

FAITH & LIFE

December 2025



GROW DEEP LIVE TALL

Jeremiah 17:7-8

First Christian Reformed Church

1401 16th St

Rock Valley, IA 51247

Rev. Matthew Haan

www.firstcrrcv.org

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“Advent”



One of my favorite hymns of the advent season is the ancient hymn “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”. This theologically rich hymn has been sung since the days of the reformation with captures the divine power and grace of the Christ coming incarnate.

If you haven’t heard this hymn, this is one version to take in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZB1eagIUxx4>

Here are the lyrics:

- 1. Lo, how a rose e’er blooming from tender stem hath sprung, of Jesse’s lineage coming as men of old have sung. It came a flow’ret bright. Amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.*
- 2. Isaiah ’twas foretold it, the rose I have in min with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother king, Ot show God’s love aright she bore to men a savior when half spent was the night.*
- 3. The Shepherds heard the story proclaim by angels bright, how Christ the Lord of glory was born on earth this night. To Bethlehem they sped and in the manger found him as angels herald said.*
- 4. This flow’r who fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air, dispels with glorious splendor the darkness everywhere. True man yet very God; from sin and death he saves us and lightens every load.*
- 5. O Savior child of Mary who felt our human woe; O savior King of glory who dost our weakness know bring us at length we pray to the bright courts of heaven and to the endless days.*

Throughout Advent, we will hear the echoes of this hymn lead us through the fullness of the chapters of 1 John. As the apostle after he had completed the gospel that bears his name and as a witness to what he saw and heard in the Christ Jesus, now writes to the church scattered that they would remain fixated on Christ who became incarnate.

Like his gospel, John the apostle describes why Christ as the Word has come, so that we would not only have expectation in Advent but would love what God desires, including His Spirit and His Son and finally loving the faith that we are given.

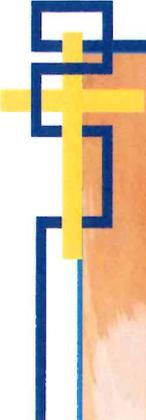
Let these truths be sweet aroma that dispels the darkness that we know as we look into the manger and see our eternal king.

As we look for that final day where we will see the Lord Jesus in all Glory by the side of the Father, we are invited in this season to come and wait. To come in expectation and hope. We come into this season desiring to be disciplined and changed by the sights, the lights, and the songs, and that we would be ready for the ultimate gift of our Savior Jesus who came that we would be saved.

Come in preparation in this year for the coming of the King whose second advent is near even as we celebrate His first advent in the past. Come this year and give Glory to the King that your heart would sing.

Merry Christmas,

Pastor Matt



BIRTHDAYS

- December 5 – Harold Driesen will be 91.
- December 6 – Clarence De Roon will be 88.
- December 6 – Harriet Van Zanten will be 90.
- December 13 – Grace Van Grootheest will be 85.
- December 19 – Faye Medalen will be 83.

CELEBRATIONS & GATHERINGS

- Our Mission Committee and other volunteers were able to attend a worship service at **Freedom's Gate Church** and provide a meal following the service on November 2!
- We had the privilege to honor our past and present military personnel with a **Military Tribute** video on Sunday, November 9 for Veteran's Day!
- As a Church we had the opportunity to enjoy a **Chili Cook-Off** hosted by our Fellowship Committee on November 13!
- We had the privilege to witness and celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Baptism of **Jensen James WhiteFeather-Koedam**, infant son of Chloe Koedam, during our morning worship service on Sunday, November 16!
- As a Church we were able to come together to support our IGNITE Youth Group as they served their annual **Potato Bake Supper** on November 19!
- As a Church we had the opportunity to meet together for our **Annual Congregational Meeting** where our newly elected office bearers were chosen on November 19. As Elders: Elmer Boon, Jeff Van Bommel, & Merlin Van Otterloo, with Rob Jansen as Alternate. As Deacons: Austin Blik, Tyler Den Boer, & Taylor Kats, with Alex Kooima as Alternate. Our Narthex Expansion Project was passed by paper ballot. Our Church Budget and Classical/Denominational Budgets were passed by voice vote.
- We had the privilege to welcome to our Church family, **Duane & Gayle Walhof**, on Sunday, November 23! They transferred their membership papers from the First Christian Reformed Church of Le Mars.
- We had the privilege to witness and celebrate the Profession of Faith of **Austin Folkens, Brock Mulder, Harper Van Bommel, & Addison Van't Hul**, and Reaffirmation of Faith of **Kevin & Lori Eppinga**, during our morning worship service on Sunday, November 23!
- November 30 – **Communion** as a congregation and the **1st Sunday of Advent – Hope** - Darin & Lisa Pollema family

SPECIAL CONCERNS

Church Family:

- **Rick Davelaar** – Pray for Rick as he began treatments for his cancer in November.
- **Tracy Hoogendoorn** – Pray for Tracy as she continues recovering from surgery to relieve arthritis in her thumb.
- **Paula Kats** - Pray for Paula through her continuing recovery and health struggles as she remains in the hospital.
- **Galen Kats** - Pray for Galen as he recovers at home from hip replacement surgery.
- **Gerrit Kats** - Pray for Gerrit as he recovers at home from bladder surgery and anticipates treatments to begin soon for a cancer spot that was discovered.
- **Brock Mulder** – Pray for Brock as he underwent surgery on his pinky finger after it was broken during a football game.
- **Nate Van Kley** - Pray for Nate as he continues radiation treatments and all the side effects he is enduring.
- **Starla Van Otterloo** – Pray for Starla as she continues to recover at home from knee surgery.
- **Gert Van Regenmorter** – Pray for Gert as she underwent an angiogram on November 25, which was required prior to having her anticipated knee surgery.

