

***Welcome to First Christian Reformed Church!***  
***Pastor John Knoester***  
***January 17, 2021 – Sanctity of Life Sunday***

\* Please stand in body or in spirit

*"I have a Maker"*

Prelude

Opening Video: Imago Dei: The Image of God

Welcome/Announcements

\* Call to Worship (Based on Psalm 8)

Leader: O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name  
in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.

**People: From the lips of children and infants you have  
ordained praise**

Leader: When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,  
What is man that you are mindful of him,  
the son of man that you care for him?

**People: You made him a little lower than  
the heavenly beings and crowned him  
with glory and honor.**

Leader: You made him ruler over the works of your hands;  
You put everything under his feet:

**All: O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name  
in all the earth!**

\* God's Greeting:

Leader: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Leader: 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: *"Behold Our God"* – Sovereign Grace

*"He knows my heart"*

### **Sanctity of Life Sunday - Prayer of Lament**

Reader#1: God of heaven and earth,  
you create every human life in your image.  
You knit us with care and sustain us each day.  
You shower us with gifts and look on us with pride.  
You alone are the source of every good thing.  
You are our strength, our courage, and our hope.

Reader #2: Lord, we lament for a world that does not  
recognize the value of every life,  
whether born or preborn.  
We cry out to you on behalf of the lives  
lost each day through abortion.  
We grieve with those who grieve the loss  
of children and grandchildren, nieces  
and nephews.

Reader #1: Lord, we lift up in prayer to you those  
who need you most: For those, even Christians,  
who believe the lie of culture that life is only  
as valuable as its capabilities or resources,  
we ask for you to soften hearts  
and reveal your truth.

- Reader #2: For the many, many women who want to keep their unborn children but cannot see any possible options for doing so, we pray for support, encouragement, and for sisters and brothers in Christ to rise up and meet their needs.
- Reader #1: For women told lies about the impact that choosing abortion will have, and for women who are told they have no choice, Lord, we ask for clarity and courage.
- Reader #2: For men who will never know or hold their child, and are left to wonder “what if,” we pray for comfort and strength.
- Reader #1: For women whose bodies have been damaged, some even to the point of death, by an abortion, Lord, we pray for healing.
- Reader #2: For countries where policies restrict the number of children that can be born or devalue the lives of women to the point that abortion is forced upon them, particularly when they are carrying a daughter, we pray for your hand to move to change unjust laws, to protect women at risk, and to raise up a generation that will call on your name. Surely, your arm is not too short to save!
- Reader #1: Lord, forgive us for being parts of nations whose policies promote access to abortion more readily than access to food for children living in poverty. Open our eyes to recognize your face in the most vulnerable and to offer the gifts you have freely given us to them with ready and generous hearts.
- Reader #2: Mighty God, we cling to your promises— for justice to be fulfilled, for your grace to be made known, and for your peace to rule in hearts and minds and lives.

Reader #1: Help us to live out the vision you have given us  
for life in this world.  
Give us the will and the courage to put the lives  
of others before our own  
and to advocate on their behalf,  
to sacrifice where necessary and to serve  
where needed. Amen.

Song of Response: *"The First Place"* – Matthew Westerholm

Invitation to Transformed Living

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

\* Words of Assurance: Psalm 103:8-13 and I John 3:1)

Pastor: <sup>8</sup>The LORD is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
<sup>9</sup>He will not always chide,  
nor will he keep his anger forever.

**People: <sup>10</sup>He does not deal with us according to our  
sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.**

Pastor: <sup>11</sup>For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his steadfast love toward those who  
fear him; <sup>12</sup>as far as the east is from the west,  
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

**People: <sup>13</sup>As a father shows compassion to his children,  
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear  
him.**

Pastor: See what kind of love the Father has given to us,  
that we should be called children of God; and so  
we are. The reason why the world does not know  
us is that it did not know him.

\* We Declare our Faith and Commitment:

(From *Our World Belongs to God: The Contemporary Testimony of the Christian Reformed Church*, Article 44)

Leader: Life is a gift from God's hand, who created all things.

