

SEPTEMBER 2025 PEW ECHO

FIRST REFORMED CHURCH

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1stReformed.org

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GOOD WORK

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

- Ephesians 2:10

Where did summer go? How did we get to Labor Day weekend already? Well, the days are getting just a little cooler and a little shorter, the fair is underway, football season is about to begin, and kids and teachers are back in school. Yes, it's that time. We make the shift from summer to fall, and another school year is here.

The start of a new school year also means the return of many school-year ministries and activities, along with many ways to serve and to give of our time and talents to the work of the Lord. I know that we don't always think of work as a blessing; yet from the beginning God has given us work to do. And through this work, God has given many blessings. God uses work as a means of providing for us through the wages we receive. Work helps to give us a sense of purpose. And, as we give ourselves to the work of the Lord, we experience His presence and power at work in us. After all, we are God's workmanship, "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph. 2:10) This was Paul's experience, as he shares with the Colossian church: "To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works within me." (Col. 1:29)

As we consider the work of the Lord this Labor Day weekend, let us remember that God gives us the amazing calling and awesome privilege of joining Him how and where He is at work. So this month, let us give thanks for the various ways that people are working for the kingdom, and let us consider how we can encourage them and pray for them in their work.

Our elders and deacons have provided steady leadership and encouragement. They have consistently participated in meetings and prayerfully worked through decisions to be made and tasks to be taken care of. And they serve in many other often unseen ways. Our staff—Aaron, Amy, & Sue—continues to do great work while faithfully carrying out their various roles in support of our congregation and the ministries of our church. Our teachers and youth leaders and Bible study and small group leaders are a huge blessing to our church family. They have persevered through numerous challenges and have lovingly and faithfully provided a place for students and adults to continue to learn and grow in their faith.

We have many others who serve among us in a variety of ways. When it comes to sharing gifts as a part of worship, our dedicated singers and musicians give of their time and talents to help us worship the Lord together. The nursery volunteers, and the sound and camera and computer operators, provide much-needed support for our Sunday morning services. Several important projects are being completed through those who participate in our various church work days throughout the year. We are also able to enjoy some special gatherings together through the work of those who serve at events such as the church picnic and harvest supper. Others serve our community at the Falls Food Pantry and the Shepherd's Closet and through Helping Kids and Love INC. We also have several people from our church who serve on various boards and committees for ministries, civic groups, and local government. And, at the risk of neglecting to mention others that should be mentioned, we know that there are many others who continue to pray, and give, and serve.

And there's one more thing I would ask you to consider this month. How are you called to serve? How is God at work in you through the good works that He has prepared in advance for you to do? And as you consider that, consider also this reminder and promise from God's Word in Philippians 1:6: "(I am) confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Grace and Peace in Christ,
Pastor Brad



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

5	Roxann Church
12	Dale Wingert Julie Messner Makenna Veenendaal
13	Jenny Kappers
14	Jackie Stoffregen Aaron Lund Max Huibregtse
15	Beth Wingert
21	Zoey Gulig
22	Sue Dulmes
23	Howard Buehler
27	Sophia Zhang
28	Paul Graumann
29	Dan Van Wyk Christine Hansen
30	Nathaniel Otte

God is Awake



A mother and her 4-year-old daughter were preparing for bed one night. The child was afraid of the dark, and on this occasion the mother, alone with the child, felt fearful herself.

When the light was turned off, the child caught a glimpse of the moon outside the window. "Is the moon God's light?" she asked her mom.

"Yes," replied the mother.

"Will God put out his light and go to sleep?" asked the girl.

"No, dear. God never goes to sleep."

Then, out of the simplicity of a child's faith, the girl said something that reassured the fearful mother. "Well, as long as God is awake, there's no sense in all of us staying awake."

The pair slept well that night — and for the many nights that followed.



SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

3	Jeff and Nancy Van Wyk	(37)
4	Dick and Joan Koebel	(54)
5	Chuck and Tiffany Otte	(33)
9	Gary and Sue Bimmel	(48)
14	Marty and Sherri Halverson	(23)
19	Joel and Ashley Huibregtse	(10)
30	Mark and Jean Kappers	(53)



A Cheerful What?

Guideposts editor Mary Ann O'Roark recalls hearing the phrase.

"cheerful liver" so often in church as a girl that she asked her grandmother what a liver is. "It's a part inside you, like your stomach or your heart," Grandma replied.

