

ALT

REFORMED CHURCH

ARTICLES

A Year Worth Remembering?

By Pastor Kevin Van Wyk

I really prefer to think about the future over the past. Whether I ponder the global trauma, the national divisions, the local challenges, or the personal struggles of the past year, I can't help but want to move on. But, I do think the year is worth pondering...

A year of loss...

We lost three really wonderful people this year; Donna Kastein, Randy Bruins, and Gladys Kastein. All three left amazing legacies of faith for their families. If you were to watch their services, you'd see the difference Christ makes in life and death. These families gathered and celebrated lives well-lived. My heart breaks on the one hand in acknowledging the loss, and yet rejoices in the examples they left.

I really enjoyed the visits with Gladys and Donna as their faith oozed out and their hope of heaven became real. Randy still inspires me with his insistence on moving the church to reach the next generation. He would hobble into Revitalization and Multiplication Commission Meetings for the classis and nudge us to action, never wanting his health to be a concern.

A year of struggles...

We've watched others struggle through disturbing health issues and often experienced them ourselves. Some have been on our prayer chain for years as they battle cancer. Others have

just been added. The back of our bulletin lists several people facing struggles, but it certainly doesn't include everyone. The concern for their well-being and survival weighs heavy on my heart, and it doesn't seem to get better over the years.

A year of tough choices...

Sure, returning to one service at 9:30am was a difficult decision (along with a host of other COVID questions), but nothing quite compares with deciding to leave the RCA. Alto has been connected with the RCA for over 160 years. While I was raised in the Methodist church, my roots are in the RCA. Both my grandparents were active in RCA churches, and I've now spent 30 years in the RCA, 22 of those as a pastor. My calling to ministry was to revitalize RCA churches in the Midwest. It's painful to watch an entire denomination abandon truth for tolerance.

Well, that pretty well sums up why I prefer to look forward.

As I ponder all this, **I could have** just as easily titled the above sections...

A year of celebrating faithful saints sharing a powerful witness to the Gospel.

A year of seeing God's presence, peace, and healing.

A year of faithful discernment and standing on grace and truth.

I could have celebrated the babies baptized into the family... Colbie, Beckett, Collin, Landon, Kyrie, and Nova (not yet baptized, but hey, she's only a few days old).

I could have celebrated decisions to follow Jesus, thriving ministries, and healthy funds for building improvements.

Honestly, I should have celebrated the good more, but the challenges leave their mark as well and that's ok. Join me in looking forward to the new year with this stirring prayer/hymn...

Another year is dawning!

Dear Father, let it be,

in working or in waiting,

another year with thee;

another year of leaning

upon thy loving breast,

another year of trusting,

of quiet, happy rest.

*Another year of mercies,
of faithfulness and grace;
another year of gladness
in the shining of thy face;
another year of progress,
another year of praise,
another year of proving
thy presence all the days.*

*Another year of service,
of witness for thy love;
another year of training
for holier work above.
Another year is dawning!
Dear Father, let it be
on earth, or else in heaven,
another year for thee.*

Times and Seasons

By Pastor Doug Shotsky

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 - 1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

- 2** a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,
- 3** a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,
- 4** a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,
- 5** a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
- 6** a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,
- 7** a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,
- 8** a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

God has created times and seasons in a way that have natural periods where there are beginnings and endings. The time that it takes to travel around the sun is one of those periods that seems to give us pause to evaluate all that's taken place in those previous 365 (or 366) days. Some years we reflect with thankfulness for all that's been and hope that life will continue in such peace and joy of all that's happened. Then other years death, tragic circumstances, and other trials take precedence and we hope for better in the year to come.

Being a part of the Body of Christ, all of us have likely experienced some of both of these over the past year, and likely the most significant events, whether good or bad, overshadow most everything else. We are all in such different places in life that there's no way to look back over any year from the same lens, and that's why it's so important that we continue to look at all of our circumstances through the lens of the cross.

