

WELCOME



to the Neighborhood!

The 4th Focus

“Reflections from Elise Leasure”

What is written in the Law? How do you read it?

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”

A couple Sundays ago, Pastor Tim preached on Luke 10 where a lawyer (“expert in the law”) tests Jesus by asking him what he must do to inherit eternal life. (This man was looking to find fault with Jesus’ answer, thinking he may steer from what was written in the Law of Moses.) Our Bible-believing Jesus replies with these questions, “*What is written in the Law? How do you read it?*” The man’s next question, “And who is my neighbor?” should cause us all to pause and consider who, through our actions, do we truly believe to be our neighbor. If we begin to see that most, maybe even all, of our outreach is to our own children, families, and friends, then the truth of who you believe your neighbor to be might be well summed up in this: “those who know and understand me well, think similarly to me, spend money like me, etc.” If that is the truth in your life, as it is often in mine, I urge you to meditate on the example of the Samaritan man who put aside his agenda for the day because he had compassion on the man who was beaten and left for dead. Jesus says, “He set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.” For me, this is the challenging part – the close, physical contact. It is a challenge for me to welcome my neighbors in northwest GR into my home. Why? Because my eyes lose sight of eternity and I am shallow. “They might not take off their shoes. They might smell like smoke. What if a kid steals something? That kid looks dirty...” I highly doubt the Samaritan man had concern regarding the man’s blood or snot getting on his animal or on his own clothing. I highly doubt the Samaritan man had concern for anything other than the healing of the man he found lying half dead. *He had compassion.*

It is easy to have compassion on our children, our church family, our closest friends; and yes, this is still a godly compassion, however, I would be surprised to hear that your love for your child, (unless you consider this child an enemy), has caused people to ask you where your love stems from. But when we hurt for and have a sincere compassion that manifests itself through action for those who have either deeply hurt us (maybe causing us to associate them as an enemy) or are not in our social circle or bloodline, the world looks twice because they are witnessing a love that is not “shallow and convenient.” When the Holy Spirit lives in us, we ache for those we would otherwise ignore and deny “neighborship” status because he aches for them and lives in our hearts! We begin to focus on what has eternal value and that is when we crave to see his kingdom advance in the here and now.

Justin and I live in a neighborhood full of moms and children who are seriously hurting and need to see Jesus lived out. We had talked about having a grill out for all of the neighbors, in hopes of furthering relationships. In Pastor Tim’s application, he asked us all what is hindering us from reaching our neighbors. I was convicted that my attitude is what stands in the way. I love to receive a quick hug from a neighbor kid and throw out a word of encouragement and then go into my cozy home and lock the doors. But God is calling us to so much more! After church, we decided to have a cook out in our backyard that very day for all the neighbors; many moms and children came, also a few teenage boys. Justin grilled hotdogs. We served watermelon, baked beans, and ice cream sandwiches. Some kids came into my kitchen and helped me cut up watermelon; one boy said, “Nobody’s ever invited me to come in their house and help them cook before; I love cutting up watermelon.” We received great feedback from the neighbors who said this kind of thing has never happened in this neighborhood before.

As Pastor Tim said in his sermon, “You will care for the poor when you realize that you are the poor and bankrupt apart from Jesus.” Indeed, if it weren’t for the Spirit’s work in our lives, we would still be part of that valley of dry bones that Ezekiel prophesied over. I urge you and ask that you would urge me to share of God’s provision and greatness; let’s share our resurrection stories with our neighbors while being ready to set aside our agendas to listen to their stories. Maybe you live in a neighborhood full of elderly folk who keep to themselves, making it easier for you to keep your distance; but likely, some of them are lonely and don’t know the love of Jesus. You have your own ministry to them that will look very different than the one we have on our block, but God has settled you in your own neighborhood for his purposes. Don’t believe that he has placed you there only to bless you and your family with a comfortable home. His primary concern is seeing his glory revealed and seeing his kingdom come as we, his beloved children, seek to reach those living in darkness.



The GEMS packed into the church van and headed out to cool off on a hot June day at the Maplewood Park in Jenison. There the girls enjoyed a wonderful splash pad and play structure. Nancy and Marcia purchased some great ice cream treats for a snack. It was a sun-filled and fun-filled day for everyone. Friendships were renewed and

new friends were made! They look forward to two more outings this summer before the meetings resume in Oct.

Neighborhood Block Party

A great way to connect with people and show God's love to those who live in our community is to attend or help out with the Neighborhood Block Party which is scheduled for Saturday, July 27. The gathering will be held just a block north of the church from 11AM to 2 PM. Help is needed setting up and taking down, serving food, "manning" games, and just conversing with people. If you feel led to be a part of this event, see Beau McDowell or Ruth Meendering.



Darling tissue flowers decorated many of the gift bags at the baby shower for Elise. A mark of the Hop Scotch Children's Store! It was a lovely and delightful evening celebrating the upcoming birth of the precious Leasure baby. (We even enjoyed singing Happy Birthday to Grace!) Thanks to Leslie and Leah for making it a special evening for Elise. AND Dawn for picking out the perfect book which brought tears of fond memories for our mother-to-be.

