

JANUARY 2026

FIRST REFORMED CHURCH, SHELDON, IOWA

"BUILDING GOD'S KINGDOM ONE LIFE
AT A TIME"

January 4

Jack Michael Jager, son of Hunter and Kennedy Jager, will be baptized. He is the grandson of Shane & Christie Jager and the great-grandson of Edgar & Shirley Jager and Bob & Cheryl Van Meeteren.

Kipp James Haack, son of Drew and Brenna Haack, will also be baptized.

January 4

All Sunday school classes will resume - children, youth and adult.
Children & Worship will resume.

January 7 - We resume regular Wednesday Schedule

5:00-6:15 - Meal

6:00-7:30 - Awana

6:15-7:30 - Middle School Youth Group

6:30-7:30 - Adult Bible Study

7:45-9:00 - High School Youth Group

DATE: Thursday, January 8

TIME: 4:30-6:00 PM

LOCATION: Living Water Church

Bring a box with you to pick up your groceries.



Consistory Training Friday, January 9

6 PM Meal

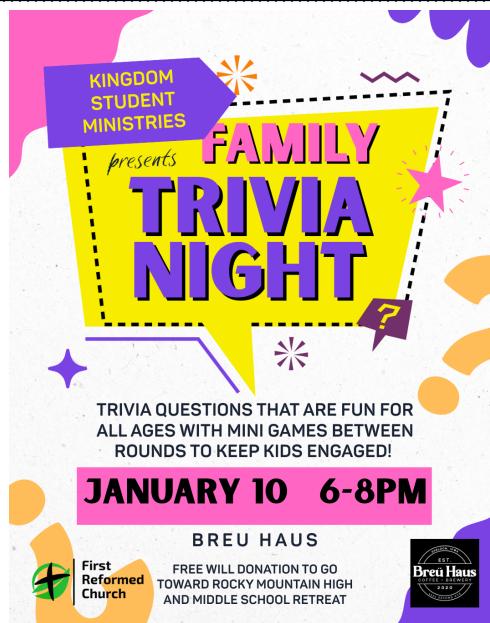
7-9 PM Training Session

Saturday, January 10

8 AM Breakfast

9-12 PM Training Session

All current consistory members are encouraged to attend. This is open to past consistory members who would like to attend also.



Ordination/Installation of New Elders & Deacons

WHEN: January 11

We will also recognize our outgoing Elders and Deacons.



WHEN: January 13
TIME: 7 AM
WHERE: church lounge
The study of the book of Acts will be continued.

Attention High School Parents
... a reminder to let Caitie know by January 14 what your family will be donating for the upcoming silent auction. Please see your email for more details or reach out to Caitie if you cannot locate it. Thanks!

FAMILY NIGHT MEAL - 5:00-6:15 PM



To drop off your items in the kitchen when the church is not open, use the code provided to you by your work group leader.

Jan 7 Spaghetti (red & Alfredo sauces), Garlic Bread, **Brownies**
[10 - 9x13 pan of Brownies]

Jan 14 Tacos/Taco in a Bag, Fruit, **Bars**
[10 - 9x13 pan of bars]

Jan 21 Taverns, Chips, Baked Beans, **Cookies**
[7 people bring 2 dozen cookies]

Jan 28 Taco Pasta, Fruit, **Cake**
[10 - people bring 9x13 cake]

Items that are needed to be brought in by work group members will follow the meal for that night (**in bold lettering**). Please have donated items here no later than 4 PM on Tuesday. If you can't get items to the church by this time, call the church office & make arrangements with Wendy. Your items are greatly appreciated and allow us to provide desserts with the meals. The kids really love your desserts!!

NEW BABY GIFT BASKET



A basket is on the table at the back of the church (in the narthex) for Ryker Dean Jager. He is the son of Josh and Haley Jager. Please bring your baby gifts to add to the basket by Sunday, January 4.

Parents of Seniors: It is that time of the year when we start planning for graduation. Please check your inbox for an email from Caitie about sending in a graduation picture, baby picture and information for future plans following graduation for our slideshow and newsletter. Please email pictures in a PNG or JPEG format if possible. Thanks!



Sheldon Area
Unity Meal



MONDAY, January 19
TIME: 5:30-6:30 PM

LOCATION: Living Water Church
A bag of groceries is available to take home after you have had your meal. Come join us for some food & fellowship.

Starting in January

- The Women's Afternoon Bible Study will be meeting on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 1:30 PM. Their meeting will be on January 20.
- Consistory meetings will be held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month starting this month. Elders and Deacons will meet at 6:30 PM and at 7:30 PM the consistory will meet. These meeting will be on January 20 too.

Happy Anniversary

January 13 Paul & Courtney Van Maaren - 25
January 26 Dan & Fran Dykstra - 58

A big apology to those of you who sent me a thank you to include in the Encore. I accidentally deleted the entire newsletter & had to retype items from memory.



Thanks for the generous donation of a wonderful meal for Thanksgiving.

~ Sandy & Autumn Park residents

Thank you for the great meal provided to us for Thanksgiving. All of us greatly appreciate your generosity.

~ The residents at the CRH

We want to thank everyone for your support during Dixie's trouble with her leg that lead to amputation. Support by visits, cards, meals, flowers, fruit, treats and prayers made us feel great. Knowing we have a Great Church family & community support going into 2026 is promising. God Bless You All!

