

Shepherd's Staff

December 2020

We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.

"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!"

Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m. ~ Life Plus Wed., 6:30 p.m.

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

What a year 2020 has been! Looking back at the year we have had epic weather events that stretched from the east to the west, north to the south with many parts of our nation still recovering from the devastation storms and fires left behind. Record storms also affected our own state with the derecho storm that tore buildings apart, flattened crops, wiped out trees in entire communities and left many in the wake of its ruin. If the storms were not enough we have a pandemic that has filled the news, sickened many, and taken lives of loved ones too soon. Some may wonder what is next.

Some are claiming these events are leading up to the end of the world as we know it. But these claims have been made before. When the world seems to be at its darkest we are reminded that we who believe in Christ have hope. As we enter the season of advent we are reminded of the love of God proclaimed in the birth of a Savior. We are given hope in the sure salvation that is ours through this Savior. We are invited into a world of peace in spite of whatever is happening around us through the continued presence of the Holy Spirit of God living with us.

Looking back we can also see that through the year we have never been alone in the times of heartache and trial. God has continued to be good to us, blessing us in so many ways. Still holding to the promise of the catechism that "not a hair can fall from our heads without the will of our Father" we can look forward without fear. Nothing life can throw at us can change the relationship we have through Christ with our heavenly Father. Life or death are in his hands and we know that what Paul was saying holds true for us, the "for me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

This year may be a wake up call for us as we again are pressed on so many sides. What we thought was important doesn't seem so important anymore. The things we were called to give up on during the pandemic we found did not collapse the world around us. We found the importance of family again and also the importance of a church family. Torn apart we realize the importance of coming together in harmony. Of living with our eyes on God and one another has grown in many communities. Faith communities have come to the aid of those whose lives have come undone because of the fall out of fear with businesses closing and unemployment going up. We are called to make a difference in our world, but are we?

The news shows us those who are taking a stand to help their neighbors with genuine acts of caring and love for others. Even children are leading in the fight to relieve the hardships that have crippled so many. So what are we to do? We must share the hope, the peace, the joy, and the peace of Advent. We must live out our desire to share what God has blessed us with. Remembering that God loved so much that he sent his Son to help a world that was bound for destruction. What little cost we may confront is small compared to what God has done for us. Let's make this year one that we give to others in such a way that it reflects what God has done for us and change the memory of the year 2020 from one of great loss to one of great joy.

Pastor Rus

Dear Congregation,

In the November church Newsletter, I wrote to you about the issue of “women in church office” in the Parkersburg CRC. I learned that Classis Northcentral Iowa had decided that women were not to hold the office of pastor in the churches of Classic NC Iowa but each church was to be given the opportunity to decide for themselves whether women would be considered for the leadership role of Elder or Deacon. The topic is not new and has been argued for decades. I do not think that our congregation has ever been given the opportunity to express itself on this matter. At the December 6th congregational meeting, a simple ballot will be presented to inform the council of your views.

I would like to express my view on the issue of women as Elder in our church. I will share a variety of reasons why I am opposed to women serving in the office of Elder in our church. Since we confess that the Bible is “the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God”, I believe that Scripture and our church confessions are quite clear as to this decision. What does Scripture say?

The Apostle Paul discussed this issue in several places in Scripture. For example, when he discusses the need for order in church meetings, he says:

- I Corinthians 14: 34-35: “Let your women keep silent in the church, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the Law says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their husband at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.”
- I Timothy 2: 12-14: “I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent.
- I Timothy 3:1-7: “The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer (elder), he desires a noble task. An overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.” Michael Brown in *Called to Serve: Essays for Elders and Deacons* lists these characteristics as qualifications for the Office of Elder. (p 10).

