



Emo Christian Reformed Church

Care & Share

From the Pastor's Heart

Keeping Our Focus on Jesus in 2023

Dear Family

As the apostle Paul writes to the church in Philippi, he looks forward to arriving at that point when he experiences “the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:11, NIV). Further reflecting on this goal, Paul offers this profound statement in Philippians 3:13-14 (NIV):

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Paul knew he was still on his way to obtaining this goal. He still had a race to run and challenges to face before getting there. He also knew that moving forward to this goal required a certain kind of forgetting of the past. I think most of us know what Paul is talking about. Sometimes there are certain things – disappointments, painful experiences, or tragic events – that can keep us from moving forward. For the sake of our emotional and spiritual health, we need to let go of these things. But in letting go, we need to redirect our energy to something else or rather someone else. Paul speaks of “straining toward what is ahead” (Phil. 3:13, NIV), reminding us of the importance of being people who are focused on the future, not the past. But Paul’s future-directed approach is not some vague, general positivity about the future – it’s a future-directed gaze that focuses on Jesus Christ. Christ and Christ alone is the reason why we live as people who have hope for the future.

Whatever goals you and I may have for 2023, as followers of Jesus we will never have any greater goal than “[winning] the prize for which God has called [us] heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14, NIV). Whatever we do and whatever 2023 may bring, may we as a church continue to keep our focus Jesus. He will guide us safely as we journey into the future.

Wishing you a New Year full of God's grace

Pastor Marno

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Veel Heil en Zegen! Happy New Year! The Dutch saying has more depth. Heil means all the best and Zegen means blessings from God.

Another year has almost passed and yes, we say “time flies”. What did we do with the time? Good stuff and yes, also wasted time in arguing over disagreements. It is sad when we get time and we waste it. Each day is a gift from God. What will 2023 bring? Blessings, for sure. Challenges come when dealing with occasions not planned by us such as sickness, accident, etc.

Now I as I get older I am wondering what I have accomplished. My goals and ideas did not get fulfilled and I have had to rethink my future. But when we have the best Captain on board, we will arrive at the right destination.

In our church, we are blessed. Every Sunday, we are invited to worship. Thank you to Dr. Marno Retief for all the sermons and everything that comes with it. Also, thank you to all those who participated in the season of Advent. The “Carols by Candlelight” service was wonderful. The Ladies’ Night was very much enjoyed by all who came out. The Sunday School participation on Christmas Day was a blessing to all. And the musicians who played for the services—we are so blessed.

We wish you all rejuvenated energy for the year ahead. We receive so much—not to keep it to ourselves, but to share it.

Thank you to all who remembered us with phone calls, cards, well wishes and prayer when Larry was in the Thunder Bay and Fort Frances hospitals. Larry is doing so well. Soon all of the 61 staples and stitches will be out. We praise God for healing. Also, please keep Greg and Kathy in your prayers. Kathy's illness is taking its toll on all of us. Larry & Dove

Eltjo Wiersema is home and is doing fine.

Jacqui Hunsperger has received word that her leukemia is progressing. She asks for your prayer support.

Our condolences go out to Andrew and Tiffany Veldhuisen and family with the passing of Tiffany’s grandfather, Antonio Marinaro, on December 1 in Atikokan.

Congratulations to Peter & Yvonne Veldhuisen with the birth of their first grandchild, Anneke Johanna Gerber, born to Tobijah & Kacia Gerber on December 21 in Fort Frances, Ontario.

We wish Hannah Veldhuisen and Tim Adam all the best for their wedding day—this Saturday, December 31 in our church. God bless you as you begin your married life together.

Jack and Anne Wielinga are pleased to announce the marriage of their oldest granddaughter Lauren Heethuis to Caleb Kuleszas on December 30th in Sioux Falls, SD. Both are seniors at Dordt University. Jack and Anne would also like to wish everyone in Emo CRC, God's blessing as we enter into a new year. See you all in April.

Kandace Paterson is moving back to Thunderbay. Her job at New Gold has been terminated. It was good having her here among us and we wish her well as she makes her move back to Thunderbay.

