

WESTERN SPRINGS CRC

February 2024

A Joyful Word

FROM THE ELDERS A Commitment to Communicate A Joyful Word - Council

Many would tend to think that being on Council when we are vacant is no easy task. Even with a new Pastor, there's the responsibility to ensure a good choice was made, renders the job even more daunting. And, how can we provide continuity to the leadership and vision of our church with the scheduled "churn" of 1/3rd of the Council every year?

For a couple of Sundays in January, a brief notice was included in the bulletin inviting nominees for the two expiring terms of both Elder and Deacon. If I were to tell you that the mobs of our members clamoring to be considered did not materialize, would you be surprised? My guess not. Maybe the announcement should have been more inviting and chock filled with promises of limited responsibilities, short meetings and delicious snacks. Then, would my church mail box be overflowing with nominations and/or people asking where they can sign up?

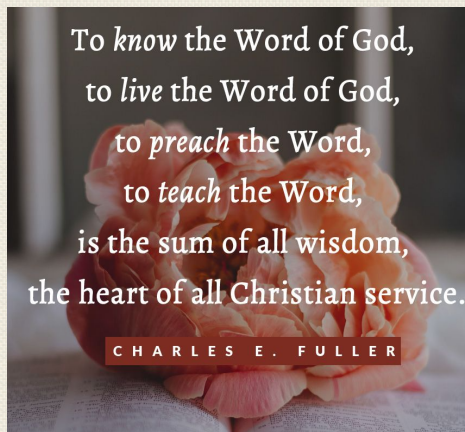
Maybe a better choice would have been to explain the various roles and expectations for being a Council member. Deacons are set apart for a ministry of mercy, service, and outreach. They gather gifts and offerings, steward them faithfully, and distribute them with wisdom and compassion to persons in need and for the purposes that advance God's kingdom on earth.

Elders provide a ministry of watchful and responsible care for the welfare and order of the church. They have oversight of all members, equipping us to live in harmony with God's Word. They ensure that the Word of God is rightly proclaimed and taught and the sacraments faithfully administered.

As I write this, the Elders and Deacons in separate meetings, have reviewed and approved the names

of individuals who are gifted to serve. Individuals are contacted asking if they will agree to having their name placed in nomination. At the same time, we are grateful that individuals have come forward stating their willingness to be considered.

A slate will be presented to the congregation three weeks prior to the May 5 congregational meeting. As we have done in the past, we will approve the nominees that are presented. This vote by members is for the purpose of confirming that the nominee meets the biblical requirements to be an Elder or Deacon. If there is more than the needed number to fill the vacant positions, individuals will then be chosen by lot.



Serving others as a WSCRC Council member is central to a Christian life of gratitude to God. Being a member of Council is to nurture a spiritually committed relationship that allows for the encouragement of each other by prayerfully understanding roles and responsibilities.

Let's be clear. This may not be easy but it is spiritually rewarding. Elders and

Deacons collaborate to advance the Kingdom of God while vacant and when a pastor is called to serve at WSCRC. We want Council members to see their work not as a burden, but as a profound and important calling from God so that they engage in spiritual practices that form both themselves and the renewal of our church.

Please pray for the election of office bearers who will build up the body of believers and reflect the heart of Jesus in their relationships with others in the year ahead.

Gary Smit

The March memory verse is Genesis 28:15.

I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Change in Church and Society

In the January issue, there was a discussion about change. Let's expand on the topic with what our denomination says about change in churches, society and the role of a CRC Pastor.

Within our denomination, there have been vast and diverse changes that affect many dimensions of the congregation's life. They include:

- Greater diversity of membership, practices, and culture as evident in differences of values, communication, mobility, and family life between/within generations;
- A marked loss of CRC Churches, worship attendance and membership:

From 2019 to 2023
CRC Churches. 7% fewer
Attendance 26% decline
Membership. 15% decline
<https://bit.ly/49Lsc10>

- Recent decisions made by Classis and/or Synod;
- Greater diversity in the number, style, and times of worship services.

Many changes evident in congregations are related to the surrounding culture.

- Growing distrust of leadership in the culture influences how members view leadership in the church;
- Mass media that sensationalize events increases the anxiety of individuals and groups;
- The disruptive presence of social media, creating opportunities for connection and outreach, but also aggravating tendencies toward conflict, comparison, and polarization;
- Degeneration of civil discourse;
- Concern about ethnic and gender diversity;
- The role of technology in changing the nature of communication, worship and church community.

Pastors are changing ways in which they see themselves, their families, and their relationship to the community in which they serve.

- More second career pastors, many who do not enter ministry from the denominational seminary;
- Fewer seminary graduates interested in being a church pastor;
- Not just in the CRC, but 53% of Pastors have considered leaving the ministry since 2020;
- Overall, pastors are staying longer in a given congregation;
- More pastors expect a balanced life where their ministry is negotiated alongside priorities to spouse, family, and self-care.

(Abridged from [More than a Search Committee](#) - Exploring Opportunities in Times of Transition: CRC Pastor Resources)

A Joyful Word - Pastor Search

As Sam Hamstra shared with us, congregations that call pastors before gaining clarity on important values and priorities, as well as pastors who accept calls to churches without appropriate discernment and wisdom, will be vulnerable to frustration, conflict, and broken relationships. That is why it is important for our church to tend to the transition before extending a call with a thorough search process, and opportunity for congregational feedback.

We ask you to continue praying for the Committee as they get to know potential candidates. Please pray that the Spirit will equip them with wisdom and discernment to identify the pastor who will shepherd us, and have the leadership ability needed to establish our role in the community.

Joyful Worship



*Congratulations to
Rev. Dr. Benjamin P. Snoek!*
~~~~~  
*Pastor Ben has successfully defended his  
dissertation for his Ph.D. in Systematic Theology at  
Columbia International University.*

Alison McKenney has taken over limited responsibility of updating our church website - [www.crcws.org](http://www.crcws.org). You can check out past sermons and previous issues of Western Times and A Joyful Word.

## Joyful Service Opportunities

### WSCRC Inside Out Committee

Young Men Educational Network (YMEN) / Chicago West Side Christian School (CWSCS)

**BICYCLE COLLECTION:** YMEN is accepting donated bicycles for its neighborhood bicycle library.

**USED TOWEL COLLECTION FOR CWSCS.** The school collects clean old towels to use as rags.

**WORK DAY AT CWSCS:** Saturday, March 2 to clean, paint and do minor repairs.



## 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.