In our best days we still have an eternity to look forward to that's immeasurably greater than anything we could imagine here on earth. And likewise, in our darkest times the hope that we have to look forward to will make the hardships we experience here on earth seem insignificant compared to the glory that's to come. So, if it's been a particularly wonderful year for you and your family, all praise be to our God and Father. And, if it's been the hardest year of your life, take heart in knowing You have a God who has walked with you every step of the way and can't wait to see you face to face in eternity.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 - **16** Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. **17** For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. **18** So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Youth Calendar

By Jessa Ter Beest

| When | What | Time | Who | Where |
|----------------|---|--------------|----------------|--------------------|
| January 5 | Game Night | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| January 9 | Game Night | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| January 12 | Question and Answer Night (Coaches, PT) | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| January 16 | Question and Answer Night (Zack, PK) | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| January 19 | A-Teams | 7:30-9pm | High School | TBD |
| January 23 | Lesson Night: Mary & Joseph | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| January 26 | Lesson Night: Mary & Joseph | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| January 30 | Lesson Night: Elizabeth and Zechariah | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| January 31 | JAMAICA SIGN UP DUE | --- | High School | \$50 Deposit |
| January 31 | Bible Study | 7-8pm | HS + 8th grade | Youth Room |
| February 2 | Lesson Night: Elizabeth and Zechariah | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| February 6 | Service Project Night | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| February 7 | Bible Study | 7-8pm | HS + 8th grade | Youth Room |
| February 9 | Girls/Guys Fun Night | 7:30-9pm | High School | TBD |
| February 11 | Overnighter | 8pm-8am | Middle School | Youth Room |
| February 13 | No Youth Group | --- | Middle School | --- |
| February 14 | Snow Tubing | TBD | Everyone | Sunburst |
| February 16 | Lesson Night: Matthew | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| February 18 | Chili Supper Fundraiser | 5-8pm | Everyone | Church Basement |
| February 20 | Lesson Night: Matthew | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| February 21 | Bible Study | 7-8pm | HS + 8th grade | Youth Room |
| February 25-27 | High School Silver Birch Retreat | 4pm F-12pm S | High School | Silver Birch Ranch |
| February 27 | Lesson Night: Nathanael | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| February 28 | Bible Study | 7-8pm | HS + 8th grade | Youth Room |
| March 2 | Ash Wednesday | 7-8pm | Everyone | Sanctuary |
| March 6 | Bridge Dinner | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Church Basement |
| March 7 | Bible Study | 7-8pm | HS + 8th grade | Youth Room |
| March 9 | Lesson Night: Nathanael | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| March 13 | Crops and Industry Prayer Service | 7-8pm | Everyone | Sanctuary |
| March 14 | Bible Study | 7-8pm | HS + 8th grade | Youth Room |
| March 16 | A-Teams | 7:30-9pm | High School | TBD |
| March 20 | Game Night | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| March 21 | Bible Study | 7-8pm | HS + 8th grade | Youth Room |
| March 23 | Lesson Night: Peter | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| March 27 | Lesson Night: Peter | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| March 30 | Question and Answer Night | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| April 3 | Question and Answer Night | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| April 6 | Lesson Night: The Thief on the Cross | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| April 10 | Lesson Night: The Thief on the Cross | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| April 13 | Service Project Scavenger Hunt | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| April 17 | Easter - No Meeting | --- | Middle School | --- |
| April 20 | Bridge Dinner | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| April 22-24 | All Church Retreat | | Everyone | Silver Birch Ranch |
| April 24 | Service Project Scavenger Hunt | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| April 25 | Bible Study | 7-8pm | HS + 8th grade | Youth Room |
| April 27 | Lesson Night: Paul | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| May 1 | Lesson Night: Paul | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| May 2 | Bible Study | 7-8pm | HS + 8th grade | Youth Room |
| May 4 | A-Teams | 7:30-9pm | High School | TBD |
| May 8 | Youth Service Prep | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Youth Room |
| May 9 | Bible Study | 7-8pm | HS + 8th grade | Youth Room |
| May 11 | Youth Service Prep | 7:30-9pm | High School | Youth Room |
| May 15 | Youth Service | 8:30-11am | Everyone | Sanctuary |
| May 15 | Lesson Night: Your Story/Bonfire | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Church Hill |
| May 16 | Bible Study | 7-8pm | HS + 8th grade | Youth Room |
| May 18 | Lesson Night: Your Story/Bonfire | 7:30-9pm | High School | Church Hill |
| May 22 | Summer Send Off | 6:30-8pm | Middle School | Church Hill |
| May 23 | Bible Study | 7-8pm | HS + 8th grade | Sanctuary |
| May 25 | Summer Send Off | 7:30-9pm | High School | Church Hill |

