



“A Fresh Beginning”



It's September, and once again I need to write an article for the Fourth Focus. I could spiritualize the rain we received the last couple of weeks, and the way it nourished the parched ground. It's tempting to reference Cran-Hill, the near record rainfall, and how we'll forget about all that water to do it again next year. I suppose I could even talk about the football season, and how the Lions are currently undefeated!

The truth is, all of these things are a reminder that we've turned the corner from Michigan summer, to the school year, which feels like a slippery slope to winter.

There are many ways that September feels like a fresh beginning. This Sunday we kick off Christian Ed at Fourth, with classes for all ages of children. We also have a class for adults on the Canons of Dort, which has nothing to do with weapons, and everything to do with understanding core Reformed theology. Next week we restart mission groups, and people will meet all over the city to eat, pray, and spend time growing in love for Jesus. Youth group launches on the 23rd with a bonfire. GEMS and Kids Hope mentoring are just around the corner, and on top of all of that, the hallways at Fourth will soon be filled with the children of New City Afterschool. Of course, all of this is on top of the things that didn't take a break for the summer like Women's Bible Study, knitting, Dude's group, etc...

As we jump into this new season of ministry, a relevant question for each of us is, how will I participate in the life of Fourth Church?

Now look, I'm honestly not trying to guilt you into doing more things. But, I do want to encourage you to think about where you're spending your time. For instance, if someone invites you to a mission group, and you say "no," what reason are you giving? When we pay attention to our own reasons for not engaging in the life of the church, we can sometimes identify an area or focus that has no lasting value in life. Again, I'm not saying anyone HAS to be in a mission group, but I am encouraging you to pay attention to the rhythms of your life and how they impact your time for Christ.

Fourth has many great opportunities for people to engage in ministry, and the truth is, we need everyone sharing their gifts in some way. Maybe it's not one of the opportunities above, but maybe it's helping with sound and projection, sharing a musical talent on the worship team, holding babies in nursery, knitting prayer shawls, making cookies, or washing windows.

What are your gifts? What are your passions? What excites you?

As a church, our mission is to follow Jesus together, serve others, and share God's love. We live into that mission as we engage in the kingdom work God has given us to do as a church. This is a mission we all agree to as members here.

If you're on the fence and not sure where to plug in, talk to me or a member of consistory who can help you find a place. Use your gifts and abilities for the glory of God, and experience the joy of serving together our Lord, who perfectly served us.

I'm excited for the opportunities we have this school year as a church. God is at work in some incredible ways, and I can't wait to see what he will do with us next!

- Pastor Eric

Youth Group

Birthdays



As Sam and I enter our 3rd year of working with the youth at Fourth, we are looking forward to another great year of goofing around with the kids, getting to know them better, and learning how we can help them grow in their faith in Christ. This summer we have been busy working on plans to bring the basement some new life with the help of MANY of you (THANK YOU!!). This has been a long process of first getting enough light bulbs to actually see, all the way to new upholstery with more things to come over the next few months. Stay tuned, we don't want to spoil any surprises!!

At the beginning of August, we had a Pool Party hosted by the Bolt family. Along with many others, I was thrown in the pool many times! It was good to relax with the kids after a day of work just seeing how they have all changed this summer. So many of them have grown taller and are now into a new year of school which brings on new challenges. We do have a big retreat coming up the first weekend of October and are getting all the details nailed down. We would appreciate prayers for safety and fun to be had by all as we travel to Bay Shore Camp in the thumb for a weekend of mini-golf, rock climbing, bonfires, and more.

We will continue with having Youth Group every other week for 6th to 12th grade students, regular time will continue to include dinner. This will allow for families to participate in Mission Groups on the off-weeks. We are hoping that we can get to more of the extra curricular activities this year, so please keep us updated on what things your students participate in so we can be involved in their lives more than just Sundays. This Family of God calls for so much more!! As with each year, we ask for prayer for guidance on how to serve each family and student in the challenges that they face - some known and some that we will see as the year unfolds. Thank you!!

- Kristi Dennis

New Member



Breanna Tubergen is an 8th grader at Rockford Christian where she delights in volleyball, soccer, cross country and her favorite - basketball. Breanna appreciates her parent's support in sending her to sport camps and cheering her on at games. She LOVES camping with her family (Estes Park and the Rocky Mountains this year) and hanging out and loving water sports with family in Pentwater where her grandparents have a cottage. She enjoys working with kids. She uses that passion volunteering in the church nursery, Children's Worship and babysitting!

