

We Are: Church Profile”



The 4th Focus

for the Personnel Team’s work to search for our next pastor, the consistory was asked to answer several questions. What follows is part of our reflections which explain the **strategies or ideas that most excite us** here at Fourth in becoming or remaining missional. Just to be clear, when we write down strategies, we are not saying that we have totally accomplished them; we are saying that it is our desire as a church to move in their direction. Phil 1:4b-6, “always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

1. Consistent with our vision statement we believe God is calling us to:

- Deeply love and nurture each other’s hearts
- Actively pursue and love others - intentionally building new relationships
- Break down relational barriers and overcome our too busy+lifestyles
- Equip and empower every member for gift-oriented ministry
- Nurture new believers in faith and maturity
- Practice biblical peacemaking and reconciliation
- Be persistent in prayer
- Reflect the diversity of the community that surrounds us

2. **New City Neighbors**, our northeast Grand Rapids mission, envisions a city of peace and prosperity with a mission of empowering youth to reach their full potential. The ministry values Biblical renewal in the neighborhood, helping people become followers of Jesus, service and employment. Our members along with other northeast churches, colleges, and high school students are able to help work toward these values by being involved with Breaktime (summer elementary day camp), New City Afterschool (tutoring), New City Bakery (summer Middle School program), New City Farm (sells CSA farm shares, employs high school students, offers college internships), and New City Garden (community plots). www.newcityneighbors.org

3. Faith Formation of Youth

- Vision: to be a church where youth are consistently nurtured into followers of Jesus Christ through intentional discipleship.
- Mission: to equip and raise up young people with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills they need to serve the kingdom of God.

4. **Small Groups:** Practicing biblical community and nurturing faith development. The groups are open to families, are multi-generational, and meet on a regular basis. We enjoy a meal together after our study time.

5. **Women’s Ministry:** Our primary goal is to meet the needs of women, helping them feel loved and supported as they move through different stages in their lives. Among the things our women participate in are retreats, showers, social events, and a prayer shawl ministry.

6. **Men’s Ministry:** Becoming true disciples of Christ by building relationships with men inside and outside the church. Events include meals together, individual accountability meetings, and social gatherings.

7. **Missions:** We currently support missionaries in northeast Grand Rapids, Guatemala, Thailand, India, and the countries served by Words of Hope. We seek to actively engage the congregation in the ministry of New City Neighbors and to strengthen our partnerships with global missionaries.

- Tom Boehm
(On behalf of the consistory and personnel team)



CHOOSE TRUTH

Excited girls attended our GEMS pre-season get acquainted party. The evening was filled with activities such as water balloons and a rope pulling contest outside. Inside we searched and gathered signatures of new friends who liked something, or had something such as red hair or a pet cat, and made some very cool necklaces out of paper clips and colored tape. Then we stuffed ourselves with pizza and ice cream sundaes. Each girl went home with a green bag filled with school supplies and a better idea about what GEMS is all about.

October began our official season with new girls being added weekly. Our evenings have been filled with fun crafts, yummy snacks, Bible challenge, singing, theme devotionals about finding your way while blindfolded and remembering God's promises with a memory game, and prayer, especially for Miss Courtney as she heads to Jordan.

Our theme this year is **Choose Truth**. We are exploring lessons in God's faithfulness in Bible times, and how God *always* keeps His promises, unlike us. His Word is the truth. The story line of the Bible is redemption and all its pages point to Jesus. When we know God's story, it helps us shine His light on our lives and our story. Our theme verse is Psalm 119:105 *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*

Once a month we have a life skill night. Our first activity night was devoted to hygiene. Miss Courtney gave us a lesson on keeping neat and clean with a comical twist, mixed with a Bible application. Julie Schalk demonstrated hair braiding. In four smaller groups we made lip gloss, practiced braiding hair on mannequins, painted nails, and played a memory game using cleansing items. The evening ended with a raffle drawing of various beauty items in which everyone won! Each girl headed home with a purple purse filled with shampoo, conditioner, soap, a comb and barrette. Thanks to Courtney Waid, our head counselor, for sharing all the examples from her job with us and for her many hours of organizing.

