

OCTOBER 2025

PEW ECHO

FIRST REFORMED CHURCH

527 Giddings Ave., Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085

920-467-3251

1stReformed.org

Brad Veenendaal - Pastor

pastorbrad@1streformed.org

Sue Dempster - Office

office@1streformed.org



Jesus Is Still Working in His Church

"On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

- Matthew 16:18b (ESV)

I know it can be tempting to be discouraged, to let doubt take hold, to think about giving up. We can look at trends in our churches and trends in the culture, and then wonder what God is up to, or if Jesus is still working in His church. Let's remember the encouragement we receive from God's Word to not become weary in doing good, because at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up (Gal. 6:9), because God is *still* "able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" (Eph. 3:20). God is still worthy of our work and will still be glorified "in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever" (Eph. 3:21).

This month, I'd like to share excerpts from the encouragement that Dennis Henderson shares in the Monday Motivator column titled "Don't Give Up on the Church" from the ministry Strategic Renewal.

In recent years, we have heard of the failures inside the church... The result is that the church has taken on water as if it were a sinking ship. We must remember that the church is no more than a collection of broken people who have been rescued and are still flawed as they try to live out their lives in Christ. Yes, some hypocrites sit in church every Sunday who do not help the reputation of the church... Yet, even in the first-century churches, we have reports of arguments, factions, immorality, drunkenness at the communion table, etc. Satan, our archenemy, has been unleashing his attacks on the church for over 2,000 years. There have been and still are places of persecution where believers' lives are taken. With all its flaws and battles, the church still exists because Jesus said, "The gates of hell will not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Jesus made this staggering claim because the church is His body, His presence, His ongoing ministry to the world. It was not just meant for a few moments—it was meant to last until He comes back.

I want to focus our attention on why the local church is critical to our changing society with shifting values. Can I remind you that the church is people? The church was never meant to be about buildings. The early church gathered in obscure homes and places, but they knew what to do, and it started with connection and commitment.

There are multiple reports that COVID changed the church. Indeed, many have not returned. The convenience of livestreaming has led many to become detached from the church. Others sporadically attend worship services with a consumer's mindset, focusing on their choice of music and appealing message, and have not connected as Christ intended. The very nature of the church points to our need for one another. There are approximately 59 instances where "one another" statements function as exhortations or commands. Paul describes the church as a body that must be connected to survive. A body part cannot survive on its own (1 Cor. 12:12-27). Paul reminds us that the church is a family (Eph. 5:19). Peter declares that the church is a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). These images all require connection. In that connection, we see the commitment to be together.

The spiritual growth of a believer does not happen in a bubble. When you look at the first church, they were devoted to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Every day, they continued to meet together (Acts 2:42, 46). The writer of Hebrews tells us to gather and encourage each other to good works (Heb. 10:24-25). In fact, he tells us to do more as we see the day of Christ approaching. For many years, I have said, "You cannot reach your maximum growth on your own." When you think of the fruit of the Spirit ... you realize that the majority of these fruits cannot be learned by yourself. You learn these with others... in your interactions with people. Much of your growth comes from your connection and commitment to the local church through challenging messages, small groups of discipleship, and serving others. For a person to neglect his local church is to ignore the commands of Jesus to have love for one another, so the world would know we are His disciples (John 13:35).

Don't give up on your church. It is your local church, even with its flaws, that God has called you to in order to be part of the change in your community. Pray hard for your church. Serve faithfully. Love greatly. Stand with Jesus against the gates of hell.

Grace and Peace in Christ,
Pastor Brad



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

| | |
|----|-------------------|
| 2 | Katie Fabian |
| 3 | Corey Kappers |
| 7 | Clark Otte |
| | Morgan Steffen |
| 9 | Ronda Arthur |
| 13 | Chuck Otte |
| 15 | Bob Bonneau |
| | Joel Huibregtse |
| 17 | Trenten Otte |
| 18 | Rachel Halverson |
| 19 | Dorothy Arthur |
| 21 | Jana Middlesworth |
| 22 | Marty Halverson |
| 23 | Tong Wang |
| 25 | Ann Graumann |
| 26 | Kris Beach |
| | Steve Stoffregen |
| 28 | Larry Meyer |
| 31 | Dennis Meerdink |

**"God is a busy worker,
but he loves help."**



While growing up in the 1970's, game shows dominated the television network airways. Primarily aired during weekdays, many game shows have stood the test of time and are still around today. One such show is the "Price is Right." The show premiered over 50 years ago in 1972 and has aired 10,000 episodes. It is the longest running game show in America and is one of the longest running series in US television history. The premise of the game is contestants must guess the price of common consumer goods, the person who guesses closest to the price without going over advances in the game. It would be difficult to find an adult in the country who is not familiar with the Price is Right.

