

# WESTERN SPRINGS CRC

## A Joyful Word

January 2024

### FROM THE ELDERS A Commitment to Communicate A Joyful Word - Change

When driving in an unfamiliar part of a large city or on an open stretch of interstate highway, I would feel somewhat anxious when the needle pointed in the direction of E on the fuel gauge. Traveling in an area where I was never at before, often had me trying to read a road map under the dim dome light of my car. Now, with GPS technology, the map that was once in my hand is brightly and vividly displayed on the screen, identifying gas stations with verbal directional guidance on how to reach my destination.

The same is true when I need immediate cash. Previously, I had to be assured that the bank was open with sufficient funds in my account and had a passbook to show a teller, prior to withdrawing cash. (Some of you reading this have no idea about a savings passbook).

I think most of us would agree that these examples of change are embraced as a way of doing things better than what we might have been accustomed to in the past. However, when it comes to church and worship, change is difficult, and not a pathway that many are comfortable with. From the comments on the survey, a few among us voiced the conviction that if we hope to witness growth, things will need to change. After all, they said, if we keep doing what we have been doing, we can expect the future to look much like the present.

Yet, during our listening sessions, we heard several individuals suggest that, as a congregation, we resist change. When we are expected to think or act in different ways, there is understandable resistance, guarded interaction, or disappointment when we don't think we will see immediate results.

In December, Council members along with Pastor Ben and Rev. Huizenga (Classical Counselor) discussed change. Insight from the Pastors, relayed to us the realities of worship post-pandemic, the impact of the diverse opinion within our denomination and the uncertainty as to what worship will resemble in the years ahead. And, we fully understand that we are not alone in reflecting on these issues whether it is a CRC or another mainline Protestant church.

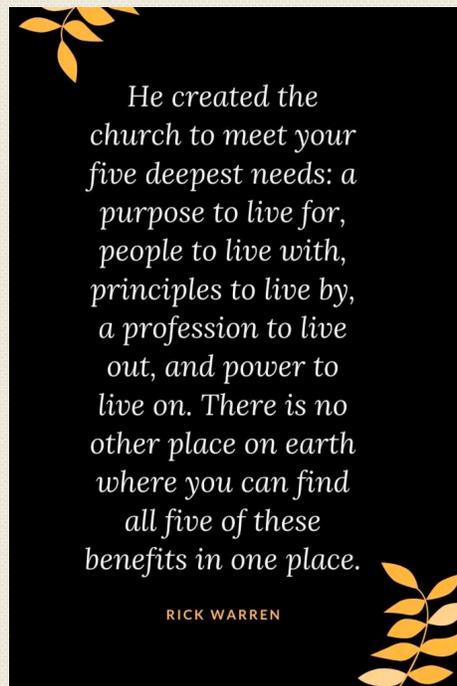
If you have read this far, you may be looking for an answer as to what change will be like for our church. Not to discourage you or regrettably fail to meet your expectation, I can share that we do not have a definitive answer. What was suggested is that with a new pastor, we commence on a visioning process that allows for the creation of goals that could address our needs, challenges and opportunities for a spiritually enriched ministry.

What we are called to do by our Heavenly Father is not always easy. There is no doubt that the possibility of what is ahead is troubling to some. Even though

this season of transition may cause discomfort and apprehension, we must remember that God is the one who holds our future.

In His strength, we are never caught with an empty tank, or being hopelessly lost in an unfamiliar area. Analogous to a reliance on the GPS or an ATM card, God's provision for us, far exceeds all that we need, as we continue to diligently approach our mission to love and serve Him.

**Gary Smit**



**The February memory verse is Romans 8:28.**

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

## A Joyful Word - Pastor Search

The Search Committee has worked diligently these past few months accomplishing a myriad of tasks related to our vacancy. With consultative and support services provided by Sam Hamstra, we conducted a church survey and held various listening sessions. The congregation received feedback in the form of a summary for both the survey and the listening sessions.

In addition, a Pastor Position Description was written and the Church Alignment Profile prepared, both of which become tools to communicate with prospective pastoral candidates. Copies of all three documents have been distributed via email from the office with printed copies available on the kiosk in the lower foyer.

What is commendable is how transparent and informative the Search Committee has been with weekly bulletin announcements, requests for prayer and the monthly reflection of their work in each issue of **A The Joyful Word**.

The committee is now embarking on the next step in the process. Completed applications from the search conducted by Sam have already generated candidates. The committee has created agreed upon questions and procedures related to interviewing individuals has begun.



## A Joyful Word - Worship

Here are the links to our Church YouTube channel for worship services that were held in January:

November 5 - Rev. Ben Snoek  
First Sunday after Epiphany  
Sermon: "Sacrificing the Present"  
<https://youtube.com/live/ACISiNkXsU0>

January 14 - Dr. Alan Strange  
Sermon: *The Heavenly King of a Heavenly Kingdom*

<https://youtube.com/live/-prEjKRcx6I>

January 21 - Dr. Cornel Venema  
Sermon: *You Are the Salt of the Earth*  
<https://youtube.com/live/AFC3spw6BzQ>

January 28 - Rev. Philip Leo  
Sermon: *Recognizing the Light*  
<https://youtube.com/live/S1pA24RuZTQ>

You can also access sermons at our church web page.  
[www.crcws.org](http://www.crcws.org)

## A Joyful Word - Fellowship

What a blessing it has been for the opportunities we have for fellowship as members of WSCRC. Whether it was the **Souper**

**Salad & Sweet Supper** organized by the Inside Out Committee that was overwhelmingly successful, or Ashley Thompson hosting an **Under 30's** (more or less) dinner and activity over Christmas break. We can be joyful in our sense of community that we genuinely treasure as a congregation.

What's next? Our church will be hosting a **Winter Hymn Sing** on Sunday, February 18, at 5:00 p.m. led by Men of A-Chord. We are looking forward to a time of fellowship as they lead us in giving honor and glory to God through the gift of music.

You can consider joining the **Growth Group/Bible Study** in their study on Hebrews. Their next meeting will take place on Sunday, February 4. New members are always welcome.

Finally, our annual **Mission Emphasis Week** will take place from Sunday, February 18 through Sunday, February 25. We will have a luncheon on February 25 at 11:45. Everyone is invited to come and enjoy some food and fellowship.

## ELDERS

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

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your District Elder.