

# WESTERN SPRINGS CRC

## A Joyful Word

December 2023

### FROM THE ELDERS

#### A Joyful Word – Commitment to Communicate

There is the story of an old shoe cobbler who dreamed one Christmas Eve that Jesus would come to visit him the next day. So the next morning he got up and went out and cut green boughs and decorated his little cobbler shop and got all ready for Jesus to come and visit.

The hours passed and Jesus didn't come. But an old man came inside for a moment to get warm out of the winter cold. As the cobbler talked with him he noticed the holes in the old man's shoes, so he reached up on the shelf and got him a new pair of shoes. He made sure they fit and that his socks were dry and sent him on his way.

Still he waited. But Jesus didn't come. An old woman came who hadn't had a decent meal in days. They sat and visited for a while, and then he prepared for her a nourishing meal before sending her on her way. Then he sat down again to wait for Jesus. But Jesus still didn't come.

Then he heard a little boy crying out in front of his shop. He went out and talked with the boy and discovered he had been separated from his parents and didn't know how to get home. So the

shoe cobbler took the boy by the hand, and led him home.

When he came back to his shop he lifted his voice to heaven and said, "Oh Lord Jesus, why didn't you come?" And then in a moment of silence he seemed to hear a voice saying, "Oh shoe cobbler, lift up your heart. I kept my word. Three times I

knocked at your friendly door.

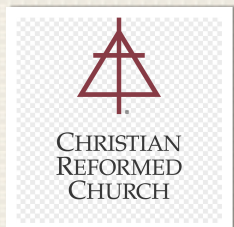
Three times my shadow fell across your floor. I was the man with the bruised feet. I was the woman you gave food to eat. I was the boy on the homeless street."

Jesus came but the cobbler did not realize that he was the hands and feet of Jesus Christ here on earth. By promoting a spirit of generosity, kindness, humility, caring and an ever-willing heart for serving God and others, we make a difference in the lives of those who are deeply committed to the ministry of our church.

As was shared in responses to the pastoral search survey, a significant number of our congregational members come to worship expecting to encounter God and be renewed by the Spirit. Moreover, 84% of respondents believe they will be cared for by our congregation when they are hurting.

As we approach a new year, we offer thanks to our Heavenly Father for the gift of this church community and all the people who have been touched by His grace. The Spirit of God is stirring, providing us with an opportunity to be a true blessing to others, as together we "serve the Lord with gladness." Ps. 100:2

Gary Smit



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*"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40*





## A Joyful Word – Pastor Search

The Search Committee shared three documents with the Council that were reviewed on December 11. The documents, prepared by Sam Hamstra and the Search Committee, were discussed in detail. Included in the discussion were Pastor Ben and our Classical Counselor Pastor John Huizenga, providing their insight and feedback. The documents are:

- ☒ Listening Session Feedback
- ☒ Pastor Position Description
- ☒ Alignment Church Profile

All three are written to assure that what will be presented to prospective pastoral candidates truly reflects our church and the desired competencies to lead our congregation. With a few modifications and language changes, the documents were approved by Council and will be shared with the congregation in early January.

## A Joyful Word – Worship

Our December Worship Services have been a blessing as we shared in the **Voices of Waiting** theme that was chosen by Pastor Ben. Each Sunday of Advent, our guest ministers preached from the prophets who spoke of Christ's arrival. We let the prophets' words become ours as we prepared for Jesus' birth at Christmas.

Here are links to each of the Sunday services in December.

December 3 - Rev. Ben Snoek  
Sermon Title: *Voices of Waiting: "The Shepherd King"*  
<https://youtube.com/live/5wzpB6RsT1Q>

December 10 - Rev. John Hoekwater  
Sermon Title: *Voices of Waiting: "The Blame Game"*  
<https://youtube.com/live/YJ595OnnpRo>

December 17 - Rev. Ted Gray  
Sermon Title: *Voices of Waiting: "The Certainty of God's Promises Fulfilled in Christ"*  
[https://youtube.com/live/HLVeCm1rN\\_U](https://youtube.com/live/HLVeCm1rN_U)

December 24 - Rev. Dean Monkemeier  
Sermon Title: *Voices of Waiting: "How to Make the Joy of Christmas Last"*  
<https://youtube.com/live/paJwcEsfqeQ>

Candlelight Service  
<https://youtube.com/live/kGIABs06Luc>

December 31 - Rev. Ted Boswell  
Sermon Title: *Teach Us to Number Our Days*  
<https://youtube.com/live/kufv78ySc18>

Thanks to Renee De Jager, Becky Walstra and all of the choir, handbell and orchestra members for sharing with us the opportunity to give honor and glory to our Heavenly Father. Their gifts provided us with true joy as we prepared our hearts to celebrate Christmas.

## A Joyful Word - Great is Thy Faithfulness

God is faithful, and we are called to walk by faith and not by sight. (2 Cor. 5:7). Despite the evolving and unstable seasons that life brings, we are called to trust God. Through times of joy and misfortune, God's faithfulness remains consistent and steadfast. When things do not go according to our plans, we become anxious and troubled, but God remains faithful.

As we approach the end of 2023, we recognize God's faithfulness as individuals and as a church. Since we are part of God's family by faith in Christ alone, we have a Friend who has promised not to leave or forsake us.

You cannot talk about the one true God without coming to this truth: **How Great is the Faithfulness of our God!**



"Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man." (Proverbs 3:3-4)

"Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds." (Psalm 36:5)

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

"Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you." (1 Samuel 12:24)

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful." (Hebrews 10:23)

## ELDERS

Gary Smit  
Randy Schmurr  
Dan Westra  
Jim Buiter  
Mike Heersink  
Tom Van Koevering

*If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your District Elder or reach out to Gary Smit as Chair of Council.*