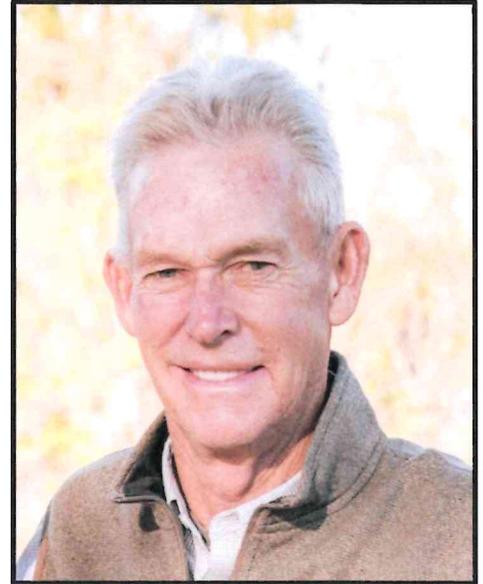
Extended Family/Friends of our Church Family:

- **Gerald Van Den Top** (Father of Larae Van Der Brink) was diagnosed with cancer and is undergoing intense treatments.
- **Judy Wesselink** (Mother of Kelsi Byl) Continue to pray for Judy through each stage of her cancer journey.
- **Hazel Mae Van Der Brink** grand-daughter of Bob & Cherie Groeneweg, daughter of Erin & Alan, was born at 26 weeks. Pray for continued growth, strength, and health for Hazel.
- **Jason Davelaar** (Father of Cody Davelaar, Alexis Rust, & Bradyn Davelaar) Pray for Jason as he continues his battle with cancer that he was diagnosed with in June.
- **Dan De Groot** – Pray for Dan and his continued battle with cancer.
- **Pray for our nation and the continuous turmoil and divide between good and evil, and for all nations experiencing daily warfare and persecutions.**

Remembering Howard Altena

Howard Bevan Altena, 72, was born on July 6, 1953, in Canton, SD, and peacefully entered Heaven's gates on Thursday, August 14, 2025. Funeral Service was held at 10:00 AM, Tuesday, August 19th at the First Christian Reformed Church in Rock Valley, with Rev. Matthew Haan officiating.

Howard was the son of the late Louis and Albertha (Van't Hul) Altena. He grew up on the family farm northwest of Rock Valley and attended Rock Valley Christian School and Western Christian High School. After graduation, he attended Nettleton College where he received a degree in Professional Accounting. Howie loved numbers and used those talents the remainder of his life. He worked for many accounting firms during the winters while he farmed, some of which were: All American Transport, Iowa Farm Business Association, and Kipley Law Firm.



On November 30, 1973, Howie was united in marriage to Lynette Klemme. They lived the first couple years of their marriage in Sioux Falls, SD, and in 1975 embarked on a fulfilling career in farming. They moved to the family farm in 1982. They were blessed with three children; a daughter, Tricia; and two sons, Troy and Evan. Howie loved his family, led by example, had a tireless work ethic, and enjoyed the farm, but his true passion was crop-farming. He was a farmer who loved and respected the land that God had entrusted him. He also fed many cattle, worked hard with his hands, and could fix any piece of equipment. Working hard was not difficult for him, but he considered it an honor and privilege, especially in his later years when he could work beside and with his grandsons. He taught his sons and grandsons many valuable tools of the trade.

Howie and Lynette enjoyed many camping trips with their family, trips to various parts of the United States and Mexico, cruises, and a trip to Israel. They moved from the farm to town in 2023, and Howie continued to farm with the boys up until four days before his death. Howie was diagnosed with cancer in February of 2015 and again in 2021 until the present. He ran his race valiantly, courageously, and with great dignity, never complaining about his circumstances. He fought this battle with his family and his Lord Jesus by his side. It was his faith that gave him the strength to carry on. He talked often of the grace and mercy so freely given him. Howie was a lifelong member of the First Christian Reformed Church, Rock Valley, where he served as Deacon, Elder, attended Men's Bible Study, Catechism teacher, and Cadet leader. He also served on the Rock Valley Christian School Board, Siouxland Energy Board, and enjoyed his time as a member of the Valley Male Chorus.

He leaves for now his beloved wife of 51 years, Lynette; three beloved children and their spouses: Tricia (Brian) Mulder; Troy (Michelle) Altena; and Evan (Kim) Altena; 12 grandchildren: Kaylee, Tristan, Jace, Rashana and Brock Mulder; Jacob (Katelyn), Tyson (Hannah), Ethan and Levi Altena; Taylor, Kaysha and Abigail Altena; a great granddaughter, Hadley Mae Altena; one beloved sister Garneth (Kevin) Kuiper of Sioux Falls, SD; brother and sister-in-laws: Steve and LaNay Welch, Greg and Paulette Klemme, and Matthew and Lori Klemme; many nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins, extended family members, and friends.

