

August 2026
A monthly publication of the
East Martin Christian Reformed Church

The Echoes

Reflections

Even When the Ground Shook, God's Providence is Still Good



It is difficult to imagine what it feels like when the ground beneath you suddenly begins to shake.

A house that seemed safe can suddenly become frightening. Walls can crack. Roofs can give way. Things that once seemed permanent can become uncertain in a matter of seconds. Work can stop. Electricity can disappear for days or even weeks. Families can find themselves wondering how they will repair their homes, feed their children, or simply get through the next few days.

That is what happened in June.

The earthquake that struck Mindanao brought tremendous suffering to many communities. Homes were damaged. Businesses and places of work were disrupted. Some workers were laid off or had their work postponed. In some places, electricity remained unavailable for weeks. Families who had been managing from day to day suddenly faced expenses they had never anticipated.

But disasters have a way of revealing something about us.

They remind us how quickly the things we depend upon can be shaken.

And they also remind us how much we need one another.

Among those affected was the Fatima PBCI congregation, the church of my parents, Willy and Josie Trinidad. What happened there became much more than an opportunity to distribute relief goods. It became an opportunity for the people of God to come alongside one another in a time of great need.

Churches and Christians from different places joined together to help. East Martin Christian Reformed Church was among those who sent assistance. Sacks of rice were distributed. Families received groceries and other basic necessities. Funds were provided to help with damaged houses. Assistance was also given toward repairs and improvements to the church building itself.

These things may sound ordinary.

A sack of rice.

A bag of groceries.

Money to repair a damaged wall.

Help to restore a building.

But when a family has just lost its sense of security, these ordinary things can become extraordinary expressions of God's kindness.

And that is what made the relief effort so encouraging.

The help was not simply about repairing buildings or putting food on tables. Through these acts of mercy, families were ministered to. People were reminded that they had not been forgotten. The needs of the body opened opportunities to care for souls.

And God has continued to show His kindness.

Since the relief efforts began, more than twenty families have been added to the congregation.

We should be careful about saying that we know exactly why God allowed the earthquake to happen. His purposes are often hidden from us. We do not have access to His secret counsel.

But we do know something about our God.

He is not absent in disaster.

He is not surprised by suffering.

And He does not lose control when the ground beneath us shakes.

The Heidelberg Catechism asks in Lord's Day 10:

Q. What do you understand by the providence of God?

A. God's providence is his almighty and ever-present power, whereby, as with his hand, he still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, indeed, all things, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand.

That last phrase is particularly comforting:

“not by chance but by his fatherly hand.”

The earthquake was not outside God's providence.

Neither was the rice.

Neither were the groceries.

Neither was the money given for house repairs.

Neither was the work done to restore the church building.

And neither, we believe, were the more than twenty families who have since become part of the congregation.

God governs not only the great events of history but also the seemingly small details through which He cares for His people. He can use a disaster to expose our weakness, a church to provide relief, a sack of rice to open a door, and an act of generosity to create an opportunity for the gospel.

This is one of the mysteries of God's providence.

We would never choose suffering for ourselves. We would never ask for an earthquake to shake our homes and disrupt our livelihoods. Yet when suffering comes, we can know that our heavenly Father has not abandoned His children.

He is still working.

Sometimes His providence looks like protection.

Sometimes it looks like provision.

Sometimes it looks like a church family showing up when another church family is hurting.

And sometimes, remarkably, it looks like the gospel advancing in places where suffering has opened hearts and created opportunities that would not otherwise have existed.

The earthquake damaged houses.

It interrupted work.

It left families without electricity.

It created fear and uncertainty.

But it did not shake the throne of God.

And it did not stop the work of Christ.

Instead, God used His people to bring help to those who were hurting. He used churches to demonstrate Christian love. He used ordinary gifts--rice, groceries, financial assistance, repairs, and practical care—to minister to families in need.

And through those acts of mercy, people heard and experienced something of the love of Christ.

Perhaps that is one of the lessons we should remember when we look back on June.

We should grieve the suffering.

We should remember those whose homes and livelihoods were affected.

We should continue to pray for those who are rebuilding.

But we can also give thanks.

Not because the earthquake itself was good, but because God is good even in the midst of it.

His providence does not mean that everything that happens is pleasant. It means that nothing happens outside His sovereign rule and fatherly care.

The ground may shake.

Buildings may crack.

Plans may be interrupted.

Jobs may disappear.

Power may fail.

But God's hand does not.

And perhaps this is what makes Christian relief different from simple humanitarian assistance. We do not merely give because people have physical needs. We give because Christ has first given Himself for us. We do not merely repair houses. We seek opportunities to point people to the One who gives us a home that cannot be shaken.

The earthquake reminded many people that earthly foundations are fragile.