~ Jim & Dixie De Jong

2025 FINANCIAL RECORDS NEEDED

If you are the treasurer of one of First Reformed Church's groups or funds, please submit your 2025 financial records for review. Please get the following items to the church by Sunday, January 18:

- ◆ Summary of income & expenses
- ◆ All documentation of expenses
- ◆ Bank statements
- ◆ Account register

Additions/Changes to 2023 Church Directory

New since October 2025

Additions

Robert* (Bob) Engel

2415 E. 3rd Street, Sheldon, IA 51201
Phone: 712.540.5959
Email: rjengel@nethc.net

Sam* & Hannah* Tinklenberg

1510 Thorman Avenue, Sheldon, IA
Phones: S: 507.920.7418 H: 507.760.1847
Email: samueltinklenberg@gmail.com & htinklenberg@outlook.com

Deaths

- **Roger Sterler**
- **Bonnie Verburg**
- **Carolyn Storm**

Births

- **Jack Michael Jager** - son of Hunter & Kennedy Jager
- **Kipp James Haack** - son of Drew & Brenna Haack
- **Ryker Dean Jager** - son of Josh & Haley Jager
- **Isaac Carson Peters** - son of Brady & Brittany Peters

Corrections

- **Ryer Dacken's new address**
 - ◊ SGT Dacken, Ryer, TM ANARCHY, TF REDLEG, 2/34 IBCT, APO, AE 09330
- **Darlene Verrip's new address**
 - ◊ Fieldcrest Assisted Living, Rm 100, 2501 E. 6th Street, Sheldon, IA
- **Marie Westra's new address**
 - ◊ Christian Retirement Home, Rm. 214, 1414 Elm Court, Sheldon, IA
- **Greta Wildeman's new address**
 - ◊ Prairie View Home, 610 N. Eastern Street, Rm E1, Sanborn, IA 51248
- **Greg & Linda Winkel no longer have their landline - ~~712-724-5034~~**
 - ◊ **Linda's new email:** lindagwinkel@gmail.com
 - ◊ **Greg's new email:** gwinkel.gw@gmail.com
 - ◊ **They no longer have this email:** glwinkel@netllc.net

With winter weather, please watch for icy patches on the sidewalks and in the parking lot. Please let someone in the kitchen or at the front door know about them so we can apply ice melt. Also, you can pull your car up to the front of the church and someone will park your car for you.



Jan 1	Scott De Goei
Jan 2	Macy Jager
Jan 3	Judy Nieuwendorp
	Jane Nieuwendorp
	Steven Gardfrey
Jan 5	Shirley Jager
	Noah Jager
	Wesley Kruse
Jan 7	Kennedy Reuvers
Jan 8	Pam Van Wyk
	Matt Vermeer
	Angela Jager
	Courtney (Winkel) Jenkins
	Payton Dekker
Jan 9	Chris Swoyer
	JoElyn Ten Clay
Jan 10	Wendy Peelen
Jan 13	Lena Dibbet
Jan 14	Darren De Groot
	Jacob Fox
	Evelyn Kats
Jan 15	Jim De Jong
Jan 16	Jill Houtsma
	Alyssa Schnoor

Jan 17	Barb Theis
	Rick Holtrop
	Damon Van Beek
	Ethan Jager
Jan 18	Johnny Granstra - 94
	Elaine Ebel
Jan 21	Brent Mouw
	Kellye Kleinhesslink
	Harper Kleinhesslink
	Cora Crooks
	Cale Crooks
Jan 22	Joel Crooks
	Joseph Freeman
Jan 23	Kristie Simonsen
	Lydia Dacken
	Kaden Bracy
Jan 25	Shealyn Van Kekerix
Jan 27	Brett Peelen
	Geri Kruger
	Brady Peters
	Katie Van Peursem
	Aniston Wolthuizen
Jan 28	Dan Bracy
	Nickie Bracy
Jan 29	Ron Koerselman
Jan 30	Carolyn Meyer
	Dylan Iedema
Jan 31	Aleida Rust - 91
	Jay Van Wyk
	Karsen Jensen

News from our Youth

It's a Rocky Mountain High Year and that means we are looking to raise extra funds for this trip! The high school youth ministry has a goal of raising \$20,000 to cover the cost of travel and registration for this event. We anticipate having around 50 people attend this event! We appreciate your support in our upcoming fundraisers.

- ◆ Family Trivia Night at Breu Haus- January 10 from 6-8 PM
- ◆ A Night Out Meal and Silent Auction- February 27 beginning at 6 PM



Lower-Level Renovation

		Nov 30, 25
Ordinary Income/Expense		
Income		
General Fund		245,572.99
Interest Income		245,572.99
Total General Fund		245,572.99
Transfer In		
Endowment Interest		7,575.00
Total Transfer In		7,575.00
Total Income		253,147.99
Gross Profit		253,147.99
Expense		
Facilities & Grounds		
Building Improvements		
Lower Level Renovations		248,316.49
Total Building Improvements		248,316.49
Total Facilities & Grounds		248,316.49
Total Expense		248,316.49
Net Ordinary Income		4,831.50
Net Cash Flow		4,831.50
Ending Cash Balance		\$ 4,831.50

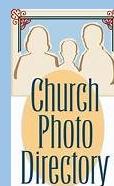
General Fund - December 2025

	Nov 25	Jan - Nov 25	Annual Budget
Beginning Cash Balance	\$ 55,627.19		
Ordinary Income/Expense			
Income			
General Fund	59,865.76	584,437.15	587,810.06
Interest Income	26.13	476.67	
Total Income	59,891.89	584,913.82	587,810.06
Gross Profit	59,891.89	584,913.82	587,810.06
Expense			
Alliance Dues	0.00	14,706.12	19,000.00
Congregational Care	927.57	12,128.98	17,000.00
Education	6,126.70	29,605.37	21,850.00
Facilities & Grounds	11,416.70	95,160.43	128,000.00
General and Consistory	5,183.33	19,175.41	15,600.00

General Fund - December 2025 - continued

Office	2,277.42	17,531.52	21,645.00
Outreach	529.26	16,571.35	24,300.00
Payroll Expenses	22,609.31	260,368.11	331,365.06
Safety & Security	0.00	15.00	
Transfer Out	15,000.00	100,000.00	
Worship	699.95	3,203.20	4,100.00
Youth Groups	29.94	1,545.51	4,950.00
Total Expense	64,800.18	570,011.00	587,810.06
Net Ordinary Income	-4,908.29	14,902.82	0.00
Net Cash Flow	-4,908.29	14,902.82	0.00

Ending Cash Balance **\$ 50,718.90**



Check your church mailboxes for new pages to add to your church directories. If you do not have a directory, stop by the church office to get one. Also be sure to add the additions/corrections that are included in this newsletter to your directory.

