

A.M.E.N.

March 2021

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ARTICLES

Uncertain Times

By Pastor Kevin Van Wyk

There is so much uncertainty swirling about our world it's very hard to not get anxious, frustrated, and angry. Whether I look at our nation, our denomination, our church, or my own life, I really wish I had more answers.

- Will the Equality Act impact our schools?
- Will our economy recover?
- Will there be more violence this summer?
- Will General Synod meet in October or delay to 2022?
- Will ARC (Alliance of Reformed Churches) really succeed?
- Will other Wisconsin churches join us?
- Will I face persecution and trials?
- Will my health fail?
- Will all my work really warrant a "well done" in the end?

There were several questions regarding ARC, our classis, and our church in the

voting results from Sunday. I can answer some...

- We do own and will own our building. The RCA can't really take it.
- If ARC does not pan out, we do have other options, and it should be easy to transition out of ARC.
- We don't plan to change the name, but the logo probably will change.

Other questions are more difficult. A handful of questions were about the other RCA churches in our area.

- What is the current "bent" of our classis toward grace-filled separation?
- What is the likelihood of other churches in our area also affiliating with the ARC?
- Are there churches within our classis moving toward this also? Who?
- What are other local RCA churches doing?

I don't really know with any certainty what they may do. I recently found out that one church is much closer to leaving than I thought, and another is much further from leaving than I thought. My guess is that all the churches wish they knew better what they are going to do or should do.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible addresses these uncertain times... In Matthew 14:22-36, Jesus "made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side." They make it a "considerable distance from land," so it's not worth going back. However the wind is against them and the waves are slamming into the boat. Maybe they were rowing, maybe they gave up. Uncertainty about their future must have been circling around their heads.

In the midst of their questioning, Jesus comes to them walking on the water and says, "take courage!" After the individual encounter with Peter, Jesus gets in the boat and calms the wind.

We must remember that in the storm, Jesus commands us to take courage, that is, to trust Him with a cheerful heart ready to live by faith. Jesus says the same thing to the disciples shortly before he is arrested and crucified. "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

So, whether you're stressing over the political drama in D.C., the division in the RCA, or the turmoil in your life, Jesus gives you the simple command to take courage. Stop worrying. Don't be afraid. Trust that Jesus put you in this boat and in this storm. He is not far off, and he will

calm the wind.

I would also note that it seems from verse 34 that they took some time to row or sail to shore. There was much more to their journey than this one challenge, but together with Jesus, they brought light into the darkness. They brought hope and life to the world.

Will you jump in the boat with other believers and do your part to encourage one another to “take courage!”

Lord, help us take our eyes off the waves and focus on you, the master of the universe and King of our hearts. Reassure us of our destiny and your power to guide us through the storms. Amen.

An extra note on other churches...

Alto has been in an intentional process to address concerns with the RCA for over 2 years. There was a lot of conversation and work well before that. Other churches have been consumed with finding a pastor, resolving conflict, navigating COVID, creating stability, maintaining facilities, shepherding the aging, and/or reaching their community. Dealing with discipline and governance issues in the denomination are not all that relevant to their daily ministry, so it's no wonder they table it for another day. From the stand

point of the 5 churches in our classis that have already left, we've been slow to move, too. The churches I know in our classis, stand on the truth, but need time to process and figure out how to apply it in their church. We must put their faces on the RCA, not some unknown villain we believe is out to destroy Christian faith. Let's keep showing grace and truth.

Blast to the Past! - Save the Date!

By Adrea Daane

We are excited to begin our planning for this summer's VBS



programming

after last summer's crazy change of pace. We will be hosting our week of VBS on June 21-25 from 9:00-11:30 am here at the church. During this week we will be taking a trip back into Biblical times and dig into 5 Bible stories helping us see how God's love is INCREDIBLE, FAITHFUL,

INVINCIBLE, UNCONDITIONAL, and REAL. Stories include ones such as Moses and the burning bush, Rahab, David and Goliath, and more. Look for more details on registration, volunteer and donation opportunities, and other info as we move into the spring. Also, we will be hosting a decorating day during the week of spring break, so stayed tuned for a date, time, and other details to follow as well!! Please feel free to reach out to Adrea anytime with questions or concerns.

Library News

By Mary Vander Kooi

Time for reading has increased in the past year and our church library has a wonderful variety from which to choose. You may want to check out some of the male authors we have on our shelves. Here are three options:

- Jack Cavanaugh—has written a series of historical fictions starting with *The Puritans*.
- Robert Whitlow—an attorney who writes gripping legal novels.
- Charles Martin—a storyteller who brings out in a unique and fairly intense way how his characters face life's situations with courage. Example: *Wrapped in Rain*.

Reading is a valuable pastime, so we would encourage you to try browsing in our church library.

Women's Ministry Update

By Brittany Page

The Women's Ministry met in January for a planning meeting for 2021! We know God was very well present as we worked through a lot of ideas and plans for 2021. We are currently about mid-way through the 4 different bible studies that we kicked off in February. Thank you for filling out those surveys that were sent out. This helped us with dates on when to offer the bible studies!

For the month of March, we are asking the congregation to help us fill the Food Pantry! Here are items that they are currently in need of: Tuna, Chicken Noodle Soup, Flavored Oatmeal, Spaghetios and Ravioli. Please bring in your donation items by March 28 to church and place them in the tote by the offices.

MESSAGES

Dear Alto Reformed Church,

We have decided to take Fridays this term and give thanks to those who are lifting us in prayer and or with financial gifts. This week you are on that list.

We give thanks for how you are so faithful in supporting us in your prayers. We pray that the Lord bless you as you continue to serve Him with your hands, feet, heart, and tongue. Thank you for your encouraging letters. They boost my spirit! May the Lord bless you!

In His Service,

Wanda and Randy Potratz

God is good. We would like to thank the Church for the beautiful prayer blanket that Jane Chene' delivered. The prayers were definitely felt. Thank you also to everyone that reached out with calls, prayers, & cards. We are so thankful for the awesome congregation of the ARC. We can't imagine going through trying times without the support that we felt.

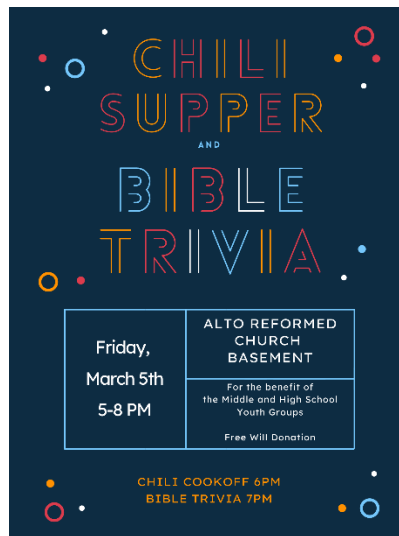
Thanks again,

Steve & Pauline Peters

We want to thank you for letting us have Ken's funeral service at Alto Reformed Church, seeing as Immanuel Lutheran is closed. We certainly appreciated that everyone "stepped up" to make sure everything went well. Ken was baptized at Alto Reformed so it only seemed right that he had his final day with family and friends at the same church. Thank you!

-Family of Ken Kamphuis

EVENTS



NEWS

Births

2/10/21 - Beckett Robert, son of Brant & Bridgette Flier

2/26/21 - Collin James, son of Nate &
Jenna Bille

Baptisms

2/28/21 - Coby James, son of Marcus &
Kelli Vossekui