The gospel reminds us that Christ is not.

So, we thank God for the churches and individuals who gave. We thank God for East Martin Christian Reformed Church and for the many others who responded with generosity. We thank Him for the relief that reached the Fatima PBCI congregation and for the families who were cared for through it.

And above all, we thank Him for what He has done beyond what we could see.

Because when we look back, we can say with confidence:

The earthquake shook the ground, but it could not shake God's providence.

Homes were damaged, but God's household continued to grow.

Work was interrupted, but the work of the gospel continued.

And through the hands of His people, God showed His fatherly hand.

All of this reminds us that our God is sovereign over both the disaster and the deliverance, over the need and the provision, over the suffering and the comfort.

Nothing comes to us by chance.

Everything comes through the hand of our Father.

And even when we cannot understand what He is doing, we can trust that He is still doing what is good—for the glory of His name, for the good of His people, and for the advance of the gospel.

In Contact With Council



Doug DeMann opening the August 11 Council meeting with devotions from Philippians 11.and prayer.

The minutes of the July meeting were read. A motion to approved passed.

Pastor Report: Dennis texted Pastor Joel. They are moving into a third apartment. They are very homesick. EMCRC will file the request for their visas soon.

Deacon's Report: The General Fund is 39.7% behind and Ministry Shares is 34.54% behind. The September offering schedule was approved. Seth Watson gave a brief summary on electronic tithing. A motion was made and supported that the deacons explore the details and report back. Motion passed.

Education committee: They will meet on August 18.

Worship committee: Discussion on Josh Shaarda preaching at EMCRC. Motion was made to explore either October 4 or 11. Passed.

Outreach committee: Angie Walker spoke about the new "Educational Enlightenment" position through Ethos 360. It is an answer to prayer for many missionaries. VBS at EMCRC is tabled until 2027.

Building and Grounds: Insulation was added to the parsonage as well as a new sump pump and dehumidifier. Jen Tuinstra returns to the janitorial position. Still looking for a chairperson. Thanks to Kevin Bouman for the church dehumidifier lift pump.

Eight Council visits were made.

Old Business: Possibly have Julie share about her trip to Cuba.

Martin Schools Rapid Response Team looked at EMCRC facilities for emergency use and were pleased. They were looking for a land line to use – no longer available.

New Business: Bridal showers (grocery) for Riley Tuinstra and Brooke (Leep) Hoystadt were discussed.

Discussion took place on the Classis Lake Erie merger with Kalamazoo classis.

Evening Ladies' Bible Study wants to study the book of Titus (Displaying the Gospel of Grace). Motion to permit study and fund the purchase of books if requested passed.

Motion to adjourn passed. Dennis DeYoung closed in prayer and has devotions September 8.

Bible Study Opportunities at East Martin

Sunday School and Catechism

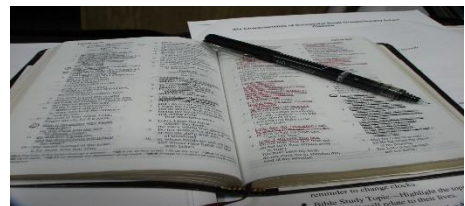
Sunday School and Catechism will begin on September 20. The teachers for this year are as follows:

Prekindergarten -2nd: Amy Kalkman and Nancy Leep

3rd and 4th: Libby Dendel and Cece Sutherland

5th-8th: Bruce Tiemeyer

9th-12th: Jonathan Kalkman



Men's Bible Study

The Men's Bible study will be starting again on Wednesday evening, September 16th at 7 and meet the first and third Wednesday of each month. They will be continuing their study from the book Spiritual Warfare by Jack Kuhatschek. The lessons so far have dealt with detecting the deceiver, facing temptation, the serpent's strategy, and the armor of God. They are on lesson 5, which is about the war within. Other lessons will cover defeating the destroyer, overcoming our accuser, surviving Satan's attacks, and standing firm. Anyone interested in joining or any questions please talk to Keith Smit.

Ladies' Evening Bible Study

The Ladies' Bible Study will be doing a study on Titus. The gospel that saves us for all eternity is the same gospel that transforms us day by day. Knowing, believing, and living out the truths of the gospel changes not only our lives, but our homes, churches, and culture as well. This is how the gospel of grace is put on display for all to see. In this 8-session Bible study with video,

Courtney Doctor and Hunter Beless team up to explore every verse of Paul's letter to his friend Titus. You'll see the essential connection between right belief and right character and the way both testify to the goodness of the gospel. And you'll be reminded that our world will be attracted to the gospel when they see its beauty displayed in us.

There is a signup sheet in the narthex if you would like to join. Meetings will be held the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. starting September 14th. If you have any questions, please talk to Sue Tiemeyer.

