

FAITH & LIFE

May 2025



GROW DEEP LIVE TALL
Jeremiah 17:7-8

First Christian Reformed Church
1401 16th St
Rock Valley, IA 51247
Rev. Matthew Haan
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“Dressed for Battle: Living in the Armor of God”

May is a month of celebration at First CRC! Beginning with Gems Sunday and Mother's Day, then celebrating all the graduates at every age in their good work and then remembering the sacrifice of the fallen for freedom on Memorial Day.

May is a month that can often feel like a contact sport bouncing from place to place hoping there aren't too many blockers in the way. Trying to meet and greet everyone, while still going to soccer, or baseball, or track, or family reunions, or taking a breath to go camping.

May reminds us that life is a battle. Most are good and joyful battles, but some are trying and difficult, dark, and seemingly unending.

In all battles, we need armor. Not just any armor, but the full armor of God. Eph 6:11 says, *“Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand.”* The armor of God is the spiritual protection that He provides for all His children. Protection that is sized according to the life that we face right now. We are going to take some time in May to walk through each of the pieces of our protective armor so that we would be prepared for daily living.

So come with us on this journey as we study the **belt of truth** that holds everything together. The **breastplate of righteousness** that comes from Christ Jesus himself, in order that we would have feet prepared to follow him; fitted with the good news, the **gospel of peace**. The peace that carries the **shield of faith** well, to extinguish the flaming arrows of fear, doubt, and temptation that can perplex us.

We need the **helmet of Salvation** because the largest battlefield is often our mind, and the helmet from God reminds us daily that we are saved, sealed, and secure in our Savior Jesus. Sixth, we need the powerful **sword of the Spirit**, which is God's Word that doesn't just defend but goes on the offensive to cut through the darkness and sin of the world.

And finally, we need to pray. Even though prayer isn't listed as a piece of the armor that we wear, it is certainly the leading behind all that we do with the armor upon our flesh and our soul. It keeps us connected to our Eternal Commander.

It is our Eternal Commander who daily reminds us that we are not left without protection in the conflicts that we face. We have the armor of the Lord holding us up and on. Not just to survive—but to **stand firm** in victory. So, in the month of May, don't forget to get dressed. Your spiritual life depends on it!

Amen!

Blessings,

Pastor Matt



BIRTHDAYS

May 3 – Donna Bakker will be 85.

May 7 – Mary Ann Klarenbeek will be 83.

May 24 – Bob Kooima will be 88.

ANNIVERSARIES

May 31 – Roger & Hilaine Kempema will be married 57 years.

SYMPATHY

-- We express our Christian sympathies to **Larry & Pam Maassen , Jacob & Amanda Maassen, Brent & Carisa Maassen family** in the passing of their mother and grandmother, Jennie Maassen on April 19.

We pray that our Heavenly Father will wrap the family in His arms of comfort and surround them with His peace.

SPECIAL CONCERNS

- **Larry Haak** – Pray for continued strength and healing from his aorta replacement surgery.
- **Howard Altena** – Pray for strength and comfort as he continues treatments altering between chemo and immunotherapy every other week.
- **Clarence Klarenbeek** – Pray for his overall health and his battle with abdominal cancer.
- **Paula Kats** – Pray for continued healing and improvement with her health struggles.
- **Ruth Koedam** - Continue to pray for comfort and strength for her as she continues with her cancer treatments and overall health.
- **Dan De Groot** – Pray for Dan as he began intense treatments for a reoccurrence of cancer that was found in his liver.
- **Mandy Visser** – Pray for strength and comfort as she continues her chemo treatments for colon cancer.

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.

❖ ***Please uphold all of our students who are completing this academic school year and preparing for life changes in their education and future endeavors.***

“Let Us Take Time”

Let us take time every morning to turn to our God and say,
Thanks for another restful night and the dawn of a brand-new day.
Thank you for the blessings and gifts you've given us all these years,
and for the times you helped us through life's many heartaches and tears.
Thank you for this beautiful world, for the flowers, the birds and the trees,
and for so many precious children, we thank you for all of these.
Your blessings and gifts outnumber, by far, the stars that shine above,
but the one we treasure the most of all is your overwhelming love!

Remembering Gertrude Jane Vis

Gertrude Jane Vis, 101, of Rock Valley, IA, passed away on January 13, 2025, at her earthly home and went to her eternal home in Heaven. She was lovingly cared for by hospice, her children and grandchildren her last few weeks here on earth.

A celebration of Gertrude's life was held on Saturday, January 18, at the First Christian Reformed Church in Rock Valley at 10:30AM with Rev. Matthew Haan officiating.