Benevolent Fund - December 2025

	<u>Jan - Nov 25</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Beginning Cash Balance as of January 1, 2025	\$ 90,325.63	
Ordinary Income/Expense		
Income		
Benevolent Fund	62,998.98	188,250.00
Missions	1,100.00	
Sunday School	1,158.66	
Total Income	65,257.64	188,250.00
Gross Profit	65,257.64	188,250.00
Expense		
Commitments		
Beth (Blankers) Borgens/CRU	5,250.00	7,000.00
Bethesda Christian Counseling	0.00	4,000.00
Grace Covenant Ministry-Annville	5,250.00	7,000.00
Grooters, Jay & Amy-Costa Rica	5,250.00	7,000.00
Harlan Moss-SD Prison Ministry	5,250.00	7,000.00
Inspiration Hills	2,500.00	7,000.00
Jake & Brittany Korver	5,250.00	7,000.00
JoJo Bong-Asian Youth	0.00	3,500.00
Lay Mission Fund	0.00	15,000.00
Love Inc	6,416.63	7,000.00
Mission & Service Projects	11,619.28	5,000.00
Mission to India-ChurchPlanters	5,625.00	7,500.00
Mission to India-Literacy Prog	1,875.00	2,500.00
Multiplication Network	0.00	3,500.00
Pascal,Sasha &Sara-Moldova	2,250.00	3,000.00
Reformed Church in America		
Brownell-Japan	5,250.00	7,000.00
Nicole Ogenorth-Nicaragua	5,250.00	7,000.00
Total Reformed Church in America	10,500.00	14,000.00
Rise Fest	5,000.00	5,000.00
Rise Ministries	7,000.00	7,000.00
SandalsOnSand Min (B Godbersen)	0.00	2,500.00

LIKE SANDPAPER

Posted on June 27, 2024 by [kate \[loop\] hannon](#)

"Go set this on the kitchen table."

Ruby grabbed plate and "thankful" tag her mom had put together and set it carefully on the kitchen table. She paused just a second to feel the smoothness of the wood. A faint smile crept across her face as she remembered that table's history.

When they'd first gotten the table, they all got splinters from it. "Ouch!" was the most common word spoken at the dinner table that night.

That's when Ruby's dad had hauled the table to the garage and begun sanding on it. Ruby had just been a little girl, but her father had let her watch as he rubbed rough paper against the wood's grains. "You're hurting the table!" Ruby had protested, but her father had just smiled. He knew what she didn't—that this sandpaper was exactly what that table really needed.

He'd been right. The table after sanding and finishing no longer produced splinters. It served its purpose and had been blessing them all since.

Ruby snapped back to the present, thinking about the

Benevolent Fund - December 2025 - continued

Sheldon Christian School	0.00	7,000.00
Talking Bibles	0.00	7,000.00
Touch of Hope Bibles	298.33	4,000.00
Touch of Hope Haiti	0.00	7,000.00
Vasileiadis, PavlosMeggan-Greece	5,250.00	7,000.00
Village Northwest Unlimited	0.00	6,000.00
Words of Hope	0.00	28,000.00
Total Commitments	84,584.24	187,500.00
RCA College Scholarships	750.00	750.00
YTD Offerings Paid Out	32,882.98	_____
Total Expense	118,217.22	188,250.00
Net Ordinary Income	-52,959.58	0.00
Net Cash Flow	<u>-52,959.58</u>	<u>0.00</u>
 Ending Cash Balance	 \$ 37,366.05	

things in her life that felt a little uncomfortable, like sandpaper. Maybe she should really be thankful for the situations and people that rubbed her wrong. Perhaps they were meant to somehow transform her like the sandpaper had this table.

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

~ From Christian Perspective



SHORT STORY: TWO PERSPECTIVES

Posted on [June 27, 2024](#) by [kate \[loop\] hannon](#)

BaBa and BeBe both had traveled through some tough terrain recently. Their shepherd had led them through a narrow mountain pass, into (and out of) a dark cave, and now they were in a field where wild beasts had roared in the distance.

“It’s been a horrible trip,” BaBa moaned. “Dangers and hardships everywhere. Did you see how I toppled on my back coming down that mountain pass? I’d never traveled such a steep slope.”

“But the shepherd picked you right up,” countered BeBe. “He led us safely every step. We didn’t know where we were going, but he did. And I’m sure he still does.”

“But did you hear that noise last night?” BaBa asked. “I thought for sure a wild animal would tear us apart.”

“I heard it,” replied BeBe, “and I was afraid at first. But then I looked over at the shepherd, and saw he had his weapon at the ready. He’s not going to let anything hurt us, BaBa. I, for one, am going to graze in peace.”

With that, BeBe started munching on a delicious clump of grass. But BaBa was not finished yet.

“Where do you think we’ll go next? What if it’s near a cliff? I’m soooooo scarred I’ll fall over a cliff.”

BeBe felt a momentary panic at the thought of a cliff, but then she remembered her shepherd. “If our shepherd can lead us through the dangers he has, I think we can trust him to keep us safe near a cliff,” she replied, returning to her munching. This pasture had such delicious grass!

BaBa, on the other hand, kept baaing about the distant animal noises she heard and how hard of a path she’d trod. She kept thinking about the hardships instead of the shepherd.

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.”

Psalm 23:1-2a

~ From Christian Perspective

2026 SHEPHERDING TEAMS

First Reformed Church, Sheldon

The congregation is divided into nine groups - one for each Elder/Deacon pair. Your Consistory shepherding team is responsible for keeping in regular contact with the families listed under their names. If you are experiencing some significant trial or illness or are involved in a crisis situation such as a job loss, major life change, or family death feel free to contact your Care Elder or Deacon. If your family has experienced a joyful occasion like the birth of a baby, the marriage of a son or daughter, a wedding anniversary, a promotion at work, or retirement, etc., please let your shepherding team know of the special occasion. In all these situations, an appropriate prayer to the Lord will be offered.

