



## ARTICLES

### Radical Kindness for Christmas

By Pastor Kevin Van Wyk

I just recut the bottom of our Christmas tree in hopes it would start drinking some water. Apparently, 7 hours on top of our van dried it out too much. In the process of cutting, hundreds of needles covered the floor. Stephanie was quickly sweeping them up and asked if I would help with the garbage as this would overflow. I very begrudgingly proceeded to help and then took the garbage to the dumpster.

Maybe you are bursting with energy to love, serve, and bless others. You probably jump at these opportunities to help. Or maybe you are a bit more weary, self-centered, and lazy.

What happens when you see the kitchen counter is cluttered with dishes, there are crumbs on the floor, the garbage needs to go out, or a thin layer of dust is taking over the TV stand? I tend to look on, thinking someone should take care of that... We all want someone else to do the work.

I did not do a nation-wide study, but I am pretty sure this is a major reason we don't serve. We fill our lives with work, sports, hobbies, food, fellowship, and then feel too exhausted to jump in and serve others.

**Yet our Covenant Partner vows state...**

## **“I will serve sacrificially as Jesus did...”**

And how did he serve? Well, he succinctly stated, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

Read that again! The Greek word here is diakoneō and it means to assist (Mat. 20:28), to take care of (Mat. 25:44), to serve food or drink (Mat. 4:11, Mark 1:13), to give financial aid (Acts 6:1), to carry out ministry of evangelism (Acts 20:24), or to be a deacon, serving the needs of believers (1 Tim. 3:10, Rom. 16:1, Eph. 6:21).

Notice the extent of the service Jesus offers... to give his life! Talk about raising the bar! If you read through the passages above, you’ll see a much lower bar: simple acts of kindness. Yet, each of these actions are sacrificial acts, requiring one to die to self (Phil. 2:1-11).

Our Covenant Partner vows mention two ways we are to do this in the church. “...using my spiritual gifts and financial resources to further the mission of Jesus through the local church.”

You can read more about identifying and using your spiritual gifts here [www.altoreformedchurch.org/discover-your-strengths.html](http://www.altoreformedchurch.org/discover-your-strengths.html).

These are a couple of the most basic practices for believers: use your God-given abilities and resources for God. You are hopefully well aware of the churches need for your involvement in ministry and the need to fund programs and our ceiling project. I could pound on this for pages, but let me ask you one question:

**Are you doing what God wants with your time and treasures?**

If your answer is “no,” make a change.

**There is one more application I should mention.** Given we have entered the Christmas season and the economy is effecting us all, let me challenge you to think more on serving than simply giving big gifts. I know, it won’t fly with the grandkids, but it certainly is God’s desire for us. When you see a nasty job no one wants to do, be the first to step up. Follow Jesus’ example as he washed

the disciples' feet; wash the sticky hands, wipe the runny nose, clean the toilets, scrub the carpet, and change the world with radical kindness.

**Remember, whether its your time or treasures, “God loves a cheerful giver.”**

**PRAYER:** Lord, help us joyfully pour out our lives in service to you. Inspire us to give, serve, love, and bless others with a grateful heart. May we keep our eyes on your abounding kindness on the cross, so much so that we are moved to radical kindness toward others.

## Advent

By Doug Shotsky

**Isaiah 40:5** - And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

I find that too often we can go through life without stopping to ask questions like, “Why do we do the things we do?” or “What does that mean?” The season of advent is one of those times for me. I’ve never taken time to ask, “What does **advent** mean?” Well, when I looked it up it makes a lot of sense:

Advent - the arrival of a notable person, thing, or event.

I had known through teachings I’ve sat through, and through taking chocolates out of an advent calendar for the first 24 days in December that we were mirroring the idea of the anticipation of Christ’s birth. But, I didn’t know that the word advent literally meant the arrival of what we’ve been waiting for. The arrival of Jesus was what all of creation longed for to redeem the broken relationship between God and humanity, and this fulfilled the hope that was predicted through the Scriptures and prophets for thousands of years.

What the world had always been waiting for had finally come! Join us, beginning in December as we delve into a series that will take us through the anticipation of the coming of Christ all the way through His arrival into our broken world to redeem us from the power of sin and death!