Sadly, many folks play the Price is Right with the inspired word of God. Many are familiar with the bible but only to the extent that they must "guess" at what God's plan is for humanity. Some only know bits and pieces of the Scriptures, leading to erroneous ideas and misconceptions. Popular daily devotional apps and social media memes only add to the confusion, many times using passages out of context and giving false hope to thousands. How could you guess the correct price of boxed rice dinner if you'd never bought one? Thus, how would you know if a "church" used biblical practices if you'd never read and studied what the bible says about those things? Some contestants on the popular game show base their guesses on the guesses of other contestants. Should we base our religion on what others do or what is the most popular? "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." (Matthew 7:21) Do we know the Lord's will or are we just guessing what He may want from us? Finally, what happens to the Price is Right contestant that doesn't guess the correct price? They never advance, they are out of the game and don't win the prize. "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:22-23)



OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES:

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------|------|
| 3 | Dale & Beth Wingert | (44) |
| 5 | Woody & LaVerne Soerens | (74) |
| 6 | Rick & Ronda Arthur | (45) |
| 12 | Steve & Linda Wilterdink | (51) |
| 18 | Lyle & Luella Justinger | (62) |
| 22 | Pastor Brad & Tonja Veenendaal | (31) |
| 25 | Dave & Jackie Stoffregen | (39) |
| 27 | Ken & Sara Born | (40) |
| 30 | Dan & Jane Van Wyk | (43) |



Providence and Pastries

After starting a new diet, I altered my drive to work to avoid passing my favorite bakery. I accidentally drove by the bakery this morning and there in the window was a host of goodies. I felt this was no accident, so I prayed, "Lord, it is up to you. If you want me to have any of those delicious baked goods, create a parking place for me directly in front of the bakery."

And sure enough, God answered my prayer! On the eighth time round the block, there it was!

IS THIS YOUR DOG?



As you cruise through social media, you're sure to run across a photo of a dog or two with the caption, "Is this your dog? This poor baby looked lost, and we just couldn't leave him alone." Well-meaning folks post photos of dogs they find at shopping centers, on the side of the road, or in the rain. Their heart-felt sympathy and concern is poured out on the poor

unfortunate pooch, who may be abandoned or separated from its family. Being long-time dog parents, we understand how that humans can feel such compassion for our furry friends. Oh, that we would have as much compassion on people who are spiritually lost!

Jesus said that He came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10) When He sent out seventy disciples to evangelize, He said, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Luke 10:2) So important was the mission of evangelism, it was one of the last things the Lord instructed His followers to do. Just before He ascended back to heaven, He told the Apostles, "And you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Now, some two thousand years later, the Holy Spirit inspired words of the Apostles are available around the world.

The Bible says that we are to develop the character of Jesus, to walk just as He walked, following in His steps. (1 John 2:6; 1 Peter 2:21) As one reads the story of Jesus in the Gospels, it is seen time and time again the Savior's demonstrations of compassion for the lost. If we think about the massiveness of humanity, we may become discouraged about evangelism. But please recall the story of the shepherd who searched for the single lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7) and that we can help that one lost friend, stranger, or family member come to Christ, causing joy in heaven.

GOD'S HIGHLY VALUED INVESTMENT



Someone once asked IBM founder Thomas Watson if he would fire an employee who made a mistake that cost the company \$60,000. To the questioner's surprise, Watson replied,

"Why would I fire someone in whom I've invested \$60,000 in training?"

Neither will God "fire" or in any way dismiss us for our mistakes and failures. He has invested far too much — even his own Son's life! — in each of us for that.

Don't hold back for fear of failure. Serve the Lord boldly. Try something new for the sake of the Gospel, and when you make a mistake, bring it honestly to God in prayer. Be open to the Holy Spirit, who provides "continuing education" — in Scripture, through other Christians and by connecting directly with your heart — to improve your skills and gifts every day.

A Sunday school teacher gave her second-graders a month to memorize Psalm 23. One little boy was excited about the task but just couldn't remember the whole chapter.

When the day came for the children to recite Psalm 23 before the congregation, the nervous boy stepped up to the microphone and said, "The Lord is my Shepherd, and that's all I need to know!"