One of our church’s historic confessions—the Belgic Confession – remains one of the Forms of Unity for the CRC. While the Belgic Confession is not as well known as the Heidelberg Catechism or the Canons of Dordt, it contains valuable content regarding the beliefs and practices of the Reformed Churches. Article 30 in the Confession is devoted to the “Government of the Church” and outlines the basics of Reformed Church government. Three specific offices are described—pastors, elders, and deacons. In describing the office of Elder, author Daniel Hyde (*With Heart and Mouth: An Exposition of the Belgic Confession*) offers these conclusions:

- “The second of these offices is that of elder. The elders are the men in the congregation who with wisdom rule the church along with the minister.” (p. 408)
- “We need a generation of men who are intimately acquainted with and devoted to the Word and to applying it in the life of God’s people.” (p. 409)
- “The people of God must recognize that men fill the offices of minister and elders not lightly, but reverently. To preach God’s infallible and eternal Word, to shepherd Christ’s flock, to administer discipline with the wayward and so protect the whole church from the leaven of sin are the holy “work” these offices entail.” (p. 424)
- “Paul also tells the church at Philippi that he is going to send Epaphroditus to them. In response, they are to ‘receive him in the Lord with all joy and honor such men.’ (p. 424)
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I did receive a few responses from members of the congregation sharing their opinions of women in church office. One person shared an example by stating she had asked her father over 50 years ago whether she would be a good candidate for the office of Deacon, given her significant banking and secretarial experience. Her father did not think this was a good idea. He was reflecting the position of the *Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church in North America*, where Article 3 of Church Order (in 1976) stated:

“Confessing male members of the church who meet the biblical requirements for office-bearers are eligible for office. Only those who have been officially called and ordained or installed shall hold and exercise office in the church.”

The present CRC Church Order (Supplement 3a) states:

- “All congregations may, but will not be required to, allow women to serve in the office of minister, elder, deacon or commissioned pastor. Every classes shall respect the prerogative of its constituent churches to call and ordain office-bearers according to their biblical convictions.”

I have already mentioned that Classis Northcentral Iowa has decided that women were not to hold the office of pastor in the churches of Classis. Each church has been given the opportunity to decide for themselves whether women should be considered for the office of elder and deacon. This is your opportunity to help decide how our church will answer this question.

At the December 6th congregational meeting I will share a ballot asking you to decide two questions:

- Shall women be allowed to serve as Elder in the Parkersburg CRC? Yes - No
- Shall women be allowed to serve as Deacon in the Parkersburg CRC? Yes - No

Ballots will be tabulated and shared with the Council, since the final decision rests with the Council.

I realize that many members may not be present at the December congregational meeting due to the COVID-19 virus. Anyone wishing to receive a ballot on this issue may request one from me by email – druvengad@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Darrell Druvenga



A Christmas Prayer
by Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father,
Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate
and open the door of love all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift
and good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing
which Christ brings,
and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning
make us happy to be thy children,
and Christmas evening bring us to our beds
with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven,
for Jesus' sake.
Amen.



December Birthdays/Anniversaries



Happy Birthday

12/6	Darlene Bruns
12/7	Delbert Cordes
12/7	Joel Reints
12/12	Angie Meester
12/14	Clayton Groeneveld
12/17	Rylan Ascher
12/20	Duane Anderson
12/31	John Oltman

Happy Anniversary

12/10	John & Karen Oltman
12/17	Mark & Lanae Kramer
12/26	Paul & Ruth Haan
12/27	Irv & Amy Haan



REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX.
ON CHRISTMAS EVE DONATE THE CONTENTS TO A
FOOD BANK.

- December 1 - box of cereal
- December 2 - peanut butter
- December 3 - stuffing mix
- December 4 - boxed potatoes
- December 5 - macaroni and cheese
- December 6 - canned fruit
- December 7 - canned tomatoes
- December 8 - canned tuna
- December 9 - dessert mix
- December 10 - jar of applesauce
- December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
- December 12 - cranberry sauce
- December 13 - canned beans
- December 14 - box of crackers
- December 15 - package of rice
- December 16 - package of oatmeal
- December 17 - package pasta
- December 18 - spaghetti sauce
- December 19 - chicken noodle soup
- December 20 - tomato soup
- December 21 - can corn
- December 22 - can mixed vegetables
- December 23 - can carrots
- December 24 - can green beans

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Reminder: If you have anything you'd like included in the Shepherd's Staff, please try to have it to Wendy Armstrong by the 20th of the month.

The year 2020 has been very difficult for so many people in our local communities. If you are able, please consider using this reverse advent calendar as a guide for making a donation to a food bank. Additional items that are needed include personal care items, such as toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, etc. Dish soap and laundry soap would be appreciated, as well. No matter the size of the donation, every can, every box, every dollar would be appreciated.

Thank you.