Howard was preceded in death by his parents, Louis and Albertha Altena; parents-in-law, Darwyn Klemme, Rod and Eunice Reoh; maternal and paternal grandparents.

Special thanks to the many family members for sharing their memories.

Abby: My favorite memory of Grandpa is when he rode the tube right beside me going fast behind Uncle Brian's boat.

Kaysha: My favorite memory of Grampa was playing Pictionary at our family Christmas when Grandpa tried to draw a "back ache" that everyone guessed wrong.

Taylor: When we went to Canada with all our fancy fishing gear, and grandpa caught the biggest fish (27 ½ inch walleye) with a Walmart pole and went home early.

Tyson: My memory is when Grandpa Howie called SDSU college to send a school nurse to my college dorm room at 8:00 in the morning because I didn't answer my phone. He called just to see if I wanted to go with him to a sale barn.

Ethan: Grandpa took me to a work meeting at JJ's in Rock Valley and he needed help grabbing a car battery. I rode along with him after work at the farm, and during the car ride we were listening to a radio station.... Of course it was an auction, even though he rarely bought anything. But He went inside the auto shop, and he looked at me and said, "Can you grab the battery?" It was the fact that he knew that he needed help, and I was there for him.

Levi: My special memory with grandpa is that he was the first person to teach me to run our tillage tractor. He was always there to help and improve our lifestyle on the farm. He always pushed us to be the best person we could be.

Jacob: My grandpa Howie was one of the hardest working people I know. I spent a lot of time fixing with grandpa every spring and fall. He never hesitated to call me when he needed something welded around the farm. For example, I'm pretty sure I've welded his loader on his 4450 in every spot you could think of and every spot you couldn't. Grandpa Louis did most of the welding around the farm, and when he wasn't around anymore, I somehow fell next in line. I have a lot of good memories with Grandpa, from him hitting us baseballs around in the front yard at the farm, and taking us to a Twins game, and watching him play his guitar which inspired me to learn to play. Everyone started to know grandpa was getting into his older age when he started to run into things. Like turning his pickup into the side of the tractor or forgetting he had a trailer hooked to dad's trailer when he was backing up which resulted into wrecking the bumper. Grandpa was always prone to breaking something but never feared fixing the problem. Cleanliness was never something he was good at; I'm sure grandma can tell you that. Every tractor cab on the yard had everything he needed in it. You could never find what you were looking for in the shop, but some how he was always able to find it. My grandpa was a very humble and honest man and taught us to always work hard and never feel sorry for yourself. I'm going to miss calling him over to help me fix or figure something out. The farm will never be the same without grandpa around. We will all miss you. I love you grandpa.

Brock: My favorite memory of my grandpa is him coming to my wrestling and football games. Sometimes he was a little late because he just had to check out a farm auction along the way. No matter where we would go with grandpa, we always seemed to end up at McDonalds, like it was all part of the plan.

Jace: I remember when Grandpa and I were working on the silage pile, and he was in the tractor. He accidentally ran over the farm four-wheeler right in front of me.

Tristan: My favorite memory of grandpa was recently when Brock and I did tree work at their house in town, and how much he loved to sit in the grass and watch us work.

Rashana: My favorite memories of grandpa are the first time I gave him a haircut, and also when Grandpa drove his pickup through the mud on the farm to where Grandma and I were sitting to watch the silos come down. He stayed in the pickup to eat his lunch from his lunch pail, smiling and waving at us.

Kaylee: Some of my favorite memories with my grandpa Howie are the times we spent outside. I remember riding on the back of the snowmobile as kids, with grandpa pulling a sled behind the four-wheeler in the front yard and going out to find the baby kitties around the farm. Your strength never went unnoticed; you will be forever missed.

Tricia: I loved how dad always made it his utmost priority to read the Bible and pray with us at the table before family meals. My last moment with him was reading Psalm 27 to him. What a privilege!

Brian: Having Howard at the kids' events and supporting them, and his fatherly Christian example he instilled in my wife.

Michelle: My memory of Howie is him never worrying about putting an inexperienced person on his equipment to learn how to run it. He always had fly spray in his tractor. He always made sure everything had plenty of grease and oil. Every time I hauled silage loads, I packed along wet wipes to clean the grease off the steering wheel.

Troy: In 2014, Dad needed his hip replaced. He had hobbled around probably 5 years too long, but the surgery went well, and when he was coming to in the recovery room and still looking a little groggy and green, I said, "Dad, you were right, the doctor said your hip really wasn't that bad." He immediately turned to my Mom and said, "See Lynette, I told you I didn't need this!" (Actually, the surgeon told us it was one of the worst hips he had ever replaced.)

Kim: That he knew how to play a song on the piano and he could play guitar, something other than constant work. I also appreciate that he was happy at home, being home, and dedicated to his work.

Evan loves playing pranks, and he remembers the time he hung a chicken leg and foot from a dead chicken on a piece of twine and hung it over his Dad's plier pocket without him realizing it. Later, Dad went to town to run several errands with that chicken leg hanging on his plier pocket and didn't see it until he got home.