Gertrude Jane De Groot was born on December 15, 1923, at home on the farm near Doon, IA, to Abraham and Jennie (Koel) De Groot. Gertrude was the eighth of ten children. Later the family moved SW of Sioux Center, IA, where Gertrude attended country school through eighth grade. On May 24, 1942, Gertrude made profession of faith at the First Christian Reformed Church of Sioux Center. Still found in the back of her Bible were the verses given to her that Sunday – Ephesians 6:16 and Micah 6:8.



On February 15, 1943, she married the love of her life, Edward Vis, on her parents' farm. Gert would sit right next to Ed in the car (before seat belt restrictions) wherever they went. Gert was a devoted wife working beside Ed on the farm south of Hull, IA, running the concession stand at the fast pitch league in Rock Valley, fixing rental properties in Sioux City, IA, or tending to a vending route they had. Ed and Gert were blessed with five children, William (Betty) Vis of, Mesa AZ, Janice Carrell of New Orleans, LA, Loretta Vis of Sheldon, IA, Sandra (Ken) Wolthuizen of Sheldon, IA, and Gerrit (Kay) Vis of Rock Valley, IA. They traveled side by side visiting their children throughout the United States. She continued to travel to visit her children even after Ed passed away. Their love for each other was an example of a loving Christian marriage. Ed passed away on May 14, 1990. Gert immediately became a volunteer for hospice, caring for others instead of feeling sorry for herself.

Gert loved God. She often said "I am so blessed" right up to her last days. She loved going to church to hear God's Word preached. She would back the car into her parking spot as good as any truck driver. She wasn't going to be the person to back into someone at church. The last two years she faithfully watched 2 services on TV each week. Saying almost every week, "Wasn't that a good sermon" or "I think that sermon was for me".

Gert loved her five children and their families. She was a loving and kind grandma; often getting visits from grandchildren traveling for hours to spend a day or two with her or going miles out of their way to say hi and spend a little time with her. Her teenage great-grandchildren would stop by alone or in groups of 3 or 6 just to talk to great-grandma. She was a good listener, never judged, or spoke harshly and you were always offered a cookie, banana bread, and a sucker when you left.

Gert's legacy is her family. She is survived by her 5 children and their spouses; 18 grandchildren; 50 great-grandchildren; and 1 great-great-grandchild. Gert is also survived by a brother-in-law, John Vis from MI.

Proceeding Gert in death were her parents; her husband's parents, William and Hattie Vis; husband; great-grandson, Kane Van Bommel; 9 siblings and their spouses; and Ed's 10 siblings and 11 of their spouses.

Special thanks to Gert's family for sharing memories with us.

For those of us that have been blessed to know Gert, Mom, Grandma, Great-Grandma, and Great-Great Grandma knew we were loved and prayed for.

Mom never complained about being lonely because of all the visitors she received. Family, old friends, new friends, and neighbors always stopped by and were welcomed with a big smile and true joy and contentment. Very seldom did a day go by without someone stopping by to say hi - making it a great day for her!

She never spoke a harsh word unless you did something seriously wrong to a family member. Then she faced that person (not speaking about them behind their back) and told them what she thought about them and their actions!

Today, her family remembers and uses the many life skills and lessons they were taught. From gardening, caring for flowers, canning vegetables and meat, making the best gravy, homemade tomato soup, making balken brei, combining salt and pepper together, etc. etc.! And remembering each time to say "I love you" when you leave and smile with love that is beyond measure!

Welcome Bradyn & Braelee Davelaar Family

We are Bradyn and Braelee Davelaar and we have two children, Wrynlee and Knoxtyn. Bradyn's parents are Jason and Misty Davelaar; siblings are Cody(Emileann) Davelaar, Paige(Mitch) Claussen and Alexis(Alex) Rust. Braelee's parents are Brent and Jennifer Rus; siblings are Jaxon, Mitaya, and Teague. We both grew up in Rock Valley. We met at Rock Valley Public School in 6th grade when Bradyn transferred in from Heritage Christian School. We live on an acreage southwest of town. Bradyn does custom manure hauling and crops, and Braelee stays home to take care of the kids and animals. We enjoy spending time outside with our animals and golfing together in the summer.



Meet Faith Briella Van Tilburg

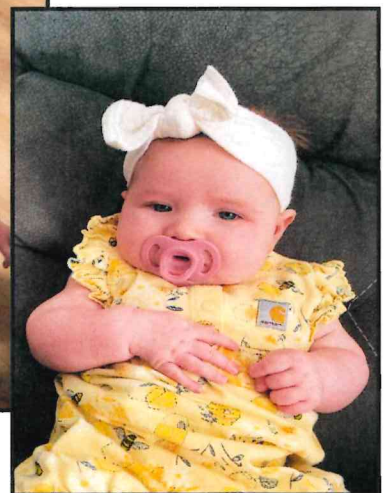
Faith Briella was born Jan. 10, 2025
to Tim & Kendra Van Tilburg.

