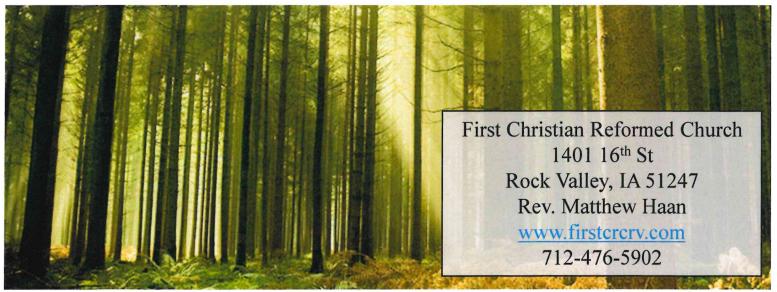
# FAITH & LIFE

July 2024





#### "MIRACLE IN THE MIRE"



The third week of June 2024 will be a week of infamy forever in our minds and hearts for the people of Rock Valley and surrounding communities. Never has so much rain fallen in a 48hr period and never has the river flooded so hard, so far, and so quickly.

Harrowing and heroic stories of rescue will be told and retold for generations. The heaviness of the heart and soul is almost too much to bear. Yet, the shoulders to cry on, the hands to work and hold, are many. Rock Valley is strong in the Lord. Rock Valley is strong as a community. Rock Valley will rebuild our businesses, schools, homes, and churches! Rock Valley is a place of miracles.

We have miracles in the hands that have helped. We have miracles in the food and supplies that have been given. We have miracles in the mire to share of our church.

On July 23, one of the first people inside was Evan VB, our Chair of Council. His love for us all in the Living Church and God's house and his entire community is a blessing to all! He saw the waterline on the outside of the building at nearly 30 inches and thought for sure the inside would have been just as high.

But, the bottom step of the balcony was dry. The pew cushions were dry. Going down the hallway, the library books were dry. The Pastor's books were dry. Yes, the basement was filled to the second step and all the carpet was wet, but even the bottoms of most of the doors were dry.

It was as if the Lord had taken His finger and sealed our leaky doors all around the building as He sealed Noah and his family inside of the ark in Gen 7:16. God Almighty worked to save His people then, and God Almighty saved a symbol of His work now. God Almighty didn't save Noah's house or his vineyard. God Almighty saved his family in a protected place. A place where the Name of the Lord would be praised in the midst of the storm. That miracle is what we have seen here.

The second miracle that we have seen is the outpouring of labor to prepare God's house for worship this past week, so that the third miracle of worship and baptism of Charlotte Kats could be celebrated as a reminder that water is still good. Baptismal waters point us to the truth that we are washed in the blood of Christ Jesus who makes us permanently clean. No matter how much muck or mire we have to wade through in this life.

The Name of the Lord Jesus purifies us as God's adopted children. The Name of the Lord redeems us in love; restores us in hope; and renews us in spirit, so that we would be strong in the Lord and make His name known!

Praising the Lord's name is what we are to do with the miracle that we see!

Blessings, Pastor Matt

Additionally, we continue to lift every family in the church in prayer. For those who lost homes, we pray for guidance and wisdom from the Lord for a permanent dwelling to return. For those whose homes are damaged, we pray for the strength to rebuild.

For so many who have labored unceasingly using tools and skills without a thought of who needs you, THANK YOU!!

Thank you for your service. Thank you for your attendance. Thank you for your generosity to people inside and outside of our congregation. Thank you for your faithfulness.

We praise God for each of you. We pray for you, and love you with the love of Christ Jesus our Lord. Rock Valley is a blessed place and First Church is a blessed body richly carrying the Holy Spirit of unity and service. Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do!

God bless you all!

#### BIRTHDAYS (80+)

July 14 - Gerrit Kats will be 84.

#### ANNIVERSARIES

July 6 – Don & Lois Postma will be married 54 years.

June 27 – Harvey & Joanne Van Otterloo will be married 65 years.

#### SPECIAL CONCERNS

- --Continue to uplift in prayer **Howard Altena**, as he continues his battle with cancer and as he has started chemo treatments.
- --Aiden Van Roekel underwent and emergency appendectomy. Please pray for continued healing for him.
- --Albert Van Grootheest underwent knee surgery on Tuesday, June 25. Please pray for continued healing and patience throughout recovery.

