

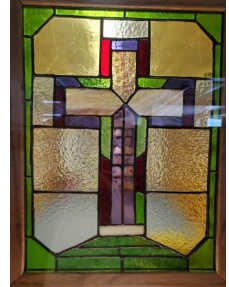


January 2026

A monthly publication of the
East Martin Christian Reformed Church

Reflections from the Pulpit

New Sermon Series on the Book of Nehemiah: Rebuilding, Reforming, and Restoring



The Echoes

We have recently begun a new sermon series in the book of Nehemiah, a timely and deeply encouraging journey that calls us to see how God rebuilds His people—not only spiritually, but also communally. From Nehemiah's burdened prayer to the people's united labor, this book shows us that renewal begins when God's people take seriously both God's glory and the brokenness around them. Nehemiah reminds us that God's work of restoration is always rooted in His covenant faithfulness and carried out through ordinary believers who are willing to pray, to act, and to serve together.

As we walk through this series, we are being invited to see ourselves in the story: a people called not to stand alone, but to build side by side. Nehemiah teaches us that leadership matters, unity is essential, and spiritual indifference is dangerous. It teaches us that God delights to use willing hands and faithful hearts to accomplish His purposes. This series encourages us to renew our commitment to Christ and to one another, trusting that the same God who rebuilt Jerusalem's walls is still at work rebuilding His church today, stone by stone, by grace.

Bringing the Table to Those Who Could Not Come

Last month, our church began a ministry of bringing the Lord's Supper to those who are shut-in, hospitalized, or unable to attend worship because of illness or winter conditions. This ministry is rooted in the conviction that the Lord's Supper is not only a remembrance, but a true means of grace—a spiritual meal by which Christ strengthens weak faith, comforts the weary, and gives His people a foretaste of heaven. At the bedside and in the home, Communion proclaims hope: that believers remain part of Christ's body, that Christ meets His people even in weakness, and that His grip is stronger than disease, distance, and death.

We thank God for the opportunity to bring the Table to Larry and Phyllis before Phyllis entered glory; to Bill and Bonnie during Bill's rehabilitation; to Paul and Betty in their home; to Pat Fenton with her daughter, Sue, and grandson, Aren, in assisted living; and to Hazel Kroon, a widow, in her lake house. We continue to hope to serve Gerda Wubben, Joan Kammeraad, Mina Haveman, and Mary Visser. By God's grace, eleven

church members have already volunteered to join in this ministry. We look forward to continuing to serve our widows, widowers, the shut-ins, and the sick—bringing them the elements and the assurance they proclaim: Christ invites the weak, strengthens the doubting, and faithfully feeds His people until the day they gather at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Testimonies of New Church Members Part 1:

In 2003 my nursing license was suspended and I turned to a life of crime and addiction. I spent the next 16 years in and out of jails, prisons, and mental institutes.

In 2019 I experienced an episode of mania and psychosis and received a diagnosis of bipolar disorder with psychosis. That became my focus and I struggled with trying to understand what this meant for my future. I searched for God but did not believe in Him, I focused on medication and therapy and reading as much as I could about this disorder. In October 2024 I experienced mania and psychosis again. During that time God made Himself known to me and guided me to East Martin Christian Reformed Church. I didn't want to attend a church in Martin where others knew of my past, I had shame because I didn't have God. I was led to this scripture: Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord; plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans to give you hope and a future."

I was also led to Spiritual Care Consultants and I began my journey of healing + filled my life with church, Bible study, and forgiveness. I no longer suffer from depression, mania or psychosis. II Timothy says "For God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

- Kenlee Funk

I thought I could do everything myself, long after I was saved at 13 years old. Over time, traversing churches from Mars Hill to Grace Spring, listening to many pastors on TV & everything in between, I was never feeling full. In the back of my mind, as long as I was following the 10 Commandments and living within those parameters, I was a 'good Christian', I would be fine and see heaven someday. Fading away, going the easy route, wandering, not focused, rarely praying or seeking, not really waiting and seldom listening.

