

FAITH & LIFE

January 2024



GROW DEEP LIVE TALL

Jeremiah 17:7-8



First Christian Reformed Church

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“The Year of Our Lord 2024”

With every New Year comes new opportunities for doing something better than we did the year before. Perhaps you are promising yourself to eat or to sleep better, exercise faithfully or work more efficiently, or read through the Bible this year.

All of these topics are fairly common resolutions that we like to make in the New Year. So, what is your New Year's resolution?

We should ask aloud, because the more a resolution is known, the more likely it is to actually happen for two reasons. First, if the resolution is part of our conversation, then it is always out in front of us. Second, because it is part of our conversation, the person for which we share such desires with, invites accountability, which we all need, and in fact desire. So that “I should”, or “might”, becomes, “I will!”

Lord willing, you have already read this life-changing book by the same title that is circulating in every Care Group. If you haven't, ask your elder to get you a copy. Because for family visiting this year, we are intentionally focusing through God's Word on the concepts of faith put to practice laid out in, *I Will*, so that the fire of faith is fed in us all.

So please read this resource!

Along with this resource there is a partner resource book entitled, *I am a Church Member*, that lays out practical encouragements for engaging the body of Christ here at First Church, that we are having every new member enjoy and would encourage every church member to read.

Additionally, we have three other resources that have been life changing reading to include in your reading in 2024, including, *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*, Tony Evans' *No More Excuses*, and *Kingdom Man* and the partner *Kingdom Woman*.

All six of these books are wonderful devotional partners with God's Word that read well will deepen your faith in 2024. It is my encouragement that you are able to read at least one in this year. And if you have another plan great. But have a plan. Work the plan of spending time with the Lord.

Faith development is something that we all need no matter our age, or circumstance. Plan on growing your faith in this year of our Lord 2024.

Happy New Year!

Blessings,

Pastor Matt



BIRTHDAYS (80+)

Jan. 1 – Alvina Van't Hul will be 94.

Jan. 6 – Esther Kats will be 84.

SYMPATHY

We express our Christian sympathy to **Tyler & Alli Den Boer** in the passing of Tyler's grandfather, John Den Boer who was called to his heavenly home on Nov. 24, 2023.

SPECIAL CONCERNS

Rick Davelaar was hospitalized this past month for respiratory issues. He is doing much better.

Diana De Groot continues to recover at home from her foot surgery.

Gerrit Kats will have ongoing procedures.

Please continue to encourage and pray for all those who continue to recover from recent surgeries, those anticipating surgeries, and all those struggling with illness, cancer, and other health concerns.

"The Year Ahead"

May God make your year a happy one!
Not by shielding us from all sorrows and pain,
But by strengthening us to bear it, as it comes;
Not by making our path easy,
But by making us sturdy to travel any path;
Not by taking hardships from us,
But by taking fear from our heart;
Not by granting us unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping our face bright, even in the shadows;
Not by making our life always pleasant,
But by showing us when people and their causes need us most,
and by making us anxious to be there to help.
God's love, peace, hope and joy to us for the year ahead.

- Author Unknown; Adapted by Debra Mooney

2023 Statistics for 1st CRC

We praised God for 6 babies born in our church family.

Jonah James Van Surksum	4/20/23	Brooke Olivia Van Tilburg	9/2/23
Quinnley Blake Faber	5/20/23	Chetson Jake De Jager	9/13/23
Elsie Marie Hernandez	7/25/23	Sawyer James Van Otterloo	12/7/23

We mourned with 3 families over their loved one's death.

Francis LeLoux	1/3/23
Duane Haak	4/6/23
Merle Koedam	4/22/23

With God's help, we promised to encourage and guide 8 babies/children at the baptismal fount.

Jesse Dayton Rust	1/8/23	Jonah James Van Surksum	6/18/23
Kamden Jay Jansen	2/5/23	Quinnley Blake Faber	8/13/23
Archie Michael Walls	3/5/23	Chetson Jake De Jager	11/5/23
Crew Junior Van't Hul	4/23/23	Elsie Marie Hernandez	11/19/23

We praised God for the fruits of the Holy Spirit when 11 baptized members publicly professed or reaffirmed their faith.

Alex Rust	1/8/23	Jake De Wit	3/12/23
Alexis Rust	1/8/23	Shelby Van't Hul	4/23/23
Glenn Walls	3/5/23	Amanda Ann Maassen	4/30/23
Leah Walls	3/5/23	Leah Van Surksum	5/14/23
Aysha Pollema	3/12/23	Ryan Olivera	7/30/23
Jace Mulder	3/12/23		

We rejoiced with 7 couples as they joined together in marriage.