Rather confused, O'Roark tried to figure out how to be cheerful from the inside out. Then during Sunday school one week, a classmate explained that God loves a cheerful *giver*, not liver. Years later, however, O'Roark realized that her younger self wasn't too far off the mark. After all, God does indeed love someone who *lives* cheerfully, spreading the hope and joy that he longs for all people to know!

After all, it was Jesus who said, "I came that [all] may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

?? ? ?
Bible Quiz

How many times in the Old Testament do people cross a body of water on dry ground?

A. once
B. twice
C. three times
D. four times

Answer: C (See Exodus 14; Joshua 3; 2 Kings 2.)

THERE IS SOMETHING BEYOND



For many centuries the men and women in Europe looked out upon the western sea, what we call the Atlantic Ocean, and they saw the sun coruscating upon the glittering surface of the waters and they wondered.

They wondered if there was anything beyond. Scholars said that you could sail off the edge of the world—there was nothing out there at all. In fact, inscribed on the escutcheons of the coat of arms of the nation of Spain was its national motto, *Ne Plus Ultra*, meaning, “There is nothing beyond.”

One day Columbus went westering on the shiny waters. He sailed off into the sunset as people waited expectantly, and finally after a long time the sails reappeared and the crowds were exultant. They shouted with joy, and Columbus announced that there was a land beyond the sea that was rich beyond their dreams. It was a glorious paradise. The king of Spain changed the motto of that land until it reads as it does today, *Plus Ultra*, meaning, “There is more beyond.”

For many centuries innumerable people stood beside the dark hole that we call a grave and watched the remains of their loved ones lowered into the earth, and they wondered: Beyond the dark waters of death, is there anything beyond?

Then one day, a young explorer went westering into the setting sun and descended into the blackness of the pit. He sailed off the edge of the world and crashed into hell. People waited expectantly. Finally on this Resurrection morning, as the sun arose in the east, the Son of God stepped forth from a grave and declared, “There is something beyond. There is a paradise beyond your greatest expectations. And there awaits a heavenly Father, waiting with outstretched arms to wipe away every tear from your cheek.”

—D. James Kennedy, “Message from an Empty Tomb”

THE SKILLED BLOWS OF GOD

Many years ago, there was found in an African mine the most magnificent diamond in the world's history. It was presented to the king of England to blaze in his crown or state. The king sent it to Amsterdam to be cut. It was put into the hands of an expert lapidary. And what do you suppose he did with it? He took the gem of priceless value, and cut a notch in it. Then he struck a hard blow with his instrument and—lo!—the superb jewel lay in his hand cleft in two. Did he do this out of recklessness, wastefulness, and criminal carelessness? Indeed not! For days and weeks that blow had been studied and planned. Drawings and models had been made of the gem. Its quality, its defects, its lines of cleavage had all been studied with minutest care. The man to whom it was committed was one of the most skillful lapidaries in the world.



Was that blow a mistake? No! It was the climax of the lapidary's skill. When he struck that blow, he did the one thing which would bring that gem to its most perfect shapeliness, radiance, and jeweled splendor. That blow which seemed to ruin the superb precious stone was, in fact, its perfect redemption. From those two halves were wrought two magnificent gems which the skilled eye of the lapidary saw hidden in the rough, uncut stone as it came from the mine.

Sometimes, God lets a stinging blow fall upon your life. The blood spurts; the nerves wince. The soul cries out in agony. The blow seems to you an appalling mistake. But it is not, for you are the most priceless jewel in the world to God. And He is the most skilled lapidary in the universe.

Let us beware of questioning the methods and approaches of almighty God. We lie in His hands, and He knows just how to deal with us.

—James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited

USHERS FOR SEPTEMBER

Steve Wilterdink

Dennis Beach



**USHER
SCHEDULE**



GREETERS FOR SEPTEMBER

Sept. 7

Paul & Ann Grauman

Sept. 14

Mark & Jean Kappers

Sept. 21

Lyle & Luella Justinger

Sept. 28

Mike & Mary Rammer





Dana & Brian Phipps

Dear Friends,

In the last few weeks, **Leman and Selma** (pictured below, left to right) have both come to faith in Christ! Praise God. Obviously, these new friends come from very different backgrounds. However, they are equally eager for discipleship. Please pray.



We just came home from a **three-hour evangelistic Bible study** with Silan (single female) and Tunahan (single male). They seem close to faith. Please pray.

