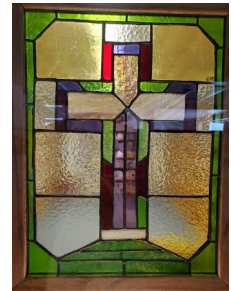


The Echoes

September 2025

A monthly publication of the
East Martin Christian Reformed Church

Reflections from the Pulpit



We concluded our sermon series on the seven churches of Revelation with a service full of celebration. Preaching on the letter to Laodicea, we reflected on Jesus as the true and living water—the One who refreshes, renews, and invites His children to dine at His table.

What a joy it was that morning to witness two professions of faith and six baptisms—five in the sanctuary by pouring and one by immersion. We also gathered around the Lord's Supper. It was a Lord's Day rich with every means of grace. Truly, praise be to God for His abundant blessings!

As a church, we also began a new sermon series for Reformation Month: *Courageous for the Faith*. Together we are exploring the Five Solas of the Reformation and remembering how God used Reformers such as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Tyndale, and Huss to restore His church to the pure gospel. Their courage changed the world, and their witness continues to inspire us to stand firmly in Christ.

In our evening worship, we continue to walk through the Heidelberg Catechism and are nearing the end of its section on the Apostles' Creed. How fitting during this Reformation season to be reminded that the church of Christ is a confessional, catechetical, and creedal church—then and now.

Celebrations of Faith

This past month, the Lord has richly blessed our congregation by adding to our number. With joy we welcome:

- ◆ Seth, Keri, Luke, and Kelsey Watson – a wonderful family joined to our fellowship.
- ◆ Steven Heffron, who recently married Sarah De Young, is now part of our covenant family, too.
- ◆ Rozalyn Denzel, who has long served among us and now comes to the Lord's Table in full communion. She was very excited and looking forward to having her first communion.
- ◆ Eden Suk, whose faith journey has been nurtured by many in our congregation and beyond. It was a lovely evening when we baptized her at a lake.
- ◆ Kenlee Funk, who shared a powerful testimony of God's grace in bringing her out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Professions of Faith:

- ◆ Steven Patrick Heffron
- ◆ Charles Seth Watson

Baptisms:

- ◆ Keri Ann Watson
- ◆ Luke Andrew Watson
- ◆ Kelsey Ann Watson
- ◆ Rozalyn Aria Denzel
- ◆ Kenlee Nichole Funk
- ◆ Eden Marie Suk (by immersion at SON-Life Camp)

We rejoice with these brothers and sisters and praise God for the beauty of His covenant promises.

Shepherding Visits

Pastoral visits this month have once again reminded us of God's faithfulness in every season of life.

- ◆ Together with Renee Aukema, I visited Mary Visser. Though dementia clouds her memory, her joy in the Lord was evident. We read Philippians 1:20–21 and prayed with her, rejoicing in the hope of being with Christ.
- ◆ Betty visited us and we welcomed her warmly with coffee and Filipino pastries. We prayed together for healing, strength, and encouragement for both her and Paul.
- ◆ Gerda Wubben also received a visit. Though memory fades, her faith endures, and we take comfort in knowing that God never forgets His children. We read Psalm 13 and prayed together.
- ◆ We visited Joan Kammeraad and had a lovely lunch at her apartment's kitchen. We met her neighbors and friends. We read Philippians 4:4-5 and closed in prayer.

I also joined our Outreach Ministry meeting. Together we are planning new opportunities for outreach to families and friends of our members. We continue to lift up the missionaries we support, trusting that even through challenges, the Lord's providence is sure.

Looking Ahead

As we look toward October and the rest of the year, we are excited to see several of our regular attendees exploring membership. Lord willing, we will receive them in December during Communion Sunday.

We also continue our Reformation Month series. May the courage and conviction of the Reformers stir our own hearts to stand firm in the gospel—by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone.

With gratitude for what God has done and anticipation for what He will yet do, we entrust our church family to the care of Christ, our Good Shepherd.

**In Contact
With Council**

Doug DeMann opened the September Council meeting by reading Psalm 65 and opened with prayer. The minutes of the last meeting were read. A motion to approve passed.