Faith weighed 7lbs 8oz
and was 19 inches long.

Her proud sister Brooke, 19 months old,
welcomed her home.

Proud grandparents are Tim & Kim Van
Tilburg and Rebecca Johnson.

Faith's mom works at Fareway and her
dad is a trucker for Tilly's Trucking.
Faith lives with her family in Rock Valley.



Meet Brayton Clarence Zomer

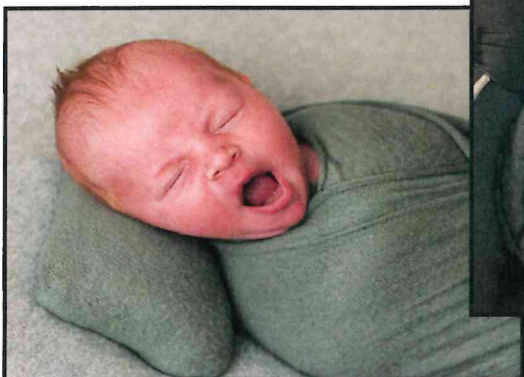
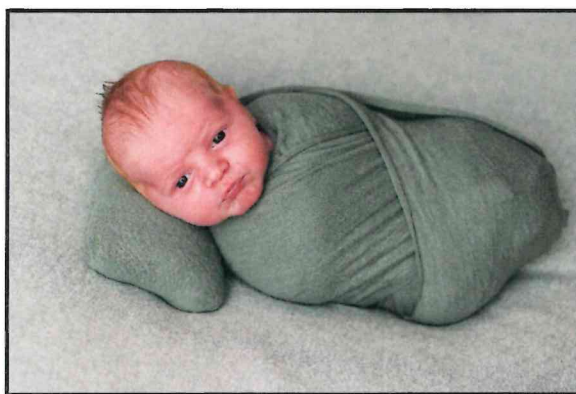
Brayton Clarence was born Feb. 24, 2025
to Blake & Genae Zomer .

Brayton tipped the scales at 9lbs 7oz
and was 21 1/2 inches long.

He was welcomed home by his siblings,
Wyatt age 4 and Gensen age 2.

Proud grandparents are Mark & Karla
Zomer and Nolan and Gina Den Boer.

Brayton's mom and dad both work at
Zomer Company in Rock Valley
where they also reside.



Puzzles, Pop & Pizza



Winner

Awards Presented To:
1st Place - Laurie, Amy, Samantha, Steph
2nd Place - Renae, Brian, Jadyn, Dylan
3rd Place - Jamie, Josie, Kendra, Ashley
Last Place - Sue, Mary, & Sandy



****If you would like to borrow the puzzles used at this event for your own family function or gathering, you are welcome to use them!****

Memorial Day

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

Pancake Breakfast

★ 7:00 - 10:30am ★



Location: First Christian Reformed Church
Fellowship Hall

Hosted by: *Christian Education Chapter
of First CRC*

We hope to see you there!



“The Blank Page”

There are times in the writing process that I’m staring at a blank page waiting for inspiration to strike and for the words to come. Thankfully, God does allow for inspiration from Him and for the words to fill the page. I’m also thankful that my life in and with Him is not just a blank page. What a dull and boring life it would be if it was.

Thankfully, we have a God who is active, a God who is moving each and every day, not just in our lives, but in the lives of everyone. He has created us fearfully and wonderfully with many different gifts and abilities, some that are left untapped until the proper time. We get a lifetime to continue to work out what God has put in our lives as He created each of us uniquely and individually. We also have the opportunity to come together as communities to serve His kingdom better.

There may be another reason for mentioning a blank page. Having a blank page available and ready will allow you as well as others to come up with lists of things that you can do with the gifts that you have been given. There is work for us as individuals such as continuing our personal study of God’s Word and how it applies to each of our lives. There is also an opportunity for communal growth as we come together to share what we have learned. Church, Bible study, and other opportunities allow us to lean on one another and learn from one another. We can go forth from the opportunities with ideas on how best to serve

So, what does your page have on it? Don’t be discouraged by simplicity. If it’s a simple task such as calling someone who you recognize may need encouragement today, move forward with that call, knowing that you are doing the Lord’s work. If it’s as simple as a greeting to a complete stranger or someone you have noticed before, go ahead and make an introduction. God can take the small and make it big and He can take the big moments and turn them into small steps of a bigger life.