Our seniors, celebrating birthdays in January are Jan Van Zwol and Anne Wielinga (on the 6th), Wilma Esselink (on the 7th), and Henry Kaemingh (his 90th birthday on the 8th).

We wish all those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries in January, God’s blessings on your special day!

Thought for the Month:

Leaving the details of my future in God's hands is the most responsible act of obedience I can do.

Charles R. Swindoll

Merry Christmas from Resonate Global Mission! I hope you are enjoying this Advent Season. Thank you for your support in 2022. I am so grateful for you and your heart for missions. Your gifts of support have made a huge impact. I wish you and your families peace and joy. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Carolyn Meraji/Donor Relations Officer Resonate Global Mission

*Dear friends,
As the year draws to a close we wanted to take a moment to share our deep appreciation for all of the ways you have helped us to connect World Renew to your church. Globally, 2022 was a year of many trials. But despite the challenges, World Renew has witnessed God working through generous-hearted people like you to restore creation. We are so grateful to all who have walked alongside us to share God's love and hope with people struggling with hunger, poverty, and injustice. Thank you! As we look forward to the new year we are excited for the opportunity to connect more personally with you and say thank you, perhaps even face to face! Stay tuned for more and may you know the deep peace and extravagant love of God this Christmas season! Thank you for all you do!
Iona Buisman, Chidi Nwene and Chris Orme
(Your World Renew Church and Community Engagement team)*



Dear Friends in Emo CKE,

December 11, 2022

A short note to go with our card! It's been a year of special family times, meaningful work, enjoyment of birds and rivers and hikes, and gratitude for God's kindness.

Carolyn and I travelled to Kazakhstan in May to be with Jess and Ian for William's birth. So. Much. Joy! Couldn't get enough of the grandparenting. Workwise, I continued to manage the ministry of Timothy Leadership Training, interacting with church leaders around the world. Carolyn kept up her work providing nursing care for people who need long-term care at home, and one-day-a-week child care for church friends.

Jessica and Ian continued their work at Tien Shan School. William was born May 15! Being born abroad also brings lots of paperwork – especially for travel documents. Ian spent lots of time in government offices, adding to his Russian vocabulary, and testing the limits of Google Translate. But everything arrived in time, and they spent most of the summer in North America. The week before their return to Kazakhstan was at a friend's cottage in Michigan with our whole family. One of the many pictures from that fabulous week is the family photo with this letter.

Kristin and Johnny stayed busy with their jobs in Ann Arbor, just a 2-hour drive from where we live in Grand Rapids. Kristin is still involved with a medical research lab at the University of Michigan (Go Blue!), while Johnny works with the engineering company AVL in research and development of vehicle technologies like batteries and drive-trains. They've both honed their birding skills (*bird-watching, to the uninitiated*), and are frequently out at sunrise to focus their bins (*binoculars*) on fabulous feathered creatures. Johnny has also picked up photography as a hobby, which pairs amazingly well with birding.

Grace completed her Master's degree in graphic design in New York City in May, and landed a job in the same city a few months later. She was able to join us for several weeks this summer, and again for Thanksgiving in November. She has more than one reason to come to Grand Rapids, since her brother also lives here. We're probably guilty of hogging her time whenever she's around.

When Andrea was growing up, she always said she'd stay with us, even when we got old. We let her leave to marry and go live with her husband Henry last year, but they're only 5 minutes away. It's wonderful having them so close! Andrea is nursing at the University of Michigan Health – West Hospital. The workload was extreme at times in the year, with things settling down a bit as the year went on. Henry is working with an armored services company (*think banks, businesses, ATMs*), enjoying the work and building creds for other possibilities down the road. A highlight of their year was a trip to Alberta in July for Albert's parent's 60th wedding anniversary, meeting up with almost the entire extended family. A beautiful occasion!

A year of God's faithfulness, over and over. And now, Christmas. So grateful!

Albert & Carolyn Shephard

Thanks for your prayers and support in 2022!