Pastor's report:

- ◆ Pastor Joel reported on several visits.
 - He visited with the families who had babies baptized.
 - Henry and Cece (profession and baptism) have been rescheduled.
 - The Watsons are excited to be members here.

Working at East Martin Christian School this year teaching Bible. Visited the Smit family, Mary Visser, Paul and Betty DeMann and Merrie Beth and followed up with Kari Mejeur Zhou. Had Wayne, Denise and family over for supper.

Went to Sam and Julia's wedding.

- ◆ Deacons' report:
General fund 4% behind; Ministry shares 29% behind.
The offering schedule was presented.
A motion to approve passed.
We will continue to support Angie Walker.
- ◆ Executive committee—no meeting
- ◆ Worship committee—met
Considering doing a live Nativity again this year.
Working on a hymn sing on the 5th Sunday of each month. A motion to proceed passed.
- ◆ Education committee—met
Teachers are ready to start.
September 17 is the start up for Cadets and GEMS.
Men's Bible study meets second and fourth Wednesday of each month
Women's Bible study has big group on Monday night.
Sunday School Christmas program set for December 21.
- ◆ Outreach committee—met
Shaardas will be here on October 12.
Josh is preaching both services. We are having lasagna for lunch.
Faith Promise forms go out in November.
Dismantled a small playground
Potato bake held on September 14
Meeting in January to see about the possibility of doing Vacation Bible School here.
- ◆ Building and Grounds—met
Parking lot cracks were sealed
New handicap spots installed
New locks installed
Carpets cleaned, beams cleaned, and floors in basement scheduled to be waxed.
- ◆ Finance committee—no meeting
- ◆ Five Council visits were made

- ◆ Old business: Pastor Joel's student visa expires on May 15; need to be ready to start the process for a new Visa.
- ◆ New business: A motion to accept new members passed. Seth, Keri, Luke and Kelsey Watson, Kenlee Funk, Steve Heffron and Eden Suk.
- ◆ The Lord's Supper will be celebrated September 14. Don and Wayne will greet.
- ◆ Libby has new Bible study on Sunday night and they are looking for name.
- ◆ A motion to let Martin Public School use our church in case of an emergency passed.
- ◆ The next meeting is scheduled for October 14. Dennis closed with prayer and has devotions next time.

Praying for the Nation: Indonesia

Indonesia has about 792 people groups, of which 237 remain unreached, representing nearly 200 million people with little or no access to the gospel.

Please pray that God would:
Awaken hearts among the unreached to seek Him.
Provide Scripture and Christian resources in local languages.
Protect and strengthen workers serving in difficult areas.
Unify and mobilize the Indonesian church to reach the unreached.
Break down spiritual and cultural barriers so that the gospel may advance with power.

Bible League Conference 2025

The Wonder of *With*

Tucked in between accounts of battles and kings, we find in our Bibles this little gem of a book called *Ruth*. Yet, beginning and ending with Naomi, the reader sees not Ruth, but Naomi, in only the first five verses go from a scarcity of food to a scarcity of hope. In the end, though, over the course of an interwoven love story between Boaz and Ruth, we witness the wonder of *with*.

On Friday, September 5, 2025, at Friendship Christian Reformed Church, 208 attendees of the Bible League International Michigan Conference (fourteen from East Martin) fellowshiped, worshipped, and learned about our incredible Lord and His desire for our lives. The day's offering (to reach the under-resourced church around the world) came to \$10,100, along with an additional \$565 from a new feature, sales of gently used jewelry.