Your Shepherding Team is directly above the list of families to whom they are assigned:

Team 1: Bob Stellinga & Tyler Drenkow

Ed Alons – Kendall De Groot

Team 2: Brad Bosma & Dan Bracy

Evan De Hoogh – Betty Gonnerman

Team 3: Steve Van Beek & Marty Van Peursem

Johnny Granstra – Shane Jager

Team 4: Dennis Ten Clay & Jared Schaeffer

Luke Jenness – Toby Maggert

Team 5: Larry Vander Plaats & Rodney Kruse

Eileen Martens – Carol Pomerenke

Team 6: Randy Fonkert & Cleiton Zanela

Caleb Popkes – Noah Sterk

Team 7: Galen Blankers & Brady Peters

Brian Stofferan – Norma Van Gorp

Team 8: Mike Kleinwolterink & Andy Cooper

Lyle Van Heuvelen – Darlene Verrips

Team 9: Greg Sawyer & Brent Hofmeyer

Marwin Vogel – Brad Zuetenhorst

*“Building God’s
Kingdom one life
at a time.”
1 Peter 2:4-5*



Church Contact Information

Church phone number: 712.324.2130

Email: frcsecretary@outlook.com

2026 Ministry Teams Contact People

EXECUTIVE TEAM

Pastor Paul - President
Dennis Ten Clay - Vice President
Mike Kleinwolterink - Clerk
Brady Peters - Chairman of Deacons
Tyler Drenkow - Secretary of Deacons

ADULT DISCIPLESHP

Dennis Ten Clay - 712.348.3160
dennistenclay@gmail.com

BUILDING & GROUNDS

Nathan Punt - 712.449.9001
punt76@gmail.com

CALLING ELDER

Gary De Hoogh - 712.348.2647
gndehoogh@msn.com

CHURCH PRIVILEGE

Larry Vander Plaats - 712.348.4626
plaats58@yahoo.com

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Bob Stellinga - 712.348.3330
stell@nethtc.net

We Care -

Nancy Martens - 712.348.0590
nkmartens@hotmail.com

ENDOWMENT FUND

Euan De Hoogh - 712.541.3521
euan@gecabinetryinc.com

MEMORIAL FUND

Euan De Hoogh - 712.541.3521
euan@gecabinetryinc.com

MISSION COMMITTEE

Rodney Kruse - 712.348.4232
rodneykruse@hotmail.com

NURSERY

Kelsey Cooper - 712.348.2636
kelseydh34@gmail.com

HANDS OF HOPE OUTREACH

Dianne Wolthuizen - 712.348.4679
waldian12@gmail.com
Janna Kats - 712.441.7122
jannableyenberg@gmail.com

PRAYER CHAIN COORDINATOR

Brenda Godbersen - 712.348.0392
brendagodbersen@gmail.com

PULPIT SUPPLY

Dennis Ten Clay - 712.348.3160
dennistenclay@gmail.com

SACRAMENTS

Dixon Van Meeteren - 712.324.1600
dixum@nethtc.net

SAFETY & SECURITY

Larry Vander Plaats - 712.348.4626
plaats58@yahoo.com

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Brady Peters - 712.541.7640
brdyptrs@gmail.com

WOMEN TO WOMEN

Brenna Haack - 712.441.0050
brennahaack@gmail.com

WORK GROUPS

Beu Brouwer - 712.348.4083
brouwerb@premieronline.net

NOTE: People in red have not been replaced yet.



Important Church Information

- ◆ **WEBSITE:** www.sheldonfirstreformed.com
- ◆ **WORSHIP VIDEO:** www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/media/worshipservices.cfm
- ◆ **BULLETIN:** www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/media/weeklybulletin.cfm **OR** paper copies are available in the bulletin box outside the north kitchen door along with the most recent Encore and devotional
- ◆ **RADIO BROADCAST:** Sundays at 10 AM on FM 100.7
- ◆ **TV BROADCAST:** Tuesdays at 4 PM on local cable channel 12
- ◆ **FACEBOOK:** www.facebook.com/sheldonfirstreformed
- ◆ **E-GIVING LINK:** Text the word "SFRC" to the number **[833.484.7253](tel:833.484.7253)** or give online at www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/give
- ◆ **TRADITIONAL GIVING:** Mail to Sheldon First Reformed Church, 1101 7th Street, Sheldon, IA 51201 **OR** drop your offering in the slot on the church office door during the week
- ◆ **MY CHURCH APP:** Download on Google Play or the App Store **OR** text the words "SFRC APP" to the number **[833.484.7253](tel:833.484.7253)**.
- ◆ **PRAYER REQUESTS/PRAISES:** Call the church office at 712.324.2130 or email Pastor Paul at paul@sheldonfirstreformed.com
- ◆ **NEXT STEPS CODE:** The QR code is on the bulletin cover. Using your smartphone device scan the code & it will bring you to a page that will take you to our Connection Card, Prayer Requests, or Giving.
- ◆ **PARENTS:** Children's bulletins are available at www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/media/children-s-bulletin.cfm.
- ◆ **SUNDAY SCHOOL GUIDES:** Pick up in the youth house.
- ◆ **MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL:** Follow us on Instagram & Facebook @ Frcsheldonstudent ministries for upcoming activities & any updates. To be added to the email list please email Caitie at caitie@sheldonfirstreformed.com.
- ◆ **DURING THE WEEK:** The church is open from **7AM-4 PM Monday - Thursday, and from 7 AM-12 PM on 2nd & 4th Fridays**. During the week you may use the north & south doors to get your mail or drop off offerings etc. in the office. You will need to ring the door bell (silver button) to the right of these doors to enter the church. Wendy will buzz you in from the office.
- ◆ **SUNDAY MORNINGS:** The church doors will lock at 9:30 AM. If you find the doors locked upon your arrival, go to the front/east door and a team member will welcome you into the church
- ◆ If you would like to receive church emails & don't currently receive them, please call the church at 712.324.2130 & provide Wendy with your email address. You may also fill out the connection card with this info & place it in the basket as you leave the sanctuary.
- ◆ If you have moved, made changes to your emails or phone numbers, please contact the church office with the updated information by calling 712.324.2130 or emailing frcsecretary@outlook.com.
- ◆ **BULLETIN & NEWSLETTER ITEMS:** If you would like items included in either, please get the items to the office by 10 AM on Thursday morning for the bulletin & the Thursday of the last full week of the month for inclusion in the upcoming newsletter. **This month is an exception due to the holiday. [The deadline to submit items for inclusion in the February Encore is Thursday, January 29. It will be printed on January 30.](#)**

NOTE: To access videos & bulletins, note the above information in **green**. If you cannot find bulletins, look under the media tab. Then scroll down to the date of the bulletin you are looking for and click on it.