Garn: The funniest memory is when he was going to rescue me from on top of Dad's house where I had painted the peak, and instead of helping me, he got out of his pickup, took one look and fell on the ground rolling in laughter that I was stuck on the roof and didn't dare to go down the ladder. The other fun memory is when a friend and I lived in Sioux Falls going to college, and we thought a man was peeking in one of our windows at 11 o'clock at night, Howie came over with a shot gun and searched the block. I always felt he was my protector.

Lynette: Everyday of the 51+ years Howie and I were married; I saw him to be a very strong person who lived each day with great purpose and intent. There were always many things he felt he HAD to accomplish each day. No matter how hard the task, he never seemed to tire. This was never more evident than in his later stages of cancer when he fought through pain and tiredness, never complaining and so thankful to God for yet another day, especially Sundays when all the kids and grandkids would gather around for dinner. Everyday became more meaningful. What great memories seeing him smile at the weddings of two grandsons, so glad he could be there; and the day he first held his great granddaughter, Hadley, so thankful he could see another new generation beginning. He remarked more and more to me, how good God was to him!

Welcome John and Claretta Lobbes

John and Claretta met over 70 years ago when John was teaching in Rock Valley and Claretta was teaching in Lebanon. She came to Rock Valley to pick up her sister Jo, and they started talking and got acquainted with each other. They have been married for 69 years.

They have two daughters; Ronda was born the first year they were married. She went to Calvin and met her husband, Tom. They settled in Albuquerque. Holly, they adopted through Dr. Den Dulk in Ripon, CA. She is living in Sioux Falls.

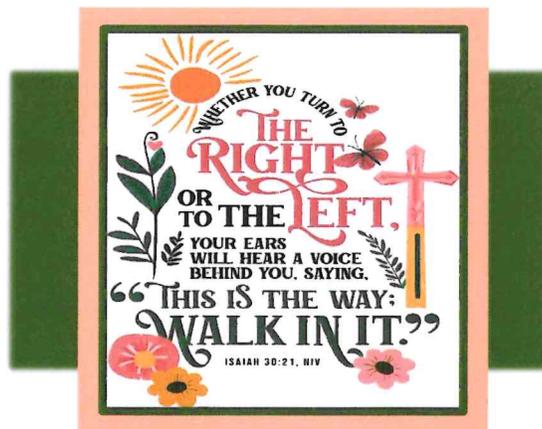
John & Claretta have 5 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

John taught school in Rock Valley, Prinsburg, and Orange City. He was Assistant Principal in Prinsburg. Claretta taught school in Lebanon.

Some highlights of their life include visiting relatives in Michigan, going on volunteer trips in Mississippi, Kentucky, and Florida. Also working at Hope Haven in Orange City and part-time with Mover in Orange City.

John is now residing at a Riverview Ridge Apartment and Claretta is at Whispering Heights.

John quotes "As I look back on my life, I see that God has been directing me and has taken care of me."





Join us for a fun night of

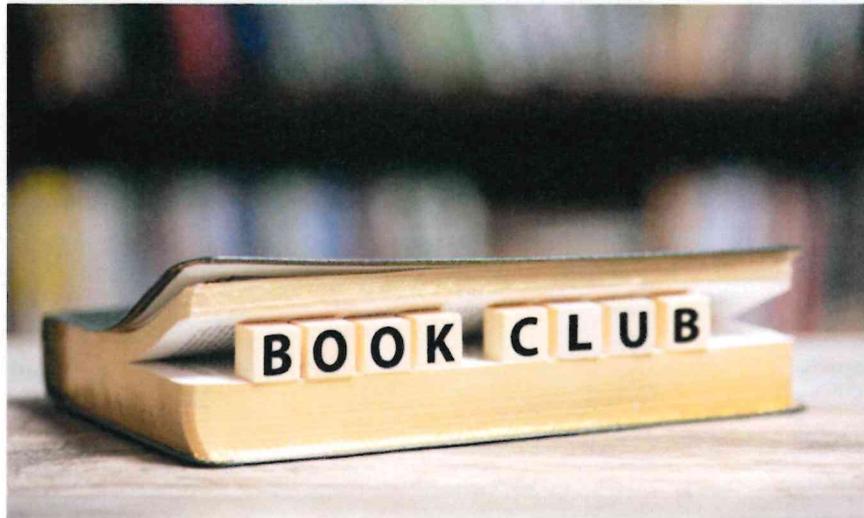
Christmas Caroling & Bingo

at the Senior Center & RiverView

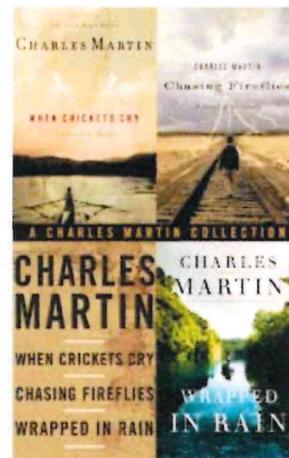
December 11, 2025 - 6:30pm

*Help us share the
joy of Christmas with our
Care Center residents!*





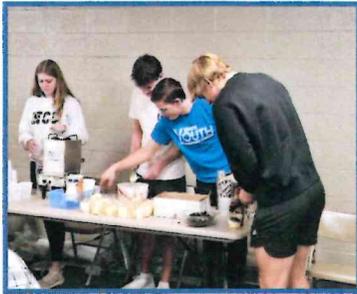
- Everyone is Invited
- Monday January 12 at 6:30
- Come Fellowship and Discuss Favorite Books
- Get Ideas for your new read
- Contact Karen Jansen or Sandra Van't Hul with any questions.