Breanna just felt the time was right and the Spirit was leading her to make profession of faith. Her Grandma Tubergen was involved in a serious accident which impacted her life during that time.

As Amy Baragar her mentor reflects....."I have known Bre her entire life, but it has not been until these past couple of years that I have had the privilege of getting to truly know who she is. Bre is a tender, compassionate young lady who has a heart for people and a desire to see the good in the world. She is ambitious, will try just about anything, and knows how to have fun. I love listening to her talk about the different sports teams she is on, whether its basketball, soccer, volleyball or--soon--cross country. What strikes me the most is that, unlike many other students her age, winning is nice - but not everything; she is there to have fun and winning is an added bonus. I get the added perk of living in close proximity to her, so she comes over often and is always willing to help manage the chaos with me. In our neck of the woods she has three little boys who think the world of her!and so do we."

September

- 1 - Mary Proos
- 2 - Dale Springfield
- 2 - Jim Gibbs
- 4 - Abbie Schalk
- 7 - Tim Brinks
- 8 - Ruby Parler
- 9 - Travis Bolt
- 11 - Norm Schalk
- 14 - Nolan Baragar
- 15 - Ellie McDowell
- 19 - Patrick Marvin
- 19 - Clara Broene
- 22 - Barb Funckes
- 22 - Henry Coeling
- 23 - Marty Berthiaume
- 23 - Deb Robinson
- 26 - Steve Burggraaf
- 26 - Eric Schalk



October

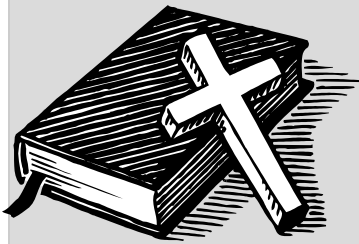
- 1 - Dave Randall
- 1 - Gina Schalk
- 1 - Siena Broene
- 1 - Becky Tubergen
- 3 - Kintaro Rossiter
- 4 - Julie Gleason
- 6 - Joshua Schalk
- 11 - Sandy Gleason
- 15 - Sue Hawkins
- 15 - Jeni Wammack
- 15 - John Bills
- 17 - Brian Tubergen
- 18 - Richanda Bolt
- 19 - Diane Christians
- 21 - Addison McDowell
- 22 - Bob Scherpenisse
- 25 - Emmet Playter
- 26 - Nancy Aukeman
- 28 - Suzanne Bolt
- 30 - Phyllis Berrevoets
- 30 - Dianne Waterloo



"I have loved getting to know Breanna in our Christian Education class. Her love for Jesus and desire to walk with Him are very evident in her contributions to our discussion and prayer. She has great knowledge of the Bible and offers wise applications for living the Christian life - often sports related!"

- Norma Boehm

The Protestant Reformation



John Wycliffe - Morning Star of the Reformation

The year 2017 marked the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's nailing of the *Ninety Five Theses* to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg, Germany. This event is often popularly believed to mark the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. In fact, significant attempts at reform began long beforehand and were separated afterward into various forms by Luther, John Calvin and others, developing into the Protestant churches as we know them today.

Little is known of the early life of John Wycliffe. (C. 1324-84) He was born at Hipswell, in the English county of Yorkshire. He studied at Oxford University, becoming master of Balliol College in 1361 and considered one of the great scholars of his day. In 1374, King Edward III named him to a commission to negotiate peace with France and to meet with papal representatives regarding English church appointments.

Eventually, Wycliffe began to promote reform. His writing *Of Civil Dominion* maintained that God is Lord over all things. Landholding clergymen were not owners, but stewards who, if they became corrupt, risked giving up their land to others, including secular landowners. Perhaps because of this, he found support and protection among the wealthy nobility, who often had little inward desire for spiritual things.

Wycliffe's writings also condemned unbiblical church teachings. The church, he said, was not composed of an outward organization, but individual elect believers. Christ alone headed the church, since a pope may not necessarily be among the elect. Wycliffe condemned the worship of saints and relics, indulgences and prayers for the dead.

Wycliffe will always be associated with the first complete translation of the English Bible. He collaborated with Nicholas of Hereford, who completed the Old Testament and part of the New Testament by 1384. Despite not knowing Hebrew or probably Greek, Wycliffe helped translate the English New Testament from the Latin Vulgate Bible. The entire work was revised by John Purvey in 1388.