Christmas Program 2025





What a Blessing!





Prayer Warrior
Annville Institute/Grace Covenant
Ministries
PO Box 340, Annville, KY 40402
Phone - 606-364-5151
Email: contact@gcmannvilleinstitute.com
December 2025



Sharing the Joy!

“O Zion, messenger of good news, shout from the mountaintops! Shout it louder, O Jerusalem. Shout, and do not be afraid. Tell the towns of Judah, “Your God is coming!”

(Isaiah 40:9 NLT)

We are excited about our partnership with you and the unique ways we have celebrated this festive season in our community! Our Small Business Saturday was a great success, featuring an artisan fair with 16 talented artists showcasing their work. On December 7, we held our sixth annual community Christmas tree lighting event on our campus. Then, on December 13, our gym was filled with joy as we hosted a Christmas concert featuring several local singing groups and pastors who shared the Christmas story.

On December 22, our youth ministry team is organizing an all-day camp for young students. Campers will enjoy breakfast, watch a Christmas movie, hear the Christmas story, bake cookies, create crafts, and participate in fun games.

We hope these events effectively convey the message of the most incredible love story ever told. Thank you for supporting us in spreading the love of our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer.

Artisan Fair



Community Tree Lighting



Concert in the Gym



Camp during school-break



Grace Covenant Ministries

Spreading the Hope of Christ – One Life at a Time

Christmas 2025

Dear Friends and Ministry Partners,

As we celebrate the birth of our Savior this Christmas, our hearts are filled with gratitude —for Christ’s unending love and for *you*, our faithful supporters, who make the work of Grace Covenant Ministries possible.

This holy season reminds us of God’s greatest gift: Jesus Christ, Emmanuel—God with us. In a world that often feels uncertain and weary, the message of hope, peace, and redemption shines brighter than ever. Because of your prayers, generosity, and commitment to the Gospel, we are able to carry that message into communities that desperately need to hear it.

Throughout 2025, we have witnessed the Lord’s faithfulness in incredible ways. He has truly given us “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.” Whether through Work Groups, the many camps we offered to the community, or simply walking alongside someone in need, **your support has helped us be the hands and feet of Jesus and given us opportunity to share the hope we have in Him!**

As we look ahead to a new year of ministry, we are reminded that we do not walk alone. God continues to open doors, and with your continued partnership, we are excited to see what He will do in the year to come.

May your heart be filled with the wonder of His love this Christmas. We pray that you and your loved ones experience the peace, joy, and presence of Christ in every moment of this season and beyond.

From all of us at Grace Covenant Ministries—thank you, God bless you, and have a very Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

In His Grace,



Chad Demers

Director
Grace Covenant Ministries



“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness, on them light has shone.” Is. 9:2

Praise the Lord for the light of Jesus Christ that sets the captives free! It is a blessing for me to share the light of Christ to the men in prison and to encourage them in the faith walk. When I started prison ministry 24 years ago, my desire was to bring hope to the men behind the prison walls. My desire was to let them know God has a new life for them when they repent of their sins and put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! The true light of Jesus Christ has and is shining on men behind bars!

Jameson Annex was lockdown for nearly two weeks. It gave me the opportunity to visit the county jail and the Hill. It was good to get back into Jameson on Wednesday morning and meet with some of men again! Two of the Christian men who are in the same cell were having difficulty getting along before the lockdown. James told me that he would have to move out or his celli would have to move out. When I came back on Wednesday morning James told me the lockdown was good for him and his celli. He said, “The lockdown forced us to be honest with one another. We could not keep going with the bad feelings between us. We shared with each other what was irritating about the other. We apologized to each other, prayed together, and now we are having Bible study together in the early morning!” Praise God for the light that broke through the darkness!

I have known Joe for more than 15 years. Some years ago, he came to my mental health weekly Bible studies. Joe just found out his brother had died, and he wanted to visit with me. Joe poured out his heart to me. His story is a sad story of a broken man.

Joe was very emotional telling his life's story. He told me, “My father was not around much when I was growing up.

He had an addiction problem. When I was five years old my mother told me where I got some of my scars. It was from my father who did this before I could remember what happened. I grew up with terrible fits of anger. When I was eight years old a kid a few grades ahead of me started to make fun of me. I ran full force into him and he hit his head on the cement. I couldn't stop beating on him and he died. I was put in a home for kids like me where I got into many fights. Now in my forties, I look back over my life and see how I have hurt a lot of people. I don't know how God could love a person like me.” In the past several years Joe has been studying various religions. As I went over the gospel with Joe, he said he believed God's Word. As we prayed together Joe invited Christ to forgive him and trusted Jesus to be his Lord and Savior. Joe said, “I am surprised that I made this commitment. Now I have to keep my commitment to God.” He wants to meet weekly to grow in understanding the Bible. Joe is serious about the decision he made to follow Jesus daily! As the Lord's light shines on him, Joe now has the hope only God can give!

Henry is a very timid man. He told me, “I am tired of my life of addiction. My personality changes for the worse when I am high on drugs. I have hurt a lot of people because of my drug addiction! I want to take Jesus seriously this time and have Him change my life.” We prayed for his salvation and the next week he was baptized! A few days after his baptism Henry told me, “Men in my cell block are telling me that they know where I can get more drugs when I get out of prison. I told them I have no interest in doing drugs, my life has changed! The bad dreams I have been having are now gone since I have been baptized!” Praise God!

I am always thankful for your prayers and financial support! I hope you have a great Christmas and blessed New Year!

In Christ,

Harlan



PAVMEG CONNECT

FALL 2025

THANKING GOD FOR...

- α. Another new school year is kicking off smoothly. Risa ended up with a new teacher and a new gymnastics class. Matthew has the same teacher and the same fun soccer team. Theodore is getting used to all the new things at his international American school and was even nominated to be a part of a special incubator group of students who receive funds for creative projects.
- β. The opportunity to join our music ministry friends at a Christian family conference. As seasons change, our relationship deepens.
- γ. The Kypseli church event celebrating our 10th anniversary in October. The history shared through stories and pictures was nostalgic. We were the only young family with babies at the beginning. Here's to more years of loving service in the community.



