

Welcome to First Christian Reformed Church!
Pastor John Knoester
December 20, 2020 – Fourth Sunday in Advent

* Please stand in body or in spirit

“Blessed be the God of Israel,”

Prelude

Sung Call to Worship: *“Heaven Has Come to Us”* – Sovereign Grace

Welcome

* Call to Worship

* God’s Greeting:

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: On this fourth Sunday of Advent,
may the love of God the Father,
and the grace of Jesus the Son,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be and abide with us all.

People: Amen!

*Opening Song: *“Emmanuel (God With Us)”* - Amy Grant

“Who comes to set us free.”

Announcements:

Invitation to Transformed Living – Longing for Redemption

Scripture and Refrain: LUYH #616 *“Psalm 42”*

LUYH #616: *“As a deer in want of water, so I long for you, O Lord.”*

Reader #1: As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God?

Reader #2: ³ My tears have been my food day and night,
while people say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”

Reader #1: ⁴ These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,^[a]
and led them in procession
to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.
⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?

Reader#2: Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help ⁶and my God.

LUYH #616: “As a deer in want of water, so I long for you, O Lord.”

Reader #1: By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.

Reader #2: ⁹ I say to God, my rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?”

Reader #1: ³ O send out your light and your truth;
let them lead me; let them bring me
to your holy hill and to your dwelling.

Reader #2: ⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God my exceeding joy;
and I will praise you with the harp,
O God, my God.

Reader #1: ⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?

Reader #2: Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

LUYH #616: “As a deer in want of water, so I long for you, O Lord.”

Words of Assurance: (Based on Psalm 130:5-7)

Leader: I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his Word I hope.
My soul waits for the Lord more than those
who watch for the morning.

People: There is no darkness with you, O Lord.

Leader: O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is plenteous redemption.

People: There is no darkness with you, O Lord.

Leader: Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

People: There is no darkness with you, O Lord.

Lighting of Advent Candle: "Joy" (From Exodus)

* Song of Preparation: *"Joy Has Dawned Upon the World"* – Getty's
(During the singing of this verse the Advent candle is lit)

"And raises up new hope for us:"

Scripture Readings: Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us." ²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Prayer of Illumination:

Immanuel, as we wait for your return,
help us see your glory and love through
the reading and preaching of your Word.
We pray in your name. Amen.

Message: ***“Christmas According to Matthew: Immanuel – God With Us”***

Time of Prayer

“A Branch from David’s tree.”

Song of Reflection: *“Son of God”* – Michael W. Smith

* We Profess our Faith: (Our World Belongs to God)

Leader: As followers of Jesus Christ, living in this world—
which some seek to control, but which others view
with despair— we declare with joy and trust:

People: Our world belongs to God!

Leader: God remembered his promise to reconcile the
world to himself; he has come among us in
Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh.

**People: He is the long-awaited Savior, fully human and
fully divine, conceived by the Spirit of God and
born of the virgin Mary.**

Leader: We long for that day when Jesus will return as
triumphant King, when the dead will be raised and
all people will stand before his judgment.
We face that day without fear, for the Judge is our
Savior. Our daily lives of service aim for the
moment when the Son will present his people to
the Father.

**People: With the whole creation we wait for the purifying
fire of judgment. For then we will see the Lord
face to face.**

Leader: He will heal our hurts, end our wars, and make the crooked straight. Then we will join in the new song to the Lamb without blemish who made us a kingdom and priests.

People: **God will be all in all, and righteousness and peace will flourish. Hallelujah! Come, Lord Jesus.**

* God's Blessing:

* Parting Praise: "*Emmanuel*" – Michael W. Smith

Postlude

Welcome! The psalmist prayed: "Restore us, O Lord God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved" (Psalm 80:19). May all who have come to worship find restoration, inner peace and spiritual strength.

	<i>Today 12/20</i>	<i>Christmas Day</i>	<i>Next Week 12/27</i>
Sound:	Henry Van Zanten		Tim Hibma
Video:	Tim Hibma		Brandon Speck
Projection:	Devin Van Zanten	Tim Hibma	Josh Hammingh
Offering:	General Fund	Love Inc.	General Fund



How can
we
PRAY
for you?

People to be remembered with prayers, cards, letters & words of encouragement. Call the church office at (336-2405) or e-mail: secretary@firstcrmv.com by 9:00 am Thursday of each week with your prayer items.