**People: Receiving this gift thankfully with reverence for the Creator, we protest and resist all that harms, abuses, or diminishes the gift of life, whether by abortion, pollution, gluttony, addiction, or foolish risks.**

Leader: Because it is a sacred trust, we treat all life with awe and respect, especially when it is most vulnerable—whether growing in the womb, touched by disability or disease, or drawing a last breath.

**People: When forced to make decisions at life's raw edges, we seek wisdom in community, guided by God's Word and Spirit.**

Sung Prayer of Preparation: *"Speak O Lord"* – Keith and Kristyn Getty

*"Before even time began"*

Scripture Readings: Matthew 3:1-12

<sup>1</sup>In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea <sup>2</sup>and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." <sup>3</sup>This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" <sup>4</sup>John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup>People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup>Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. <sup>7</sup>But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing,

he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? <sup>8</sup>Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. <sup>9</sup>And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. <sup>10</sup>The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>11</sup>"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. <sup>12</sup>His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Message: ***"Repentance and the Sanctity of Life"***

Time of Prayer

*"My life was in his hands"*

Song of Reflection: *"Who You Say I Am" – Hillsong*

\* We Affirm our Faith: Lord's Day 33 Q&A 88-91

Q 88. Leader: What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?

**A. People: Two things: the dying-away of the old self, and the rising-to-life of the new.<sup>1</sup>**

Q 89. Leader: What is the dying-away of the old self?

**A. People: To be genuinely sorry for sin and more and more to hate and run away from it.<sup>1</sup>**

Q 90. Leader: What is the rising-to-life of the new self?

**A. People: Wholehearted joy in God through Christ<sup>1</sup> and a love and delight to live according to the will of God by doing every kind of good work.<sup>2</sup>**

Q 91. Leader: What are good works?

**A. People: Only those which are done out of true faith,<sup>1</sup> conform to God's law,<sup>2</sup> and are done for God's glory;<sup>3</sup> and not those based on our own opinion or human tradition.<sup>4</sup>**

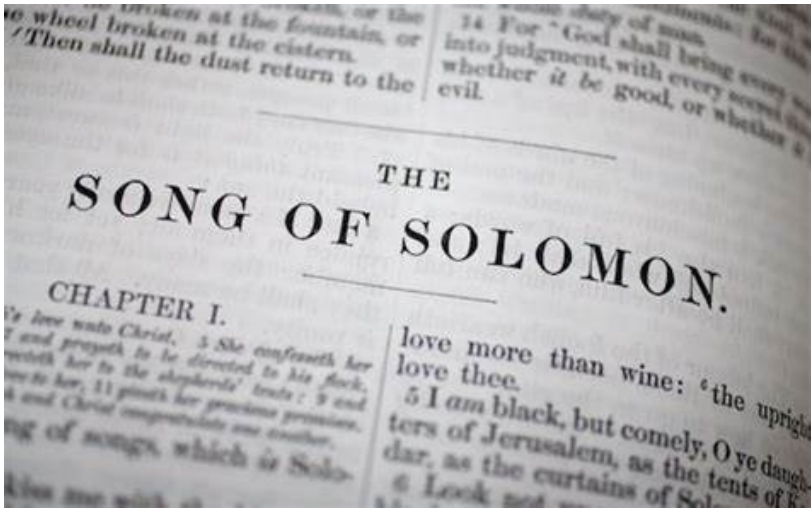
\* God's Blessing

\* Parting Praise: *"In Christ Alone"* – Stuart Townsend

Postlude

**Welcome** to worship! Here let us seek to see God more clearly, love God more completely, and serve God more certainly. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised!