Library Update

By Pauline Peters

Happy New Year's to all. I'm not sure if you're one to make a New Year's resolution, but if you haven't and are looking for one, I'd say put your phone down, shut off the TV, or close your computer & pick up a book. Our library is stocked for any of your interest. If you like history, there are plenty of historical fiction to learn about how people used to live, or historical events. You can learn about how people lived in Bible times, to the Victorian age, to current

times. You can learn about different cultures from European, to Irish, to Amish, to cowboys. While you're being informed you are also being enlightened spiritually. God has given us such a great gift of imagination which you can use while reading a book. We also have a great variety of non-fiction books if that's more your style.

I would like to give a big shout out to Jean Stelsel who is in charge of our library. Due to her great organizational skills, our library is able to keep going during her absence. I believe I speak for the whole library committee when I say how much we appreciate her dedication & are looking forward to her return.

Happy New Year's again & we hope to see you down in the Library

MESSAGES

We would like to thank the people of this church and community for the unbelievable love and support that has been shown to Jean and I and our family. The people that have told us they are praying for us and to Stephanie Lenz and family, who Jean has prayer for as long as they have been a family, for setting up a prayer vigil at the farm of which over 100 friends and neighbors came for. It's a little overwhelming to see that kind of love. To all the farmers that helped with harvest so Jed and I were able to finally get done. For all who gave us food, gas cards and cash in our time of need. Jean has a ways to go before she can come home but the prayers and the nursing staff that has taken care of her have saved her life. Just waiting for the day she can come home to be the wife, mother, and grandmother that we all miss so much.

-Rick Stelsel and family

A big thank you to our church family for the special Christmas remembrance. Thanks to Keith Loomans for delivering it.

-Dave & Donna Henker

Thank you for the box of candy. I enjoyed each piece as I ate it.

-Joyce Van Buren

I would like to thank the church for the box of candy and also Barb Pluim for delivering it.

Thank you-

Marilyn Kamphuis

Thanks for the box of candy and the ornament from the church and to Carol Jansma for delivering the box and her visit.

-Beverly Kowalski

Thank you to the church for the candy and to Renee Bruins who brought it. Also, thanks to all who remembered me with prayers, cards, and thoughts in the loss of my brother and nephew.

-Ann Boerson

Thank you for all the prayers and concerns about Harvey. Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a healthy, happy new year.

-Elaine Daane

Thank you for the candy and to Renee Bruins for delivering it.

-Geraldine Loomans

Thank you to the Church for the box of chocolates and Christmas ornament we received and to Carol Jansma, our Shepherd for the nice visit we had with her. We are so blessed to be a part of a loving and caring Church.

-Barrie and Ardyce Tenpas

Thank you to our church and the wonderful shepherds we have that delivered the Christmas gifts from the church to me. Bob & Barb have huge, caring hearts, and do great work for the church.

-Rollie Schroeder

We would like to thank the congregation and Pastors for the prayer support, and cards in our time of need and the gift at Christmas. You may never know how much each word on your cards meant to us. We are so thankful for each one of you.

-Paul & Audrey Elenius

EVENTS

Mark your calendar...

Alto Reformed Church
January 2022

January 09 **Elder/Deacon Installation**
Join us during the worship service for the installation of elders and deacons at 9:30am.

January 12 **CCCD Mission Trip**
The CCCD mission trip group leaves for Jamaica and returns Jan 19.

January 22 **Men's Breakfast w/ Jared Abbrederis**
Guys, join us at 8:30am for a pancake and sausage breakfast and guest speaker presentation at 10am by former Badger and Packer player, Jared Abbrederis. All ages are welcome!

January 24 **Men's Bible Study**
Guys, join us for a 5-week bible study on Mondays at 6:30-7:30pm.

For detailed information:
Call 920.346.5505 or email office@altoreformedchurch.org

NEWS

Births

12/21/21 - Nova Beth, daughter of Scott & Mel Bruins

12/27/21 - Jeremiah Kane, son of Jason & Kassandra De Jager