Colton & Leah Van Surksum	4/24/23	Ryan & Madison Olivera	9/8/23
Dawson & Allison Feenstra	6/10/23	John & Madeline De Wit	10/21/23
Davis & Maddie LeLoux	7/15/23	Davis & Aubrie Van Roekel	11/4/23
Matthew & Julianna Van Otterloo	7/22/23		

We welcomed 5 new church members/families through transfers in.

Alexis & River Rust	1/8/23	Shelby Van't Hul	4/23/23
Glenn Walls	3/5/23	Amanda Maassen	4/30/23

6 families/members transferred out or were released to new church families.

Jace Vande Kamp	January 8, 2023 to First Reformed Church of Inwood
Judith Smith	February 27, 2023 to Bethel Christian Reformed Church of SC
Brent & Carisa Maassen Family	March 11, 2023 to Faith Christian Reformed Church of RV
Tyler Grevengoed	July 20, 2023 to Prairie Lane Christian Reformed Church of Omaha
Davis LeLoux	August 2023 - Hull Protestant Reformed Church
Jordan & Haeley Faber Family	October 2023 - Trinity Christian Reformed Church of RV

Caroling at Whispering Heights





“Ending the Year with Thankfulness”

One of the last big holidays we celebrate at the end of every year is Thanksgiving. We come together in person or via technology and are able to see and think about the blessings that God has given to each of us. We also come together as churches and communities in various ways of giving thanks to particular people by volunteering, donating and serving in our communities in various ways. Thankfulness is sad and shown a lot during this month and at this holiday.

The end of celebration for this holiday does not stop with the holiday of Thanksgiving. Although Christmas is seen as a time for giving, we also have the opportunity to say thank you, first and foremost to our heavenly father for the gift of his son. Then we have the opportunity to “thank” many people in our lives by the giving of gifts, a special card, or maybe a donation to a charity or group. What a great way to end each year: the opportunity to give thanks in a myriad of ways to many different people

As we anticipate entering into a new year, we get to be reminded once again of the lives that we lived in the previous year. We get to end the year thinking and thanking and we have the opportunity to begin the new year, the same way. We get the opportunity to thank God for a new year of his blessings and his opportunities yet to be unfolded. We get to thank God for the journey that he has carried each of us through. We get to think and imagine with God’s help what the new year will bring. And ultimately, experiencing those moments when God brings them into our lives, we get to thank him for the opportunity.

Some of us know some of the opportunities that will await us in the year of our Lord 2024. It may be the opportunity to attend college and study a particular passion that God has led you to. It may be the opportunity to pursue a career in a field you have long trained for, prayed for, and ultimately have been prepared for. Or it may be a totally new avenue for you to discover and take the first step in a new journey. Some of us do not know what this next year will hold and we will be trusting and believing in God even more fully than we ever have before.

In whatever situation we find ourselves in, in whatever opportunity we have put in front of us, we have the greater opportunity to be thankful. Thankful in the moment, thankful in the simplicity, thankful in the complex. Whatever the situation brings us we can be thankful that we have a God that is in control of it all. Whether we have the five steps down pat for our next adventure or are going into a new opportunity with eyes wide open, we have the opportunity to be thankful.

As we enter the year of our Lord 2024, we do so with thankfulness, thankfulness of where we have been in the past year, thankfulness of where we are now as we enter this new year and thankfulness that we know that we have a God that can carry us forward into the future. Thank You, Father, for always being with us even when the road seemed to end, the idea seemed to stop or the passion seemed to die. You alone know the plan for our lives and know the next steps that need to be taken. Thank you for what you have given us already in our lives and the opportunities that we will be given in this new year. Above all we thank you that we can move forward in the glorious reminder of the birth of your son. How can we not end each year with thankfulness?

The Wheeled Worshiper



“Resolve to go Micro!”

Most New Year’s resolutions are so major they seem made to be broken. Maybe that’s why “micro-resolution” is the latest January buzzword. Setting smaller goals is more realistic and helps ensure follow-through, according to experts. People who try setting micro-resolutions say that approach is more positive and leads to longer-lasting change. For example, instead of attempting to lose 30 pounds this year, make a micro-resolution to walk 10 minutes twice per day and to snack on fresh fruit at least once a day.

Micro-resolutions can also be helpful in matters of faith. If aiming to read the entire Bible in one year feels overwhelming, take five minutes each morning and evening to read a brief devotional or pray. If joining your church’s missions committee isn’t possible, try to talk to one new person each week about your faith or church. May God bless you as you take small steps that add up to big impact this year!

“Our Source of Light”

January 6 marks the day of Epiphany, when the wise men (who were Gentiles) came to worship Jesus and bring him gifts. During the church-year season of Epiphany, we remember that God’s Son is the Light of the whole world.