For more than a week, temperatures have reached **near 100 degrees** in our neighborhood. Please pray for the heat and other details....

Family Bible Camp in biblical Ephesus was a great success! Thank you for praying. From our church, twelve people and one dog (pictured below) participated.



Love,

Brian and Dana

Avant

[10000 N Oak Trafficway](http://10000NOakTrafficway.com)
[Kansas City, MO 64155](http://KansasCityMO64155.com)
www.avantministries.org

We had a gloriously air-conditioned room for our morning and evening **Bible sessions** (pictured below).



We **baptized three people** in the Aegean Sea.



Muammer and his wife

Nurgül brought 25 believers from the two church plants that Muammer pastors.

Muammer and Nurgül came to faith in Christ through our ministry in the year 2000. They are **amazing leaders** now, and the Gospel is growing in their region of Turkey by leaps and bounds. Please continue to pray for this husband and wife.





The Midwest Network Newsletter

A Word from the President

REV. D. MARC DE WAARD

...of all Believers

I thank the Lord for growing up in a family where there were ten of us – eight children and two parents. And often we'd have more than ten around the kitchen table as family from the Netherlands or business people from my father's vast connections throughout the world would stay with us. And this family became a microcosm of the church. Two older siblings (both took organ lessons) where one is a current elder in a Ref'd Church, the other a foster parent for First Nations children. Younger siblings include a business woman who has financially supported the work of many churches, a brother who provides and oversees housing for single mothers, another brother who is a pastor and counselor, a sister who plays piano for assisted-living facility services, and another sister (married to a pastor), who invests in the lives of many church children in so many ways. Alongside the support from parents (for instance, my folks helped us financially with seminary) – we certainly attempted to live into Col. 3:17.

From our beginnings there at Maranatha Ref'd Church – the church, and my family – helped instill in me the "priesthood of all believers." We as a family, and as a local church – were a unit. We were not "lone-ranger" Christians but were in this "living out our faith" together. From building cabins at a church camp to giving monies to see that people in Belize and Japan got to hear the Good News of Jesus – we did this together. We each had our own Bibles – and had devotions around the kitchen table at breakfast and supper. We had the Word expounded to us off the pulpit, and explored the Word further in catechism and youth group gatherings. We could approach God in praise and petition because of what Christ had done for us all – collectively, and individually.

I love the words "network" and "alliance". It speaks of connectedness, of partnership. I love the Scriptures that speak of worship (Rom. 12:1-2), of spiritual giftedness (1 Peter 4:10), and of my job description (Eph. 4:11-12). All within each local church are priests (1 Peter 2:9-10) including the Sunday School teacher, the deacon, the nursery worker, the usher and the elder. May it be that the Midwest Network churches collectively, recognize the privilege that is ours to encourage and strengthen each other, as well as to train and empower one another on in the faith. All who confess that Jesus is Lord – belong, body and soul, in life and in death to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. Let it be that we ask the Spirit, and seek out within our fellowships, the impetus, further training, and learning to be whole-heartedly willing and ready ... to live for Him (HC, Q&A #1).

I'm thankful for you all. I'm grateful for the privilege of having been president for these past two years. I'm thankful for Dennis Olsen (past-president) and his emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. I'm excited for Cody Moret's taking the torch now, and of leading us, alongside our great staff and Admin Team, into tomorrow if the Lord tarries. And I'm thankful that this Midwest Network – local fellowships made up of priests of God – will keep advancing God's kingdom!



Prayer Team Update

JACOB VAN DER LINDEN

The August Prayer Guide can be found [HERE](#)

For any prayer requests feel free to email us at midwestnetprayer@gmail.com.

Financial Update

BRENDA VAN BEEK

Soon many of our churches will begin to work on 2026 budgets, and our Network Compensation and Benefits Team supports that work by looking at inflation and benefits data. The team will finalize a cost-of-living recommendation later this month, and plan to provide suggestions to the Admin Team for our benefits policies to consider, too. It's a small team, and we would welcome new volunteers! If you're interested in serving or know someone who would do it well, please reach out to Brenda.

We hope many of you had a chance to hear the conversation we had with Connie Buskohl, CPA, on our Last Tuesday webinar. She covered compensation and tax issues for pastors that would be helpful for deacons and treasurers to review. You can watch the recording [here](#). And as always, if you have questions, you can reach out to Brenda or contact Connie's office.