	Today 1/17	Next Week 1/24
Sound:	Henry VZ	Mardy Stevens
Video:	Devin VZ	Tim Hibma
Projection:	Tim Hibma	Devin VZ
Offering:	General Fund	General Fund



Dear Friends,

I suspect that when most of us first attempted to read the Song of Songs one of our initial reactions was, “*What in the world is **this** doing in the Bible!?*” No doubt a second common question was “*What on earth is this about!?*” When it comes to reading this particular book of the Bible most of us can probably identify with the confusion of the Ethiopian eunuch when Paul asks him, “*Do you understand what you are reading?*” (Acts 8:30).

Yet, in a world that often both worships sex and also treats it as something dirty – the Song of Songs provides a much needed corrective. It seems to communicate that passionate physical love is a beautiful gift from God. Not only does it demonstrate that the Bible is not ‘anti-sex,’ but it also demonstrates that biblical sex is to be celebrated with gratitude to God who made us in His image.

In short, the Song of Songs is not only a beautiful love poem, but also a parable about human love that invites us to also reflect deeply on the relationship between Christ and His followers. In other words, it gives us the opportunity to reflect on our own intimate relationship with Jesus. And therefore, certainly one practical question we should keep in front of us throughout the weeks ahead is simply this: “Are we striving to love the Lover of our soul (Jesus) with the same kind of eagerness, anticipation, and passion as we see expressed here in the Song of Songs?”



Listed below is a *tentative* outline of our study. As always, I encourage you to read the texts ahead of time. May God continue to bless us with both grace and truth as we travel this road together.

In His Love, Pastor John

1. **January 24** – “A Theology of Human Sexuality and an Introduction to the Song of Songs” - Song of Songs 8:6-7
2. **January 31** – “A Desire for Intimacy” – Song of Songs 1:1-1:14
3. **Feb. 7** – “Crazy Love” – Song of Songs 1:15-2:17
4. **Feb. 14** – “Money Can’t Buy Love” – Song of Songs 3:1-4:7
5. **Feb. 21** – “Intimacy Lost and Regained” – Song of Songs 4:8-6:13a
6. **Feb. 28** – “The Song that Never Ends” – Song of Songs 6:13b-8:14



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@firstcrcmv.com](mailto:secretary@firstcrcmv.com) by 9:00 am Thursday of each week with your prayer items.

#### **NEW REQUESTS:**

Please keep **Rich Knight** and his family in your prayers today and throughout the days ahead. Rich's father, Richard Knight, passed away suddenly and unexpectedly due to heart failure. Please pray for his entire family as they grieve their loss and also as they make their way to Caldwell, Idaho for the memorial service in the days/weeks to come. May God grant each one of the family the kind of internal peace that only He can provide.

We express our condolences to **Hank and Anjean Vander Veen**. Anjean's 95 year old sister, Freda Visser, passed away at a nursing home in Lynden. For many years Freda was the organist at the Sumas CRC and is now enjoying the music of her heavenly home. Please commit to upholding all of Freda's loved ones in your prayers today and throughout the days ahead.

### **CONTINUING REQUESTS:**

Please continue to pray **for Adelaida Vega**. Adelaida is taking some new medication pills with hope that they can control the cancer in days to come. Please continue to pray for her and her family.

**Chris Vander Wekken** Is still continuing rehab at The Bridge. His course of radiation is complete. Please pray that it has eradicated all of the tumor and 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.

### **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)**

**January 17, 2021 - (Office of Social Justice: Sanctity of Human Life Sunday)** Abortion has disproportionately affected communities of color. In the United States today, a black child is three times more likely to be aborted than a white child. For women of color in Canada and the U.S., being pregnant and giving birth brings a higher risk of death from complications than for white women in these countries. Pray for the safety and protection of women and children who are vulnerable to abortion, and of those who face risks during pregnancy and childbirth, particularly people of color.

**January 16, 2021 - (ReFrame Ministries: Church Juice)** Pray for the mental health of people who are feeling especially anxious during the winter months of an already stressful year. Pray specifically for Anne, who recently sent a request to our Church Juice team: "Help me pray that I do not succumb to anxiety and depression."