Date night to celebrate Megan's 40th birthday



Game time for the kids at family camp

TRUSTING GOD WITH...

- α. "The new building move for our church family. While the need to transition has never felt more urgent, the obstacles keep arising." - We wrote these words one year ago, and unfortunately, the situation remains the same. Please pray for patience and wisdom as progress, however slowly, continues.
- β. Megan's pastoral care ministry. At times it has felt hard to separate greater

intentionality in friendships from the work of routine care, but this year really cemented the need for this commitment. Every preacher that we know well in Greece is a man, except for one, and the majority have at least two jobs already, so paying attention to the women who could really use another woman's care and listening ear feels very purposeful and fulfilling.



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BEAR FRUIT

WITH BEARFRUITMEG



I love reflecting on the Christian story during Advent and Christmas. Not that it is a competition, but I tend to stand in greater awe before the significance of "God with us" than I do other theological concepts. Philippians 2:6-7 says Jesus didn't think of divinity as a thing to be grasped, but instead became a human to serve.

Jesus lived out relatable human experiences. He learned his father's craft. He walked alongside young people sharing life wisdom. He wept.

Then he did other things that fewer humans dare to do. He ruined his reputation hanging out with the wrong people. He went and touched those with physical ailments that kept them from being "clean" to join Jewish worship practices. He sympathized with tax collectors caught up in governmental systems of exploitation and helped reconcile relationships amongst his hodge podge group of friends and followers. He taught women hungry to learn and encouraged that desire when societal norms dictated otherwise.

Jesus' growing popularity resulted in religious and government leaders fearing the threat to their power, so Jesus was eliminated in a horrible way. This was Jesus, born into dependency on others as

an infant; building intimate relationships; and finally dying a shameful human death.

The fancy theological term for these "God with us" musings is called incarnation, or literally, enfleshment. The heart of my ministry work in this season is incarnational ministry. I walk alongside others through their joys, but especially sorrows. Recently there has been no shortage of them. For example, a college friend with a relatively recent bipolar diagnosis like me, tragically ended her life. This was a gut punch on so many levels that I'm still processing with her friends, some old, some new to me. Not only is it important yet challenging walking with one another through the grief, I also find myself in a unique position to have actually lived the bipolar experience, in the flesh, and therefore I am often asked to explain the almost unexplainable realities of having your mind assaulted in such devastating and violating ways.

Then there's cancer. Screw cancer. An extended family member, a beloved community member, and a 19-year old from our Athens church have died from cancer this year after relatively short times of knowing how severely ill they were. Beyond the loss of these precious lives, sometimes the recovery and

fall out from the season of treatment is also terrible. A college friend, for instance, was recently met with a lot of unexpected financial stress two years after her diagnosis simply because she switched jobs and her insurance plan had to adjust. Money and health care. What a mess.

Family and friends have gone through significant surgeries lately and some of their recoveries are not going nearly as smoothly as hoped. Others are debating what sort of treatment is necessary or beneficial for chronic pain.

Unfortunately, there have also been more friends than ever before walking through divorce mediation and settlements and custody agreements. I don't think divorce is always avoidable. It wasn't the first, second, or even third choice of my friends. I long to communicate grace and practical support where necessary as well, because sometimes greater flourishing can only come again with new living arrangements.

Jesus wept. Jesus grieved with those who grieved. Jesus longed for healing in more ways than one and showed the way to live this life from an overflow of God's love moving in you and through you to others. One of my favorite Greek words is *xehilzee* (xe-he-lee-zee). Overflow. May you be filled

up and overflowing with God's love so you too can weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice. Such as my friends with various bittersweet and wonderful news updates:

There were celebrations of well deserved retirement transitions. A friend enthusiastically welcomed a foster son into their already busy family dynamic. Also, a precious newborn shares a birthday with his late grandpa who left us far too young. There are new and old friends moving to Athens, giving opportunities to connect and help with adjustments. I am here for it—the joys and challenges of various transitions through life. Unfortunately many pastors, including ours, are not paid full time by our church, so I know that helping with pastoral care visiting is important. Not only that, many American young moms arrive in Athens through missions or US embassy work, but have few who can understand what they're going through. Since I've been here 17 years, I have a good toolkit of knowledge and experience to offer alongside the all important listening ear.

I enjoy my job very much. Thank you for your prayers and support so that I can do it! May you all have a very Merry Christmas celebrating Emmanuel - God with us.

SHARE *the Word*

CHANGE *Young Hearts*



Your support in 2025 helped 19,126 young people in Venezuela to study God's Word.

Share the Gospel with Young People

For 87 years, Bible League International has believed that lasting change begins with a Bible—and someone who cares enough to share it.

One of our key ministry programs is helping young people to know their Savior, Jesus Christ. We provide hands-on Bible study materials that get kids and teens excited about Jesus. And we train leaders who guide them.

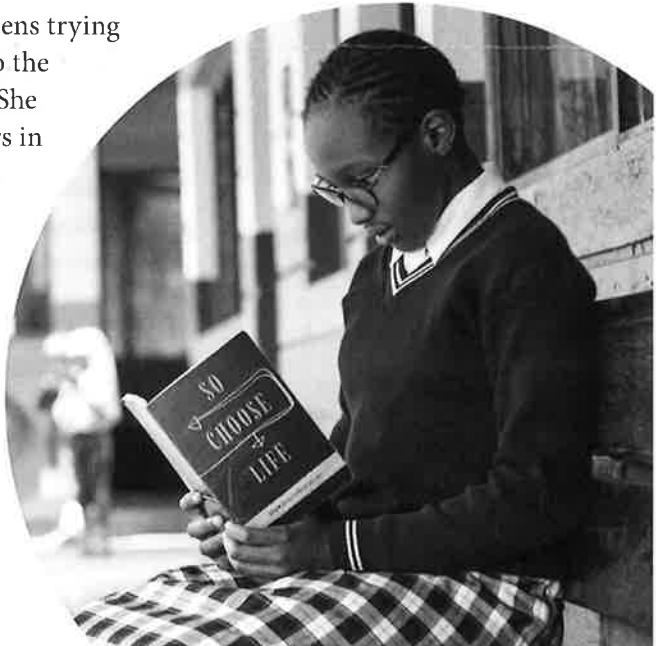
About 40% of those who studied God's Word through Bible League's ministry are children and youth. In 2025, nearly 690,000 children around the globe heard how much their heavenly Father loves them. Our new materials for children—the *Discovery Series*—have been instrumental in helping to engage more children in God's Word.