July

- 1 - Kari Bierens
- 2 - Jerry Wierenga
- 8 - Connie Larson
- 8 - Jeff Broene
- 14 - Ed Reitsma
- 17 - Jessica Ortiz
- 22 - Jonathan Brinks
- 23 - Avery Gleason
- 23 - Kate Schalk
- 24 - Wendy Wetzel
- 26 - Erica Fles
- 28 - Branson Parler
- 29 - Erica Stone

August

- 2 - Tom Adams
- 3 - Charlton Meyer
- 3 - Tim Meendering
- 5 - Connie Scherpenisse
- 5 - Jackson Bolt
- 5 - Alexis Bolt
- 5 - Ella Schalk
- 8 - Joyce Van Neuren
- 9 - Evie Walton
- 12 - Rick Berthiaume
- 14 - Steve Springfield
- 14 - Jake Kooyer
- 15 - Betty Webster
- 17 - Darold Parks
- 20 - Jose Ortiz
- 21 - Amy Adams
- 21 - Christian Parler
- 22 - Ken Walton
- 22 - Jacob Tubergen
- 23 - Bertha VanderVelde
- 24 - Lynn Simone
- 25 - Amber Studebaker
- 26 - Joel Adams
- 31 - Jeff Springfield



WANTED!

New Mentors for the 2013-14 School Year!

Qualifications: Regularly attend 4th Church, at least 16 years old, have one free hour a week during the school year, want to make a difference in the life of a child.

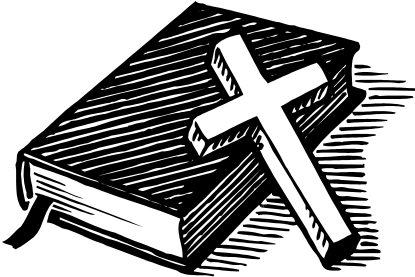
Salary: You would work for free, but the blessings are priceless!



Mark your calendars for a potluck after church with our missionaries from Thailand - Jeff & Lisa Boehm on July 21.

Reformed Church Heritage - Church Independence

Long after the English takeover of New Netherland, The Reformed Church in America remained under the authority of the Dutch Classis of Amsterdam. A long process eventually led to independence from Holland at about the same time as our nation's independence from Great Britain.



The idea of an organization of churches first came from Classis Amsterdam. Once peace and unity came following the controversy surrounding the ministry of Rev. Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, the Classis expressed relief, and then added *We should be especially pleased if we could receive from you some Plan, which would tend to promote the union of the Dutch churches in your part of the world...*

Thus began the formation of the Coetus (pronounced *see-tus*) or an assembly of church representatives having limited authority. Rev. Gerardus Haeghoort sent a *statement of Reasons for the Necessity of a Coetus* to the church at New York.

Letters were sent from New York asking churches to discuss the idea and send delegates. The first meeting was held in September 1737 with eight churches promising to participate. Because there was still much opposition to the idea, the Dutch Classis asked both sides to submit arguments before making a ruling binding for all. In August 1739, it finally ruled in favor of the Coetus on condition that nothing would be spoken against church doctrine and that there would be no examinations of candidates for the ministry.

For nearly a decade, the Coetus failed to advance much beyond the planning stage. There remained a great deal of opposition from ministers and consistories. Limitations imposed by Classis made its work ineffective. Chief among these was the continued prohibition against the American ordination of much needed ministers, which many saw as *the* vital reason for the Coetus. Another factor was the frequently poor attendance at meetings. At the meeting in April 1741, only three ministers were present.

By 1747, there was a renewed interest to revitalize the Coetus. Three regional “circles” (New York, Albany and Jersey) were established where local matters could be addressed and, when necessary, referred to the central organization. The new Coetus was somewhat more effective, it was still very limited in its work. In most cases, it could do little more than offer advice, and continued to frequently seek counsel from Classis.

Although Classis allowed four ministers to be ordained in America from 1747-54, it maintained its unbending authority over this matter, allowing this to take place only when notified in advance and when deemed absolutely necessary. Reasons may have included the absence of a Dutch Reformed theological college in America, the fear that an American-trained clergy might somehow be less qualified and respected and the concern that a Dutch Reformed Church independent of Holland might lose its favored status with the English government, which was not extended to other non-Anglican churches.

A tragic event brought independence closer to reality. Three sons of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, Theodorus, Jacobus and Ferdinand sailed to Holland to be examined and ordained. On their return trip, their ship was detained causing a long delay. It was during this time that Jacobus and Ferdinand died of smallpox. Theodorus went on to serve the church at Albany, where his anti-Coetus consistory kept him as a virtual prisoner, forbidding him to attend Coetus meetings. Nevertheless, he became a leader of the group now committed to the organization of an independent classis, making the peril of ocean travel for ordination no longer necessary.