Ponder the gifts of Epiphany with these two reflections, written centuries apart:

Your light, dear God, surpasses all other light, because all light comes from you. Your fire surpasses all fire, because your fire alone burns without destroying. The flames of your fire reach into the soul, consuming the sin and selfishness that lie there. But far from damaging the soul, your fire sets it ablaze with love. What moved you to enlighten me with your truth?

The fire of your love was the reason. You loved me so much that you could not bear to see me confused and perplexed. Can I ever repay the burning love which you have given me? No, because I have nothing of my own to give. Yet you assure me that the love which you put into my soul is repayment enough. You desire only the joy of seeing me receiving your gift.

What more perfect Father could there be!

~Catherine of Siena (c. 1347-1380)

Epiphany beckons us to come to the light of Jesus Christ. Epiphany calls us to stare into that light until our inner darkness is fully expunged. Epiphany then sends us out into a dark and weary world as women and men with shining faces, until we say with the apostle Paul, “It is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” [see 2 Corinthians 4:6].

~Jason Gaboury, campus minister in New York City

Bible Trivia

In the book of Judges, the warrior Barak would go to battle only if a certain female leader went with him. Who was she?

- A. Rebekah
- B. Jael
- C. Michal
- D. Deborah

See next page for Answer.





“The Heart of Our Faith”

Christianity affirms that at the heart of reality is a Heart, a loving Father who works through history for the salvation of his children. Man cannot save himself, for man is not the measure of all things and humanity is not God. Bound by the chains of his own sin and finiteness, man needs a Savior.

~Martin Luther King Jr.

“A Year That Whispers Jesus”

For author Nancy Tichy, a small holiday gift once sparked big-picture thoughts about Christian living. One December she received a kitchen towel with the message “I want a Christmas that whispers JESUS.” That prompted thoughts of what it’s like to have an entire year that whispers Jesus.

For starters, that involves daily quiet time, devotion and prayer. “Sometimes I wake with the thought of a person on my mind,” writes Tichy. “I’m quiet with this impression, interceding for the family member or friend until it has lifted. Could this be a whisper from our Savior?”

Many other daily occurrences are “worthy of [Jesus’] whispered response of love,” Tichy points out. That’s true whether we’re distracted by tasks and troubling thoughts or buoyed by encounters with contentment and joy. “For me,” she writes, “whispering is part of intimacy, and that is what I want to make a hallmark of the coming year. I want closeness with our Savior that enables me to hear from him, even when he whispers.”

“First, Contact”

In *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality and Mortality*, Richard Beck writes powerfully about Jesus healing a leper in Matthew 8:1-3. “What is intriguing about this story is the sequence. Jesus touches the leper first. Then the command ‘Be clean!’ is offered. That is, Jesus’ first move is into ritual defilement. By first touching the leper, Jesus ... [is] standing in solidarity with the unclean.” Beck finds this “striking” because typically we expect purification before contact.

But Jesus’ actions reverse the pattern: “Contact occurs first.”

How fortunate for us, too, that God didn’t wait to reach out to us until he had cleansed us of sin. God didn’t save us from afar and only then come to live among us. Rather, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, ESV). And continuously, Jesus loves us, comes to us and touches our hearts, even when we are at our worst — straying from God, trapped in sin, unworthy, unclean, unrighteous. For it’s not our righteousness or purity that heals and saves us, but Christ’s.

“Predictions for the New Year”

Author Ronald Wilson, in Stretching the Soul, describes being certain that four things will occur in the days ahead.

Trouble will come. Life is difficult. I must mourn as well as dance.

In this long journey [of life], I’m not in control. God has reminded us of this.

Many times I will fail.

I will find forgiveness and get up and go on. God will wipe up the mess I’ve made of things, take me by the hand and set me back on the right path.

Praise God for his sure presence during the joys and challenges the new year brings!



2024 WINTER NEWSLETTER

❄️ HEART OF CHRISTMAS ❄️

On Saturday, December 10, we held our annual Heart of Christmas event at Faith Church in Rock Valley. Kids aged 3-11 enjoyed carnival activities while parents picked out and wrapped gifts for them. This year we also had a new addition to our event that brought smiles to many faces – a therapy dog names Onyx! The event concluded with an interactive retelling of the story of the birth of Christ. Registered families also received a family game and devotional, a box of food to make a Christmas meal with, and a bag of hygiene and cleaning products. We are grateful for the many volunteers, schools, businesses, and churches that partnered with Love INC to put this event on and enabled it to go smoothly. We are also thankful for each of the community members that purchased gifts and donated money for the food boxes. Many families were blessed this holiday season as a result of the body of Christ in Sioux County using their skills and resources to serve the Kingdom of God!



❄️ REALITY CHECK ❄️

In November we had the opportunity to host a Reality Check for seniors at Rock Valley Community School District! Reality Check is finance simulation for local high school students that prepares them for what to expect as they become young adults. Students were given an income based on a career that they chose, and then went to different stations to pay various bills, such as housing rent, auto insurance, and groceries. They also encountered life's unexpected expenses, such as health emergencies and speeding tickets! We look forward to offering this opportunity to more schools in Sioux County in the future!



