



The 4th Focus

“Where God Is Leading Us”

The church is buzzing with activity today. It's a Thursday, during the New City Neighbors' summer program season, and people are everywhere. Many of the thirty kids in Breaktime are being tutored today by volunteers, and thus many of the classrooms are in use. The back door is a gateway to the CSA farm share pickup, where multiple people are gathering their weekly produce. The Cafe has had a steady flow of traffic with people gathering outside, and inside to eat wood fired pizza, awesome baked goods, and drink delicious coffee. Inside, the kitchen is full of life as middle school students wash dishes, prepare pizzas, and process orders.

If you haven't been here on a Thursday afternoon, you really need to take a long lunch break and check it out. God is doing something incredible on our campus.

While I marvel at all the action, I'm also aware that there is even more going on in the life of Fourth. The mission and vision focus groups have clearly communicated that God is up to something special at Fourth. Among the regular highlights from those discussions are mentions of our new mentoring program for youth, a growing youth ministry, joyful worship services that include the gifts of many people, our commitment to the gospel, and the way we seek to welcome people who join us each week.

People of Fourth, we have much to celebrate as we see God at work in our family of believers!

The focus groups have also revealed though, that we have some work to do. Almost every group noted that while we welcome people well, we rarely invite them into our lives. In other words, we have to address hospitality. Every group spoke to the fact that our church is not as diverse as our neighborhood. Another theme that came up repeatedly relates to women serving in office. There was also talk about ministering to college aged people and young families, finding better ways to get everyone involved in the church, and finally, serving better coffee at fellowship time.

We are just beginning our work to evaluate the information from these groups, but it was clear to me each week that one of our dreams as a body is that more people are empowered for ministry. Furthermore, I heard from many of you a strong desire to see our neighbors become a part of our body and grow with us in love for Jesus.

Each week, as I heard many of the same ideas repeated, I saw a glimpse of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of our church. He is already preparing us for the road ahead. It's too early to say what our next mission statement will be, and where that will lead us, but if today's activity at the church is any indication, there is huge potential for the future.

Ten years ago, none of us would have dreamed of a two acre farm, a cafe, and a ministry reaching over sixty kids during the summer, while also providing job training for roughly twenty of them. And yet here we are, with an amazing amount of lives being impacted by Jesus each day. What will life look like ten years from now? I don't know, but I believe the Holy Spirit is inviting us into a renewed season of engagement for the sake of proclaiming Jesus.

As we continue to work out our mission statement, pray for the team of people working on it, and pray that God will show you your part in carrying that mission out. Pray for the lives that will be impacted by Jesus. Pray that our neighborhood begins to reflect the kingdom of God. Pray for revival as we walk in step with our Lord and Savior Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Pastor Eric

New Members



So what's it like living in the parsonage? **Josh Schalk** thinks it's great! He can walk over for the summer NCN programs and church, his dad's office is just across the parking lot, and all the kids have their own bedrooms, which makes it pleasant for everyone. Having his dad as the minister is awesome, too. He knows a lot about the Bible and Josh can learn things through him.

Josh finished his last year at Kent Hills and will be moving on to Zoo School this fall for 6th grade. He will miss his friends, but looks forward to being with other kids who are serious about learning. He also loves animals, of course!

Josh enjoys sports and has medals and ribbons from running in track meets. He loves to cheer on the Lions and wishes they could win the Super Bowl! (Don't we all.) Collecting and organizing stuff is a fun pastime for him. For example, he has a bunch of erasers he has gathered over the years that he likes to line up in certain orders.

He enjoys going to movies with his dad and playing Pokemon GO. The family has great fun camping together - especially family camp with his mom's family and Cran-Hill Labor Day weekend.

Josh has a sensitive spirit and loving heart. He really enjoys helping kids in the nursery and children's worship. He also likes to give people stuff. Recently he bought his mom a flurry at Frosty Boy. He will be working in the NCN bakery this summer and looks forward to connecting with people there.

Josh has been thinking about making profession of faith and seeing other kids do it gave him courage. Jesus is the most important person in his life and is grateful He died on the cross for him! Amen! Having Bob Berthiaume as a mentor was not just OK, it was GREAT! Besides spending time going through the "I Believe" book, he also took him hunting, out to eat each time, etc. He is looking forward to some fishing this summer with Bob. Josh had Bob for his leader in 180 so they had previous history together. It was a wonderful experience for Bob to mentor Josh and he looks forward to seeing how Josh serves the Lord in years to come.