**Q: WHAT DID DANIEL TELL HIS
REAL ESTATE AGENT**

**A: I'D PREFER A HOUSE WITH
NO DEN**

**Q: WHY DIDN'T ANYONE WANT
TO FIGHT GOLIATH**

**A: IT SEEMED LIKE A GIANT
ORDEAL**

From the Network Pastor

SETH SUNDSTROM

Health Update

I've spoken with many of you, but here's an update for the rest of you.

Earlier this Summer my hand tremor (have had it for years) got noticeably worse. After being referred to a neurologist, I underwent testing and found out I have Parkinson's disease. The only symptom I have is the tremor, which I'm told is a good thing. My doctor has started me on a med and we're exploring other diet and exercise elements that can help.

Please know that I'm doing just fine. While I have the shakes, my faith in Jesus is unshaken. I enter this battle knowing it'll likely get worse (like all things on earth), but it only increases the comfort I have knowing I belong to Jesus. So, pray for me if you're moved, but please don't mourn me yet...I still have some fight left.

Transitions/Updates

SETH SUNDSTROM

Seeking Pastor

Free Grace Reformed of Middleburg IA
Faith Reformed of Wisconsin Rapids WI
Immanuel Reformed of Belmond IA
Delaware Reformed of Lennox SD

Accepted Calls

Josh Whipple - Grant Reformed of Grant MI

Retired

Gary Hegstad - Delaware Reformed of Lennox, SD
(Continues to serve on the Alliance board and the Midwest network Covenant Keepers Team)

The Network has started to compile a collection of resources for our churches. Resource topics cover compensation and benefits, ordination, covenant keepers, as well as directories and forms.

<https://midwestnetwork.org/resources>

Password: Midwest2024



UPCOMING

EVENTS

REVITALIZATION COHORT BOOK CLUB

BEGINS TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16TH @ 7PM

Book discussion based on "[Anatomy of a Revived Church: Seven Findings about How Congregations Avoided Death.](#)" Each month you'll be asked to read a chapter, then join (zoom) a discussion with others from our Network for support and accountability. We will take 7 months to make it through the book, so the load is easy. Please take a moment to review the [book](#), pray about who you can invite from your church, and get this on your calendar. If you need more convincing, I can connect you to a church that has recently used this resource.

WHEN - 3RD TUESDAY @ 7PM EACH MONTH BEGINNING SEPT. 16

WHERE - ZOOM

WHO - PEOPLE WHO LOVE JESUS AND THE CHURCH

WHAT - BOOK DISCUSSION

WHY - CHURCH HEALTH MATTERS

SEP 16 - INTRO & CHAPTER 1

JAN. 20 - CHAPTER 4

OCT. 21 - CHAPTER 2

FEB. 17 - CHAPTER 5

NOV. 18 - CHAPTER 3

MAR. 17 - CHAPTER 6

DEC - CHRISTMAS BREAK - NO ZOOM APRIL 21 - CHAPTER 7 & CONCLUSION

TO SIGN UP: [HTTPS://ARC21.CHURCHCENTER.COM/PEOPLE/FORMS/1010870](https://arc21.churchcenter.com/people/forms/1010870)

MIDWEST NETWORK ANNUAL MEETING

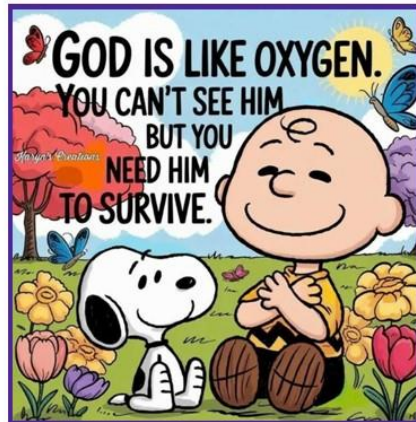
NOVEMBER 14-15

AMERICAN REFORMED CHURCH - LUVERNE, MINNESOTA

A time set apart to worship Jesus, enjoy rich fellowship, and be equipped for the ministry God has called us to. This two-day gathering is open to pastors, elders, deacons, and all church members who desire to grow in faith and serve more effectively. We're excited to welcome special guests from Coram Deo and the Thrive Coaching Network, who will lead equipping sessions designed to equip healthy leaders and healthy churches for ministry. In addition, several of our own pastors from within the Midwest Network will be teaching and sharing practical proven ministry strategies. Whether you come to be refreshed in worship, to connect with fellow believers, or to gain practical tools for ministry, we believe you'll leave encouraged and inspired.