I pray that our pages can be filled from the small tasks to the big moments. I pray that God will show us how we can be involved in each and every task and how we can better serve Him in the long run. I hope stories can be told, not only about us, but also about the lives and people that we have impacted and changed with both the small and the great. Lord willing, great praise can be given to our Heavenly Father for the work that He allowed us. May we be inspired and challenged, chosen and transformed by God’s grace to do the work that He has called us to. May the pages of our lives be filled with His glory and grace in and through us, His people.

The Wheeled Worshiper

"Our Fallen Soldiers"



We walked among the crosses where our fallen soldiers lay.
And listened to the bugle as taps began to play.
The Chaplain led a prayer, we stood with heads bowed low.
And I thought of fallen comrades I had known so long ago.
They came from every city across this fertile land.
That we might live in freedom, they lie here 'neath the sand.
I felt a little guilty, my sacrifice was small.
I only lost a little time, but these men lost their all.
Now the services are over for this Memorial Day.
To the names upon these crosses, I just want to say,
Thanks for what you've given, no one could ask for more.
May you rest with God in heaven from now through evermore.

~Cathy Jo Moore



"The Children Call Her Grandma"



The children call her Grandma, a smile upon their face,
For in their hearts, it's Grandma who holds a special place.
She never is too busy to give a hug away
or play a game or read a story on a rainy day.
When someone's feeling poorly, Grandma is always there
to give that special someone some extra loving care.
Her cookie jar is always filled with something tasty sweet;
She'll say it's just in case some little person needs a treat.
Grandma is growing older and more precious with each year.
The children call her Grandma; I call her Mother dear.

"My Mother's Garden"

A mother is a gardener,
planting the seeds of faith, truth and love
that develop into the fairest flowers
of character, virtue and happiness
in the lives of her children.



"Seven Things You'll Never Regret"

1. Feeling reverence for your Maker.
2. Showing kindness to an aged person.
3. Destroying a letter or not sending an e-mail – written in anger.
4. Stopping gossip that could wreck a reputation.
5. Offering an apology that saves a friendship.
6. Taking time to show loved ones consideration.
7. Accepting the judgment of God on any question.

Bible Trivia

What was the name of the wealthy merchant of purple cloth who met Paul and his companions, was baptized, and became a leader in the Philippian church?

- A. Priscilla
- B. Lydia
- C. Dorcas
- D. Joanna

See next page for answer



“You’re Going Places!”

Commencement marks the beginning of a new stage of life, with graduates heading off to discover opportunities and face challenges. Oh, the Places You’ll Go! — a Dr. Seuss book that’s now a popular graduation gift — whimsically explores life’s ups and downs, twists and turns.

Young adults will face excitement and slumps, fun and loneliness. They’ll feel a sense of purpose as well as confusion and even fear. “There are some [things], down the road between hither and yon, that can scare you so much you won’t want to go on,” writes Dr. Seuss.

In the storybook, the life-traveler’s sheer determination propels him beyond difficulties. But God’s children don’t need to journey alone. Our heavenly Father walks beside us on every winding path and around every corner. Life cannot take us anywhere God hasn’t been first. Graduates — and all Christians — can trust in the promise of Joshua 1:9 (NRSV): “Be strong and courageous ... for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

“The Long-awaited Ride Home”

In September 2024, NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams headed to space for what was supposed to be an eight-day mission. Due to technical problems, that expedition exceeded nine months. Despite the unexpected delay, Williams said the astronauts didn’t feel stuck or abandoned. Instead, they viewed the extended voyage as an opportunity to do more research.

Almost 30 years ago, another astronaut also faced setbacks with her return trip to earth. Shannon Lucid had to stay at the Russian Mir space station six months because of hurricanes and various mechanical problems. Before catching a ride back home on the space shuttle Atlantis, Lucid said, “You can rest assured I am not going to be on the wrong side of the hatch when they close it.”

Followers of Jesus need not worry about being on the “wrong side of the hatch” someday. Although the gate to heaven is narrow, Jesus himself is the way and leads us safely home.

~adapted from an illustration by Craig Brian Larson

“Seizing Holy Opportunities”

In Holy Moments, Matthew Kelly discusses the world’s need for more small (but sometimes large) instances of people caring for others, cultivating joy, encouragement and love instead of anger, envy, fear. Kelly defines a Holy Moment as “a single moment in which you open yourself to God. ... You set aside personal preference and self-interest, and for one moment you do what you prayerfully believe God is telling you to do.”

