and Angie DeBoer
15. Gary and Sandy De Vries
16. Stan and Abby De Zeeuw;
Keegan, Aiden, Joselyn, Addison
17. Pray for our College Students
18. Pray for our Church
19. Glenn Doorenbos
20. Kelsey Doorenbos
21. Merlin and Karen Doorenbos
22. Paul Doorenbos
23. Cory and Amy Dykstra; Wyatt, Cole
24. Pray for our College Students
25. Pray for our Church
26. LaVon Dykstra
27. Mark and Tanya Dykstra; Makya
28. Ron and Nancy Dykstra
29. Scott and Marlys Dykstra
30. Trudy Dykstra
31. Pray for our College Students

College Students:

Grace Beavers
Michael Block Jr.
Ella Bruxvoort
Aiden De Zeeuw
Apiyo Harberts
Uchan Harberts
Karissa Hulstein

Marissa Ackerman
Halle Block
Tayler Bremer
Madison Brouwer
Regan Crichton
Keegan De Zeeuw
Makya Dykstra
Maverick Elser
Jared Kruger
Emma Langstraat
Matthew McDougal
Gannon Rockman

MacKenzie Beyer
Teddy Van Gelder

Carter Brouwer
Andrea Leusink

Dalten Bremer
Natalie Klaassen

Grant Brouwer
Ryan Van Marel



PRAY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

Assisted Living

Trudy Dykstra
Ethel Jurgens
Larry & Alfreda Verdoorn
Margaret Calsbeek
Anita Ernst
Ellen Schram
Jane Buysman

The Nursing Homes

Marlys Brink
Donna Sterler
Martha Krikke
Wilma Hatting

Christian Retirement Home

Helen Vander Veen

Our Missionaries

Dr. Bernadeth Kelly &
Adrian Bobb
Sayuri Kist—Okazaki
Brian & Donna Renes
J.J. & Tim TenClay
Rowland & Jan Van Es
Grace Covenant Ministries
Jeff and Chelsea Lampen

PRAYER JOURNAL

Lined area for writing prayer journal entries.



Celebrations

~~Birthday's~~

1 Ellie Loerts	20 Charlie Kuhl
3 Vanessa Odens	21 Jessa Wolter
4 Garrett Sayler	22 Paul Feldkamp Jena Meyer
7 Cory Dykstra Dawson Beyer Aidan Beyer	Lindy Tracy
8 Chris Wynia Landon Odens	24 Sharon Bartels Amy Elser
9 Natalie Klaassen	25 Wilma Hatting
10 Barb Van Diepen Regan Crichton Anita Ernst	26 John Bartels Brenda Kuhl Brad Loerts
11 Leanne Van Kley	27 Madison Brouwer
13 Tayler Bremer	28 Larry Riebeling
15 Megan Loerts	29 David Van Ruler
16 Deb Kosters Dawson Kreykes	30 Renae Groen Lisa Nissen Linda Mehls
17 Alyssa Wassman Andrea Block	31 Tessa Feldkamp Grace Sayler Jackson Van Der Sloot
19 Alexis Gaalswyk Maureen Heilman	

~~Anniversaries~~

2 Jim & Pauline Van Engen	50 years
4 Merlin & Karen Doorenbos Chad & Megan Travaille	34 years 6 years
6 Ger and Barb Van Diepen Ken and Wilma Loerts	58 years 48 years
7 Charlie and Brenda Kuhl John and Kim Mc Dougall	43 years 25 years
11 Eugene and Renae Groen	52 years
13 Steve and Lynn Mulder Clayton and Jodi Wagenaar Michael and Chelsea Hulstein	36 years 36 years 13 years
15 Mike and Mary Hustoft	61 years
18 Dave & Donna Kleinwolterink	48 years
22 Arnie & Diane Langstraat	55 years
23 Scott and Jamie Hulstein Brent and Brenda Wassman	27 years 27 years
24 John and Lois Van Diepen Randy and Kelli Vande Berg	62 years 34 years
25 Brian and Chelsey Alexander	12 years
28 Leroy & Glenda De Boer	43 years
30 Steve & Leanne Van Kley Brian and Megan Loerts	50 years 16 years

From the library--

The church library inventory is always changing, here are three new books...