❄️ LOVE & LEARN CLASSES ❄️

Our spring session of Love & Learn Classes will be on Tuesday evenings at Trinity Christian Reformed Church in Rock Valley starting on Tuesday, January 23. This session we intend to offer Faith & Finances, Boundaries, and Grief Share.

- We are looking for **volunteer mentors** for our Faith & Finance class. We will provide curriculum and training to mentors, so you do not need a background in finances to volunteer in this role!
- We are looking for a **facilitator for Boundaries class**. If you enjoy *Boundaries* by Dr. Cloud and Dr. Townsend and have a desire to help people grow in relational wisdom, this is the perfect opportunity for you!
- We are also looking for some people who would be willing to **volunteer in the nursery** a few times throughout the 12-week session.
- **If you are interested in volunteering or registering for a class**, please call Love INC at (712) 476-5990 or email ministries@loveincsiouxcounty.org.

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january

Letter Writing to our MISSIONARIES



	RIBBENS	MALETOUNGOU	KLOMPIEN
January 7	Elaine B	Elmer B	Karl B
January 14	Eric B	Josh B	Mitchell B
January 21	Randy B	Cody B	Rick D
January 28	Vern DB	Kevin DG	Zach DJ

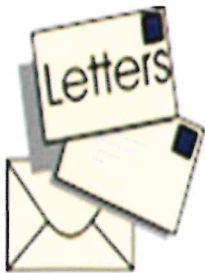
Resonate Global Mission

Attn: Rev. Michael & Megan Ribbens

1700 28th St SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49508

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



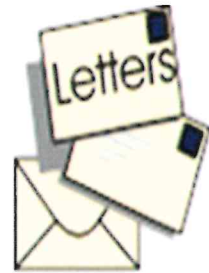
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Resonate Global Mission

Attn: Mark & JinHee Klompier

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GREETERS



January 7	Carl & Melissa Elbers Jeff & Stephanie Elgersma Brian & Renae Faber	Justin & Josie Faber Marv & Dee Faber Bob Gilman & Arnold Kempema	John & Carol
January 14	Brad & Nanci Grevengoed Galen & Elsie Grevengoed Bob & Cherie Groeneweg	Marva Haak Austin & Rachel Haak Kelly & Patty Haak	Rog & Hilaine
January 21	Mike & Tammy Haverhals Eddie & Lanae Hernandez Leonard & Deb Hoekstra	Steve & Sue Hoekstra Kyle Hoogendoorn Jarod LeLoux	Larry & Yvonne
January 28	Rob & Karen Jansen Travis & Kendra Jansen Dick & Carla Jansma	Kevin & Kristin Jansma Sara Johnson Galen & Paula Kats	Vern & Ellen

USHERS



January 7	East: Jeff E, Rick D West: Ron L, Gene L	AM PM	Cherie G, Deb H, Kennedy VH, Ava VO Kristin J, Kayla B
January 14	East: Cody D, Mike B West: Cole VDB, Colton VO	AM PM	Jessica K, Tamae K, Aftyn B, Abby A Michelle K, Kaysha A
January 21	East: Josh B, Mike VZ West: Dan B, Darin P	AM PM	Malorie K, Rhonda L, Amera F, Taryn B Jill M, Benjamin H
January 28	East: Joel B, Matt VE West: Jace M, Alvin L	AM PM	Lisa P, Jackie R, Titus H, Teeghan B Ellen VB, Brielle J

2024 january 2024

Happy new year!

Happy new year!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Austin Bliet Alvina Van't Hul (94)	2	3 <i>the Alex Rust's</i>	4 Pat Byl	5 Aiden Van Roekel <i>the Kar/Bos'</i>	6 Harper Byl Esther Kats (84)
7 Kiah Van Der Brink	8 Brian Mulder	9 <i>the Justin De Wit's</i>	10 Cole Hoekstra	11	12 Malorie Kirkley Hudson Pollema	13
14	15 Anna Van Surksum <i>the Eric Breuer's</i>	16 Kelly Haak	17	18	19 Janie Bliet Deb Van't Hul	20 Kaysha Altena Myron Bleyenbergh Brennan Van Kley
21 Elmer Boon Harlan Driesen	22 Easton Byl	23 Fred Van Kley	24 Hadlie Van Bemmel Lyle Van Engen	25 Carla Jansma Hilaine Kempema Owen Rus	26 Nanci Grevengoed Justin Van Otterloo	27 Jasmine Bos Marva Haak
28 Justin Faber Cole Van Der Brink	29	30 Hayden Van Otterloo Skylar Zomer	31 <i>the Taylor Kat's</i>			29