Everyone has different tastes in books! Bring your favorite book along to book club and share why you love it!



IGNITE Potato Bake



CANARIES GAME



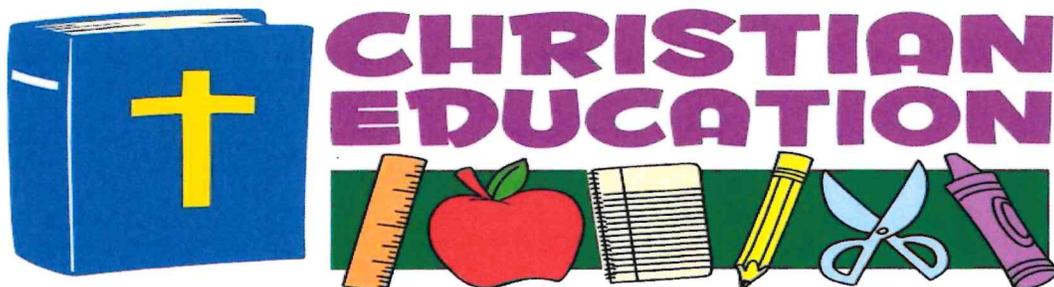
Chatter from the Chapter



School	# of Students	Fair Share
Rock Valley Christian School	48 @ \$1,800	\$86,400.00
Hull Christian School	1 @ \$1,750	\$1,750.00
Ireton Christian School	2 @ \$1,750	\$3,500.00
Orange City Christian School – 2 nd sem	2 @ \$875	\$1,750.00
Western Christian High School	15 @ \$2,800	\$42,000.00
Total Fair Share		\$135,000.00

Fundraising Income June – November 2025	\$117,394.00
Amount Remaining	\$18,006.00

Fundraisers	Profit
Envelope Challenge	\$5,029.00.
Silage Piles	\$31,556.00
CEC Auction	\$61,527.00
Offerings and Misc Donations	\$19,282.00
Upcoming Fundraisers	
Koated Kernels <i>February 2026</i>	
Taco Supper <i>March 2026</i>	
Pancake Breakfast <i>May 2026</i>	





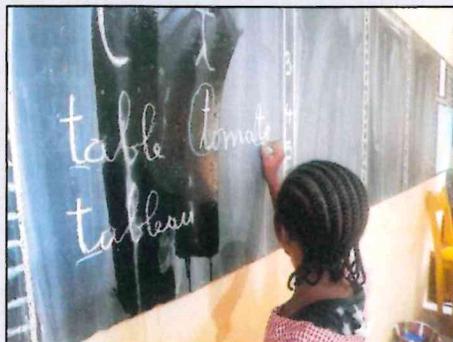
“A Small Book with Big Purpose”

I get the privilege and opportunity to study Jonah this fall. We all think we know the basic story of the prophet and it only covers four chapters. One may think this would be an easy book to study, a quick study that will teach us something worthwhile but will not take a lot of our time and energy. I'm hoping and praying that we have the exact opposite, a rich study full of questions and answers, truths and challenges that we can carry forward.

Many small books in the Bible are overlooked whether they be books like Jonah or Jude, or First or Second Peter, just to highlight a few. These books are often recognized but are often overlooked and underappreciated not only for the wealth of insight we can gather from them, but also their place in the overall tapestry of God's word. Each of the 66 books regardless of their size carry within them an essential part of God's story and plan, a plan and story that he wants us to know and find out and also apply.

Our purpose in studying calls us to find the purpose of each and every book. The amazing part is that once you think you understand the purpose of a book, there may be more in store for you. This allows Bible studies to repeat studies on books and pastors, speakers, writers, and others to reflect on and study the Bible. The underlying messages of these books may not change but the opportunity to gain new insight and a new level of truth can change. My prayer is that we get the opportunity to experience that multiple times in our lifetimes of study.

I don't know what Bible study book you may be undertaking this season. It may be a small book like Jonah or a larger book like Revelation. No matter the title or size, there is wisdom to be found, truths to be captured and perspectives be changed in the study of each and every book. My prayer is that God will use your study of his word to encourage, enlighten, change and grow. May a seed be planted that continues to grow long after this Bible study season is done. May the Word of Christ “have opportunity to dwell in you richly” this season and beyond as you study a big book with a bigger purpose perhaps in the midst of studying a small book with a big purpose.



Observing student learning, Conakry

I have 25 students in my class. Normally, when I do an assessment after teaching a lesson on reading, I find that close to half of the class doesn't understand the lesson. But now, as I put into practice the approach you taught us, almost the entire class understands. There are only about 2-3 who usually needed some extra help in the end. Thank you to the Teacher's Garden team!"

Praise from the Classroom

Listening to teachers as they share and reflect on their classroom experiences has been a very enjoyable part of our training sessions. Earlier this month, we heard from Madam Lucia, a 2nd-grade teacher who has been participating regularly in our trainings since November of last year. During a series of phonics-focused sessions we held at the Teacher's Garden with about 30 other teachers, she shared with great joy:

"I implemented the phonics concepts and strategies we learned during the last training in my classroom practices. It made a huge difference!"