Even though I always knew Jesus was with me, I never had a deep relationship with him. It was when the hard stuff hit, losing my father & shortly afterwards my grandmother, my aunt, and then my brother in a tragic fishing accident, one after another in a very short period of time, I was brought to my knees. Then, my best friend who is a Christian, had a massive stroke after the premature birth of her long-awaited baby. She lost her baby on my birthday; the pain wouldn't cease. The massive stroke left her almost unable to communicate. Yet, she kept leaning on Jesus to carry her thru, most would be angry but she wasn't, she was another testament to me.

I learned to lean on Jesus more. Then I prayed ceaselessly to be turned toward Him more, to know Him more, for the Holy Spirit to fill my heart. The heart break was immense but His Grace carried me through. Further realizing that I couldn't do it on my own, I shared with others. I wanted His light to shine thru me so others could see how His grace and mercy lifted my unworthy self and brought me closer to our Lord and Savior. I was weary, He was strong. I was angry, He kept being my rock. When life and daily events occur, I give God the glory. I now know that everything, good or bad is out of my control and is His will. His love is steadfast like no other and He never leaves me, although I'm not worthy. Through His grace, my eyes have been opened. I am thankful that I know Him more each day and I am His. I prayed and prayed for a church for my family to belong to and God led my husband here. I am eternally grateful and will joyfully continue my journey, stronger than ever to seek Jesus.

With gratitude,
- Keri Watson

I am very grateful to the Lord Jesus for my salvation and that our Lord has led me to EMCRC. It has also brought me great joy to see my wife and children baptized and join EMCRC as members of the church. I enjoy listening to Pastor Joel's Bible-centered preaching and have enjoyed my time with the Men's Wednesday night Bible study. It is also wonderful to see the spirit moving others to join us in worshipping our Lord Jesus in our time at EMCRC. It warms my heart to be a part of this church and join the fellowship of so many kind and friendly believers.

- Seth Watson

My Testimony

I was blessed to be born into a family of believers. From an early age, my parents taught me to live for Christ and to build my life upon His Word. For a time, however, our family found ourselves without a church home. We had stepped away from many of the postmodern churches of our day, feeling disconnected from the truth-centered worship we longed for.

Even during that season, my father made sure our family didn't go without hearing the Word of God. Every Sunday, we would gather together at home and listen to sermons—very often by R.C. Sproul. Those messages spoke to my heart in a way few others ever had. R.C. Sproul preached the Word clearly and faithfully, calling believers to live not for the world but for the glory of God.

Week after week, as I listened, I could feel the Spirit working in me. My thoughts, my choices, and my habits began to change. But as the years went on, and without a church community to walk beside me, I slowly began to drift. The fire that once burned bright inside me dimmed. I wasn't nourishing the light Christ had placed in me, and I began to turn back to worldly things.

Then one day, everything changed. I was sitting in my room, scrolling through social media, when I came across a young man—someone my age who seemed to have everything: wealth, success, and all that the world calls "good." I found myself jealous, wishing I had what he did. But in that very moment, the Lord convicted me. It was sudden and powerful—like being struck by truth itself.

I turned off my phone, set it down, and reached for my Bible, which had been gathering dust beside my bed for months. I opened it to the Gospel of Matthew and began reading *The Sermon on the Mount*. I don't even know what prompted me to do that—it felt as though it wasn't me, but the Spirit leading my hands.

As I read Jesus' words, I was overwhelmed by conviction. My sins lay bare before me. I saw what I had become—someone chasing after earthly riches instead of storing up treasures in heaven. Yet, in that same moment, I also saw the grace of God pulling me out of that path.

That night marked a turning point in my faith. What had once been my parents' faith became my own. I began journaling what I was learning, writing down truths from Scripture and reminders to keep my heart focused on the things of God.

I made the decision then to dedicate myself fully to Christ—to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to follow Him faithfully, no matter the cost.

- Luke Watson

Praying for the Nations: Somalia

Prayer Points for Somalia

Population: 19.5 million | Unreached: 99.7% | Evangelical Christians: ~0.1%

Missionaries:

Pray that God would raise up, protect, and sustain gospel workers to serve faithfully among a people where the need is vast and the church is very small.

Organizations:

Pray for mission and aid organizations to labor with wisdom, unity, and perseverance, and for God to provide workers and resources for long-term gospel presence.

