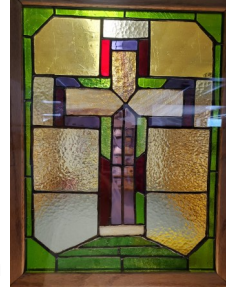




December 2025

A monthly publication of the
East Martin Christian Reformed Church

Echoes of God's Faithfulness — A Year in Review (2025)



As we come to the close of 2025, we pause not simply to look back, but to give thanks. This past year has been filled with growth, challenge, sorrow, joy, and above all, the unmistakable faithfulness of God.

The year began with our journey through the book of Psalms, walking together through the prayers and praises of God's people. By early summer, we had reached Psalm 22, a psalm that brings us to the foot of the cross, reminding us that the suffering of God's people is never outside the purposes of God (Psalm 22:24).

From there, we entered a particularly meaningful season: a five-sermon series on Psalm 23. This series marked a turning point not only in the preaching calendar, but in our life together as a church. It was the beginning of summer, the season following my graduation from Mid-America Reformed Seminary, and the time when JC and I began visiting members more regularly, sitting at kitchen tables, praying in living rooms, listening to stories of faith, grief, endurance, and hope.

Psalm 23 reminded us that the Lord is our Shepherd, not only in green pastures but also in the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:1, 4). Preaching became more personal because ministry became more personal. As Scripture itself teaches, shepherding is never done at a distance (Ezekiel 34:11–16).

Hosting church families at the parsonage was one of our favorite highlights this year. There is nothing that compares to unhurried, deeper conversation shared over Filipino food, good coffee, and generous Dutch desserts.

That same summer, we held our first membership class, and in September, during a Communion Sunday, we witnessed God's covenant grace at work as six adults were baptized and two made profession of faith. We also welcomed seven transferred memberships, including an elderly couple and a young family of five. These moments were living testimonies that the Lord is adding to His church (Acts 2:47).

Following Psalm 23, we turned our attention to the seven churches of Revelation. This series challenged and encouraged us to be a church that listens carefully to Christ's voice—repenting where needed, persevering in

The Echoes

faith, and holding fast to the gospel (Revelation 2:7). The letters reminded us that Christ walks among His churches and sustains them by grace, even in weakness.

In October and November, we entered a six-sermon series on the Reformation and the Five Solas. Together, we rejoiced in the truth that salvation is by Scripture alone (2 Timothy 3:16–17), Christ alone (John 14:6), grace alone (Luke 15:20), faith alone (Romans 1:17), and to the glory of God alone (1 Corinthians 10:31). This series culminated in yet another celebration of God's work among us: an adult baptism and a profession of faith—a powerful reminder that the Reformation is not merely a historical event, but an ongoing work of God by His Word.

As we entered Advent, new faces continued to appear among us. Families from different walks of life began visiting—some considering transferring membership, others new to the area, and some simply seeking a church home. One family is currently in membership class and will be received into church membership through baptism and profession of faith in January. Another woman, who has attended Bible study faithfully for years without church membership, is now ready to take that step. These are quiet but profound works of the Spirit, drawing people not just to activity, but to belonging in the body of Christ (Ephesians 2:19).

Our Christmas Nativity this year was a great blessing. On that evening, three individuals committed their lives to Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God for everyone who labored faithfully to make this event possible. As a church, we now joyfully embrace the responsibility to follow up with these new believers and warmly invite them to come, worship, and grow within our congregation.

Another great blessing this year has been our evening worship service, where we have been working through a pastorally rich and biblically grounded summary of the Christian faith in the Heidelberg Catechism. Week by week, we have been reminded that the Christian life is not built on shifting feelings, but on gospel comfort, that we belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 1; cf. Romans 14:8). Many who attend have expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to revisit this precious confession, finding renewed clarity, assurance, and joy as Scripture is carefully opened and applied to everyday life.

Bible study groups launched in September, and we give thanks for the leaders who have stepped forward to serve. We continue to pray that the Lord would equip, enable, and empower them to disciple with wisdom and compassion, walking alongside participants as they grow in the knowledge of grace.