This testimony is a reminder that as teachers are empowered through context-relevant tools and strategies for teaching, they can bring not just a few, but almost their entire class to master the concepts they're teaching. Research suggests that learners' performance in reading is crucial to their performance in other



Student small group guided by their teacher

subject areas. Their ability to read and understand the Word of God also depends on that. Madam Lucia's testimony is a glimpse into a slow yet promising process of transformation in Africa -one teacher, one school and one classroom at a time- as we equip more teachers for good work.



Teacher peer discussions on phonics

The movement of Christian education continues to spread across the African continent, preparing the next generation to bear Kingdom fruit. The Teacher's Garden has been playing a modest part in the process by **working to develop the full potential of teachers for contextualized and transformative schooling** in Guinea.

Since September, for example, 88 teachers have participated in our various trainings, not to mention the body of about 30 national educators we host monthly for prayer and worship gatherings. Join us in thanking God for His sustained goodness in the ministry:

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his love endures forever"

- 1 Chron.16:34.



Christian educators monthly prayer at the Teacher's Garden

Family:

Navigating Conakry, the capital city where we live, has been challenging lately due to road construction and closures. However, this is also an indicator for praise as the country leaders are investing in public goods and infrastructure.



Navigating traffic in Conakry

Sosthene has been on a few ministry trips recently, including in Chad for the launching of the Africa Week of Christian education. Over 30 local churches and 30 Christian schools in the country joined in unity to participate in that event. The growing unity and collaboration between the church, families and schools in preparing the next generation in Africa has been very encouraging to us.



Sosthene launching the Africa week of Christian education, Chad



ACSI Africa awarding certificates in biblical worldview and integration to a cohort of 23 trained teachers, Kenya

Thanksgiving and Prayer Items

- Give thanks to God for sustained growth in the ministry of the Teacher's Garden
- Pray for God's provision for the resources needed by the Teacher's Garden ministry to meet growing demands for teacher training in Guinea and beyond.
- Pray for peace, calm and safety as Guinea begins campaigns for presidential elections taking place on December 28
- Pray for a new measure of God's favor and wisdom in Sosthene's ministry with ACSI for Kingdom impact across the African continent.

Thank you for your prayers and support!

The Teacher's Garden needs your support!



To give go to:

www.theteachersgarden.org/donate

or mail a check to:
The Teacher's Garden
PO Box 12
Rock Valley, IA 51247

The Teacher's Garden is a 501(c)(3c) nonprofit

To support our regular ministry work in Africa, go to:

<https://www.resonateglobalmission.org/missionaries/sosthene-and-kara-maletoungou>

Or you can mail a check to:
Resonate Gift Processing
PO Box 30006
Lansing, MI 48909-9760
(Be sure to note "Maletoungou" in the memo line)

Bible Scavenger Hunt

FOR ADVENT

Prepare for Christmas with this Bible-based Advent activity. Each day in December, look up the answer to one question.



1 What will God's Son be called?
(Isaiah 7:14)

2 Where will Jesus reign?
(Isaiah 9:7)

3 Where will Jesus be born?
(Micah 5:2)

How many generations are between Abraham and the Christ?
(Matthew 1:17)

5 Who tells Mary she is having a baby?
(Luke 1:26-31)

Who issues the decree about a census?
(Luke 2:1)

9 What does Jesus' name mean?
(Matthew 1:21)

Until his son John the Baptist is born, what can Zechariah not do?
(Luke 1:20, 64)

4 What does Mary say that God has done for her?
(Luke 1:49)

6 Which relative of Mary is also having a baby?
(Luke 1:41)

10 From where do Joseph and Mary start their journey to Bethlehem?
(Luke 2:4)

What does Mary use to wrap up baby Jesus?
(Luke 2:7)

13 What serves as Jesus' first bed?
(Luke 2:7)

Who tells the shepherds the good news about Jesus' birth?
(Luke 2:8-12)

15 When the shepherds tell others about Jesus, how do people react?
(Luke 2:8-12)



11 Where does Joseph flee with his family for safety?
(Matthew 2:14)

12 What three gifts does Jesus receive from the wise men?
(Matthew 2:11)

18 Who is upset to hear about a newborn King?
(Matthew 2:3)

14 From what direction do the wise men (or Magi) come to worship Jesus?
(Matthew 2:1-2)

16 On what day is Jesus presented in the temple?
(Luke 2:21)

20 When does Jesus' family return to Israel?
(Matthew 2:19-21)

21 In what district does Jesus grow up?
(Matthew 2:22)

22 What free gift does God give us through Jesus, his Son?
(1 John 5:11)

17 Where do all our gifts come from?
(James 1:17)

23 How should we respond to our gifts?
(2 Corinthians 9:15)



“Candles That Tell a Story”

Lighting candles each Sunday is a treasured tradition during the four weeks of Advent.