Coffee Break

Come join this season for Coffee Break every Wednesday at 9:45 am beginning September 16. The study of "Am I My Sister's Keeper" by Barbara Geer will continue. If you have any questions, please talk with Deb Smit or Denise Leep.

Youth Group

Youth Group will be starting September 13. We meet at The Anchor on the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 7:30 pm. We don't know what Bible book we are studying yet. Any High Schooler through 20 years of age may join us. We eat, do Bible study and play games. If anyone has questions, please contact Scott Tuinstra or Libby Dendel.

Her True North

Her True North is a young ladies' Bible study which meets on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month at The Anchor at 7:30 pm. We enjoy a time of fellowship over a meal and study the Bible together. We will continue with our study of the Ladies of the Bible. Any young lady in High school though age 20 is welcome to join us. If you have any questions, please contact Jen Tuinstra or Libby Dendel.

GEMS and Cadets

Watch the bulletin for details on GEMS and Cadets.



What's New in our Library

A LESSEN IN PROPRIETY - JEN TURANO #1
IN PURSUIT OF CIVILITY - JEN TURANO # 2
DON'T UPSTART THE BODY - NAOMI STEPHENS (Mystery)
THE EYES OF RIVER - CINDY K. SPROLES (Appalachian Novel)
CONSPIRACY - COLLEEN COBLE (Sanctuary novel #3)
A LIFE SO TRUE - TRACIE PETERSON (Minnesota Legacy #2)
THROUGH EACH TOMORROW - GABRIELLE MEYER (Book 6)
SHORTBREAD IN THE HIGHLANDS - ROBIN JONES GUNN



Martin Area Resource Center

When grocery shopping please remember Martin Area Resource Center. In September, they need Back to School “stuff”.

Peanut butter and jelly; mac and cheese; tuna, healthy snacks, graham crackers, cracker packs, puddings and Jello, juice boxes.

Thanks in advance for helping those in our community who are in need.



East Martin Christian School will be hosting their 83rd annual Harvest Sale on Saturday, October 10. Start thinking about items you would like to make or donate for this fundraiser. Thank you for your support of the Harvest Sale and Christian education at EMCS.

Pan Burritos

2 pounds ground beef
2 large cans of enchilada sauce
16 oz refried beans (warmed)
1 pkg tortillas
2-10 oz shredded cheese
Salt
Pepper
Garlic powder



Brown ground beef, drain. Add ½ can enchilada sauce. Simmer 15-20 minutes. Add garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Spray 9x13 pan.

Make layers: sauce, tortilla, beans, meat, cheese (3 layers) -- tear tortillas to fit pan.
Bake @ 350 degrees 30-40 minutes.

Offerings for July 2026

General Fund	\$12,126.00
Ministry Shares	2,287.45
Benevolence	200.00
GEMS	100.00
Cadets	70.00
Faith Promise	
East Martin Missions	150.00
Shaarda	315.00
Smit	1,765.00
Tiemeyer	315.00
Walker	315.00
Barry County Christian School	70.00
East Martin Christian School	1,531.90
Heritage Christian School	150.00
Kalamazoo Christian School	290.00
Tri-Unity Christian School	200.00
Zion Christian School	70.00
Philippine Earthquake Relief	4,568.00
SON-Life Camp	70.00
Martin Resource Center	250.00
Bible League Intl.	431.00
Gideons	100.00
Project Hope	100.00
Youth for Christ	317.00
Wycliffe Bible Translators	70.00
Freedom in Christ	551.00
Total	\$26,466.35

Offerings for September

September 6: AM – General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM – Bible League
September 13: AM – East Martin Christian School; PM – Luke Society
September 20: AM – General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM – Mel Trotter Mission
September 27: AM – General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM – Rehoboth Chrisitan School

Greeters

September 6: AM: Bruce & Renee Aukema, Vern Klaasen; PM: Don & Julie Wubben
September 13: AM: Elders; PM: Marcia Bouman
September 20: AM: Sunday School Kids, Dave Misner; PM: Chase & Laura DeMaagd
September 27: AM: Joe DeKoekkoek, Keith Smit; PM: Merrie Beth DenBoer

Ushers

September 6: Bruce Tiemeyer, Henry Tuinstra, Henry M. Tuinstra
September 13: Dean VanderMeulen, Luke Watson, Tim Westendorp
September 20: Sunday School Boys
September 27: Thomas Westendorp, Dean Wubben, Don Wubben

Nursery

September 6: Laura DeMaagd
September 13: Riley and Addison Tuinstra
September 20: Jessica Tucker
September 27: Rebekah Westendorp

Library

September 6: Linda DeYoung
September 13: Ida Westendorp
September 20: Rena Lynema
September 27: Nancy Tuinstra