Government:

Pray for leaders and authorities, that God would restrain violence and corruption, grant stability, and open doors for peace and the spread of the gospel.

Souls:

Pray that the Holy Spirit would open hearts to Christ, draw many to saving faith, and establish strong, Scripture-rooted churches where so few currently know the gospel.

In Contact With Council



Cameron opened the meeting of January 13 with devotions from John 14:23-24 and In Touch Ministries — The Value of Obedience.

- ♦ Minutes of the November meeting were read. A motion to approve passed.
- ♦ Pastor's Report: (December 2025-January 2026)

Twelve visits were made including the Leep family, Larry and Phyllis Tuinstra, Joe DeKoeckoe, Nick, Courtney and boys, the Watsons, Bill and Bonnie and Joyce Ritchie. Five families were hosted for meals.

Communion was delivered to five shut-ins with congregation members and Elders.

Pulpit swap will take place on January 25 with Mark Immink

Pulpit supply February 26

Several membership classes were held.

Vacation is planned for April.

- ♦ Deacons' Report:
 - General Fund is 15.9% ahead;
 - Ministry Shares is 20.6% behind
 - The motion made to accept the February offering schedule passed
- ♦ Worship Committee: The live nativity went well. Three people made a commitment to Christ.
- ♦ Outreach:
 - Getting a committee to start VBS plans
 - Getting info on Martin Resource Center
- ♦ Building Committee:
 - Checking on getting salt down early
- ♦ Council Visits:
 - Baskets were delivered — 14 reported visits
- ♦ Trinidad family insurance — currently set
- ♦ VISA update: calling congregational meeting on January 25 for an update
- ♦ A motion was made and passed to not allow our church facility to be used for non-member functions unless approved by the Council.
- ♦ The motion made to accept the membership transfer of Tim and Terri Miller passed.
- ♦ A motion to adjourn passed.
- ♦ Tim Westendorp closed in prayer and has devotions at the February meeting.

The Year in Review

The following changes took place in our membership in 2025.

Ayden Petrie, Charlotte Zhou, Wesley Hoysradt, and Jett and Josie Leep were added to our membership through infant baptism.

Rozalyn Denzel, Kenlee Funk, Eden Suk, Keri Watson, Kelsy Watson, Luke Watson and Cecillia Sutherland were added to our number through adult baptism.

Steve Heffron, Seth Watson and Henry Tuinstra joined our membership through profession of their faith.

The memberships of Paul and Betty DeMann, Brad and Maria Leep and their son, Jack, were received from other churches. The memberships of Sam DeYoung and Rob and Marlene Leep were transferred to other churches.

Kathy Adrianson, Eleanor DeKoekkoek and Phyllis Tuinstra were taken from us in death.



Check Out What's New in our Library

THE CHRISTMAS RING—
KAREN KINGSBURY —
Good Book

THE ROYAL ARTISAN—TESSA AFSHAR
(Queen Esther's Court #2)

MY BELOVED—JAN KARON

A MOMENT TO LOVE—TRACIE PETERSON
(Hope of Cheyenne)

C IS FOR COURTING—SHELLY SHEPARD
GRAY (Amish ABC's)

WHAT I LEFT FOR YOU—LIZ TOLSMA
(Echoes of the Past)

STILL WATERS—PATRICIA JOHNS (Amish
of Shepherd's Hill #2)

FAULT BETWEEN US—STEPHANIE
LANDSEM (Yellowstone National Park
Earthquake)

DASTARDLY DEEDS DOWN ON THE FARM
(4 Farmyard Mysteries)

Jonah Wubben is very grateful to be remembered with cookies and other goodies periodically by his home church. He wouldn't say how fresh the cookies were but he did say he wasn't complaining. His box is now sent directly to the USS Blueridge so it arrives much quicker.



If you wish to write to Jonah, addressed envelopes are available on the bulletin board for your use.

Wild Game Dinner at EMCS



Save the date! East Martin Christian School's Annual Wild Game Dinner will be held on Saturday, February 21. Doors open at 4 pm; dinner at 5 pm. Our speaker this year is Tom Maher, former public safety officer and hunter. There will be Dutch and silent auction items to win. If you have meat or fish you'd like to donate or if you're willing to make a dish, please contact Jen Tuinstra at 269-779-2323. For more details and to RSVP visit www.eastmartin.org/support.