A Wonderful Summer

We are so thankful for His timing, for safe (uneventful) travels, and for the opportunity to see so many of you! It was a different experience travelling across the ocean and all over North America with an infant, that is for sure! William was a champ and took it pretty easy on us first timers.



Our time started out in Alberta celebrating the 60th wedding anniversary of Jess's Grandparents with the whole Strydhorst family, and ended with a quiet week at the cottage in Michigan. God made a way for us to meet with 7 churches in our time. What a JOY it was to share William with many eager arms and to see you love on our son! God is so good.

While we always wish for just a bit longer, and goodbyes will always be hard, we are really grateful for the time we had with you all and for all the memories we made. It was crazy how fast the time flew by.



The 2022 - 2023 school year!

It's hard to believe that this is our third year of teaching here already! A few weeks ago in our devotional time together, Ian and I took note that we are really starting to feel settled, and that God has made Kazakhstan and our school community feel like home. We praise Him for his faithfulness and goodness to us as he leads us to continue teaching here for the foreseeable future.

As we anticipated, there are MANY new students who joined our school this year. Many are the children of workers who were previously sent to Russia and Ukraine who can no longer safely reside there. These 40 or so new students (added to our 140 students) are adjusting to life in Kazakhstan and we ask for your prayers for them and their families.

It is not easy to transition to a new country and a new school, especially in circumstances such as these. Some leaving with less than 3 days notice from a place they had been doing ministry for many years. Pray also for the returning staff and students, that God would grant us wisdom in how to support them and their families, and that they would feel warmly welcomed into our community.



Giggles with Grandma at the Cottage
(PC John Lee)



First day in Canada with Aunt Kristin
and Uncle Johnny



Reading books with Nana and cousins



Relaxing at the cottage with Papa
(PC John Lee)



First 4 Wheeler ride with Grandpa

2022 - 2023 school year continued...

In terms of teaching, Ian is teaching the same courses he taught last year. He is teaching AP Calculus, Geometry, Life skills, and Leadership. He is also taking a larger role in guiding and training the student worship team that leads our chapels. That has been especially rewarding as he has been able to build relationships, invest in them and see so much growth in the students - a different kind of growth than a math teacher might observe.

Jess is not an official classroom teacher this year as she is spending 3 days a week at home with William. However, they are still very much a part of the school community! They come to school every Tuesday and Friday, and Jess helps out in the Library as well as the Yearbook class. Jess was also blessed to speak at elementary chapel a few weeks ago on Psalm 23:6.

The students love to see William and all take turns holding him and playing with him at lunch and after school. It is such a blessing to watch the joy that William brings to students and staff and for us to watch our son be so treasured and loved.

Christmas Ministries

Our school is collecting items and food to give to families in remote villages. These will be distributed by some M workers with the hope that they will be invited into homes and communities and be able to share the gospel message.

Others will share the Christmas story through the avenue of teaching english, and have the opportunity to explain "Magi", "Virgin Birth", and "Immanuel".

PRAYER & PRAISE

Praise God for...

- Jess' parents visiting over Christmas
- The start of Middle School has been a joy-filled success!
- The blessing of a vehicle we can call our own and fits our family
- Supporters like you who make the spread of the gospel here in Central Asia possible

Pray for...

- The mental health of our students
- Christmas ministries of M workers
- God's comfort as we continue to grieve the death of Ian's grandpa Jake Friesen

Engaging People. Embracing Christ.

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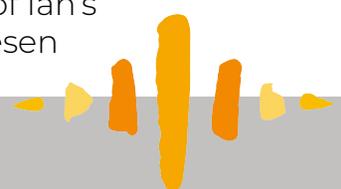


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"You are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

December 2022

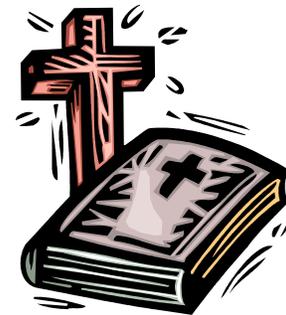
Greetings from Mark & Tina Mast

Merry Christmas from Rainy River! We wish to "Thank You!" for the privilege of serving together in ministry and the special encouragement and blessing that you are to us! We are so grateful for your prayers, encouragement and financial support.