USHERS FOR OCTOBER

Curt Tuenissen
Dick Koebel



GREETERS FOR OCTOBER

Oct. 5
Gary & Janice Ten Haken



Oct. 12
Curt & Sheila Teunissen

Oct. 19
Vern & Karen Heidenreiter

Oct. 26
Paul & Rachel Houwers





Amazon News

AUGUST 2025

FAMILY TIME

Sometimes we can get incredibly busy in ministry or general life things and start overlooking the fact that one of the biggest ministries will always be in our own homes. It is where we may make some of the biggest impacts.

So Friday nights have always been "mandatory" family time where we take the night and do something together.

Recently, however, I started feeling like I was not spending enough time with my grandkids and really believe I needed to do something about it. So every Thursday night is now "grandkid night", and we plan a very special evening and do fun themes and memorable activities and always have an intentional bible moment or character building lesson worked into the evening..

CRAZY THEMES



HAWAIIAN NIGHT



PIRATE NIGHT

There was no shortage of new memories with our latest Hawaiian night, and our recent pirate evening was an incredible time of dressing up and doing pirate things. The best part was getting into a card board boat and reviewing the whole plan of salvation. It was a very special time together and I praise God for these moments and God's prompting to improve my relationships with them.

WELCOME

GEICILEIA AND NEILIANE

Well, I have special news to share with you. Once again, God has wonderful things planned that I never expected. This past March, two new teenage girls have joined my little adopted family and are now living with us. Their names are Geicileia and Neilane, and they are sisters who have been living by themselves for the past year. It was not a good situation for them, and it is our privilege to have them in our home. I still shake my head in awe... having kids was never in my thoughts but God has filled my life and home with a ton of them. So we are a full house presently with 6 dogs and 4 girls. I thank God often for His perfect ways.



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A NEW GENERATION

There is no greater joy than to see your kids become mature adults who are making great choices, loving God and changing their story. Jaison is one of my adopted kids who came into my life when he was 8. He is from a dysfunctional alcoholic family and decided he wanted something different for his life and future. He made some life changing decisions by first accepting the Lord as His personal Savior. He then decided to never drink alcohol, studied refrigeration, and now has a very successful business and beautiful family. Every morning he is in the Word and after breakfast does devotions with his family. God is so good and has transformed this family. Our hearts are full of praise.



Jaison, Regiane,
Zaki and Eloá

VISA UPDATE:

Well we did try one more time to get tourist visas for our kids to come to the USA but once again unfortunately all were denied. It is disappointing and they were so very sad, but we will once again trust the Lord know the best thing for us and the right time.

A TIME OF CHANGE

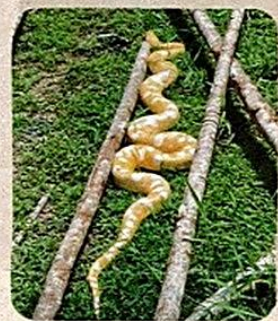
Our hospital is up for sale

For the past few years we have been praying constantly about what to do with our hospital ministry. It has not been an easy decision and there are so many factors involved, but we all feel it is time to sell and begin focusing on other pressing ministries.

I have been juggling 4 different ministries at once and now will begin investing my time especially in training leaders. This past year I have worked weekly with this fabulous group seen on the right. They are all trained in evangelism, are now mostly leading the children's ministry (which is running at full speed), and they are in charge of small groups with the teens that meet Wednesdays. They have begun discipling others and just about 2 weeks ago a young man named Marcos made a salvation decision after one of our leaders explained how to have a relationship with Jesus and be forgiven. I just am so thankful to the Lord for this opportunity to train and see fruit.



Ever see an albino boa constrictor?



How would you like one of these in your garden? This showed up in our town recently and I thought you might just like to get a glimpse of a rare albino snake. I have been serving on the Amazon 27 years now and have never seen one of these during my time there.

CHRISTMAS OUTREACH

We have already practicing since June for our Christmas outreach to the city. We expect another big crowd this year. Usually about 1000 people come each night over four consecutive evenings and a clear Gospel message is presented.



CONSTRUCTION OF A MINISTRY CENTER

So if we sell the hospital, we have realized that we will no longer have a great space to use for all of our ministries that meet there weekly. Since there is a possibility we might be selling anytime, we are praying about and looking at constructing a new multi-purpose building that would work for us to use as ministry /training center.