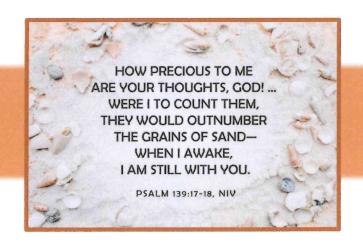
Continue to pray fervently for all who are anticipating or recovering from surgeries, those dealing with sickness & injuries, and those continuing their battles with cancer.

Continue to pray for all those affected by the flood. The many people displaced from their home/business, the significant loss of personal property, the uncertainty of the future and all the decisions to be made going forward. Pray for all the volunteers giving their time to help those in need. Pray for our community as it recovers.

#### SYMPATHIES

- --We express our Christian sympathy **Alvina Van't Hul** in the passing of her sister-in-law, Marlene Van't Hul, who was called to her heavenly home on June 14.
- --We express our Christian sympathy to Dereck, LaRae, Kiah, & Cole Van Der Brink in the passing of Bertha Van Den Top, their beloved mother and grandmother. Bertha was called to her heavenly home on June 1.

May the Lord wrap his loving arms around you and comfort you as only He can do.



#### First CRC families RELOCATED due to the flood:

(This list is *ongoing*, please notify us of *anyone not listed that should be added*, *corrections* if something is listed incorrectly, and *updates* to your location as time goes on, etc.)

- -- **Don & Lois Postma** Sheldon Christian Retirement Home, 1414 Elm Court, Sheldon, IA 51201 Phone 712-541-3228
- -- Jim Driesen River View Ridge 712 Westview Drive #114, Rock Valley
- -- Elaine Bolkema River View Ridge 712 Westview Drive #113 , Rock Valley
- -- Faye Medalen River View Ridge 712 Westview Drive #, Rock Valley
- -- Chad & Sandra Van't Hul family living with James & Rachelle VB 2631 320th St., Rock Valley
- -- Eric & Tracy Breuer living with Eric's Mom 1218 7th Street, Hull
- -- Harm & Bonnie Wiersma currently in their camper, then to an apt in Hull
- -- Verlyn & Sandy Van Bemmel currently in their camper
- -- Kevin & Kristin Jansma living with Mary Van't Hul 800 Golf Course Road, Rock Valley
- -- Tim & Kendra Van Tilburg Pending
- -- Jacob & Amanda Maassen mail can be sent to Larry & Pam's address 1010 17th Ave., RV
- -- Starla Van Otterloo & Sam 2730 340th Street, Rock Valley, IA (Chris & Whitney's)
- -- Warren Van Otterloo living with Rick & Bonnie 2137 340th Street, Rock Valley
- -- Lyle & Joyce Van Engen 2468 300th Street, Rock Valley
- -- Loy & Janice Van't Hul 1411 11th Street, Rock Valley (Alyssa's)
- -- Josh & Katie Byl living with Randy & Pat 3154 Elmwood Ave., Rock Valley
- -- Alvin & Sue LeLoux 2793 300th Street, Rock Valley
- -- Galen & Paula Kats living with Pat 2746 300th Street, Rock Valley
- -- Carl & Melissa Elbers Dordt Squares Send mail to current Rock Valley address
- -- Kevin & Diana De Groot living with Janice Attema 1415 29th Ave., Rock Valley
- -- Karl & Alyssa Bos 822 18th Place, Rock Valley c/o Arnie De Ruyter
- -- Jaden Den Boer 2618 Warren Circle, Rock Valley
- -- Erin De Kam 818 Fairway Oaks Drive, Rock Valley

There are many more congregation members that have been severely affected by the flood, whether it be their home, business, school, farmland, and more.

Please continue to pray for our entire community as together we continue to help each other to clean-up, process, recover, and rebuild!

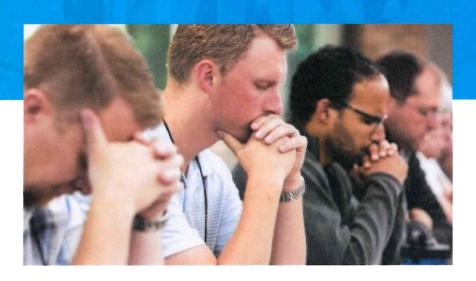






We pray you had a happy and safe 4<sup>th</sup> of July!