May the Lord bless you abundantly this Christmas season!

As we reflect upon 2022, we are so grateful to the Lord for the myriad of ministry opportunities that were afforded us to make known the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ! Some of the highlights were:

- *Guatemala Outreach "GO!" - March 28-April 5
- *Northern Lights Bible School - Lake Road Bible Chapel - June 20-23
- *Northern Lights Bible School/Day Camp - Barwick Community Church - July 11-14
- *Northern Lights Bible School - Morson Bible Fellowship - July 18-21
- *Northern Lights Bible School/Day Camp - Fort Frances Evangelical Fellowship - July 25-28
- *Wilderness Canoe Trip - August 20-27
- *Pikangikum First Nation - September 11-24
- *Pikangikum First Nation - October 10-22
- *Guatemala Outreach "GO!" - November 9-16
- *Preaching weekly at Border Evangelical Free Church
- *Preaching weekly at Barwick Community Church
- *Prayer & Praise conducted weekly on Zoom
- *Apple Blossoms discipleship and mentoring program
- *A host of other individual ministry events - all throughout 2022 to make Jesus known!



The fields are ripe for the harvest and 2022 provided an abundance of opportunities to declare the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the "otherwise unreached" around the world! Thanks again for your prayers and support! It has been another exciting and eventful year of ministry!

Please pray for many "Divine Appointments" to advance the Good News of Jesus in 2023. What a Mighty God we serve! "Thank You LORD for Your faithfulness and provision."

Looking to Jesus, Mark & Tina Mast

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Hettinga Update

December 2022

¹ In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

¹⁰ He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.

¹⁴ So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

John 1:1, 10 & 14 NLT

We love reflecting on this incredible story. The story of the incarnation (the becoming human) of the very One who created us. For most religions of this world, this is an unfathomable thing. God, the creator of all, would never humiliate himself by becoming human. For many, this is an offensive idea. But to us, it is hope. To us, it is love in its most pure form. It is God wanting to walk with us, speak to us in our language, eat our food, share our lives with us, all in order to save us. God wants to communicate with us and enter into each category of our lives.

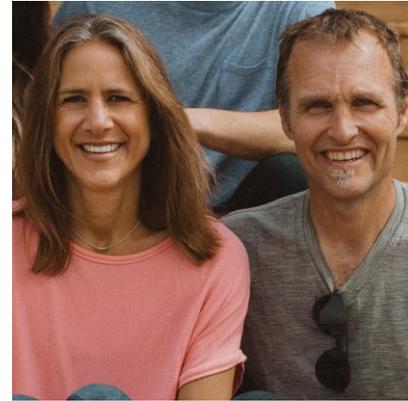
Our language is central to this communication. Whatever our language, whether it is spoken, written or signed, God has created it and He speaks it, He writes it, He signs it. No language is too small or too insignificant for the incarnate Creator.

As we enter this Christmas season, read the Christmas story and reflect on it. Let us be thankful that we have His very words, translated into our language. And pray for the millions who do not yet have these words in a language and medium they can truly understand.

Thank you for partnering with us to make a difference, through language, so people everywhere can know this incarnate Creator, and can flourish in a relationship with their Savior.

Merry Christmas!

Justin & Tammy Hettinga



Celebrated grandson Beckham's FIRST birthday on November 24

From Laura Hickey:

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Best wishes to you as we close off 2022 and begin the new year 2023!

Thanks be to Jesus who lights our way on the unknown path ahead. He told us to not be afraid but to trust Him.

A few highlights of 2022:

It warms my heart to get letters and messages from many friends and family at this Christmas Season! A big thank you!!!

Attending Prairie College's 100th Anniversary Celebration and the 50th of my graduation there in 1972. Lots of visiting with friends from that part of my life.

A visit to NW Ontario in September. We (my sister and brother-in-law and I) were able to visit some people and places from our growing up days. Next visit I will get in touch with those I wasn't able to contact due to the visit being rather short.

My sister and brother-in-law retired from camp and moved to town this summer. Now that they are much closer we get together often.