We already have a possible site and would love to construct a place that could hold up to 200-250 people. If a sale happens soon and we continue to believe this is the right direction to go we may start building as early as the beginning of next year. We sure appreciate your prayers about all this. It is incredibly exciting but also a very big step of faith. Thank you everyone for being such incredible warriors and an important part of the Amazon ministry.

Carolee Graf



Contact info

Carolee Graf
serving with ABWE
carolee.graf@abwego.org
whatsapp 55 979159-1332

SUMMER 2025

Kuntze Ministry Update

SERVING AT LAKE LUNDGREN BIBLE CAMP

Lives Impacted for Eternity at LLBC

At Lake Lundgren Bible Camp, summer is our best time of year! This summer we saw 1,902 campers. Additionally we saw around 210 different volunteers, and 45 summer staff. Below, you will see some camper quotes from this summer.

"I gave my life to God" -Youth 2 Camper

"God used Seeds to draw me even closer to Him. God was really speaking to my heart about my inner beauty and He was telling me that He loves me. I needed that." -Seeds B Camper

"I learned a lot about putting my identity in the Lord and only caring for his opinion and not the world's" -Teen 2 Camper

"Because of camp I got away from all of my distractions back home. During PQT I was able to connect with God and read deeper into my Bible. I also felt close to God during worship and I learned a lot these past days during chapel." -Seeds A Camper

"I read my Bible more and took notes. I felt like God was calling me to be a missionary, but I don't know where. I hope to be a nurse on the mission field." -Youth 1 Camper

"I was able to learn the importance of trusting in God and have really found my identity in Christ" -LDC 2 Camper

"I learned so many Bible stories that I sort of forgot! I'm glad I came. I learned about the missionaries and I think I might want to be one someday" -Intermediate Camper

God worked in amazing ways this summer, and I'm grateful to be an instrument of His work- witnessing lives impacted for eternity at LLBC.

If you were at LLBC this summer, you may have seen me with our Leadership Development Camp (10th-12th grade boy and girls) or Seeds Discipleship Camp (7th-9th grade girls), lifeguarding, running the camp store, or simply enjoying and loving Camp. I also shared a Bible lesson with our youngest campers (2nd-4th grade), taught sessions, and led worship for Discipleship Camps.

I loved the Seeds weeks, getting to know and invest in the 54 girls who came. The theme this year was beauty, emphasizing God's intentional design. I also loved working with our three Leadership Development Camps, knowing many will return home as leaders for Christ, and perhaps may be future summer staff. Brian had the opportunity to teach a session for Shoots (27 7th-9th grade boys) on the importance of reading the Bible. He loved sharing, and was thankful for the opportunity.

WHO WE ARE

Hi! My name is Haley Kuntze. I am on Missionary Staff at Lake Lundgren Bible Camp in Pembine, WI. As a Program Coordinator, I work on general program planning and oversee Women's Ministry, Social Media, Camp Store, Discipleship Camps, etc. My husband, Brian, is an electrical apprentice in the Marinette/Menominee area. Though he isn't employed by camp, he serves with me to accomplish LLBC's mission: "Lake Lundgren Bible Camp exists to glorify God by continually connecting all to Jesus."



LAKE LUNDGREN
BIBLE CAMP

Lake Lundgren Bible Camp's address: N18250 Lake Lane, Pembine, WI 54156

Email: Haley.Kuntze@LLBC.org



Seeds



Brian teaching on the importance of reading the Bible to the Shoots boys



90 Years of Lake Lundgren Bible Camp

This year Lake Lundgren Bible Camp celebrates 90 years! God has been using Lake Lundgren Bible Camp for the last 90 years to change the lives of so many! My life is forever changed by this place, and I know that that is the case for many of my family and friends, and even people I don't know. Praise Jesus!

CELEBRATING
90 YEARS
OF SUMMER CAMP!

Coming up at LLBC

We have a full Fall schedule! We are looking forward to Mother Daughter Retreat, 5 Fall Fest Youth Group Weekends, Crafters Retreats, and more! And yes, we are already thinking about summer 2026!



Lifeguarding for adventures!



Leadership Development Camp

Support Update

At this point in 2025, we have reached 42% of our support goal. Raising financial support allows us to continue in ministry at Lake Lundgren Bible Camp. All donations designated with my name go directly toward my paycheck, which is fully funded by supporters like you. This model helps keep camp costs low, making it possible for families of all income levels to hear the Gospel. Our mission at LLBC is to connect all people to Jesus- that they may know Him as Savior and King. Would you prayerfully consider partnering in this mission through prayer and/or financial gifts? Visit the website below to donate.