God's Word Transforms Lives and Communities

Stacey, 12, lives in a slum area in Nairobi, Kenya. Like so many tweens trying to navigate the world and figure out their place in it, Stacey fell into the wrong crowd. She began to disobey her parents and cause trouble. She recalls, "I became a great burden to my parents and even to teachers in schools." Her parents were not believers, and she had never known about Jesus—until her school began using Bible League's materials in her classroom.

Through studying God's Word, Stacey understood she needed to change the way she was living and make better decisions. She beams, "While doing the booklet, I realized I needed to change by making the right decision of receiving Jesus."

Since then, Stacey has seen profound change in her life. She beams, "What I loved before, and thought was the best, I came to realize it's only being with Jesus that gives real, true life, joy, and peace."



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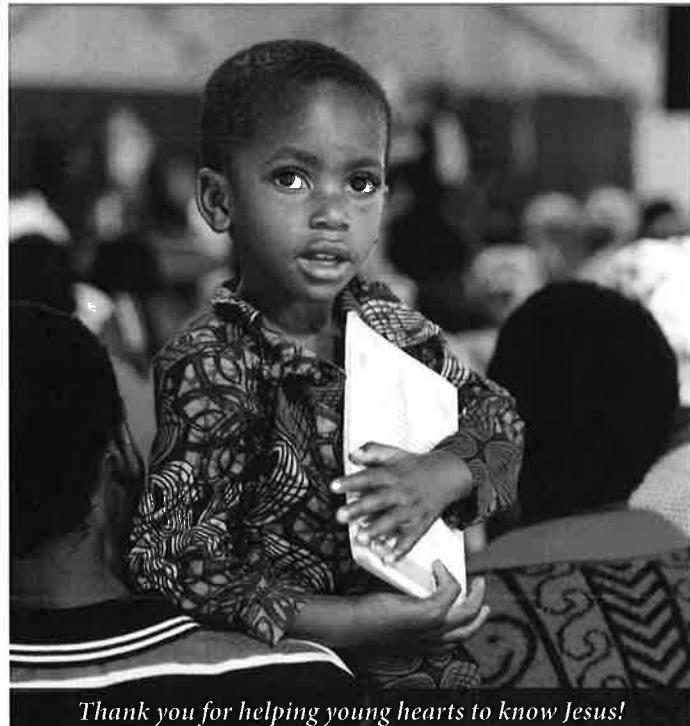
God's Word Transforms Lives *(continued)*

She stopped hanging out with the wrong crowd, began going to church, and implemented prayer within her family. The young evangelist explains how they now pray as a family every morning before school and every night before bed. Stacey gushes, "This has brought great transformation in our home."

Stacey's story shows what's possible when you help a child know Jesus. Reaching kids with the love of Jesus creates a ripple effect throughout their families—and their communities. Thank you for your faithful support in helping to shape the next generation of Christ followers. You are a blessing!

Prayer Requests

- Ask the Lord to transform Siyabonga's heart, a homeless young person in South Africa, who has been going through a Bible League Bible study for youth. He is now in a shelter and will continue with the Bible study.
- Hrachya, a 16-year-old in Armenia, is helping lead children's Bible studies at his church. May God bless him as he ministers to young people in his community.
- Please pray for the 105 children attending Bible League's Bible-based Literacy classes at a school in eastern India.



Join Others in Leading Young Hearts to Christ

When you join with the Bible League Volunteer Ambassadors, you're making an eternal difference in young hearts in at least 42 countries! Your gifts and heartfelt prayers provide Bibles and invaluable biblical resources that help young people know Jesus. Each \$14 you provide today has the power to root a child in God's Word. Young people are often more open to the Gospel and eager sharers of it. Through them, siblings, grandparents, and parents discover God's Word. Entire families transform. Thank you!

Faithfully serving more than 50 countries worldwide
We equip the under-resourced Church to make disciples, transforming lives through God's Word.



**THE WORD
IN ACTION**
BIBLE LEAGUE PODCAST

Listen to The Word in Action—a podcast about how God's Word is transforming lives around the globe. You'll hear from people who are spreading the hope of Jesus each day. Explore new stories monthly of how God is moving in the lives of kids, persecuted believers, church planters, and so many others.

*Subscribe, listen to, and comment on your favorite podcast app,
or tune in at: bibleleague.org/action-podcast*

Hello from Indiana!

I hope this letter finds you well and you're getting prepared to celebrate the holidays with family and friends from near and far.

Our family has had a great year, and we are looking forward to being together over the holidays. We love the freedom of having an "empty nest" but absolutely love when the house is full of our two boys, their girlfriends, and of course the grand dogs.

Cole is now 18 and a senior at Culver Military Academy. He had a great soccer season being named All-State Top Team Player for his team, as well as Academic All-State. He has now moved into wrestling season and is hoping to make a strong run for a state championship. Academically, he is doing well, and we are now in the waiting game to see what his offers are for college. He is hoping to get a full ride for flight school at either Purdue or Embry Riddle. I can't believe he will be graduating high school at the end of May!

Carson graduated with a business degree from Morehead State University in May. Upon graduation, he was promoted to the rank of 1st Lieutenant in the Kentucky National Guard. He didn't have much time to relax, as he reported to Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri on June 2nd for his specialized training in the Army Corps of Engineers. He completed his training and graduated on October 23rd and is now back in Kentucky applying for full-time work. We are so grateful that he is serving our country and has zero college debt.

As I mentioned earlier, Julie and I continue to enjoy our time together as empty nesters. I travel often for Mission India, and Julie can travel with me for many trips. It is so much fun being on the road with her by my side. Our favorite trip this year was to Sheldon, Iowa for a Christian music festival called RiseFest.

