

The 4th Focus

“Kingdom Decisions”

You have often heard me preach and pray with a focus on God’s kingdom. We pray for his kingdom to come and we are to live in such a way that we seek first his kingdom. This means that every day, we make kingdom decisions. Occasionally, I will remind consistory members that we, as a leadership, are called to make kingdom decisions and thus we are not focused on self-preservation of a church. For each of us, it means that we are not focused on the self-preservation of our own little insular and comfortable world. How would God have us act and think, each day, with a view toward getting on board with his ever-expanding rule, love and holiness in our community, workplace and in all of our relationships?

Kingdom decisions are essential for our support, prayers and care for those who are serving as missionaries throughout the world. As Ruth and I traveled to Guatemala in December, our world, especially as it relates to God’s kingdom was wonderfully enlarged. Gary and Rachel gave us a view into the dismal lives of the street kids whom they care for. Joel Van Dyke opened our eyes to some of the ministries that he provides leadership and support for.

Joel is the Director for Central America for the Center for Transforming Mission (CTM) and he does a great job of providing pictures, videos, emails, and letters about their work and progress. But as Ruth and I came face-to-face with Joel and the ministries, in their setting, we learned much more about how to make kingdom decisions and why our faithful support for people in full-time mission work is so vital.

First, we saw how cross-cultural mission work is a treacherous, steep and endless hill to climb. As Ruth and I have labored here at Fourth for more than seventeen years, there have been plenty of challenges and opportunities for discouragement. And along the way, our perseverance, joy and energy has been fueled by many of you who prayed, encouraged and shared the burden. But when you take full-time ministry and add in the spiritual, physical, emotional challenges and then the language/other barriers of a drastically different culture such as in Guatemala, Africa, or Thailand, the value of our prayers, encouragement and burden sharing is exponentially intensified.

Shortly before we arrived, Gary and Rachel buried one of the street kids that they had been loving and caring for because a truck had hit him. Joel introduced us to a young family (öLittle Gö) who had taken up ministry in an extremely difficult community after another young man, who had taken up a ministry post in that community, was mistaken for his brother and executed by a gang. Eleven thousand people live as scavengers in the city dump. Joel took Ruth and me to meet Sandra who lives in the ominous shadow of this community with her two daughters and son. Joel’s ministry has been involved in developing a medical care center that is nearby but unable to care for Sandra’s oldest daughter, Rosita, who suffers from headaches so intense that they turn into nosebleeds.

Do you get a sense of the depth of the challenges? As we focus on those who struggle in our own neighborhoods, we see plenty of needs and challenges. But the challenges overseas are severe as they often involve survival for the day. Many are looking for safety, food, shelter, and a loving community.

On top of all these challenges, missionaries such as the Boehms and Van Dykes are far removed from family and a greater Christian community. We are also reminded of the risks undertaken as we pray for Lee DeYoung of Words of Hope, who suffers from the debilitating effects of contracting cerebral malaria on a ministry trip to Africa.

Every day, your kingdom decisions will include prayer, perhaps an email or Facebook note of encouragement, and perhaps spending less on stuff so that there can be greater support for our missionary of the month. And perhaps one day, your kingdom decisions will include taking up your post someplace for the sake of the King who rescues us.

- Pastor Tim

Check These Out!

Birthdays

MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Wednesday Wars and **Okay For Now** - by Gary Schmidt (Calvin professor)

Award winning local author comes highly recommended for middle schoolers and adults alike. Give them a try this winter!

ADULTS

Help, Lord! I'm Having a Senior Moment by K. O'Connor

Like it or not, perhaps earlier than we thought, senior moments hit us all. Karen helps us laugh at ourselves and both values and validates her fellow seniors.

Instructing a Child's Heart by Tedd & March Tripp

As parents of 6 spunky children, we've found the Tripp's parenting advice to be simply the best - Gospel-driven, God-centered, and compassionate.

Every Body Matters by Gary Thomas

Thomas explores the spiritual stakes behind the very physical battle of eating and exercise and offers a fresh perspective and renewed motivation for making some major changes.

The Year of Living Like Jesus by Ed Dobson

Read how Dobson's transition from someone who follows Jesus to someone who lives like Jesus takes him into bars, inspires him to pick up hitchhikers, and deepens his understanding of suffering.

Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand

New York Times Bestseller

A World War II story of a young man's journey into extremity. *Unbroken* is a testament to the resilience of the human mind, body, and spirit. Highly recommended.

Teen-ology The Art of Raising Great Teenagers by Jim Burns

Teen expert Jim Burns provides you with real-life answers and advice for navigating this ever-changing season in your child's life.