# Equipping Youth Calendar

By Jessa TerBeest

When	What	Time	Who	Where
January 2	High School Praise Band Practice	7-8pm	Band	Sanctuary
January 4	Game Night	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
January 8	Game Night	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
January 11	Testimony Night	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
January 15	Testimony Night	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
January 16	Bible Study: The Chosen-Season 2: Ep 1	7-8pm	HS + 8th grade	Youth Room
January 16	High School Praise Band Practice	8-9pm	Band	Sanctuary
January 18	Lesson - The Challenge: Made to Thrive	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
January 22	Lesson - The Challenge: Made to Thrive	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
January 25	Question and Answer Night	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
January 29	Question and Answer Night	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
February 1	A-Teams	7:30-9pm	High School	TBD
February 5	Game Night	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
February 6	Bible Study: The Chosen-Season 2: Ep 2	7-8pm	HS + 8th grade	Youth Room
February 6	High School Praise Band Practice	8-9pm	Band	Sanctuary
February 8	Testimony Night	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
February 10	Overnighter	8pm-8am	Middle School	The Union Youth Center
February 12	No Youth Group	---	Middle School	---
February 15	Lesson - The Challenge: Reading the Bible	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
February 19	Lesson - The Challenge: Reading the Bible	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
February 20	Bible Study: The Chosen-Season 2: Ep 3	7-8pm	HS + 8th grade	Youth Room
February 20	High School Praise Band Practice	8-9pm	Band	Sanctuary
February 22	Ash Wednesday	7-8pm	Everyone	Sanctuary
February 24-26	High School Silver Birch Retreat	4pm F-12pm S	High School	Silver Birch Ranch
February 26	Testimony Night	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
March 1	Lesson - The Challenge: Prayer	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
March 5	Lesson - The Challenge: Prayer	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
March 6	Bible Study: The Chosen Season 2: Ep 4	7-8pm	HS + 8th grade	Church Basement
March 6	High School Praise Band Practice	8-9pm	Band	Sanctuary
March 8	Service Scavenger Hunt	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
March 12	Crops and Industry Prayer Service	7-8pm	Everyone	Sanctuary
March 15	Question and Answer Night	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
March 19	Service Scavenger Hunt	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
March 20	Bible Study: The Chosen Season 2: Ep 5	7-8pm	HS + 8th grade	Youth Room
March 20	High School Praise Band Practice	8-9pm	Band	Sanctuary
March 22	A-Teams	7:30-9pm	High School	TBD
March 26	Question and Answer Night	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
March 29	Testimony Night	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
April 2-5	Manitowau Mission Trip (sign ups due in Feb)		Everyone	Camp Manitowau
April 2	Bridge Dinner (membership)	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
April 3	High School Praise Band Practice	7-8pm	Band	Sanctuary
April 5	Spring Break - No Meeting	---	High School	---
April 9	Easter - No Meeting	6:30-8pm	Middle School	---
April 12	Family Night - Pinewood Derby	5:30-?	Everyone	Alto Community Center
April 16	Testimony Night	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
April 17	Bible Study: The Chosen Season 2: Ep 6	7-8pm	HS + 8th grade	Youth Room
April 17	High School Praise Band Practice	8-9pm	Band	Sanctuary
April 19	Lesson - The Challenge: Worship	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
April 21-23	All Church Retreat		Everyone	Silver Birch Ranch
April 23	No Meeting	---	Middle School	---
April 26	Lesson - The Challenge: Discipleship	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
April 30	Lesson - The Challenge: Worship	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
May 1	Bible Study: The Chosen Season 2: Ep 7	7-8pm	HS + 8th grade	Youth Room
May 1	High School Praise Band Practice	8-9pm	Band	Sanctuary
May 3	A-Teams	7:30-9pm	High School	TBD
May 7	Youth Service Prep/Game Night	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Youth Room
May 10	Youth Service Prep	7:30-9pm	High School	Youth Room
May 14	Youth Service	8:30-11am	Everyone	Sanctuary
May 14	Lesson - The Challenge: Share Your Story	6:30-8pm	Middle School	Church Hill
May 15	Bible Study: The Chosen Season 2: Ep 8	7-8pm	HS + 8th grade	Youth Room
May 15	High School Praise Band Practice	8-9pm	Band	Sanctuary
May 17	Lesson - The Challenge: Share Your Story	7:30-9pm	High School	Church Hill

# MESSAGES

A big thank you to the whole congregation for all of the donated items to both Waupun and Brandon's food pantries. They very much appreciated all the donations as they received so many items that they needed. We collected over 275 pounds worth.

-Women's Ministry Team

The Family of Helen Straks would like to thank the ladies for the wonderful lunch they served. It was much appreciated. Also for the cards and prayers for the family. Pastor Doug we want to thank you for the caring message on behalf of Helen's family.

-Thank you, Helen Straks' family

Thank you for making the trip to Sioux Falls for the Network meeting and choosing to give a gift to the Hamilton Reformed rebuild. May God give you wisdom, courage, and be harvested souls for His purpose.

-Pastor Steve

Stork Committee-

Thank you for thinking of us after Bodhi's arrival and for the gift card to Reach Out. We are so grateful for the caring and thoughtful church family Bodhi will get to grow up in. Truly Blessed.

-Tom & Lindsey Bruins

# EVENTS

**Mark your calendar...**

**Alto Reformed Church**  
**December 2022**

**December 11** **Christmas in Alto**  
Join us for caroling around Alto at 5-6pm and then for a neighborhood party at The Old Feed Mill (across the road from church) any time between 6-8pm. Enjoy a bonfire, refreshments, crafts and the Christmas story.

**December 14** **K-5th Grade Christmas Program Practice**  
All K-5th graders should meet in the sanctuary at 6-7:30pm to practice for the Christmas program.

**December 18** **"Messiah: Heaven's Glory" Mixed Choir Cantata**  
The Mixed Choir will present the cantata "Messiah: Heaven's Glory" during the Sunday morning worship service at 9:30am.

**December 18** **"The Real Story: A Christmas Comedy" Christmas Program**  
The PreK-5th graders will bring the message of Jesus' birth beginning at 6:30pm.

**December 19** **Women's Worship Night**  
Ladies, join us at 7pm for an evening of worship.

**December 24** **Christmas Eve Service**  
Join us at 4pm for an evening of worship and celebrating the birth of Jesus.

For detailed information:  
Call 920.346.5505 or email [office@altoreformedchurch.org](mailto:office@altoreformedchurch.org)

# NEWS

## Covenant Partnership

11/13/22 - Matthew & Becky Hibicki