We got to see some cousins we had not seen for quite some time.

I keep in touch with several friends from the African countries where I worked. A privilege to pray for and encourage them. Some dealing with illness, others doing studies, others just struggling with life during COVID and all of the changes and difficulties that came to them. Inflation has hit them hard too. One friend from Congo died of COVID-I knew him when he was a kid.

Most of the time I just enjoy day to day living here in my condo, doing various activities at church, pool exercises twice a week, walks around town in the summer and at the rink in the winter, visiting friends. I have been well. My COVID in January was very mild.

I am thankful for all of God's blessings and for His Promises. They are a light to me and give me courage to go on when uncertainties come and difficulties arise.

Luke 2:10 "Do not be afraid, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people". A message for us in the days ahead.

Let us walk in the light of His presence and trust Him fully.

Loving greetings!

Laura

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FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

A Pastoral Letter to the CRC

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in Christ's name. In my prayers for you I find myself echoing the Apostle Paul, "*I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way*" (1 Cor. 1:4). Though these are challenging times, there is much to be thankful for. The Holy Spirit is at work in our churches and members. This fall I've heard many stories of churches growing through outreach, of faithfulness in difficult conversations, and of community engagement in Christ's name.

I admit, however, that one task in which I have felt the considerable weight of my responsibility is the decision of Synod 2022, directing me "*to instruct the churches and classes to seek and to keep the unity of the church and the denomination in ways that are consistent with biblical principles, our Reformed confessions, and our Ecumenical Charter*" ([Acts of Synod 2022](#), p. 858). I cherish what the Spirit has accomplished through the single mindedness of our congregations on matters of mission, acts of mercy, education, and many others. I also grieve because I see so many examples of brokenness between and within our congregations and classes. There have been conflicts between councils and pastors, disagreements about ministry, and frustration regarding our denomination's position on human sexuality. Denominations are fracturing around us, and most poignant are the experiences of our sister denomination, the Reformed Church in America. How can those who value the unity of the Christian Reformed Church respond to this reality?

Borrowing from synod's direction ([Acts of Synod 2022](#), p. 858), I would like to make three pastoral observations to guide our response:

God, and *one faith* (Eph. 4:1-6). Christ died for all of us and, therefore, all of us have died in Christ. Regardless of how we feel about the positions and practices of others, if they claim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, then our calling is “*to be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*” Therefore, at a core level, our Christian faith calls us to *be Christ* with those we disagree with--listening, loving, respecting, engaging. This unity is not something we can achieve simply based on our own fallible efforts. Instead, we are called to the spiritual discipline of working towards unity. This is something we can do only if we let Christ, through his Spirit, live through us.

- Second, our unity is “*grounded in biblical principles and shaped by our Reformed confessions.*” As a person who joined the CRCNA as an adult, I admit to being enthralled and a bit overwhelmed by the profundity of our Reformed confessions and the biblical principles they summarize. They provide a deep and rich foundation for ministry and mission at a time when both personal and congregational individualism holds sway in our North American societies. While these are time-bound human summaries of inspired Scripture, I found (and continue to find) comfort in submitting to our Reformed confessions, surrendering the driver’s seat of my faith to the Holy Spirit and trusting in the Spirit’s guidance of the church. I realize that today there are some who feel beset by the confessions, particularly with our denomination’s interpretation of Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 regarding same-sex sexual relationships. In this life, faith exists alongside doubt and difficulties, and sometimes those are deeply personal. Yet, our unity depends on our submission to the biblical and confessional principles we share. I am concerned about a future in which our denomination remains organizationally connected, but in which churches and leaders moving in opposite directions attack one another, withhold mutual support and care for ministry, and damage our witness to the world. God calls us to a better covenant where we are bound together by one baptism and fellowship together at one table.
- Finally, I want to observe that you, members and leaders of the CRCNA, are already stewards of spiritual wisdom that will lead us forward together. Why? Because Christ is *in you* and *you are in Christ*. I know that many of you, like Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:28, are deeply concerned for the well-being of all the churches. You are praying and pleading that God would make your congregation and the denomination one for the sake of our witness and mission. Synod 2022 directed me “*to gather best practices on pursuing unity*

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fraught time with me by emailing your reflections (including any effective practices you're doing) to general-secretary@crcna.org. Also, give special attention to our unity around God's big mission as congregations and as a denomination. God calls us to holy living and right teaching so that we, through the Spirit, might offer his gospel humbly and graciously to the world for which Christ died.