CHILDREN

God Gave Us the World by Bergren & Bryant

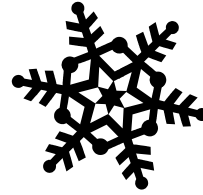
This story offers young children an opportunity to learn about the wonder of diversity, the gift of creativity, the importance of caring for His gifts and how each child is special to God.

Ronnie Wilson's Gift by Francis Chan

A great book that encourages children to see the value in other people instead of in material possessions.

S is for Snowman by Kathy-jo Wargin

Enjoy reading God's wintertime alphabet with your children!



February

- 1 - Luke DeBoer
- 2 - Nancy Springfield
- 2 - Caden Gleason
- 5 - Megan McDowell
- 8 - Bud Waterloo
- 11 - Ken Coeling
- 15 - Percy Woods, Jr.
- 17 - Merribeth Fannon
- 21 - Don Coutchie
- 22 - Marcia Schuur
- 23 - Steve Gleason
- 25 - Kathy Burggraaf
- 25 - Brayden Hawkins
- 25 - Ron Schuur
- 26 - Ryan Faasse
- 27 - Ruth Meendering
- 28 - Maria Dorn

January

- 2 - Jim Berthiaume
- 3 - Laura Horinga
- 3 - Delores Christians
- 6 - Lynn Berthiaume
- 6 - Jennifer Parks
- 9 - Connie Wierenga
- 10 - Ed Van Timmeren
- 11 - Jim Rinkenberger
- 13 - Dave Gleason
- 13 - Nicholas Walton
- 16 - Marge Berrevoets
- 17 - Amalie Woods
- 22 - Doris Kelly
- 24 - Gary Proos
- 26 - Justin Bierens
- 27 - Steve Wammack



Build into your lives both personal devotions and purposeful study of God's Word in 2012.

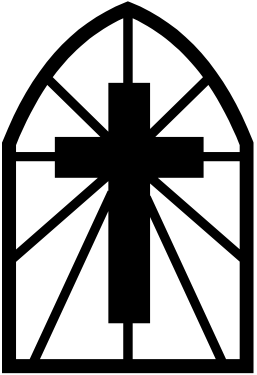
Regular study in a class or with a book where the (living or dead) teacher has seen more than you have can give you insight in 30 minutes that might otherwise take you ten years to see.

The reason I plead for both is that without a book or a class about what some part of the Bible means and a teacher who is ahead of you, your devotions will probably flatten out at a low level of insight.

Year after year you will go over the same biblical ground and find it as perplexing as before. There will be little advance in understanding. This will tend to take the heart out of devotional reading, because the lack of growth cannot sustain the joy.

Seek out preaching, books, classes, studies, which take you further in grasping what various books and texts in the Bible mean. - John Piper

Reformed Church Heritage - The Comforters of the Sick



The Dutch presence in North America began with the arrival of Henry Hudson on September 12, 1609 who explored the river that now bears his name. The formation of the Dutch West India Company encouraged the colonization of New Netherland, eventually made up of what are today the states of New York, New Jersey, Delaware and Connecticut. The first settlement was established at Fort Orange (Albany, New York). Governor Peter Minuit purchased Manhattan Island from the local natives in 1626 naming the settlement New Amsterdam.

Spiritual nurture in the colony was first undertaken by lay workers called comforters of the sick. Two titles, *krankenbesoecker* and *ziekentrooster* described their work. While both terms were virtually interchangeable, each had a slightly different meaning. While the first indicated one who sought out and visited those sick or in need, the second described one who provided special spiritual comfort and encouragement to those gravely ill and near death. Since they were often not well educated, they used a handbook *The Consolation of the Sick; or Instruction in Faith and the Way of Salvation to Prepare Believers to Die Willingly*. A portion of this document can be found today in the Order of the Visitation of the Sick and Dying in the Reformed Church liturgy.

Gradually, the work of the comforters of the sick expanded to include leading the people in worship. They were allowed to read from a book of sermons, probably the popular *Huysboeck*, which during the Reformation in the Netherlands was the most widely read book outside of the Bible. They also lead in public prayer, Scripture reading and catechism instruction, but were not permitted to administer the Lord's Supper. There is evidence that they did missionary work among the local natives.

Two men served as comforters of the sick before the arrival of the first ordained minister. Bastiaan Jans Krol arrived in America in January 1624, probably settling at Fort Orange. He soon returned to the Netherlands to appeal to the Amsterdam consistory for either an ordained minister or permission to baptize and perform marriages, of which the latter was granted. He returned to America and in August 1626 became the agent for the West India Company and later governor. Jan Huygens who arrived in New Amsterdam in July 1626, was the brother-in-law of Governor Minuit. Within two years of his arrival, Huygens either added to or substituted his responsibilities by becoming storekeeper for the West India Company. Both Krol and Huygens served on the first consistory after the arrival of the first ordained minister.