By 1754, the Coetus, now supported by a majority of ministers in the colonies, began to move toward becoming a separate American classis. Secretly opposing this plan was its secretary Rev. Johannes Ritzema, who added a letter expressing his views along with the letter from the Coetus to the Dutch church authorities. Before emerging as independent, the Reformed Church in America would explode into two hostile camps.

- Eric O’Brock

Next-Independence Part II

The Reluctant Chef: Embracing the Strange and Wonderful World of Garden Cuisine



When I signed up for a half share of the farm earlier this spring, I knew it would be a mixed bag for me. I'm not known for my cooking skills in the first place, and the attempts I've made at creative or unusual non-Dutch-potluck-style recipes have a tendency to end badly.

But I am all for trying anything once, so I packed my eco-friendly brown paper grocery bags into the car and headed out to church last Thursday to pick up my first assortment of fresh spring greens. I had my support group in place - Ruth surprised me for my birthday, right at the stand with an adorable assortment of reusable produce bags. My sister-in-law had been emailing me links to kale sites. Rachel Ray is on NBC every day at 2:00PM. My children gave me a useful salad spinner for my birthday. Well alrighty then. All systems go. Booyah.

"Fresh spring greens" doesn't begin to describe the glorious bounty laid out before me in the market stand behind church. The market staff were hugely helpful and more than tactful when dealing with my ignorance: "What the...um, what is this?" "Bok Choy." "What parts do you use? The stems? The leaves? Do you cook it or eat it raw?" "Yes." I was confident when I picked out the radishes, no problem there. I had never seen such a variety of them, though. I settled on four different colors, a creamy white, a rich, deep purple, and two shades of burgundy. I moved on to the lettuces. Unbelievable. I ended up with three bulging bags of tender baby greens and a delicate, lacy, leafy red-spotted butterhead. It was exquisite - unquestionably the most gorgeous vegetable I've ever seen in my whole life.

Oh, swell. Rhubarb. The bane of my existence. I tried to act excited because I didn't want to hurt their feelings. I actually have rhubarb growing at my house. I bought it years ago on clearance at Home Depot because it said it had large, leafy foliage, and it came back on its own every year and I thought it was the perfect solution to the ugly, bare spot on the sunny side of the garage. It never once occurred to me to eat it. I remember my grandma serving it often at her house, she would boil it and add sugar and put it in a big white porcelain-type bowl and it looked stringy and soggy and horrid, like something you would use to slop the hogs. Or worse. The only possible reason I could think of to explain their passionate love of it was because it probably reminded them of something they ate when they were children in the Old Country or maybe during the Great Depression. Rhubarb pie, on the other hand, is another thing entirely. But that would mean.... making pie.

I loaded everything into the van and drove home. Hmmm. Now what? Fitting everything into the refrigerator was proving to be a problem. Did I necessarily have to EAT everything? I found a darling bowl that just fit the red-spotted lettuce which made a most attractive centerpiece on my table. I could give away some of the mixed greens, one bag went to mom and one went to my co-workers. This would make good advertising for the Farm, be good stewardship, and solve both the refrigerator and cooking problem at the same time. The radishes were easy. I could put them in a salad or just wash them and eat them right away and save myself the trouble. They were delicious.

The kind and helpful Farm people had included a recipe for Asian Bok Choy Salad in the newsletter. There was just the right amount of bok choy, and sweet little green onions as well, so I had only a few other ingredients that I had to go out and purchase. I am not going to whine about the fact that pine nuts cost more per ounce than fresh-caught imported West African Rock Lobster Tail. I am not. The salad was a huge hit. Oh, the glory.

More salad, then. I was on a roll. And I still had a bulging bag of fresh spring greens. At the risk of offending my children, I have to admit I was less than thrilled when I opened the big box wrapped up beautifully for my birthday and pulled out a salad spinner. When I was a new bride-to-be and registering for wedding gifts, the salad spinners had just rolled off the production line at the salad spinner factory as a brand-new invention. I skipped right over them on the list, thinking they were the dumbest thing I'd ever seen. Seeing them on card tables at numerous garage sales I've gone to over the past 33 years has confirmed that I was right. I was stuck with the thing now, however, I might as well try it. I put the fresh spring green assortment in the bowl, rinsed well with water, and gave it a good spin. I have to say that the new and improved salad spinner is a good example of the fact that I am, at times, wrong. It was a marvel in modern technology, really, it even had its own special button to use as a brake system. The fresh spring greens came out crisp, tender, and dry, and....the best part ever.... you can store them in the salad spinner in the refrigerator and they keep perfectly and are handy and ready to go whenever you want to eat them.

So then. The first week of Urban Farm Half-Share days, a smashing success. My apologies to all those that used to love rhubarb but don't anymore. My thanks to you, Lance, and Shanna, you and your crew are rock stars. Your expertise and hard work have so enriched our lives already. Looking forward to many exciting food adventures ahead!