This year's emcee for this annual event, Pastor Ken Kuiper, opened the day-conference by focusing our attention on important characteristics of God. Thinking about II Peter 3:1-13, 18, he posed the question: Why has Jesus not come back yet? It's certainly not because He's forgotten! Rather, God is patient and knows every single person in history who's going to come to faith in Jesus Christ, some of whom have not yet been born. Let each of us be glad that He didn't come back before we accepted Him. Points to consider: (1) give thanks that He patiently waits for all to come to Him; (2) meanwhile, live holy and godly lives; and (3) remember *how* God gathers His people: *It comes from the Word.*

And our keynote speaker from Proverbs 31 Ministries, Alicia Bruxvoort, directly took us to that powerful Word, in the book of *Ruth*. Did you know that *Ruth* means "companion"? We all need someone who helps "make our legs braver." Well, it's not wise to do life alone. Because we were made to do life together. And we don't need to do big things to make an impact for God in history. In fact, it often simply boils down to **withness**. [No, that's not a typo!] Ruth 1:16 shows us the "**wonder of with.**" Ruth says to her mother-in-law Naomi, "Do not press me to forsake you in turning back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God." To sum up, "**withness**" means I'm committed to sharing your steps with you. We don't have to know all the answers. But you are not alone. ***"I will go where you go."***

Alicia exhorted and challenged us to give the gift of the **wonder of with**. We need to *see* people the Lord puts in our path and *align* our walk with our words. Every step validates "I

see you." Let us "[b]e devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above [y]ourselves" (Romans 12:10). The words "I'm with you" don't mean much if they spill off our tongues but don't steer our steps.

How do we do just that? In a back and forth interview, Bible League CEO Jos Snoep and Ministry Trainer and pastor, Johnny Delgado, brought out the absolute necessity of hunger for the Word. As in Acts 12:24, "... the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied." Notice that the Word continued to grow. Clearly, we can't do discipleship or evangelism if we don't have the Word of God. As Alicia then pointed out, "We may be able to watch without engaging our hearts, but we cannot truly see without engaging our souls..." and for that we need the Word. "Lord, open the eyes of my heart" (Ephesians 1:18).

Following our break for a delicious lunch, John Scafe from Legacy Thrift noted that each of us is on a journey. Similar to the Israelites of old, we camp until the Lord moves us on to the next step. God sets up boundaries. He drives down stakes. Then we live in our area of influence, as true followers of Jesus Christ. Similarly, the **wonder of with** is a resolution to meet each other where we are, continued Alicia Bruxvoort. There's a significant difference between a *chaperone* and a *companion*, however. The name *Ruth* means *companion*, one who *keeps company* with another. ***"I will stay where you stay,"*** the Moabitess declares. It's meeting others where they are—like pitching a tent. Literally or figuratively, tarry throughout the night with someone the Lord puts in your path. It's not enabling; it's *engaging*.

The truth is, God adopts all of us, His children, into His family (Ephesians 1). It's a call to learn from our many differences and celebrate our ONE hope. Thankfully, we don't have to erase our differences to embrace walking together. "For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future" (Ephesians 4:4 NLT). Also, the **wonder of with** isn't always about the ultimate destination. Rather, it's a promise to stay near during the "night halts," to join the journey which is still in process, just like the Old Testament Israelites—and Ruth and Naomi.

The **wonder of with** is a courageous commitment to honesty and authenticity. Actually, it's in the grit of life that we need the grace of **withness**. Our *imperfect* presence often speaks louder than *perfect* words. Finally, it's a daily decision to choose faithfulness. "A remarkable life is made up of a thousand unremarkable steps," Alicia shared, quoting Pastor Jeff Manion. Let someone taste and see that the Lord is good, and he or she will want more of what s/he sees. In reality, we hinge our lives on our hope. "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you:" writes Paul in Romans 12:1 MSG. "Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering."

On that September Friday, we listened to and participated in music, thoughtfully and intentionally selected by worship leader Sara Denzel—prelude music of songs and hymns, a special music number from Sara, and lots of joyful and vibrant singing, from an early set that focused on Jesus' Name to additional sets that beautifully enhanced and enriched each and every conference segment.

During the final portion, the **wonder of with** [involves]...an overflow of our relationship with Jesus, God-with-us. "**Your God will be my God.**" We have a God Who sees, Emmanuel, God with us, 24/7. It's a commitment for the long haul. But if we don't keep company with Jesus, we won't keep company with others. We can't do it in our own strength either. The secret to walking well is prioritizing our walk and letting Him empower our steps. Jesus instructs us, "Walk with Me and work with Me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with Me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly" (Matthew 11:25-30 MSG).