Because of the large land area and few ministers, comforters of the sick maintained a presence for many years. Even so, their numbers were always fewer in this part of the Dutch colonial world. A report from April 1640 stated that 14 persons had been sent to the East Indies and seven to the West Indies as comforters of the sick, but there was only one minister and at most two comforters of the sick in New Netherland. Unlike many migrations from Europe, the Dutch motive for colonization was not religious freedom but economic gain. The West India Company paid the expenses of ministers and since there was less profit to be made in New Netherland, there was also less support. To supplement their income, comforters of the sick often doubled as school teachers or other occupations.

By 1628, the population of New Netherland had reached several hundred people including about 270 at New Amsterdam. Requests for an ordained minister who could administer the Lord's Supper and exercise church discipline had been made for some time. One would soon be forthcoming.

- By Eric O'Brock

Next: Jonas Michaelius - First Minister in the Reformed Church

Women Ministering to Women



ing, writing notes, eating, sharing, and listening.

We ended another great year of women's ministry with the Secret Sister Reveal Dessert. Everyone who participated as a Secret Sister during 2011 filled out a "clue form" so that their sister would have some helpful hints to guess who had been leaving them gifts and notes of encouragement all year. Nearly everyone was able to attend the dessert party in December, and women had fun guessing who had them or revealing how they had known all along. We also enjoyed cheesecakes made by New City Neighbors (thanks, Eric!) and a Christmas carol game that had everyone humming and singing under their breath or sometimes right out loud. It was a wonderful ending to a great year of women at Fourth supporting each other through volunteering, pray-

As 2012 begins, we are on the search for women who would like to step forward to participate in a greater way in some of the events hosted by Women's Ministry at Fourth. I have been Women's Ministry Coordinator for two years, sometimes with other women coming alongside me and sometimes on my own. I can tell you, it is a lot more fun to work with a team. My challenge to you is this: pray about how you can get involved.

Think about your favorite events during the year, and consider stepping forward to help plan those. Last year we hosted breakfast at Russ' every other month or so, a dinner out (Friday at Friday's), a Progressive Dinner, the Secret Sister program, a couple of showers, a Lenten breakfast, and the fall retreat. With one person involved, the planning of those events can get overwhelming. If everyone steps forward and signs up to help in the area that means the most to them, though, there will be light work for all involved. For 2012, we would like to continue the breakfasts, host a Progressive Dinner, enjoy an evening out, share a retreat together in the fall, and host a baby shower and a bridal shower. Maybe you have ideas for a craft night or a spring breakfast. Maybe you have other thoughts. So, share your ideas and sign up to help! Women ministering to each other is a wonderful way to spend 2012.

- Beka McDowell

GEMS Update from the Counselors

We have started the New Year with every GEM girl finally having a Special Friend. Yeah!!!! This was too long in coming as some of the counselors were still serving as both counselor and Special Friend. If you feel led to become a Special Friend next year, please let any counselor know so we can encourage these GEM girls early on in the fall.

Now for the really hard job.

We need to replenish the GEMS store **before April 16**. Please consider purchasing some new items.



The girls really love:

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Large stuffed animals | Jewelry, including earrings |
| Nail polish | Cute girly socks |
| Color wonder | Craft kits |
| Stickers | Journals |
| Markers | Art supplies |

You can use coupons from Hobby Lobby or Michaels for up to 50% off many of the suggested items!

Without the help of a caring church we would not have such a great GEMS program. Thank you in advance and we hope you will be as blessed as we are by the GEMS girls and the program we have here under New City Neighbors.

New City Neighbors

The lack of snow this winter has been good for at least one thing - running. Last year at this time I wasn't running much, but together with the board of NCN, we came up with the crazy idea that became **Run, Eric, Run**. I can't believe how naive I was about how easy it would be to train for that grueling race. My ankles developed tendonitis, my knees hated me, and really the biggest problem was that I lacked the mental toughness for the race set before me.

When I crossed the finish line all I wanted to do was cry, but I also felt the need to keep my composure (stereotypical and stupid guy response). I had given that race everything I had. I fought through pain, I fought through hunger and thirst, and I fought through my mind which kept telling me I was too weak, too much of a loser to finish.

The *5/3 River Bank Run* taught me a lot about Hebrews 12:1-3. It was a metaphor for what I had gone through, and what I will likely go through at other times in my life. It reminds me that I need to cling to Jesus in every-

thing. As I was confronted with my weakness, and as friends and strangers rallied around to urge me on, I saw Christ at work in my life in a new way. The race ended up becoming something I never expected it to be; a profound spiritual experience.



I wasn't sure what emotions I would feel as the race crept closer, but I can honestly say I'm ready to take on that challenge again. I'm already ahead of last year's training and I hope to take a half hour off my time. As I train like crazy for this race, I want to invite you to join me. This year we will do our **Second Annual Run, Eric, Run Fundraiser**. Last year we had 10 adults and 9 children sign up to walk and/or run to raise money for NCN. In the process we raised over \$15,000 for our ministry with kids in this community.