Stay tuned in the bulletin for our upcoming service project in December.

- Laura O'Rock



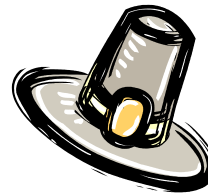
Kids Hope is off to another great start this school year. We look forward to our Christmas party on December 9 at Fourth. If you would like to help financially with the gifts that will be bought for the families, please place a marked envelope in the offering plate. We thank you in advance for your support and prayers for our mentors and children this school year!

Birthdays



November

1 - Iva Brus
1 - Michelle Coutchie
6 - Marge Bolthuis
7 - M. Meendering
8 - Taylor Eising
14 - Nick Kooyer
15 - MK Townley
18 - Philip Brinks
24 - Nevaeh Bills
27 - Sydney Hawkins
30 - Nancy Brinks



December

1 - David Bolt
11 - Caleb Coeling
11 - J. Zomermaand
12 - Peg Blanksma
15 - Dennis Jingles
18 - Bob Berthiaume
19 - Amy Coeling
20 - Kurt Faasse
21 - Beth Rossiter
24 - Elise Adams
25 - Gabriel Hawkins
26 - Erin Broene
28 - Tom Boehm
28 - Sharon Gamache
29 - Dave Bolt
31 - Greg Coutchie
31 - Eliana Parler
31 - Shayla Newman

Children's Books

Mr. Squirrel and the Moon by S. Meschenmoser

Wonderful pencil portraits enhance this delightful tale of Mr. Squirrel's inner fears.

If You Plant a Seed by Kadir Nelson

A great story with beautiful illustrations about the power of even the smallest acts and the rewards of compassion and generosity.

Beautiful Moon by Vera R. Jackson

A richly painted and emotionally complex children's book that celebrates prayer and kindness while recognizing the diversity of the world around us.

God Gave Us Christmas by Lisa Bergren

A great tale that provides perfect opportunity to help children celebrate the true meaning of Christmas and how much God loves them.

China - David Abeel and the Amoy Mission



Contact between China and the rest of the world including the Christian church was very limited before the nineteenth century. Trade with Europe dated back to the time of the Roman Empire. The journeys of Marco Polo in the eleventh century brought China to world attention. The Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) worked in China for many years. Through his scholarliness and unselfish, voluntary service, he was permitted to freely share the gospel and gained the respect of people in high places.

As for mutual trade, while the West craved silk and tea, the Chinese needed little in return. Europeans were required to pay for goods with hard currency. England forced unwanted opium into China which led to widespread addiction. In the resulting Opium War of 1839-42, China proved to be no match for the British, who opened five Chinese ports to Western influence. While a door had been thrown open to narcotics, it also let in the gospel. The port of Amoy became a center of Reformed Church missions.

Influenced by John H. Livingston and his global appeal embodied in *The Everlasting Gospel* sermon, Rev. David Abeel caught a vision for world missions while a student. Early in 1830, after briefly serving a Reformed church in Athens, NY, he began to minister to American seamen at Canton, at that time the only Chinese port open to the West. Within a year, he joined the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, (ABCFM) travelling throughout Southeast Asia. Chronic illness forced his return to America in 1833 where for the next five years he promoted Asian missions.

The Reformed Church joined the ABCFM in 1826, but played a minor role even after gaining limited independence. Relations were always cordial, but by 1857, the church established its own mission board, hoping that the denomination would assume a more active role.

Abeel sought, as he said, *some kind of connection between the churches at home and in Holland, with a view of co-operating in foreign missions*. He received permission to send missionaries to Borneo, part of the Dutch East Indies. During its 13 year life, the Borneo Mission encountered great difficulties. One might have thought that a common Dutch heritage would foster mutual friendship, but the opposite occurred. The Dutch government distrusted the Americans, viewing them as spies bent on overthrowing the government. By 1849, the Borneo Mission was abandoned.