<https://llbc.org/staff/haley-brian-kuntze/>



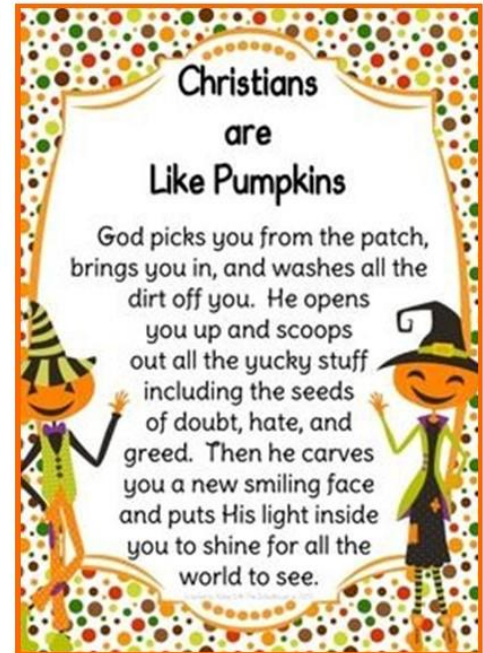
Leadership Development Camp Counselor and friend, Colette, was once an LDC camper when I was leading the program in 2022

LAKE LUNDGREN
BIBLE CAMP

We hope to see you at camp soon! Please let us know how we can be praying for you!

— BRIAN and Haley Kuntze

KID'S PAGE



WOULD YOU
RATHER:

See the burning bush?
 Hear Balaam's donkey talk?

Help Noah build the ark?
 Name the animals with Adam?



THE CANDY CORN GOSPEL

ORANGE - Reminds us of all of the pumpkins we see this time of year. Every pumpkin we see is filled with gunk that has to be cleaned out before it can have a light placed inside it. It's the same way with our hearts, when we ask Jesus to be our Savior he cleans the gunk we call sin out of our hearts. Romans 3:23

WHITE - Reminds us that Jesus can make our hearts white and clean. White is at the top of the candy corn pointing us to God and reminding us that no matter how many mistakes we have made, if we ask Jesus to be our Savior, he will wash our sins away and give us a new life with him that will never end. Acts 2:21

YELLOW - Reminds us of the streets of gold in heaven and the eternal life that God has promised to everyone who believes in Jesus. John 3:16



| | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|-----|-----|
| | | | 1 5:30pm Praise Team 6:30pm CrossCenter 6:30pm Great Commission Bible Study | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 9:30am Worship 10:45am Sunday School / POW45 10:45am Bible Study | 6 6:30pm Living Bible Study | 7 1pm Dorcas Society 7pm Elders | 8 6:30pm CrossCenter 6:30pm Great Commission Bible Study | 9 6:15pm Great Commission Bible Study | 10 | 11 |
| 12 9:30am Worship 10:45am Sunday School / POW45 10:45am Bible Study | 13 6:30pm Women's Bible Study | 14 7pm Executive Committee | 15 6:30pm CrossCenter 6:30pm Great Commission Bible Study | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 9:30am Worship 10:45am Sunday School / POW45 10:45am Bible Study | 20 | 21 | 22 6:30pm CrossCenter 6:30pm Great Commission Bible Study | 23 6:15pm Great Commission Bible Study | 24 | 25 |
| 26 9:30am Worship 10:45am Sunday School / POW45 | 27 6:30pm Women's Bible Study | 28 | 29 6:30pm CrossCenter | 30 | 31 | |



HEAVENLY BASEBALL

Two buddies, Bob and Earl, were two of the biggest baseball fans in America. For their entire adult lives, Bob and Earl discussed baseball history in the winter and they pored over every box score during the season. They

went to 60 games a year. They even agreed that whoever died first would try to come back and tell the other if there was baseball in heaven.

One summer night, Bob passed away in his sleep after watching the Yankee victory earlier in the evening. He died happy. A few nights later, his buddy Earl awoke to the sound of Bob's voice from beyond.

"Bob, is that you?" Earl asked.

"Of course it's me," Bob replied.

"This is unbelievable!" Earl exclaimed. "So tell me, is there baseball in heaven?"

"Well, I have some good news and some bad news for you. Which do you want to hear first?"

"Tell me the good news first."

"Well, the good news is that, yes, there is baseball in heaven, Earl."

"Oh, that is wonderful! So what could possibly be the bad news?"

"You're pitching tomorrow night."

Q. Which Bible character had no parents?

A. Joshua, son of Nun