While the later impact of the English Bible on language and society was tremendous, it was severely suppressed for over 150 years. The reading of it was outlawed in 1414. No authorized English Bible appeared until the English Reformation was well under way. Wycliffe's version did not appear in print until 1850.

Further controversies eventually lead to Wycliffe's expulsion from Oxford. In 1381, he attacked the doctrine of transubstantiation, which taught that the bread and wine in Communion, once consecrated by a priest, were transformed into Christ's actual body and blood to be sacrificed repeatedly. He saw this as not only unbiblical but exploitive. A peasant revolt, blamed on Wycliffe, but caused primarily by economic factors, gave fuel to his enemies. Driven from Oxford in 1382, Wycliffe retired to his rectory at Lutterworth in central England. Twice stricken with paralysis, he died on December 29, 1384.

Wycliffe's followers continued the cause. His zealous *Poor Priests* went about in large numbers, barefoot and wearing coarse brown robes. They were better known as Lollards, a mocking term meaning *mumblers* or *mutterers*. It was said that if someone saw two people walking down the road, one was sure to be a Lollard. The Lollard John Ashton, was scornfully described as *leaping up from his bed and, like a dog, ready to bark at the slightest sound*.

The Lollards suffered bitter persecution after the statute *De Heretico Comburendo* (1401) declared the death penalty for heretics. Those burned at the stake often had portions of the English Bible tied around their necks. Wycliffe himself was condemned on 260 counts at the Council of Constance (1414-18). Protected in life, in 1428 his remains were dug up and burned with his ashes thrown into a river.

Wycliffe was described after his death as *having lit a fire which shall never be put out*. It was said that he elevated the Bible as the believer's only source of truth, far more than all the other medieval theologians combined. Because of this, and with the honor he gave to preaching, marriage and manual work, he stands before the other reformers who would follow him.

- Eric O'Brock

Next - John Huss

Inclusion Column

GEMS Update



As the fall season of ministry begins again, we're excited for what this means for inclusion in our church! Our team,

Lynn Simone, Don Coutchie, Mary Kay Townley, Becky Tubergen, Barb Funckes, and myself just recently met to discuss the future. We have three key areas we're looking at this time.

First, we're excited to celebrate Disability Awareness month in October. We're coming up with some fun ideas to include each Sunday service throughout the month, and hope to highlight some good things going on here at Fourth!

Secondly, we're excited as some of our previous conversations begin to align with the RENEW Campaign. A few of us have been tasked with checking out other churches in regards to accessibility and worship stages. As we continue to dream and plan for the future, we are excited about what a new stage at Fourth might look like! We're also really excited that some of our dreams will be coming to life sooner rather than later, such as the handicap accessible bathroom, stair tape for easy identification of the stair's edge, and better signage around the church. This is where each one of us can make a difference, and already are. While we love dreaming up accessibility here at Fourth, it's only possible if there's money for it... so let's keep giving towards RENEWING our church!

And thirdly, we're going online! Don't you love to check out a destination via internet and see what they have to offer? This is what we'd like to show so that people with different needs can be confident they can get around should they choose to show up. Be watching for website updates as we'll be adding what our accessibility looks like at Fourth. Be watching for the next issue of the Fourth Focus where we hope to take a deeper look into some of the families here at Fourth.

- Julie Schalk



Greetings! For those who don't know me, I'm Shayla Newman. I have attended Fourth, on and off, since 2009. I cheated on Michigan with Texas, but after my loving

friends threw an intervention for me I realized I had to come back. I don't know what took me so long. I am happy to be back in Michigan, especially back at Fourth. And I am glad to say that I am the new co-coordinator of GEMS! Kristi has graciously said she will be my co-coordinator as I stumble through figuring things out. I have not been a part of GEMS before, but have been working with children for many years. I volunteered at New City Neighbors for most of college, was a house parent, worked at an after school program, and have dabbled in some babysitting. I was able to get to know some of our GEMS girls through our summer events. It was fun and good to connect with them outside of our normal program.

I am very excited for this upcoming year. We have some changes happening. GEMS will be centering its focus on 1st-5th graders this year. Don't worry though, we aren't leaving the older girls in the Michigan winter. We are restyling our leader in training program with a sharper focus on learning the girls' strengths and gifts and helping them learn to use them now. We believe this will benefit not only the program, but also the church and community, as we empower our young girls to be a blessing to others.



It was a rainy weekend, but memories were still made at Cran-Hill!