One final note: I know for some of you, even broaching a conversation about *unity* could lead to further *disunity*. I leave this matter to your wisdom and will be thankful for whatever responses you are willing and able to share.

Now may he who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us, bless you with every good thing needed for doing his will together, and may you sense his presence this Advent.

Zachary King, General Secretary of the CRCNA

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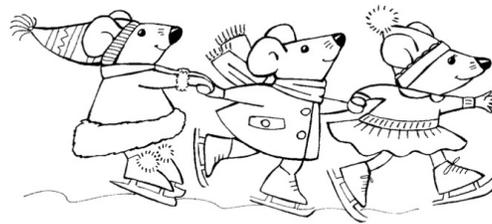
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January

	Old Testament	New Testament	Psalms	Proverbs
<input type="checkbox"/>	01 Genesis 1:1-2:25	Matthew 1:1-2:12	Psalms 1:1-6	Proverbs 1:1-6
<input type="checkbox"/>	02 Genesis 3:1-4:26	Matthew 2:13-3:6	Psalms 2:1-12	Proverbs 1:7-9
<input type="checkbox"/>	03 Genesis 5:1-7:24	Matthew 3:7-4:11	Psalms 3:1-8	Proverbs 1:10-19
<input type="checkbox"/>	04 Genesis 8:1-10:32	Matthew 4:12-25	Psalms 4:1-8	Proverbs 1:20-23
<input type="checkbox"/>	05 Genesis 11:1-13:4	Matthew 5:1-26	Psalms 5:1-12	Proverbs 1:24-28
<input type="checkbox"/>	06 Genesis 13:5-15:21	Matthew 5:27-48	Psalms 6:1-10	Proverbs 1:29-33
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<input type="checkbox"/>	12 Genesis 26:17-27:46	Matthew 9:1-17	Psalms 10:16-18	Proverbs 3:9-10
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<input type="checkbox"/>	27 Exodus 4:1-5:21	Matthew 18:1-20	Psalms 22:19-31	Proverbs 5:15-21
<input type="checkbox"/>	28 Exodus 5:22-7:25	Matthew 18:21-19:12	Psalms 23:1-6	Proverbs 5:22-23
<input type="checkbox"/>	29 Exodus 8:1-9:35	Matthew 19:13-30	Psalms 24:1-10	Proverbs 6:1-5
<input type="checkbox"/>	30 Exodus 10:1-12:13	Matthew 20:1-28	Psalms 25:1-15	Proverbs 6:6-11
<input type="checkbox"/>	31 Exodus 12:14-13:16	Matthew 20:29-21:22	Psalms 25:16-22	Proverbs 6:12-15



January 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Nicole Boven Weston Veldhuisen  New Year's Day 10:00 WORSHIP	2 *Gary & Cheryl Foster (17th)	3 7:00 COUNCIL	4	5	6 Jan Van Zwol Anne Wielinga	7 Wilma Esselink
8 Henry Kaemingh 10:00 WORSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL	9	10	11 10:00 COFFEE BREAK	12	13	14 Hudson Agombar
15 Grace Hettinga Max White 10:00 WORSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL	16 Sarah McInerney	17 Aiden Wielinga 7:30 CONSISTORY	18 10:00 COFFEE BREAK	19 Gavin Veldhuisen	20	21 Laura Hickey
22 10:00 WORSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL	23	24	25 Barb Kyro 10:00 COFFEE BREAK	26	27 Sullivan Shortreed	28 LoriAnn Shortreed Jenelle Veldhuisen
29 Christine Bethune Dax Laplante 10:00 WORSHIP SUNDAY SCHOOL	30 Olivia Ronmark- Paishk	31 André McInerney				