**January 14, 2021 - (World Renew: Zambia)** The economy of Zambia is still struggling to recover to pre-pandemic levels. The swarm of African migratory locusts in the western province is also still an issue, despite some action by the government. Pray for plentiful rains this month so that this year may see a good harvest and better food security for people living in rural areas.

**January 13, 2021 - (Resonate Global Mission: North America)** Pray for university students serving as student leaders within Resonate-partner campus ministries in Canada and the United States. Give thanks for the gifts and skills they bring to leadership, and ask God to guide them as they build relationships with students and support their communities.

**January 12, 2021 - (ReFrame Ministries: Japan)** Pray for brothers and sisters in Christ at Choshi Glory Church, near Tokyo. Our Japanese ministry team recently shared a new video about this church, inviting newcomers to check it out. Pray for Pastor Naoshi Sano as he leads this congregation and seeks to show Christ's love in the community.

## First CRC Announcements

*Sunday, January 17, 2021*

### OUR CHURCH FAMILY

**2021 Synod - Human Sexuality Report:** Due to the rapidly changing sexual mores within our culture today – the 2016 Synod (the annual general assembly of the Christian Reformed Church) commissioned a study committee to articulate a “Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality” to be used as guidance for churches in our denomination. Five years later (not so ‘rapid’) this report is completed and will be presented at the 2021 Synod. Recently the elders have been reviewing this report and for the most part have been encouraged by the tenor and wisdom of the report itself. It’s also one of the main reasons for our current sermon series on the Song of Songs. If you are interested in reading the entire 175 page report you may do so by clicking on the following link: [https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/human\\_sexuality\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/human_sexuality_report_2020.pdf)

If you would like to read the 12 page executive summary of the report or the 4 page Banner article about it – these are currently available on the walkway shelf in the breezeway between the sanctuary and the church fellowship hall. If you have any questions/concerns/expressions of gratitude about the report itself – please don't hesitate to contact Pastor John or your district elder.

***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:

Last Sunday's Service: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK8vm8yh48E&feature=youtu.be>

*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.com> for more information on these and other giving options.*

### **ORGANIZATIONS WE SUPPORT**

***Pregnancy Choices 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Quilt & More Auction: Sat., February 6:***

**WHERE:** Mount Vernon Church of the Nazarene, 2710 E. Fir Street  
Mount Vernon, WA. 98273

**WHEN:** February 6th, 2021

**TIME:** 9:00am Doors open; 10:00am Auction begins; 12:00pm Event ends.

This year they have a donor who will do a matching grant for the auction, up to \$8,000.00. If you have new or antique items, gift certificates to your business, or want to make a donation towards the Quilt Auction, please contact **Pregnancy Choices at 360-428-4777** or **Marnie Fox at 360-941-5821**.

**MISSIONARIES** – Check the hallway bulletin board for Christmas letters and updates from the missionaries we support all over the world!

## **REQUESTED ANNOUNCEMENTS**

***At-home Faith Formation*** Tip - The Practice of Engaging Scripture: N.T. Wright wrote, "Reading and studying Scripture [is] central to how we grow in the love of God." This coming week, start each day by reading 1 Corinthians 13 and praying that God's love will flow through you to others. (For more on faith practices from Faith Formation Ministries, visit [crcna.org/FaithFormation/Practices](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/Practices).)

***How Do I Pray?*** - Prayer doesn't have to be complicated. And there is no single right way to do it. "How Do I Pray?", a free ebook from the ReFrame Ministries Prayer Team shows you six ways to reinvigorate your prayer life. It's yours free at [reframeministries.org/ways-to-pray](http://reframeministries.org/ways-to-pray)

***WHAT'S NEXT?*** - Check out the new kids' devotion at [www.kidscorner.net](http://www.kidscorner.net). In the Old Testament story, Joseph was thrown into a pit, accused of a crime, went to jail and then survived a famine. Yet he trusted God through all the ups and downs. Listen now at [kidscorner.net](http://kidscorner.net) and subscribe to KC's weekly emails for all the new content.