



The 4th Focus

“Pressing, Pressing”

Our last few weeks of searching Scripture through the sermons have highlighted the intensity, commitment, and suffering that will and must be a part of our faith journey. When you understand God’s holy hatred of our monstrous sin and the infinite price paid by God so that justice could be satisfied and grace extended, you must also recognize that grace is free but never cheap. It makes no sense for us to respond to the intense, self-sacrificing love of Christ stretched out on the cross to satisfy the Father’s holy, burning wrath with a lazy, tepid life of “whatever” or “maybe later.”

Thomas à Kempis writes: *“Jesus has many who love his kingdom in heaven, but few who bear his cross. He has many who desire comfort, but few who desire suffering. He finds many to share his feast, but few his fasting. All desire to rejoice with him, but few are willing to suffer for his sake. Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the cup of his passion. Many admire his miracles, but few follow him in the humiliation of the cross.”*

Our focus on the “inescapable choice” of the wide gate/broad way or the narrow gate/difficult way revealed that following Jesus will involve trouble, hardship, and a constant pressing, pressing against us. This is our calling while we live in a culture that deeply values and offers up safety, leisure and comfort. John Shedd wrote, “A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.” We were not built, reborn, or recreated to huddle into the harbor. Jesus risked and even offered up his life so that we could hold up his gospel love through our own bold risk and sacrifice—every day.

So I know that this is heavy. But it may be helpful to understand that this is perhaps more about my own struggles with these things than it is about leading and teaching you. It’s both. My own struggle with this risk vs. comfort tension was intensified on my trip to California where I participated in a church growth-type conference that trained leaders to change and press toward growth without a reference to the risk and sacrifice of Christ as the means for that change. And then I spent a couple of days with a pastor friend who wonderfully demonstrates a passionate love for Christ AND a daily, bold, risk-taking behavior that has yielded a harvest.

Kevin and I had encouraged, challenged and held each other accountable for several years before he relocated to take up a post in California and so it was a joy to connect and catch up with each other again. He gave me a tour of his church’s facilities and introduced me to various church staff members. Now Kevin and I are wired very differently. He is a bold extrovert with an energy level makes me look like a listless bystander. But, my exposure to Kevin led me into some personal introspection and repentance.

I get a charge out of my time and conversations with people but I am perhaps even more energized by quiet time alone. I find myself often giving thanks to God for the silence that sets me up for study, thinking and conversation with him. Much to my more-extroverted wife’s chagrin sometimes, I work to protect at least a few mornings each week for seclusion into a corner room of the house. And so here’s where I see a need for repentance: While I am wired by God on the introversion side of the continuum, Kevin’s extrovert-oriented life, ministry and its harvest revealed how I cannot settle into the comfort of my wiring. God refreshes me in my solitude for the purpose of boldly pressing, stretching and pushing out of my comfort zone to actively connect with people for their sake and putting the joy and love of Jesus on display. I am called to both the quiet solitude that nurtures my soul and the pushing out toward others. We all are.

That means that we participate in small groups, invite people to a meal or coffee, open up our homes—for their sake and the sake of Christ. Where do you need to give up the safe and comfortable in order to honor Christ who gave up all for you? His grace is free but never cheap.

- Pastor Tim



On GEMS Sunday, the girls were able to sing some of the songs they have loved and learned. We so appreciate being able to share this with the 4th Church family.

On Monday, April 29, moms and special friends were able to share our final meeting. The GEMS went shopping with points that they earned through the year and the adults were able to make a pin, compliments of Dawn Faasse. Everyone enjoyed no calorie brownies and ice cream.

Looking back we feel so blessed that God has given us a wonderful year and all of the girls that participated. We, as GEMS leaders, are so appreciative of all who volunteered time on Monday nights and the women who were special friends. We appreciate everyone who has prayed for us. Through the summer, we have some fun events planned and then resume our regular meetings in October.

- Nancy Aukeman

Let the Games Begin!



This group of women had a great time playing Scrabble. (The lady in black won the first game!)

There were lots of games to choose from and tasty treats to munch on.

Thanks to Amy Baragar for organizing the evening!



May

- 2 - Amy Baragar
- 7 - Tyler Berthiaume
- 7 - Kara Berrevoets
- 7 - Jaidyn Ann Bolt
- 9 - Tim Randall
- 14 - Sam Wammack
- 19 - Jean Stadt
- 21 - Grace Wammack
- 22 - Jeff Boehm
- 23 - Jeremiah Parks
- 24 - Brad Berrios
- 24 - Bill Pyper
- 24 - Beka McDowell
- 26 - Norma Boehm
- 27 - Greg Hawkins
- 28 - Mike Berrevoets
- 29 - Aaron Wetzel
- 30 - Ralph Simone
- 31 - Amy Parmeter
- 31 - Ethan Parmeter

June

- 2 - Julie Schalk
- 3 - Caren Bills
- 5 - Lorraine Smith
- 8 - Dawn Faasse
- 9 - Brandon Gleason
- 12 - Owen Parmeter
- 13 - Laura O'Brock
- 14 - Eric O'Brock
- 14 - Sam Tubergen
- 16 - Trish Studebaker
- 20 - Justin Leasure
- 23 - Betsy Coutchie
- 24 - Marty Pyper
- 24 - Leslie Hawkins
- 28 - Becky Berrevoets
- 28 - Linda Randall
- 28 - Roy Giron

My Mom Is Special!