I HEARD A FLY BUZZ WHEN I DIED by Amanda Flower: “August, 1856, Emily is delighted when her brother, Austin, and his new wife, Susan, play host to famous thinker and writer Ralph Waldo Emerson and his young secretary, Luther Howard. Emerson has come to Amherst to speak at a local literary society and Emily is thrilled at the chance to meet one of her idols. Willa Noble, the second maid in the Dickinson home and Emily's friend, encourages her to speak to the famous but stern man about her poetry. But Emerson's secretary, Luther, intrigues Willa more because of his clear fondness for the Dickinson sisters. Willa does not know if Luther truly cares for one of the Dickinson sisters or if he just sees marrying one of them as a way to raise himself in society. After a few days in his company, Willa starts to believe it's the latter. Miss Lavinia, Emily's sister, appears to be enchanted by Luther, which bothers Emily greatly. However, Emily's fears are squashed when Luther is found poisoned in the Dickinsons' garden. Emerson, aghast at the death of his secretary, demands answers. Emily and Willa set out to find them to save the Dickinson family's reputation and to stop a cold-blooded fiend from killing again.



Our next book by Shelly Shepard Gray, **ONCE UPON A BUGGY** (book #2 in Amish of Apple Creek series) is for the Amish lovers: “May Schott would do anything to change the tragic moment when she stepped too close to the fire that left her best friend, Carl Hilty, devastatingly burned. After Carl left Apple Creek for extensive surgeries, May patiently prayed for one chance to ask his forgiveness. Now, six years later, Carl Hilty is coming home. The reunion goes nothing like May anticipated. Overwhelmed with emotion at seeing Carl again, she is speechless, unable to look away. And Carl's own stone-cold silence leaves her certain that whatever attraction they once shared has been replaced by his hatred of her. After hiding in the shadows of the big city, Carl has returned to connect with his family and to see if May can overlook his scars and accept his love—but it seems she wants nothing to do with him. He grudgingly agrees to stay with his family for a time before retreating once again...But in Apple Creek, it's easy to miss what everyone around you sees plain as day. For two people who belong together, it will take a few helping hands to heal the hurts of the past and make a miraculous new beginning.”



The last book takes us back to the Spanish Civil War and World War II in **THE SWISS NURSE** by Mario Escobar. “Elisabeth Eidenbenz left Switzerland in 1937 to aid children orphaned during the Spanish Civil War. Now, her work has led her to France, where she's determined to provide expectant mothers and their unborn children a refuge amid one of the worst humanitarian crises of the twentieth century. Desperate to escape the invasion of Franco's Fascist troops, Isabel Duenas becomes one of many Spanish patriots fleeing their country. She leaves behind her husband as he fights for democracy, and she seeks asylum in a refugee camp across the border in France. Without adequate shelter, clean drinking water, or medical care, Isabel's future looks bleak—until she meets Elisabeth. When Germany invades Poland, an avalanche of humanity sweeps into France. In the cascade of crises that follow, Isabel and Elisabeth learn the cost and unexpected joy of sacrifice.” (Based on the true stories of refugees and the woman who risked everything to save them.)

2024 Annual Men & Boys FRC Fishing Trip

Have you heard any good fishing stories lately? Well, let me inform you about the ones that I heard about this past weekend. A group of Grandpas, Dads, Kids, and Friends got together for the annual fishing trip at the Hidden Hill Lodge. What a weekend of fishing it was! Once again the question was asked at devotion time, "What did You see today in God's Kingdom?" I pondered this question a bit this year because we have seen the mighty power of God in a lot of unreal areas this year. How can the simple thing of water, a thing we all need every day for survival be such a great and destructive force?

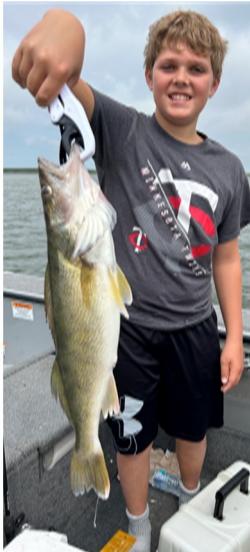
A look out the boat each day at all of the kids and dad's having conversation about fishing without the knowledge of actually learning the facts of life, about learning how tough fishing can be. Yet, learning how fun it can be jumping off the boat in the middle of the lake to cool off.

Fishing was a little bit tricky this year. I guess that's why they call it "fishing". The temps got a little hot and so did the fisherman. Sun screen was a must. All in all, not a big loss, for the Purple Cow made out well selling us the necessary cool down food.