Memory Verse Challenge

The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name.

- Exodus 15:2,3

Birthdays

July

2 - Jerry Wierenga
8 - Connie Larson
8 - Jeff Broene
13 - Dave Portinga
14 - Ed Reitsma
17 - Jessica Ortiz
22 - Jonathan Brinks
23 - Avery Gleason
24 - Wendy Wetzal
23 - Kate Schalk
28 - Branson Parler
29 - Erica Stone

August

3 - Charlton Meyer
5 - C. Scherpenisse
5 - Ella Schalk
5 - Jackson Bolt
5 - Alexis Bolt
8 - J. Van Neuren
12 - Rick Berthiaume
15 - Betty Webster
17 - Darold Parks
19 - Nick Dobkowski
20 - Jose Ortiz
21 - Christian Parler
22 - Jacob Tubergen
24 - Lynn Simone



We also welcome **Diane Veenstra** who has lived in Grand Rapids all her life. She is married with one son, who also lives in Grand Rapids.

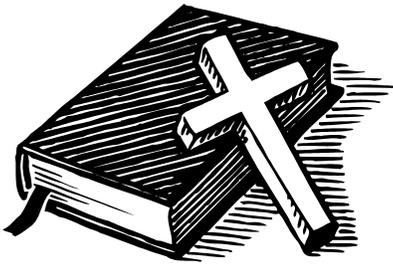
She has been an office manager, realtor and yes, she and her husband, Marvin, decided to become semi-truck drivers and traveled the country. After awhile, they saved enough money to buy a couple trucks and started their own company. They transported furniture - Steelcase and Herman Miller - to CA and the SW and returned with produce. Unfortunately, they were hit hard during the recession about 10 years ago.

Diane use to volunteer at the zoo and worked for the Wildlife Rehab Center down on Union. She also enjoyed rehabilitating injured animals at her home. She is helping her own dog recover from a recent attack by another dog!

Fourth Reformed Church is not a new place of worship for Diane. Her grandmother, Cora Von Ehr, took Diane with her to Fourth when she was a little girl. Diane is also an Aunt to Erica Stone. In fact, Diane went with Erica to church on Easter a couple of years ago and continued to attend Fourth since then.

Diane appreciates the Tuesday morning Bible study and knitting on Thursdays. We are thankful for Diane's warm smile and presence here amongst us, as we join hands and serve the Lord together in the Creston community.

Reformed Church Heritage - Iowa, Central and NW



Around the time of the beginning of West Michigan's Dutch settlements, another group settled in Iowa. Hendrik Pieter Scholte led an initial group of 900 settlers that eventually reached Marion County. With the help of a Baptist minister, the group purchased large tracts of land. The settlement was named Pella, located 40 miles southeast of Des Moines.

The Iowa Baptist Education Society wanted to start a college. Although Burlington on the Mississippi River was the initial choice, it was felt that a more central location would benefit students. Pella and Oskaloosa competed for the school. Scholte, who graduated *Magna Cum Laude* from Leiden University, was committed to higher education. His gift of money and land won the school for Pella. The Baptist Central University of Iowa began on October 8, 1854 with 37 students. That same year, work began on a 50 by 70 foot three story brick building that became known as "Old Central". The first students of a three year program graduated in 1860.

Scholte was determined to quickly integrate his community into American society. He strongly supported the Northern cause during the Civil War and made good on a promise of house plots for 129 returning war veterans. He accepted most Reformed doctrines, but also embraced many of the teachings of John Nelson Darby regarding Christ's second coming. During its first decade, there was no denominational association in Pella. From 1856-68, three local Reformed churches were organized. Accused of unsound financial management, Scholte was removed from his pulpit. He started a second congregation that disbanded after his death in 1868.

In 1884, the Baptists began a second college in Des Moines. This posed a threat to Central's continued existence. A merger of both colleges was blocked by a court injunction, but tension continued for many years. In 1915, a proposal was made to turn Central over to the Reformed Church. On June 20, 1916, a final agreement was signed. Although the college with its property was donated without cost, the Baptists kept a \$100,000 endowment.