This December, we made the intentional decision to bring Communion to our shut-ins, remembering that those who cannot come to the Table are not excluded from it. As we bring the Table to hospital beds, nursing homes, and hospice rooms, we are reminded that Christ graciously meets His people wherever they are. We hope to continue this ministry as a way of serving those whose participation is limited by illness or frailty.

This year, however, was not without deep challenges. Many in our congregation faced cancer diagnoses, ongoing sickness, hospitalizations, accidents, and uncertainty. We grieved the passing of dear longtime members and walked alongside their families in their sorrow. We witnessed families carrying heavy burdens, and many faced an uncertain future—including my own family.

Yet through it all, one truth remained unshaken: God has been good. God has been faithful. His grace has been sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9). In moments of weakness, His grace did not merely sustain—it overflowed.

As we look ahead to the coming year, we do so with a gospel-shaped hope—rooted in Christ. We pray for continued growth in love, deeper fellowship, steadfast perseverance, joyful service, and true

spiritual renewal. May we continue to abide in Christ (John 15:4), and may His life bear fruit among us as we abound in love for one another (1 Thessalonians 3:12).

To God alone be the glory—for what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will yet do among us.

“The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.”
— Psalm 126:3

Each letter of CHRISTMAS is a prayer of invitation, for Christ to come close, fill our hearts with peace, and move us to love as He first loved us. This season isn't just about counting the days, it's about making the days count through hope, healing and holy stillness.

Let this be our prayer as we prepare Him room:
“Come, Lord Jesus—Emmanuel, God with us.”

Come, Lord Jesus, and fill our waiting hearts with hope.
Heal the weary and bring peace where there is striving.
Renew our minds to rest in Your promises.
Illuminate our darkness with the light of Your love.
Silence the noise so we may hear Your whisper.
Teach us to trust in your perfect timing.
Move us to mercy, to love as You first loved us.
Abide with us—Emmanuel, God with us.
Send us forth as bearers of Your joy and grace.



Hallelujah!

Victory, glory and
power belong to our God.

Revelation 19:1 ERV

And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people,

For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be a sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host praising God and saying:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

Luke 2:9-14 NKJV

May the Good News of Jesus' birth fill your heart with joy this Christmas and all throughout the year.

Have a Merry Christmas and
a blessed New Year.

The Echoes Staff

Bible Study Opportunities at East Martin

Sunday School

Our education year will begin on January 4 and run through March 1. We will take March 8 off for the Lord's Supper, and then resume March 15-22.

Spring Break will include the Sundays of March 29 and April 5. Classes resume on April 12 and run through April 26th.

Bible Sunday is scheduled for Sunday, May 3rd during the morning service.

Sunday School and Catechism teachers from the first half of the education year will continue in the second half of the year.

Our sincere thanks to our teachers Amy Kalkman, Nancy Leep, Libby Dendel, Bruce Tiemeyer and Jonathan Kalkman. Seek them out to express your thanks for their dedication to our kids.

Coffee Break

Coffee Break will be starting up again for the Winter and Spring season on January 21. We will be continuing our series of studies titled "Am I My Sister's Keeper" by Barbara Geer. It's a Biblical study for women, pointing out ways to grow in our relationship with God, and fellow Christian women we interact with day by day. We are called to be a support and encouragement to our neighbors and friends.

We always enjoy a good time of fellowship and Bible study if anyone would like to join us.

We meet at 9:45 every Wednesday morning for fellowship, and at 10:00 spend an hour in Bible study and prayer. If you have any questions, please talk to Deb Smit or Denise Leep.

Ladies' Evening Bible Study

Our next Bible Study book will be "In View of God's Mercies" by Courtney Doctor. It is The Gift of the Gospel in Romans.

Romans is a passionate letter written by Paul, a man completely captured by the beauty,

mercy, and majesty of God and His glorious salvation. Paul wanted his readers, then and now, to know how amazing and all-encompassing this salvation actually is—that it's powerful, planned, eternal, free, and leads to a transformed life.

In this 9-session study, walk through the book of Romans to discover that salvation doesn't just change your eternal future; it changes your present reality. Because of God's salvation, hope, peace, life, faith, trust, and endurance are yours.