NEW REQUESTS:

Please keep the Link family in your prayers in the days ahead. Yesterday (Saturday) Joel tested positive for COVID. Thankfully the symptoms are mild, but the family will be in quarantine. Please pray that Joel experiences a full recovery in the days to come and for God's protection over each one of them during this holiday season.

CONTINUING REQUESTS:

Adelaida Vega's cancer has become active again and unfortunately the new treatment is not as effective as was hoped for. A DNA blood test seems to indicate that this cancer may have also been with her since she was born. Adelaida is currently taking some new medication pills with hope that they can control the cancer in the weeks and months to come. Please continue to pray for her and her family.

Rinie Rouw: Rinie is in "monitoring mode" and exploring different answers through doctors appointments and medications. Rinie and Jill are so thankful for all of your prayers and words of good wishes, and they continue to covet them while they look forward to more answers and opportunities for better health in the future.

Chris Vander Wekken continue his rehab at The Bridge. Please pray for wisdom, discernment, and peace on his end as he makes those decisions. Thank you in advance for your continuous commitment to pray for Chris.

Continue to pray for **Ryanne Vander Pol** as she continues with her IV therapy and some radiation treatments.

Please pray for Rich Knight and his family. Rich's mother has been battling cancer for nearly 7 years now. Last year she appeared to be clear, but is now experiencing some cancer-related issues again and will be seeing the doctor. Please pray that she receives a good report in the days to come. Thank you in advance for your prayers.

SHUT INS:

Nell Annema at Birchview Memory Care in Sedro-Woolley; **Jerry & Marion Ekkelkamp** and **Mary Koopmans** at Where the Heart is in Burlington; **Case Lanting** at Olympic Place in Arlington, WA; **Wilma Paul** at Life Care Center in Sedro-Woolley; **Andy Pippel**, **Adrianna Swanson**, and **Lona Vander Griend** at Home Place in Burlington; **Sally Reehoorn** at Creekside in Burlington; **Bev Van Slageren** at family in Grandview, WA.

OTHER REQUESTS: (CRC Communications)

December 20, 2020 - (Chaplaincy and Care: Prisons) Pray for our chaplains serving in prisons and for the men and women they serve. The past several months have been especially difficult as COVID-19 has spread rapidly, requiring prisons to increase safety measures leading to more isolation and restrictions. Ask the Holy Spirit to continue working through chaplains as they minister in these settings.

December 19, 2020 - (Raise Up: Educational Care: Lebanon) A Korean missionary in Lebanon who serves Syrian refugees is eager to use Educational Care lessons in that context. Interest in this program is also growing in India. Give praise that from the nations and through the nations God is reaching the nations!

December 18, 2020 - (Resonate Global Mission: Central Asia) Pray for Resonate missionaries in Central Asia who are sharing the gospel, despite risks that come with evangelism in the region. Please pray for protection, wisdom, and encouragement for missionaries. Give thanks for the way the Holy Spirit is working through them to draw people into a relationship with Christ!

December 17, 2020 - (Back to God Ministries: Today devotions) High school students at Avail Academy in Minnesota recently read the December Today devotions, photographed images that made them think of the devotional materials, and wrote reflections about their photography. Praise God for this opportunity for students to be attentive to God's work in their lives and for intergenerational faith conversations.

December 16, 2020 - (Centre for Public Dialogue and Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee: Hearts Exchanged) Please pray for the first cohorts participating in Hearts Exchanged. The goal of this ministry is to equip Reformed Christians to build connections with Indigenous peoples in order to build mutual trust and transformation.

December 15, 2020 - (World Renew: Malawi) Thankfully, the number of COVID-19 cases in Malawi remains low, but other negative trends are emerging, such as an increase in child marriages, because families are struggling financially. In addition, training sessions are reduced from 50 to 10 people to allow for social distancing. Please pray that Malawi will remain safe and that staff will be able to continue their work despite limitations.

December 14, 2020 - (Resonate Global Mission: West Africa) Several Resonate missionaries work among the Fulani, a people group from a Muslim background in West Africa. After decades of ministry work there, people are beginning to receive Christ as Lord and Savior! Please ask the Holy Spirit to continue opening hearts to the truth of the gospel.