# Synod 2024





#### Synod 2024 Overview and outcomes:

We praise the Lord for all of the good and Godly work of Synod this year. Here is a summary of the events that provide insight and blessing into the ways and workings of the CRC going forward.

How do decisions regarding our creeds and confessions impact officebearers (ministers of the Word, elders, deacons, and commissioned pastors) as well as denominational boards?

Synod affirmed that confessional-difficulty gravamina (CDGs) are not meant, nor should be used as an exception to the confessions. For clarity, the following changes were made to Church Order Supplement:

- Updated language that CDGs are temporary, the difficulty came up subsequent to their ordination (should not enter an office with any reservations), and difficulty cannot mean a settled conviction contrary to the confessions.
- CDGs are to be worked through, not held in perpetuity (despite how some have used them). When officebearers submit CDG, the council should begin a process of discipleship and discernment, providing time, encouragement, and counsel in a spirit of love, humility, and fellowship. The council determines if one has a sincere difficulty or settled conviction, thus is a CDG appropriate or is a confessional-revision gravamen (CRG) called for. The total timeline shall not exceed 3 years.
- While holding a CDG, an officebearer must refrain from teaching contrary to or disparaging confessions/synod-declared confessional status, recuse themselves from being delegated to broader assemblies while unresolved, and work toward full alignment.
- CDGs are resolved when creed and confessions affirmed unreservedly, a CRG is filed, or the officebearer resigns from office.
- Classical church visitors may be called upon by councils.

#### Along these lines, Synod also decided:

- Those who currently have CDG should follow this process.
- Local churches are to continually equip their members regarding the confessions and their officebearers regarding church order.
- The Office of the General Secretary (OGS) will develop a new Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) based on these decisions.
- Boards of denominational agencies, institutions, and Council of Delegates (COD) are to review and revise their gravamina/exception policies accordingly and report to Synod 2025.

What about churches, officebearers, and/or members that have come out with public statements of affirmation and full inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals, or who declare themselves to be members in protest to the recent synodical decisions?

- Churches have been instructed to repent. This can take the form of a statement to
  classis indicating repentance; removal of public statements and materials;
  commitment to nor ordain officebearers in same-sex marriages or relationships;
  commitment to not publicly instructing against denomination's position; commitment
  to not recognize same-sex marriage as ecclesiastically valid via officiation or blessing
  of a wedding or baptismal rites; commitment of officebearers to not serve in
  organizations designed to specifically advocate against the teachings and
  confessions of the CRCNA.
- Officebearers from non-compliant churches across the denomination were placed on limited suspension at the close of synod.
- Limited suspension includes the loss of ability to be delegated to classis, synod, COD, other CRCNA agencies (may attend classis with privilege of floor but not as seated delegate).
- Limited suspension is intended as a one-year process, but classes may add one year
  if church is participating in process (no more than two years); at the end of this year,
  if refusal to engage, classes shall initiate special discipline of councils. Classes are to
  remove council, revert church to emerging status, place under authority of a
  neighboring council.
- Members who "have declared themselves to be in the status of one in protest with ecclesiastical intent have entered into the process of discipline according to the procedures set by Synod 2024 and the existing Church Order." One of the grounds is "There is no category in the Church Order...to be 'in protest' regarding settled and binding synodical decisions concerning confessional matters, or to add 'metaphorical asterisks' by their names. Future inception or tacit acceptance of such categories would be a threat to the existence of the CRCNA and to the integrity of its confessional subscription." This does not prohibit someone from submitting a "protest"-type of communication "which expresses a complaint or objection to a decision or course of action followed by an assembly" (Rules for Synodical Procedure V. A. 2). It does not allow someone to live and declare themselves, "I'm CRC in every sense except for (insert settled and binding decision)."

Accountability for classes (plural for classis, what we call our regions of congregations): Classes are instructed to re-sign the Covenant for Officebearers (CfO) annually.

Accountability with Calvin Theological Seminary: See their "Statement on Our Confessional Commitment by the CTS Faculty."