Alicia identified three results of walking/keeping company with Jesus: Such *companionship* changes *what* we see (We have access to eternal riches.). It changes *how* we serve/give (We offer hope.). It changes *whom* we spotlight (We discern opportunities [Acts 3:1-9]). Ultimately, let's be

"Ruth's" and, like the early disciples, be "recognized as *companions of Jesus*" (Acts 4:13). To do so, we must entwine ourselves around Him and tether ourselves to His heart.

God 's desire for our lives? God calls us to

live in **The Wonder of *With!***



Check out the new books in our library

SECOND CHANCE AT
SUNSHINE INN—AMY
CLIPSTON

FINAL APPROACH—LYNETTE EASON
(Lake City Heroes #4)

SHADOWED WITNESS—ANGELA

CARLISLE (Secrets of Kincaid #2)

WOMEN OF OAK RIDGE—MICHELLE

SHOCKLEE (Historical— Very Interesting)

THE PRETENDER—WANDA E.

BRUNSTETTER (Mifflin County Mystery #3)

NOBLE—MESU ANDREWS (King David's
Brides #2)

MAAKAH WHEN THE ROAD COMES

AROUND—KATIE POWERS Good book

THE BITTER END BIRDING SOCIETY—

AMANDA COX Good book. (Be careful you
may become a bird watcher)

Cookie Time – we will be packing cookies for our military personnel, those attending college and our single high school graduates. If you are willing to bake cookies, please sign the sheet in the narthex. Please indicate the kind of cookies you will make so we have a variety. If you can't bake but would like to help, cracker packs, Kind bars or chocolates are always welcome. We will pack the boxes on October 14. Please indicate if you can help with that also.





Martin Area Resource Center

When grocery shopping in October, please remember the needs of those less fortunate.

Martin Resource Center needs the following:

Toilet paper, paper towels, napkins, paper plates, female sanitary napkins/tampons, wraps, baggies, foil.

EMCS Harvest Sale

East Martin Christian School is excited to announce that the 82nd Annual Harvest Sale will be Saturday, October 11, at 4:00 P.M. If you would like to donate or sponsor this event please contact Jennifer Tuinstra (269) 779-2323 with items/description to be included in the Harvest Sale booklet. Please be sure to turn in all donations (excluding perishable items) and auction items to the school office by October 3. Thank you for your support of the Harvest Sale and of Christian education at EMCS.



Greeters

October 5: AM—Joel and Jen DeYoung, Tim Westendorp; PM—Glenn and Nancy Leep

October 12: AM—Jonathan and Amy Kalkman, Dean Wubben; PM—Wayne and Denise Leep

October 19: AM—Steve and Sara Heffron, Don Wubben; PM—Wes and Darlene Leep

October 26: AM—Joan Kammeraad and Nancy Minegar, Harold Wykstra; PM—Dave and Karen Misner

Ushers

October 5: Joe DeKoekkoek, Kevin DeKoekkoek, Chase DeMaagd

October 12: Dave DeYoung, Jacob DeYoung, Joel DeYoung

October 19: Levi DeYoung, Sam DeYoung, Jonathan Kalkman

October 26: Bob Katje, Bram Katje, Wes Leep

Nursery

October 5: Riley and Addison Tuinstra

October 12: Jessica Tucker

October 19: Rebekah Westendorp

October 26: Jen, Violet, Willow Tuinstra

Library

October 5: Carolyn VanderMeulen

October 12: Linda DeYoung

October 19: Ida Westendorp

October 26: Rena Lynema

Tithes and Offerings for August



General Fund	\$10,848.00
Ministry Shares	1,846.40
Faith Promise	
Shaarda	165.00
Smit	415.00
Tiemeyer	415.00
Walker	145.00
Coram Deo Books Translation	2,335.00
East Martin Christian School	2,170.00
Right to Life Education	767.00
Martin Resource Center	368.00
Growing Hope Globally	230.00
Youth for Christ	146.00
Total	\$19,850.40

Offerings for October

October 5: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM—Luke Society

October 12: AM—East Martin Christian School; PM—Martin Resource Center

October 19: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM—Wycliffe

October 26: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM—Elim Christian School