First CRC Announcements

Sunday, December 20, 2020

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Grace Feddema would like to thank the congregation for the basket of goodies and especially the visit. Thank you!

The elders met briefly by Zoom recently and with the spike of cases and the recent announcement of more restrictions we will be adding the link to the past week's service to the bulletin announcements and as well to the announcements sent by email each week. **Last week's Sunday service link:** The link to watch last week's Sunday service online is as follows: Thanksgiving Eve Service: <https://youtu.be/agmHvWJmKR8>
December 13, 2020 Service: <https://youtu.be/1-BxZkoGxE>

2020 Special Services: Tonight we will have a special "Blue Christmas" reflective service at 6:30 PM. Christmas Day service will be at 10:00 am.

To further aid simplifying giving when we can't all be at church, First CRC now provides options to give your tithes and offerings electronically. This means you are now able to donate using a credit or debit card, as well as give directly from a bank account. Check the church's website <http://www.firstcrcmv.org> for more information on these and other giving options.

ORGANIZATIONS WE SUPPORT

Angel Tree: All gifts have been picked up by the family or delivered to the children for our Angel Tree project. Thank you to everyone who took part in this. May you have a Blessed Christmas.

	Today 12/20	Christmas Day	Next Week 12/27
Sound:	Henry Van Zanten		Tim Hibma
Video:	Tim Hibma	Tim Hibma	Brandon Speck
Projection:	Devin Van Zanten		Josh Hammingh
Offering:	General Fund	Love, Inc.	General Fund

REQUESTED ANNOUNCEMENTS

MARY'S MIRACLE - Check out our new kids' devotion at www.kidscorner.net. Have you ever wondered what Mary thought about the very first Christmas? Was she scared, excited, or happy? Listen to Mary's Miracle, the story imagined through the eyes of Mary. Listen now at kidscorner.net and subscribe to KC's weekly emails for all the new content.

January Series - Coming this January for the 34th year, Calvin University presents the 2021 January Series – the award winning free liberal arts education delivered in 15 weekly, lunchtime lectures. This year the series begins on January 6 and continues weekdays through January 26 from 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. EST with topics ranging from the future of the Supreme Court, climate change, the era of intelligent technology, civil discourse, racial tensions, the arts as a healing balm and so much more by top experts in their fields. And access to the award-winning lecture series will be easier than ever. This year, due to the realities of COVID-19, the January Series will have a completely virtual audience. Attendees will be able to watch and listen to the 15 presentations on their own personal devices, in their own locations, or gather at small remote sites available across the continent. For more information about the speakers, topics, remote sites and to register for personal viewing, visit our website at www.calvin.edu/january

Online Worship Learning - You are warmly invited to register for a free online learning experience held January 6-26, 2021, on key themes in worship and the Christian life. Register for free at worship.calvin.edu/symposium/ . This experience is designed for all kinds of learners: students, artists, musicians, pastors, scholars, teachers, worship leaders and planners, and all worshipers around the globe. Sponsored by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and the Center for Excellence in Preaching

CRCNA Position Opening - Ministry Support Services, a ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America is looking for a part-time Curriculum Developer for the Thrive project. Thrive is a 5-year grant funded project. Hours for the first year will be up to 18 hours a week and will decrease over the remaining four years. Visit www.crcna.org/jobs for a detailed position description or to complete an online application, attaching a resume and cover letter, no later than January 8, 2020.

At-home Faith Formation Tip - The Practice of Hospitality: “. . . and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.” In what ways might you make more space for Jesus in your everyday life? (For more on faith practices from Faith Formation Ministries, visit crcna.org/FaithFormation/Practices)

CRCNA Position Opening - Resonate Global Mission, an agency of the Christian Reformed Church in North America is looking for a part time (24 hr/week) Administrative Specialist to manage all administrative and office support activities of the West Coast Regional leader. The ideal candidate will be located on the west coast. This position will work remotely from their home. Visit www.crcna.org/jobs for a detailed position description or to complete an online application, attaching a resume and cover letter, no later than January 3, 2021.

Bloggers Wanted - Do you enjoy writing on topics related to faith and ministry? If so, Staci over at The Network (crcna.org/Network) would love to hear from you! The Network is open for anyone to post—all you'll need to do is create an account and add your blog. Or, if you'd prefer, email network@crcna.org and we'd be happy to help!