She cooks dinner every night and she takes care of all four of the kids. - Avery

She helps me do my homework. - Sydney

She makes delicious food and is my "snuggle puppy". I love her a lot. She also keeps me safe at home. - Abbie

Loving

Exciting

Awesome

How I love her! - Nick

My mom takes me out to eat and buys me presents for Christmas and for my birthday. - Zach

My mom is really nice. She helps me with my homework and cares for me. - Brayden

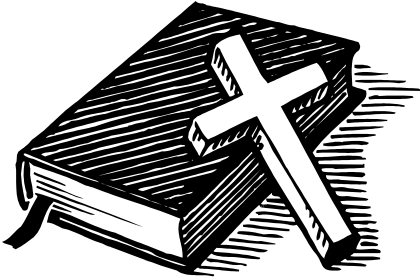
My mother loves me with all her heart. - Breanna

My mother got us a dog! - Jajuan and Analie

She cares for me all day long. - Erin

Reformed Church Heritage - Revival

During the 1700s, a largely Calvinistic religious revival called the Great Awakening swept over the American colonies. Spiritual conversion and holy living were emphasized in response to mere outward religion. By the time it ended, as many as 40,000 people had been converted and 150 new churches planted in New England alone. This revival is said to have begun around 1740, yet long beforehand its seeds had been planted by a Reformed Church minister.



Although a German, Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen was steeped in the Dutch Reformed tradition. As a student, he was deeply influenced by evangelical pietism. He arrived in America in January 1720 to minister to five churches in New Jersey's Raritan Valley largely contained in what are today the counties of Somerset and Middlesex. From the start, he condemned religious legalism and stressed the need for spiritual conversion. Portions from a Communion sermon illustrate this.

Much loved hearers, who have often been at the Lord's Table, do you know that the unconverted may not approach? Have you then, with the utmost care, examine whether you be born again...or did you go blindly forward...not examining whether you were of the number of those invited...here, by a morsel and swallow, can the covenant of God be made liable to temporal and eternal punishment. Reflect therefore...that though morally and outwardly religious, if still you be unregenerate and destitute of spiritual life, you have no warrant to an approach to the table of grace.

Frelinghuysen barred the impenitent from the Lord's Supper and refused to baptize their children. Consistory members who opposed him were excommunicated. Laymen were trained after the manner of the apostles to assist in shepherding a parish consisting of 250 square miles of desolate country.

Frelinghuysen's measures were met with stiff opposition. Critics condemned his stern discipline, deviation from established church order and emotional preaching, characterized by what were mockingly called "howling prayers". He was censured for inviting non-Reformed preachers into his pulpit and preaching without permission in other Reformed churches. At New Brunswick, he befriended and mentored Gilbert Tennent, who became the Great Awakening voice of the Presbyterians.

A 146 page document called the *Klagte* (Complaint) signed by 64 household heads was published in 1725 listing public accusations against the dominie. Although he had the support from such evangelical ministers as Bernardus Freeman and Guiliam Bertholf, the pioneer Reformed minister to New Jersey and, at times, Classis Amsterdam itself, Frelinghuysen's ministry would be marred by strife for almost 15 years. Reconciliation eventually took place, with many of Frelinghuysen's former foes later supporting him. Revival fires soon burned throughout New Jersey and elsewhere, after many of his sermons were translated into English and published.

The British evangelist George Whitefield first arrived in America in 1738, beginning the first of seven American preaching tours. Benjamin Franklin, who shared Whitefield's friendship but not his faith, estimated that the evangelist's voice could be clearly heard by as many as 30,000 people, during a time nearly 150 years before the invention of the microphone. Standing in a wagon in front of Frelinghuysen's church at New Brunswick on April 27, 1740, Whitefield preached to an estimated 7,000 people. By then, Frelinghuysen himself was preaching to multitudes at open air meetings, with many called to salvation. He was regarded as an equal colleague by Whitefield, Tennent and New England evangelist Jonathan Edwards who all mentioned him by name in their correspondence.

He who declared he would rather *die a thousand deaths than not preach the truth* opened a new chapter in Reformed Church history. Although unable to speak English himself, Frelinghuysen challenged many whose religion did little more than prolong the language and culture of old Holland in an increasingly Americanized society. His participation in the unauthorized ordination of ministers and support of an association of American churches pointed toward the eventual independence from the Dutch of the Reformed Church in America.

- Eric O'Brock

Next - Reformed Church Independence, Part 1

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

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**

English as a Second Language



There are many smiles on Wednesday evenings as refugees from countries such as Congo, come to Fourth and receive help speaking the English language. Because the ESL (English as a Second Language) classes are growing, Justin & Elise Leasure need your help!

If you are willing to help weekly or even once or twice a month, or provide transportation contact Justin at 616-929-3981 or justinmleasure@gmail.com. Classes meet from 7-8:30 PM on Wednesdays. You don't need to have any prior teaching or tutoring experience, just the ability to speak English and the willingness to help.

We thank the Leasures for their leadership in this ministry and look forward to seeing how God will continue to use it to help refugees in our city!



Kids Hope USA News

As we near the end of our 14th year of partnership with Kent Hills Elementary, I want to say thank you to all of our mentors, substitutes, prayer partners and events people for another GREAT year! The time you invested, the prayers that you uttered, the papers you helped to complete, the food that you prepared, the games that you played, the laughter you shared all served to build a relationship with not only a student but their families, and the staff at Kent Hills School.

My prayer is, most importantly, that in all our doing Christ's love was on display for all to see. Thank you to everyone for sharing that love and making a difference in the lives of others!

We look forward to our end of the year picnic at Aberdeen Park on May 29 and the Partnership Appreciation Luncheon on June 6 at Kent Hills.

- Mary Kay Townley, Director

Did you know River Bank runners Branson Parler and Dave Gleason each raised over \$700 for NCN and Jeni Wammack raised almost \$900!?