Meanwhile, Abeel returned to Asia in 1839, remaining in the Portuguese colony of Macao until the end of the Opium War. After the British capture of Amoy, Abeel arrived on February 24, 1842, living on the nearby island of Kulangsu under the safety of the British government. He began to make trips to the mainland where he gained the respect of leaders and commoners alike.

Abeel worked alone until the arrival of Elihu Doty and William J. Pohlman from Borneo. Always in frail health, he departed for America late in 1844 and died on September 4, 1846 at the age of 42. Learning of his death, the Secretary of the ABCFM, Rufus Anderson, wrote *He was fitted to conciliate, to win. Men could not help reposing confidence in him. It was good for the Amoy Mission that he was the one who commenced it, and to this among other favoring Providences, we owe much to the peculiarly tolerant spirit among the leading Chinese of that place.*

David Abeel's contributions to overseas missions are relevant to this day. He encouraged women to minister overseas and form support groups at home. He helped organize the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East (1834) the world's first woman's missionary society. The Reformed Church established its own woman's foreign mission board in 1875. Abeel also originated the idea of many vocations contributing to a total missionary effort, writing *The work of evangelizing the world demands more than the labors of the ordained missionary. There must be teachers, physicians, merchants, in places mechanics-Christian communities who can employ all the various means by which the heathen world may be influenced.*

- Eric O. Brock

Next: China - John Van Nest Talmage



Women's ministry has had a couple of fun events in September and October. Our retreat in September was a day of diversity. After a Victorian fashion show, we were all glad to live with the present day fashions. We had a time of devotion and song, a soup and salad lunch and ended with a craft with our afternoon tea.

In October, we had our first ever adoption shower honoring the Bills family as they became four. Our play dough family trees were a fun start, then good snacks including turtle topped cupcakes, and finally the opening of gifts chosen to make Luke and Nevaeh's bedroom their own. We always have fun and the fellowship is great.

The committee would like to invite anyone interested in planning for next year to contact a current committee member- we would love to have fresh ideas.

- Marcia S. Dianne W. Sarah P. and Leah W.

Youth Group



What a whirlwind experience God has Fourth Reformed Church on! As I think back, and reflect on the last month of youth group ministry, I am reminded that God has a plan and that it is good. I am also reminded that He is a God of Joy. Interacting with your students has reminded me of the beauty of diversity within the body of Christ, and how we are all created with unique gifts and talents. From deeply profound statements, to thinking critically about who they are in Christ, to completely hilarious statements; I am thankful for them all.

I think back to our first meeting together when we went around the room and shared one descriptive word for what we wanted the year to look like. Here were some of the words that were stated: "Home, Safe, Golden Rule, Fun, and Discovery". I felt blessed to be a part of such a beginning. I am also thankful there was unity in the Holy Spirit in that room during our first Sunday night meeting. We just finished a three-part series entitled, "Emerge" that looked at who we are as a group, narrowed the next week to who we are in Christ, and finally, looked at what it means to make disciples. A typical night looks like delicious food prepared by the Burggraaf family, a fantastic game, and then we finish with a lesson. I continue to pray for your students weekly, and I would encourage you to do the same! Thank you for continuing to lift up the lives of your students to the Lord, and the ministries here at Fourth. I have faith that God, who began a good work in the lives of your students, will carry it on to completion. Stay tuned!

- Alisha Riepma

Personnel Team Update

The personnel team continues to meet at least two times a month to work on the pastor search process. We have received a number of candidate profiles already and are reviewing them to determine who would be a good match for Fourth and to gather more information from them. In the next few months, we expect to begin interviewing and trying to discern which candidates God is leading us to.

God's work is evident in many ways here at Fourth Church. While many churches our size are dwindling and struggling, God continues to bless the work that is being done here. We should recognize that Fourth Church is somewhat unique in our location and our call to minister to the surrounding community. It will take a special pastor to want to be called to our church and be committed to furthering our established ministry in the community.

We continue to ask for your prayers throughout this process. As we move forward with interviewing, we ask that you pray for the personnel team to see God's will and that you also pray for the potential candidates to search their hearts to determine whether God is calling them to Fourth Church.

- Mike Berrevoets for the team