Over 20,000 people attend this event each summer and there are always so many powerful stories about how God is moving and taking back ground from the enemy. Mike Weaver (a huge fan of Mission India) from Big Daddy Weave was our guest this year at RiseFest. He performed a few songs for our Iowa financial partners and then performed on the main stage at Rise. It was AMAZING!

After performing on the main stage, we invited folks in attendance to our booth to hear more about Mission India and for a chance to meet Mike Weaver. One of the people that waited in that long line was a man named, Mike. He was a veteran with PTSD and a few years prior he was losing everything. As he introduced himself, he shared that Big Daddy Weave's song, *Redeemed*, saved his life. He went on to explain that with gun in hand ready to end his life a friend called. Mike shared what he was about to do with his friend and wanted to say "goodbye." His friend made him promise that he wouldn't do anything to himself until he arrived to his home to talk. It would take about 10 minutes, so his friend

asked if he would turn on a local radio station until he arrived. Mike agreed and turned on the radio. In that moment, God was going to rescue this man from the grips of Satan and the song *Redeemed* started to play in its entirety. Mike listened to every word and by the time his friend arrived, he was ready to commit to following Jesus.

Since that day, Mike's marriage has been restored. His relationship with his children has been repaired. He has a great job. But the best news of all... He has an amazing relationship with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

You see, Genesis 50:20 is really God's heartbeat. Whatever Satan intends for evil; God will always use for good. I am so thankful that both Mikes were at RiseFest this summer. It was inspiring to me to see the impact we can have on those that we don't even know. We GET to do this with the help of the Holy Spirit!

I pray all of you will have a wonderful Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year.

Love you all,

John, Julie, Carson and Cole Meiser

Here is the photo of Mike Weaver praying with my great friend Brian Elling and Mike at RiseFest this past June!





Dear friends at First Reformed Church,

The Love INC ministry is made possible through the generosity of church partners—like you! Your partnership empowers the God's local Church to invest in the lives of our neighbors who are struggling—ultimately strengthening the health and hope of our entire community. THANK YOU!

There is a sign hanging in my office that reads: "This story is bigger than me". It reminds me of the multiplying effect we can have when we invest in the lives of others. The 2000 movie, *Pay It Forward*, is a good reminder of this as well. In the movie, 7th grade social studies teacher Mr. Simonet, gives his class an assignment: think of an idea to change the world—and put it into action. *God had an idea to change the world.* "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life". *But that's not all. God created His Church with the purpose of reflecting the values of the kingdom of God and charged us with being Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20).*

Love INC's model of mobilizing local churches to transforms lives and communities in the name of Christ has been at work in our community since 2003. We are a partnership of churches desiring to help resolve needs in the name of Christ.

2025 has been a year of growth for Love INC! Between the summer and fall session of classes, the Life Together ministry nearly doubled in size. This program is a powerful tool for transformation as the Church invests in the lives of others. It is where "experts" share their knowledge with those desiring better lives, where community members come learn about being better stewards in different areas of life (like their finances, day-to-day living, parenting, relationships, etc.), and where children are valued by caring volunteers. Currently, 48 adults and 25 children from the community participate in this program. An additional 20+ Christian volunteers serve each week.

Beyond that, 22 households are currently receiving support through requests for household items or transportation to medical appointments. As food insecurity continues to be a local concern, we are also distributing both Thanksgiving and Christmas meal kits to families in need this holiday season.

Earlier this year, our board approved a strategic plan that outlines our vision for expanding services to meet growing needs. One exciting step in this direction is the recent re-launch of classes for our Spanish-speaking community!

As the number of people and the depth of needs continue to rise, we desire to see a greater story unfold—one where we are financially equipped to serve at a higher capacity. This means welcoming more clients and caring for them well, meeting more needs, and mobilizing even more churches and Christians to share the love and hope found in Jesus Christ. We desire to see God's kingdom multiplied through acts of care and the equipping others.

One of my favorite scenes from the movie, *Pay It Forward*, is when 7th grade student, Trevor, shares his idea for changing the world. His plan looked something like this:

This is me.



And these are the people I am going to help today.



And if each of them helps three people, this could get big really fast!



Everything Love INC does is rooted in the desire to equip people with the knowledge, resources, and *hope* for a life in line with God's design—to see our neighbors living with the full value, capacity, and potential in which God created them. When that happens, there is a trickle effect, where one life transforms another, and we are *all* living closer to the fullness God intends.

Thank you for being active partners in this mission!

In His Service,



Kristi Robinson
Executive Director
Love INC of Greater O'Brien County



January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 New Year's Day Office Closed Today	2	3
4 8am Praise Team Practice Baptisms: Jack Jager, Kipp Haack & Ryker Jager Cherish House collection	5 6pm HOH Mtg	6	7 5-6:15pm Meal 6-7:30pm Awana 6:15-7:30pm MS 6:30-7:30pm Adult Bible 7:45-9pm HS	8 4:30-6pm Sheldon Food Truck @ Living Water	9	10 Consistory Training 6-8 Family Trivia Night @ Breu Haus - RCYF Fundraiser
11 8am Praise Team Practice Installation/Ordination of new Elders & Deacons Cherish House collection	12	13 7am Men's Bible Study	14 5-6:15pm Meal 6-7:30pm Awana 6:15-7:30pm MS 6:30-7:30pm Adult Bible 7:45-9pm HS	15	16	17
18 8am Praise Team Practice Installation/Ordination of new Elders & Deacons Cherish House collection	19	20 7am Men's Bible Study 1:30 Afternoon Circle 6:30pm Elders/Deacons Mtgs 7:30pm Consistory Mtg	21 5-6:15pm Meal 6-7:30pm Awana 6:15-7:30pm MS 6:30-7:30pm Adult Bible 7:45-9pm HS	22	23	24
25 8am Praise Team Practice Professions of Faith 4-6pm Area Youth Event @ George 1st Reformed Cherish House collection	26	27 7am Men's Bible Study	28 5-6:15pm Meal 6-7:30pm Awana 6:15-7:30pm MS 6:30-7:30pm Adult Bible 7:45-9pm HS	29	30	31