The talk amongst the adults in the group was, "Why Don't more take part in this event," the conversation or the forced time spent with kids, which we all know every parent needs to do, myself included. What is remembered at the end of the day, isn't the lack of fish caught, but the time spent with one another, the one that got away, the weekend that dad/grandpa spent with me.

Look at the pictures. Smile. Look at the smiles on all of the faces. I did. Ask anyone of the people on those pictures about the picture. Just be prepared for that picture being worth a 1000 words. Don't wait until it's to late! Next year's trip has tentatively been planned for July 10 – 13th. So, mark your calendar and make plans to attend!





Hello First Reformed Church,



God is so good! Don't you agree? He has been faithful through so many things in the last three years. I am so beyond grateful that I get a chance to take a step back and breathe a little bit to be able to get back to focusing on the students and the families of First Reformed Church. With that being said, I am feeling a tug that we need to step out of our comfort zone a little bit and shake things up a bit. Try new things and try to see what kind of ministry we can do with the youth of our church here. There are going to be some new and potentially great ministries that I am wanting to start implementing at FRC. One of the biggest ones is that I would like to have worship time with the high school students. This is something that we have been doing for a couple of years now, but I would like to get a worship band together to lead the youth group in worship. If you believe that you have musical talent to do that please let me know. Here is the best part, WE WANT TO USE HIGH SCHOOLERS TOO! Even if you are in high school and have a talent for it, I would like to revamp our high school worship team and try some new things. That is one big change that I would like to see. Another, is I am not sure how many of you know this but I have been having some college students mentor some of our high school students and it seems to be going well, so this is something that I would like to implement to Junior year college and above ages to mentor our young students in youth group. More details are to come on that, but please be in prayer for that. Finally, one of the big ones is connecting with the OCMA to have a joint community youth group night once a semester. In order to make that happen we need volunteers and help with that. We are really in need of parent volunteers who are able and willing to be chaperones for different events. If this is something that you feel you would like to do, please let me know and I will put you down on a list.

To wrap things up here I want to leave on this final thought. I am really becoming passionate about families spending time together in God's word. I know that sometimes this can be difficult to do and maybe sometimes you think you don't know how to do it, where do I start, what if I don't know the answer to a difficult question, or I don't think I am qualified for this. I want to encourage you with these words. God has chosen you to be the parent to your child, which means that you are the best Bible teacher for your children. You know how they think, what they like, and how they talk. Don't think that you cannot do it, because you can! I have been thinking about wanting to host a "Discipleship at Home Training" for parents. If you are wanting more information on that please make sure to let me know and I will get that started. We are looking at kicking things off in youth group on Wednesday September 4th with our annual game, "Light in the Darkness." Be on the lookout for details on that and I will be seeking helpers with that game as well. I am very excited for this new year at FRC and I hope that you are too!

Blessings,
Josh

Dad Jokes with Josh:

Did you hear about the toilets that were stolen from the police station?.....
Yeah, the cops had nothing to go on.



Dear friends,

The recent Gen Z protests in Kenya made international news headlines and prompted several of you to write us asking about our personal welfare and safety. Thanks for your concern and for reaching out to us. We appreciate your prayers and ask you to con-

tinue praying for us, for St Paul's, and for Kenya.

After the protests on June 25, classes were moved online for the rest of the month. We are back to having physical classes this month, although that could change if protests continue. Up to 41 or more protesters were killed and hundreds wounded. Many activists were abducted and some are still missing. One of our student leaders was abducted, but we thank God he has been found and released. Several other St. Paul's students and recent graduates joined the protests, including some of our younger Gen Z clergy.

What the youth were protesting was a finance bill introduced to increase government tax revenue to cover increased debt repayments. Kenya's debt is now 68 percent of its GDP and interest payments take up 25 percent of government revenue. Instead of reducing spending, President Ruto and his party tried to increase taxes to cover the difference, including taxes on basic necessities: food, fuel, phones, etc.

In 2022, President Ruto was elected by a slim majority after promising to help the "hustlers"—the small-scale informal workers—who make up the majority of workers here. 70 percent of Kenyans are under 34 years old but 40 percent of the working-age population is officially unemployed, surviving by hustling daily. Ruto promised one million new jobs but unemployment has increased as has income inequality.

In 2023, Ruto increased income tax and added a new housing tax. Then in 2024, he proposed more new taxes: hospital insurance tax, business turnover tax, and a 16 percent tax on fuel and bread. In response, many people started calling him Zakayo, the local version of Zacchaeus, the infamous tax collector in the New Testament. Perhaps, if like the biblical Zacchaeus, he climbs down and gives away half his wealth they will forgive him. (After the protests, he did agree to reduce government spending, so that is good).