Accountability with Calvin University: Calvin University (CU) Board of Trustees is to define differences of Calvin's use of "confessional difficulties" in relation to synodical decisions on gravamina, and develop language and processes in alignment with those of the CRC to build trust in relationships with CRC churches and report to Synod 2025 on process. CU representatives spoke of their desire to walk in-step with the denomination.

Accountability with the Reformed Church in America (RCA): The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) was instructed to communicate with the RCA and report back to Synod 2025 on their responses to 1) desire for shared commitment to our shared confessional Reformed heritage, doctrine, and practice; 2) concern regarding churches that have disaffiliated being the ones in alignment with the CRC; 3) request for clarification on RCA's ongoing commitment in faith and practice to Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108-109; 4) request for clarification on whether RCA clergy have been or are permitted to solemnize same-sex marriages and whether they can remain in same-sex marriages/romantic partnerships while in good standing. Also, EIRC is to provide recommendation to Synod 2025 regarding ecumenical relationship with the RCA.

#### Other Things worth paying attention to:

**Global Vision Team report:** As formal relationships with groups of churches beyond the U.S. and Canada have been growing, how is the CRC thinking with regard to how we operate going forward?

Currently we have CRC Nigeria, CRC Chad, CRC Ethiopia, CRC Cuba, and other nations where our missionaries have been working for more than a century. The size of these other CRC's is over 1mil+ members.

These nations where the CRC has a stronghold are looking to be wrapped together into one larger Global CRC network. This is being studied for legal issues to establish proper relationships.

#### Resonate Global Mission reported 33 anticipated church plants in the coming year!

**Thrive:** Average vacancy length has increased to more than three years.

- Thrive has resources and support for progressive churches that are considering or seeking to disaffiliate from the CRC.

**Council of Delegates:** Regarding the pillar of "Grow in Diversity," they were instructed to review the wording and intent in light of concerns that the emphasis should be hospitality vs. fulfillment of ethnic quotas.

**Deferred to Synod 2025:** Overture 75 (Deferred from 2023) Evaluate Polity to Clarify Relationship of Assemblies.

**New Task Force:** To develop church order procedures to discipline officebearers, including disaffiliation initiated by a broader assembly (report back to Synod 2026).



#### "Give a Blessing, Be a Blessing"

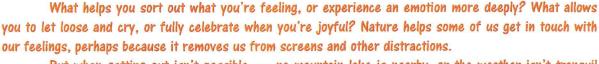
Recently, I had the opportunity to go and be a part of a worship service at the Sioux Falls Gospel Mission. My role was to pray at the end of the service. I don't usually view praying this way but in light of the story from that night that I am going to tell, it seems fitting. With a simple prayer I was asking God to bless all those who attended, church members and community members alike. I was asking God to be with them and to bless them. Little did I know that soon afterwards I would be in line for the reception of a blessing.

At the conclusion of the service, you as visitors have the opportunity to interact with the people that the Mission serves. Sometimes it's just a simple greeting and a thanks for coming to worship with them. Other times it can be a longer conversation, getting the opportunity to understand a little bit more about their situation, depending on what they're willing to share. In some cases, you can walk right out of the chapel without any interaction but knowing that you had an impact. In my case, on this night, I had the pleasure of talking with a young man. He got down on my level to talk to me and asked me if I liked his American flag sweatshirt. It was a cool sweatshirt and so I said yes. He asked me if I wanted the sweatshirt because he wanted to give it to me. My immediate response was, "Don't you need it?" His response to my question was "God told me you needed it more than I did." After this, he proceeded to put the sweatshirt on me. The man was left with just a tank top and shorts to wear for the rest of the evening.

As I reflect on this moment, it still strikes me. It still hits me deep inside. That the man would pinpoint me as someone that could benefit from his sweatshirt gives me pause, and it also gives me opportunity to consider what a true blessing he was to me. I didn't need any extra clothes yet he willingly gave the shirt off his back, literally. He and I had never met but he was led to share with me. As I look back on this moment and carry it with me moving forward, I recognize the true power of giving a blessing and also being a blessing. With simple words, I prayed a blessing on the group that was in the chapel that night. With simple actions this man showed what a true blessing it could be to physically be a blessing to a complete stranger.