The Wild Game Dinner has been a fun and successful fundraiser for our school for over twenty years. God has blessed us with many great speakers, volunteers and regulars that have made the event our biggest draw for people outside our regular East Martin Christian School community. The committee that heads up the dinner is looking for new members that are willing to take this event into the future of East Martin Christian School. We are seeking people that are willing to walk beside us for the next few years and see how they can take ownership of the Wild Game Dinner. Ideally we would like to see the current committee phased out in two to three years and then new people cycled through regularly every few years. Please contact Scott Tuinstra 269-225-9531 or Jen Tuinstra 269-779-2323 by phone or text after you have prayerfully considered how you may be able to help. We would like to set up a meeting soon with everyone that is interested. Thanks in advance.



Martin Area Resource Center

When you are grocery shopping in February, please purchase some of the items below for the Martin Area Resource Center. Breakfast items: Cereal, Pop-tarts, cereal/ breakfast bars, oatmeal and instant oatmeal flavors, pancake mix and syrup.

Greeters

February 1: AM—Wes & Darlene Leep, Kevin Bouman; PM—Les & Rena Lynema
February 8: AM—Dave & Jean Mejeur, Doug DeMann; PM—Keith & Deb Smit
February 15: AM—Nancy Minegar & Joan Kammeraad, Dennis DeYoung; PM—Bruce & Sue Tiemeyer
February 22: AM—Tom & Deb Rook, Vern Klaasen; PM—Scott & Jen Tuinstra

Ushers

February 1: Dave DeYoung, Jacob DeYoung, Joel DeYoung
February 8: Levi DeYoung, Jonathan Kalkman, Bob Katje
February 15: Bram Katje, Glenn Leep, Wes Leep
February 22: Bruce Mejeur, Dave Mejeur, Keith Smit

Nursery

February 1: Jen, Violet and Willow Tuinstra
February 8: Laura DeMaagd
February 15: Riley and Addison Tuinstra
February 22: Jessica Tucker

Library

February 1: Ida Westendorp
February 8: Rena Lynema
February 15: Linda DeYoung
February 22: Ida Westendorp

Knock Your Socks Off Cake

1 box German chocolate cake mix
8 oz cream cheese
2 cups chocolate chips
2 tsps. vanilla
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 cup pecans

Prepare cake mix according to directions. Pour into a 9x13" pan and set aside. Mix rest of ingredients and drop by spoonfuls on cake batter. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-50 minutes.

Frost with icing:
1 (3 oz) pkg instant chocolate pudding
1 pkg Dream Whip (dry)
1 1/2 cups milk
1 tsp vanilla

Whip until thick. Spread on cooled cake. Refrigerate, covered.

Tithes and Offerings for December



General Fund	\$45,327.00
Ministry Shares	4,522.00
Faith Promise	
Shaarda	8,772.50
Smit	7,422.50
Tiemeyer	8,177.50
Walker	2,877.50
Benevolence	903.00
Senior High Youth Group	340.00
Library	100.00
East Martin Christian School	3,543.00
Kalamazoo Christian High School	500.00
Rehoboth Christian School	500.00
Zion Christian School	115.00
Education Assistance	100.00
Cadets	200.00
Right to Life Education Fund	5,125.00
LEMA Institute	1,150.00
World Renew—DRS	3,150.00
World Renew—General	8,050.00
Growing Hope Globally	5,000.00
Martin Area Resource Center	7,035.00
Kalamazoo Gospel Mission	5,500.00
Reframe Ministries	25.00
Reaching the Forgotten	5,327.00
Wycliffe Bible Translators	5,000.00
Bible League	25.00
Vacation Bible School	25.00
Haven Today	5,000.00
The Luke Society	5,000.00
Total	\$138,812.00

Offering Schedule for February

February 1: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM—Freedom in Christ (Shaarda)
February 8: AM—East Martin Christian School; PM—Growing Hope Globally
February 15: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM—LEMA Institute
February 22: AM—Martin Area Resource Center; PM—Rehoboth Christian School