The Kenyan economy is growing but not for everyone. Income inequality is increasing and most of the urban poor live in "informal settlements"—large slums of many small rooms made from iron sheets with no plumbing, no sidewalks, no government services, no police, etc. where life is very hard. Africa has the fastest urbanization in the world and Kenya is no exception, but the infrastructure is not keeping up.

As you continue to pray for us and Kenya please include the following in your prayers:

Pray for more peaceful dialogue between the elected government and its citizens, especially the youth. May a solution to the current problems be found that is more equitable and transparent.

Pray for more jobs and equal opportunities for people everywhere, especially for the unemployed. May inflation and interest rates decrease so businesses can expand instead of reduce their hiring.

Pray for reform of the police and security officers. May they be "content with their pay" (Luke 3:14) and not use their power for extortion but instead truly serve and protect all the citizens of Kenya.

Pray for church leaders and pastors as they seek to minister in this volatile environment. May they speak truth to power, comfort the afflicted, and lead God's people wisely in these tense times ahead.

Pray for the leaders of schools like St Paul's University as they decide how to keep their institutions running and provide an education for the youth. May they have much wisdom and discernment.

Thanks again for your support. We are staying safe and remain confident of God's protection.

Jane & Rowland Van Es

Grip, Grit, and the GOSPEL

Be careful. Hold firmly to your faith. Have courage and be strong. I Corinthians 16:13 ERV

Monday Dinner • SEPTEMBER 9, 2024

Tuesday Conference • SEPTEMBER 10, 2024

BIBLE LEAGUE DINNER AND CONFERENCE — FOR MEN AND WOMEN

SIoux CENTER, IOWA



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:
CRAIG AND MOLLY SANBORN
craigandmolly.com

Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter icons | @cheeseballchick

Craig and Molly Sanborn's love for laughter, each other, and Jesus is contagious! Connecting well with audiences of all ages, their common theme is the necessity to be joined with Christ and committed to His Word.

Craig serves as a youth pastor and a director for Converge North Central. Molly holds a masters in Marriage and Family Therapy and teaches with Craig at FamilyLife conferences. Molly is known as the Cheese Ball Chick and has been on several TV shows.

Powerful worship and music featuring Jennifer Frens and Ensemble. Joining us in person is Santosh Chandran, Bible League's South Asia and Pacific regional director.

BETHEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

341 SOUTH MAIN AVENUE | SIOUX CENTER, IOWA 51250

SIoux CENTER, IOWA

BIBLE LEAGUE DINNER AND CONFERENCE — FOR MEN AND WOMEN

MONDAY DINNER, SEPTEMBER 9, 2024

5:30 to 6:00pm Sign-In • 6:00 to 7:30pm Dinner and Fellowship

TUESDAY CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER 10, 2024

9:00am Coffee and Sign-In • 9:30am to 3:00pm Program

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

SEPTEMBER 9 • DINNER

\$25 • Registration deadline September 3

SEPTEMBER 10 • CONFERENCE

\$40 • Early bird registration

Includes lunch • Register between July 1 and August 15

\$45 • Late registration

Includes lunch • Register between August 15 and September 3

\$35 • Conference only—no lunch

Register using the QR code or at: bibleleague.org/tickets

(If you do not have internet access, please call Bible League at 708.367.8921 between 8:30am-4:00pm CT / M-F for credit card registration assistance.)



FOR OTHER CONFERENCE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Carla Kooiman: 605.370.4675 • ckooiman49@icloud.com

Sherri Ten Napel: 712.441.3960 • dstennapel@hotmail.com

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BIBLE LEAGUE VOLUNTEER AMBASSADORS



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Registration fees cover conference expenses only. The mission of Bible League is to serve the under-resourced church. There will be an opportunity for your financial support at the events.



Our education year will be starting in September. We are currently looking for teachers for our Wednesday Night Classes and Sunday School Classes. If you feel led to volunteer, please see the signup sheet on the Information Center or talk to Deb Kosters.

Backpack
Distribution Dates:

Aug. 6 10am-7pm

Aug 12 8am-2pm

Aug 21 12pm-6pm



Interested in Volunteering?
Contact Peg Van Kley or Deb Kosters.

The Bountiful Blessings Table
Is Back!!