Central weathered the storms of the early 20th Century. On June 14, 1922, "Old Central" was leveled by fire. A new Central Hall was built that today stands adjoined to Douwsta Auditorium (1939). During the Great Depression, needy students worked for Central College Student Industries growing tulip bulbs and producing products like storm windows, wooden toys and metal hog feeders. This ended after massive college aid for veterans became available following World War II. Over 600 students, faculty and staff served during World War II. Out of these, 21 were killed.

Central is known for its long history of theater. Before 1900, participation in literary societies which included public speaking was mandatory. Maurice Birdsall, professor of theater for 31 years, directed 150 plays from 1946-77. A theater major was introduced in 1949.

Available farmland around Pella became very scarce. Henry Hospers was a successful businessman. In April 1869, he sent an advance party to northwest Iowa, about 40 miles north of Sioux City. Here, the group purchased plentiful, rich, inexpensive land. The first settlement was named Orange City. In 1872, Rev. Seine Bolks became pastor of the First Reformed Church of Orange City. By 1900, 13 area Reformed churches were organized.

Difficulties initially plagued the local community. One Sunday morning in July 1873, a black cloud of grasshoppers arrived, destroying all the crops and remaining an intermittent threat for six years. To this were added sporadic drought, flooding and hail. Eventually, the population grew.

Hospers and Bolks helped establish the Northwestern Classical Academy in Orange City in September 1883. The motto chosen was "*Deus est Lux*" ("God is light"). After classes met in temporary locations, the cornerstone was laid for a more permanent structure on June 21, 1894. Today, historic Zwemer Hall stands on the Northwestern College campus.

The school continued to grow into the 20th Century. In 1928 a two year junior college was added. During the Great Depression, the school resisted closure. Bachelor degrees were first granted in 1961. Full college accreditation arrived in 1970. In recent years, Northwestern has been honored with faculty members named Iowa Professor of the Year in 2004 and 2006.

Kids Hope USA



It's hard to believe that we just completed our 18th year of partnership with Kent Hills Elementary School.

We ended our year with a picnic on May 24! With the threat of rain in the forecast, we decided to have the picnic in the fellowship hall rather than at Aberdeen Park. The kids had fun playing tabletop bowling & shuffle board, bean bag toss tic tac toe, and everyone enjoyed playing Bingo! It was a great relationship building night!

A BIG thank you to all the Kids Hope volunteers for your faithfulness throughout the year! Please continue to pray for the kids throughout the summer and for the upcoming school year!

- Mary Kay Townley, Director

GEMS Update



As we get closer to kicking off another year of GEMS, I have to take some time to reflect over the craziness of last year! This school year saw many changes, some good that we will keep, some bad that we'll just remember as a good try! God has brought about many changes with this program and in the hearts and lives of many girls through the decades that Fourth has been hosting a chapter of this ministry - and will continue to do so!

We are so blessed to have volunteers step up to assist in the needs of the program. That being said, we are looking for volunteers! Currently we are in need of a Song Leader, Games Master, and Teachers for small groups.

We look forward to the next two months of summer with events July 17th and August 21st with our Kick-Off event on September 18th!! All events are 6:00pm-7:30pm and all girls in grades 1st to 8th are welcome to attend programming, any girls older are welcome to attend as leaders! If you are at all interested in filling any of our current needs or have any questions about the program, please contact me by email or phone: gemsatfourth@gmail.com; [989-251-3224](tel:989-251-3224).

- Kristi Dennis

Youth Group

The youth group finished up our regular school year meetings on June 4 with a celebration at Riverside Park with a ton of water balloons and games! We are looking forward to our first summer event! We are going on a summer retreat July 14th-16th to a lake house near Midland having some fun in the sun and studying Spiritual Gifts and Building the Body of Christ.

This coming school year, we look forward to studying Spiritual Disciplines such as prayer and study of Scripture and applying those well into our lives. We plan on having a fall retreat at Bay Shore Camp with a guest speaker who will be teaching on "Intentional Christianity".

We are asking for prayers for guidance as we plan the coming school year especially in regards to a mission trip that we are hoping to take in the spring. We have a lot of ideas for what that might look like, but we aren't sure which ideas to run with and which ones to turn down!

We have also done some updating in the youth room downstairs with some plastering and repainting. Many thanks to Bob and Rick Berthiaume for seeing that task through! If you haven't seen how it looks, go down and check it out! But more is coming - we aren't quite finished yet!

- Sam & Kristi Dennis