This interaction may seem simple but its beauty is found in its simplicity. Just the simple act of giving the shirt off your back to someone else mirrors for me in small ways what Jesus does for us each day. He gives of himself willingly each day for our blessing and for our benefit. One cannot forget the biggest blessing we received from him when he died on the cross to save us from eternal death and give us eternal life. How much more so should we be willing to be used by him in small and big ways to be a blessing. It causes me to ask the question: how can I be a blessing to someone today?

#### "God's Gift of Music"





But when getting out isn't possible — no mountain lake is nearby, or the weather isn't tranquil — consider the gift of music. Often instrumental or vocal music helps us access the depths of our soul like nothing else can. God may even speak to us through music — whether in song lyrics, our own inner thoughts or wordless stirrings of the heart.

Albert Schweitzer, a pastor, musicologist, physician and more, said, "Joy, sorrow, tears, lamentation, laughter — to all these music gives voice, but in such a way that we are transported from the world of unrest to a world of peace, and see reality in a new way, as if we were sitting by a mountain lake and contemplating hills and woods and clouds in the tranquil and fathomless water."

Make some playlists for various emotions: joy, grief, anxiety, hope. Then imagine yourself relaxing in nature, and experience God's love.

#### "Following Christ"

To have faith in Christ means, of course, trying to do all that he says. There would be no sense in saying you trusted a person if you would not take his advice. Thus, if you have really handed yourself over to [Christ], it must follow that you are trying to obey him.

But trying in a new way, a less worried way. Not doing these things in order to be saved, but because he has begun to save you already. Not hoping to get to heaven as a reward for your actions, but inevitably wanting to act in a certain way because a first faint gleam of heaven is already inside you.

-C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

"Preparation for Worship"

Harvests are beginning to ripen, and gardens are producing richly. God of growth, may the seeds you plant in me through worship bear abundant fruit.

In this time of worship, may all gathered here experience your lavish love,
O God, through your Word and through one another. Amen.

Lord, as we pray together in the Spirit, dress us in your armor: salvation, truth, righteousness, faith, the Word of God and eagerness to share the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:13-18).

Praise to you, O Lord! Though you are above all and beyond all, you come close to us and hold us in gentle care. We worship you.



#### **Bible Quiz**

What kind of birds does God use to supply Elijah with food at the Kerith Ravine?

- A. quails
- B. ravens
- C. eagles
- D. doves

See next page for answer.



#### "A Spirit of Gladness"

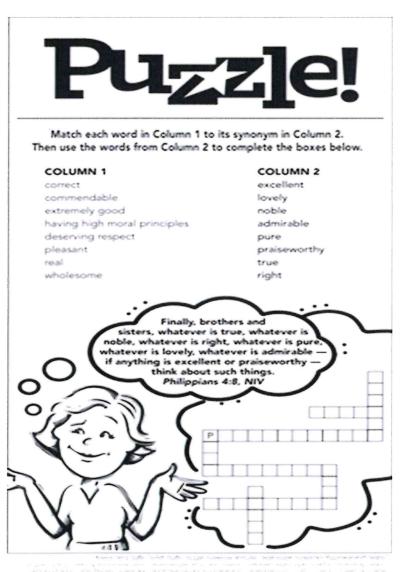
Samuel Upham, a 19th-century theology professor, was known for his preaching and humor. On his deathbed in 1904, Upham was surrounded by friends and seemed to pass away. "No, he's not dead," said one. "His feet are warm, and no one ever died with warm feet."

Hearing that, Upham opened his eyes and replied, "Jan Hus did!" — referring to the Christian martyr burned at the stake in 1415.

"We are sad by nature, and Satan is the spirit of sadness," said Martin Luther. "But God is the spirit of gladness and preserves us." As Upham's final words reveal, he was preserved by God's spirit of gladness, even in his final moments.



**Christian symbol** WEDDING RINGS — The exchange of wedding rings isn't found in Scripture. It came into practice among Christians in the late ninth century. The unending circle profoundly symbolizes a couple's mutual promises of ongoing love and commitment, as well as God's promise of eternal love that surrounds all — including each couple and marriage.