This year we want to add more people and see if we can raise \$20,000 for NCN. If you are interested in running for a great cause, please talk to me today, or you can use some sort of technology to get a hold of me later. See you at the race!

- Eric Schalk

St. Valentine's Day



Who was Valentine? Why did he have a day named for him? The only thing that is certain about this day is that it commemorates a martyrdom. The Roman emperor Claudius II declared all Christians illegal citizens. By his definition they were guilty of treason because Roman citizens were required by law to worship the emperor by saying, "Caesar is Lord!"

History records that a young priest, named Valentine, was beheaded on February 14, A.D. 269, by order of Claudius the Goth because he refused to renounce his faith in Christ. The most famous legend goes on to tell how just before being led out to his execution, the young Christian wrote a note to the jailor's blind daughter, signing it, "From your Valentine." The first valentine was really a Christian witness.

Growing out of the story we participate in a custom of sending cards to people we love. Isn't it interesting that more significance has been placed on the note than on the extraordinary love young Valentine displayed for his Lord in dying for his faith? Later he was recognized as one of the first Christian martyrs under the persecution of Claudius II.

Over time the word "saint" has been dropped from the title of the day, removing from society's memory the Christian reason for the celebration. Instead of a negative reaction to the pagan origin of the day, let's reclaim and celebrate the meaning of true love that compelled young Valentine to give up his life. What a wonderful opportunity to lead your children into a better understanding of God's love, which enables us to love one another.

- Martha Zimmerman

A PUBLICATION OF

**FOURTH
REFORMED CHURCH**



1226 Union Ave. N.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

Pastor Tim Meendering
Phone: 454-1561
www.fourthchurch.com

Sunday Service
9:30 AM

Family Fellowship
Lifeline Groups
5:00 PM

Christian Education
11:15 AM

Our Vision

Seeking to be a joyful,
welcoming
community that is
transformed by the gospel,
nurtured in God's
Word, and led by His
Spirit - to redeem the
city and beyond."

**A COMMUNITY REDEEMED TO
REDEEM OUR COMMUNITY**

Reflections on Reading Thru the Bible



By Norma Boehm

As a mom and teacher, I have spent most of my life maintaining peace and rendering justice both at home and at school. So, it is understandable why I struggled with the first five books of the Old Testament. There were not many periods of peace in Old Testament times and God's justice was usually far more severe than mine. I barely made it through January in my commitment to read through the Bible. I chose to read 24/7, a chronological arrangement of scripture, rather than the most familiar arrangement by genre. Job appears inside Genesis, and the prophets and Psalms are interjected at the times they were actually written. That was fascinating for me. There are many foreshadowings of the promised Savior in the Old Testament and watching for those events/covenants helped me stay focused on the big picture: God's consistent love for us, the sacrifice of Jesus in my place, and the hope of Heaven where He is preparing a place for me.

By Tom Boehm

My reading through the Bible reinforced my knowledge and experience that our God is both a God of justice and a God of love. On one hand I am puzzled by God's patience with me, why does He not strike me down for the things I have done; while at the same time He continually expresses and shows His love for me through people and the Holy Spirit's presence in my life. I am reminded of how the stories in the Bible are one story, **His story** and how each story is so dependent on all the other stories in the Bible. (my sin, His Son, my salvation.) Once again I am amazed at how often during my readings I would say, "I didn't know this was in here." And I was often reminded of things that I had forgotten are in this wonderful Book. A great experience once again. During worship last Sunday, I looked at my Bible which I held in my hand and said to myself, "You have read this whole Book and you know about everything that is written in it." This is a great sense of comfort for me; there should be no surprises along the way as I walk through the rest of my life. God calls me to be faithful to His teachings.

By Betsy Couthie

Thank you for the challenge to read the Bible in one year. There is a special awareness that comes from taking a 360° look in 365 days. Particularly, the persistent love of God for the world and people he created shines through. He walked with Adam and Enoch, chose Noah, Abraham and Moses to push the restart button, and continued to draw near to his chosen people through the use of the tabernacle and temple. He ultimately drew near in the person of Jesus, through whom we get a more complete picture of God's persevering love. When we read God's word today, he draws near to us.

Last year I read through some favorite parts and rediscovered stories I had forgotten. Using the chronologic reading program, it was interesting to have the Psalms interwoven through the history of Israel's leaders and kings from Moses to David and beyond. We actually spent nine months in the Old Testament before we came to the time of Christ's birth. Starting in October, we dashed from Matthew through Revelation in the final three months of the year. I miss it already. The steady stream of truth into my day was a tangible way to know God and enjoy what he wrote.