Each part of the wreath carries symbolic meaning:

- The wreath: Its circular shape represents the everlasting love of God, having no beginning or end. The green symbolizes eternal life.
- The four candles: Mark the four weeks of Advent. One tradition says that each candle also represents 1,000 years, totaling 4,000 years from Adam and Eve to Christ’s birth.
- Purple candles: in ancient times, was expensive and was considered the color of royalty and kings. On Christmas, Christ is proclaimed King of Kings. Purple also symbolizes humility and penitence. The first purple candle represents Hope; the second, Peace; and the final purple candle, Love.
- The pink candle: Lit on the third Sunday, it represents Joy and marks the halfway point of Advent.
- The white candle: The large white candle in the center is the Christ candle. Its light symbolizes Christ the Savior — “the light of the world.”



The beauty and brightness from the glow of all five candles is a reminder that Christ’s life was the light for all earth’s people — “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:5, NRSV).

The Advent wreath is more than just greenery and candles—it’s a symbol of watchfulness and growing joy as Christmas draws near.

“The Angels’ Song in Three Words”

On the very first Christmas Eve, frightened shepherds were suddenly surrounded by light and music. A choir of angels filled the night sky, singing: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14, KJV).

Nineteenth-century pastor Charles Kingsley reflected on how those three simple words — glory, peace, and good will — still capture the meaning of Jesus’ birth and the hope it brings.

Glory. God’s glory isn’t shown in dazzling displays of power but in humility and mercy. The baby in the manger revealed God’s greatness by stooping low, forgiving, and showing love.

Peace. True peace is more than the absence of conflict. It comes when we follow God’s example of selflessness, giving up pride and selfish ambition to live in harmony with one another.

Good will. God’s good will toward us is a gift that transforms our lives. Through Jesus, God invites us out of selfishness and sin into a life marked by love, kindness, and community.

The angels’ song wasn’t meant only for shepherds long ago. It still sings to us today, calling each of us to live in glory, peace, and good will.

“Christmas Prayer: The True Gift”

Dear Lord,

You have brought us to Christmastime once more. Help us not to get lost in the glitter and the glow, but to see the true glory of the birth of Your only begotten Son. Keep our hearts from clinging too tightly to parties, presents and decorations, and turn our eyes instead to Christ who bears Your very image and brings us Your message of love and hope.

In the glorious name of Christ, we pray.

Amen.

Bible Trivia

Who told Mary that her child would be called “the Son of the Most High”?

- A. Zechariah
- B. Gabriel
- C. Simeon
- D. Joseph

See next page for answer



“Gifts for a King”

Bring him thy precious things And lay them at his feet;
The gold of love, the hope that springs The unknown ways to meet.

Bring him thy lovely things; The joy that conquers care,
The faith that trusts and sings, The frankincense of prayer.

Bring him thy bitter things; The myrrh of grief and fears,
The aching heart that stings With pain of unshed tears.

These for thy gifts to him; And for his gifts to thee,
The comfort of his steadfast love, His tender sympathy.

~Annie Johnson Flint

“His Many Names, Our Great Hope”

Long before the manger in Bethlehem, the prophet Isaiah pointed God’s people to the promise of a Savior. In Isaiah 9:6 (NIV) we read: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Even before Jesus’ birth, his names revealed who he is and what he would bring. Each title carries a promise that still impacts our lives today.

- **Wonderful Counselor.** Jesus brings wisdom and guidance for every situation. In moments of confusion, we can lean on him to direct our steps with love and truth.
- **Mighty God.** He is strong enough to carry our burdens and powerful enough to overcome sin, fear and death itself.
- **Everlasting Father.** Jesus reflects the heart of God the Father, offering care that is constant and unchanging. His love doesn’t fade with time or circumstance.
- **Prince of Peace.** In a world filled with turmoil, Jesus offers a peace that goes deeper than circumstances, a peace that guards our hearts and minds.

At Christmas, we celebrate more than a baby’s birth. We celebrate the fulfillment of God’s promise, a Savior with many names. Each one reminds us of his eternal love and presence. This season, let his names bring you comfort, strength and peace.

“All Aboard the Christmas Story”

On a recent train trip, I couldn’t help noticing how the conductors’ “welcome” speeches were all different. Unlike air travel, where safety instructions sound the same no matter who’s speaking, Amtrak conductors each had their own style. One stressed that kids must stay with parents. Another warned that messy restrooms would be locked. A third cautioned that stepping off during a short stop could mean getting left behind. Each conductor emphasized what had caused trouble before.

And in much the same way, the Gospel writers highlighted different details of Jesus’ birth. Matthew, writing for Jewish readers, connects Jesus to Moses, Abraham and David. He tells about Joseph’s role and the wise men seeking the “king of the Jews.” Luke, writing for Gentiles and society’s outsiders, focuses on Mary, a humble birth and shepherds — the first unlikely visitors. Both messages tell the same story, but with unique emphases shaped by the audience.

And that’s a reminder for us, too: when we share our faith, we can tailor the message. Longtime friends, curious neighbors, kids and the hurting will all hear God’s love in different ways.