# Letter Writing to our MISSIONARIES



RIBBENS	MALETOUNGOU	KLOMPIEN

July 7	Brad P	Don P	Rich R
July 14	Damon R	Alex K	Vern VB
July 21	Jeff VB	Verlyn VB	Lyle VE
July 28	Matt VE	Albert VG	Fred VK



Attn: Rev. Michael & Megan Ribbens

1700 28th St SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49508

EMAIL: <u>mribbens@crcna.org</u> - Mike

mribbens@gmail.com - Megan

#### **Resonate Global Mission**

Attn: Rev. Sosthene & Kara Maletoungou

1700 28th St SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49508

EMAIL: smaletoungou@crcna.org

#### **Resonate Global Mission**

Attn: Mark & JinHee Klompien

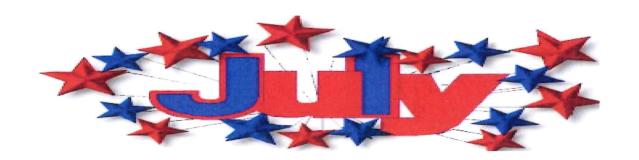
1700 28th St SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49508

EMAIL: <a href="mklompien@crcna.org">mklompien@crcna.org</a>







## **GREETERS**



July 7	Colton & Leah VS Mike & Gert VR Andrew & Sharla VR	Eric & Erica VS Alyssa VH Chloe K	Vern & Ellen
July 14	Carol VH, Mary VH Loy & Janice VH Loy & Taryn VH	Mark & Deb VH Mike & Christal VH Mitchel & Shelby VH	Harlan & Priscilla
July 21	Tim & Kendra VT Tim & Kim VT Mike VZ	Jack & Kelsey VB Gerrit & Kay V Harm & Bonnie W	Ron & Darletta
July 28	Glenn & Leah W Blake & Genae Z Ryan & Jamie Z	Evan & Kim A Mike & Tammy B Myron & Amy B	John & Carol

### **USHERS**



July 7	East: Arnold K, Bob G	AM	Malorie K, Em D, Amera F, Tad M
	West: Benjamin H, Keith L	PM	Jamie DJ, Kaysha A
July 14	East: Jeff E. Rick D	AM	April DK, Priscilla D, Brielle J, Abby A
	West: Joe M, Gene L	PM	Alli DB, Alison L
July 21	East: Cody D, Mike B	AM	Steph E, Deb H, Mason J, Taryn B
	West: Cole VDB, Colton VO	PM	Cherie G, Jaydn L
July 28	East: Josh B, Mike VZ	AM	Kristin J, Harper VB, Teeghan B
	West: Dan B, Darin P	PM	Jessica K, Brennan VK



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fi	Sat
	1 Beth Kats	2 Brooke Haverhals the Loy J. Van't Hu's	е	4 Bob Gilman	5 Ava Van Otterloo	6 Howard Altena Kilee Van Beek Cody Van Tilburg the Bob Groeneweg's the Don Postma's (54)
7 Trenton Van't Hul	8 Olivia De Jager Galen Grevengoed	9 Addisyn Bloemendaal	10 Lori Boon Jesse Eppinga Allison Feenstra Abigail Dokter	11 Taryn Breuer Zach Elbers Dereck Van Der Brink Mason Van't Hul the Evan Letoux's	12 the Chad Van't HU's	13 Griffin Kats the Keith LeLoux's
14 Gerrit Kats (84) Chad Van't Hul Harm Wiersma	15 Vern De Boer Renae Faber Yvonne Haak Trevin Van Kley	16 the Alvin LeLoux's the Mike Pollema's	17	18 Merlin Van Otterloo	19 Mike Baartman Kevin De Groot Rachel Haak Delanie Van Bemmel	20 Randy Byl
21	22 Gracia Van Kley the Gelen Kats' the Atathew Van Otterloo's	23 Rosalie Banda	24 Noah Jansma	25 Holly Haan Elsie Hernandez	26 Kay Vis	27 Tracy Breuer
28 Austin Haak	29	30 Quincy Elgersma Elsie Grevengoed the Harvey Van Otterloo's (65)	31 Jamie De Jager Cowan Van Kley the Carl Elbers'			