This may mean mowing the lawn for a neighbor with a broken leg, praising a child on his artwork, buying a surprise snack for someone having a bad day, working extra shifts for a coworker with cancer so she can receive her full salary while out sick, paying for the next car’s drive-thru order. Anyone can create a Holy Moment, because you don’t need special skills, position or wealth. “If you want to see miracles, make yourself available to God,” Kelly suggests.

He adds that God has a track record of collaborating with “the most unlikely people to make amazing things happen, and now He wants to collaborate with you.” When we’re open to God’s leading, holy opportunities abound. And we will experience as much joy as the ones to whom we show care.

“Powered by God”

God made us: invented us as a [person] invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else.

Now God designed the human machine to run on himself. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from himself, because it is not there.

~C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity



Letter writing to our Missionaries

RIBBENS

MALETOUNGOU

KLOMPIEN

May 4	Don P	Rich R	Damon R
May 11	Alex R	Vern VB	Jeff VB
May 18	Lindsey VB	Verlyn VB	Lyle VE
May 25	Matt VE	Albert VG	Fred VK

Resonate Global Mission

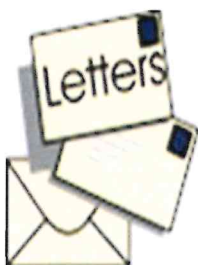
Attn: Rev. Michael & Megan Ribbens

1700 28th St SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49508

EMAIL: mrribbens@crcna.org – Mike

mrribbens@gmail.com – Megan



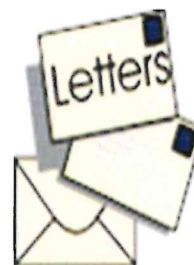
Resonate Global Mission

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



GREETERS



May 4	Sara Johnson Galen & Paula Kats Jonathon & TaMae Kats	Taylor & Jessica Kats Brett & Malorie Kirkley Ruth Koedam	Harlan & Priscilla
May 11	Chloe Koedam Trevor & Lexi Koedam Jeremy Kooiker & Abbie Eppinga	Alex & Michelle Kooima Darin & Megan Kooima Mike & Ranae Kooistra	Ron & Darletta
May 18	Matthew & Autumn Laman Alvin & Sue LeLoux Evan & Rhonda LeLoux	Gene & Carla LeLoux Keith & Jacque LeLoux Shanna LeLoux	Eric & Tracy
May 25	Jacob & Amanda Maassen Larry & Pam Maassen Joe & Jill Miller	Brian & Tricia Mulder Darin & Lisa Pollema Mike & Niki Pollema	Rog & Hilaine

USHERS



May 4	East: Joel B, Matt VE West: Tyler DB, Alvin L	AM PM	Malorie K, Rhonda L, Kaysha A, Ezra H Jill M, Kennedy VH
May 11	East: Arnold K, Bob G West: Benjamin H, Keith L	AM PM	Lisa P, Jackie R, Aftyn B, Jaelyn K Laurie VK, Teeghan B
May 18	East: Taylor K, Rick D West: Joe M, Gene L	PM	Ashley VO, Kelsey VB, Kayla B, Ada K Sharla VR, Noah DK
May 25	East: Cody D, Mike B West: Cole VDB, Titus H	PM	Taryn VH, Genae Z, Amera F, Faith K Jamie Z, Titus H

2025



2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 <i>the Scott Koedam's</i>	2	3 Donna Bakker (85) Kim Van Otterloo Jack Ver Burg
4 Braelée Davelaar <i>the Brett Kirkley's</i>	5 Rob Jansen Caleb Johnson Koen Van't Hul	6 Tristan Mulder	7 Mary Ann Klarenbeek (83) Jamie Walhof-Ellenberger	8 Peyton Rus	9 Hannah Van Tilburg	10 Sara Johnson Verlynn Van Bommel
11	12 Charlotte Kats Breyja Van Kley <i>the Zach De Jager's</i> <i>the Colton Van Otterloo's</i>	13 Lucy Elbers	14 Jacob Leloux	15 Emerson Byl Sharla Van Roekel	16 Scott Koedam Alex Kooima	17 Alyson Banda <i>the Mike Haverhals'</i>
18 Isaac Postma Julie Van Otterloo <i>the Myron Blevenberg's</i>	19 Darin Kooima Mary Vande Kamp Erica Van Surksum	20 Quinnley Faber Joe Miller <i>the Darin Paltema's</i>	21 Melissa Elbers Gerrit Vis	22	23	24 Cody Davelaar Bob Kooima (88)
25 Gensen Zomer	26 Carter Vanden Bos	27	28	29 Darletta Leloux	30 Arnold Kempema Levi Vanden Bos	31 <i>the Travis Jansen's</i> <i>the Roger Kempema's (57)</i>