Letter writing to our Missionaries

RIBBENS

MALETOUNGOU

KLOMPIEN

December 7	Rob J	Travis J	Dick J
December 14	Kevin J	Sara J	Jerad K
December 21	Jonathon K	Pat K	Brett K
December 28	Arnold K	Roger K	Clarence K

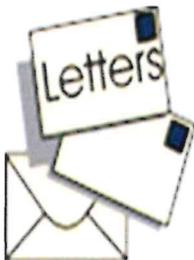
Resonate Global Mission

Attn: Rev. Michael & Megan Ribbens

1700 28th St SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49508

EMAIL: mribbens@crcna.org – Mike
mribbens@gmail.com – Megan



Resonate Global Mission

Attn: Rev. Sosthene & Kara Maletoungou

1700 28th St SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49508

EMAIL: smaletoungou@crcnapartners.org



Resonate Global Mission

Attn: Mark K family

1700 28th St SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49508

*Please mail to Mark



Children in Worship

December 7	Leader: Hadlie VB	Helper: Harper VB
December 14	Leader: Jamie DJ	Helper: Teeghan B

GREETERS



December 7 Advent - Peace	Jesse & Amber Eppinga Kevin & Lori Eppinga Brian & Renae Faber	Justin & Josie Faber Marv & Dee Faber Austin & Hannah Folkens	Harlan & Priscilla
December 14 Advent - Joy	Bob Gilman & Arnold Kempema Brad & Nanci Grevengoed Galen & Elsie Grevengoed	Bob & Cherie Groeneweg Marva Haak Kelly & Patty Haak	Ron & Darletta
December 21 Advent - Love	Mike & Tammy Haverhals Eddie & Lanae Hernandez Steve & Sue Hoekstra	Kyle Hoogendoorn & Jarol LeLoux Rob & Karen Jansen Travis & Kendra Jansen	Christmas Coffee/Cookies Served By Outgoing Elders
December 25 Christmas Day Advent - Christ	Dick & Carla Jansma Kevin & Kristin Jansma Sara Johnson		
December 28 Office Bearer Installation	Jerad & Hannah Kats Jonathon & Tamae Kats Taylor & Jessica Kats	Brett & Malorie Kirkley Chloe Koedam Trevor & Lexi Koedam	Eric & Tracy

SOUND VIDEO PPT Pianist Organist PRAISE TEAM

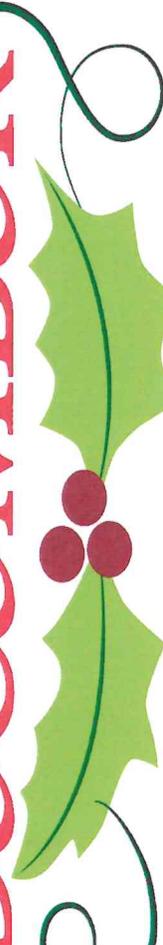
December 7 Advent – Peace	Evan VB	Rich R	Carla J	Jackie R	Lanae H, Lindsey VB, James VB, Mer VO
December 14 Advent – Joy	Mike H	Alex K	Tammy B	Ranae K	Holly H, Tracy B Andy VR, Benjamin H
December 21 Advent – Love	Blake Z	Ron L	Cowan VK	Carisa M	Rachelle VB, Tammy B, Evan VB, Ryan Z
December 25 Christmas Day Advent - Christ	James VB	Aiden VR	Jaydn L	Ranae K	Michelle K, Pat B, Jack VB, Mike B
December 28 Office Bearer Installation	Rich R	Carter VB	Aiden VR	Krista VE	Kelsi B, Julie VO, James VB, Randy VK

USHERS



December 7 Advent – Peace	East: Taylor K, Rick D West: Joe M, Gene L	AM PM	Jessica K, Titus H, Hudsyn P Michelle K, Alison L
December 14 Advent – Joy	East: Cody D, Mike B West: Cole VDB, Titus H	AM PM	Rhonda L, Tad M, Trevin VK Jacque L, Brennan VK
December 21 Advent – Love	East: Josh B, Mike VZ West: Dan B, Darin P	AM PM	Jill M, Harper VB, Ava VO Ashley VO, Erica VR
December 25 Christmas Day Advent – Christ	East: Joel B, Matt VE West: Tyler DB, Alvin L	AM	Laurie VK, Judy VO, Jenessa VR, Darren VR
December 28 Office Bearer Installation	East: Arnold K, Bob G West: Benjamin H, Keith L	AM PM	Kelsey VB, Addison VH, Bristyl B Genae Z, Kennedy VH

2025 DECEMBER 2025



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Aiden Hernandez	2 Ada Kirkley <i>the Vern Van Beek's</i>	3 Tim Van Tilburg, Sr.	4 Alex Rust Colton Van Otterloo	5 Harold Driesen (91)	6 Clarence De Roon (88) Harriett Van Zanten (90)
7 Sawyer Van Otterloo	8 Jensen WhiteFeather-Koedam	9	10 Treyton Kats Tyke Kats Cooper Koedam	11 Priscilla Driesen	12	13 Graze Van Grootheest (85)
14 Maclaine Den Boer	15	16 Jill Miller	17 Crew Van't Hul Theodore Walhof	18	19 Deb Hoekstra Chloe Koedam Faye Medalen (83) Cindy Van Otterloo Gayle Walhof	20
21 Brody Van't Hul Parker Van't Hul Ryan Zomer	22 Emileann Davelaar Alli Den Boer	23 Connor Grevengoed	24 Mary Kate LeLoux <i>the Darwin Hoogendorn's</i>	25	26	27 Archie Walls <i>the Mark Van't Hul's</i>
28 <i>the Mike Baartman's</i>	29 Tenley Zomer	30	31 Tyler Den Boer			