TO SIGN UP: [HTTPS://ARC21.CHURCHCENTER.COM/PEOPLE/FORMS/1026675](https://arc21.churchcenter.com/people/forms/1026675)

KID'S PAGE



Bible Quiz

James 1:17 reminds us about the source of every blessing. According to this verse, how is God described?

- A. The one who changes like shifting shadows
- B. The giver of wisdom to the faithful
- C. The Father of heavenly lights who does not change
- D. The one who rewards those who are generous

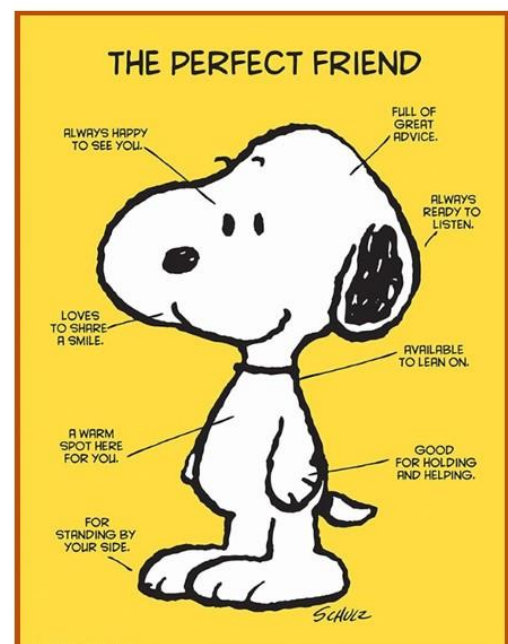
Answer: C (See James 1:17)



BIBLE EDITION would you rather?

Circle which you'd prefer:

witness God creating the world **OR** the parting of the Red Sea
visit the Garden of Eden **OR** visit the Promised Land
see Jesus walk on water **OR** see Jesus turn water into wine
help build Noah's ark **OR** name the animals like Adam
face Goliath alone **OR** wander the desert for 40 years
eat at the Last Supper **OR** watch Jesus feed the 5,000
see Jesus raise Lazarus **OR** see Jesus heal a blind man
have the wisdom of Solomon **OR** have the strength of Samson
swallowed by a fish with Jonah **OR** share the lion's den with Daniel
live in Old Testament times **OR** live in New Testament times
have courage like Esther **OR** be devoted like Ruth
live 969 years like Methuselah **OR** become a parent at 90 like Sarah
sit at Jesus' feet like Mary **OR** serve Jesus like Martha
have the patience of Job **OR** have the faith of Abraham
witness Jesus' birth **OR** witness Jesus' resurrection
share the good news with Paul **OR** bring hope with Isaiah
write Romans like Paul **OR** wrote Proverbs like King Solomon
see & hear the burning bush **OR** hear Balaam's donkey speak





good by
SUMMER
hello
AUTUMN

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 	2 1pm Dorcas Society 7pm Elders	3	4 6:30pm Prayer Gathering	5	6
7 9:30am Worship 10:45am Sunday School / POW45 10:45am Bible Study 11:30am Church Picnic	8 6:30pm Living Bible Study	9 7pm Consistory	10 6:30pm Youth Group Kickoff 6:30pm Great Commission Bible Study	11 6:15pm Great Commission Bible Study	12	13
14 9:30am Worship 10:45am Sunday School / POW45 10:45am Bible Study	15	16	17 6:30pm CrossCenter 6:30pm Great Commission Bible Study	18	19 Lake Lundgren Fall Fest	20 Lake Lundgren Fall Fest
21 9:30am Worship 10:45am Sunday School / POW45 10:45am Bible Study Fall Fest	22 6:30pm Women's Bible Study	23	24 6:30pm CrossCenter 6:30pm Great Commission Bible Study	25 6:15pm Great Commission Bible Study	26	27
28 9:30am Worship 10:45am Sunday School / POW45 10:45am Bible Study	29	30				

Q. What kind of motor vehicles are found in the Bible?

A. Jehovah drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden in a Fury. David's Triumph was heard throughout the land. Also, probably a Honda, because the apostles were all in one Accord.



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Thanks to SoloTotoCoyote 02-07-2014

MOSES AND NOAH HAVING AN ARGUMENT

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Thanks to Colin Nelson

12-14-2009

HOZEKIAH FOUND THIS RACE WITH MOSES AND PETER TO BE GROSSLY UNFAIR