Learn that after God saves you, He invites you to join Him on His two-fold mission—to sanctify and transform you into the image of Jesus and to send you out into the world to share the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

It has daily lessons to do on your own. As a group we will go over the lessons and then watch a 25 - 30 minute video from Courtney. Join us January 12 at 6:30 pm when we start this book. We will meet the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month.

Men's Bible Study

Men's Bible study will continue on January 7 at 7pm. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month. We will continue our study on David. If you need a book please contact Keith Smit and he will be able to get you one. Come and enjoy studying God's Word and sharing time with fellow brothers in Christ.

Bible Study Opportunities are available for our youth as well in GEMS (girls 1st through 8th grade), Cadets (boys 4th through 8th grade), High schoolers: Youth Group and Her True North.

From the Youth Group



Thanks to all who joined the Youth Group for the Thanksgiving breakfast. Despite the abundant blessing of snow that morning we served 74 large pancakes and were able to add \$359.78 towards our upcoming Serve trip.

Spring Break Serve Trip We know where we're going!!!

We are going to Mitchell County, North Carolina to serve those affected by hurricane Helene in that area. We will leave church early on Saturday morning March 28 and drive about 680 miles in 11.5 hours to Bakersville, North Carolina. After our week of helping others, we will leave North Carolina early on April 3 and arrive back at church late on Saturday evening.

We will be working with the Mitchell County Long Term Resilience Group (LTRG). Work projects will be largely focused on homes that have suffered damage from Hurricane Helene. Potential projects may include debris removal, drywall, framing, painting, flooring, cabinetry, siding, building ramps, weatherization, and more.

Housing is provided for volunteer work teams at the Family Life Center at Bear Creek Baptist Church in Bakersville, North Carolina.

Separate sleeping areas for men and women are provided in a gymnasium with cots and air mattresses. Volunteers also have access to restrooms and showers, wifi, and a kitchen where groups can prepare and enjoy their own meals.

If you have questions feel free to contact Randy and Mary, Bruce and Sue or Don Wubben.

There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex if you are interested or want more information. There will be informational meetings coming after the first of the year. Please give this prayerful consideration as to God's direction for your participation.



The Wild Game dinner is scheduled for Saturday, February 21. More details to follow.

Congratulations to Ruth Katje who graduated from Western Michigan University on December 13 with a Master of Arts in Teaching degree (MAT).



This is a degree that Ruth mastered with distinction. Every challenge she faced was an opportunity for God to show up and He did. He placed the right people in her life and guided her every step. She is incredibly grateful for Bob and their kids, her support system at home.

Congratulations Ruth! This is an amazing accomplishment.

The Katje family is proud to announce the engagement of their son Psalm-Cyril (Sam) Katje to Katelyn (Katey) Conklin.

Sam and Katey just celebrated 7 years together. They began dating their senior year at Kalamazoo Christian High School, and soon realized their relationship was not going to end after graduation! They decided to do long-distance for college – Katey in Chicago at Loyola University and Sam in Grand Rapids at Calvin.



After four years, and graduating with a degree in Graphic Design, Katey moved back to Michigan for work while Sam finished up his Psychology degree. In September of 2025 Sam proposed to Katey on his family's farm in Martin, surrounded by their close family.

The two are set to be wed on August 15th, 2026, and are planning a trip to Italy for their honeymoon shortly after! They are in the process of renovating the farm home on Sam's parent's property, and plan to move home to Martin after their wedding.

Congratulations Eli

Congratulations to Eli Tuinstra who was selected as a finalist in the Patriot's Pen Youth Essay Contest sponsored by the VFW.

Eli won first place and \$150 for his essay about how he shows patriotism and support for his country. Eli was recognized by the VFW and received a medal with his name engraved on it, a certificate and prize money.

Eli's essay will now be submitted to the District 8 level for further evaluation and the chance to win more money. Great Job Eli.



Check out the New Books in our Library

SENSE & SUITABILITY—PEPPER BASHAM
(A Novel)

ON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR—PETERSON,
WITEMEYER, BELLER

RESCUED HEART—ANGELA HUNT (The
Story of Sarah —The Matriarchs #1)

A HEART SET FREE—AMY CLIPSON

THE AMISH BALLERINA—RICHELLE
BRUNSTETTER with WANDA E.

BRUNSTETTER

A SONG IN THE DARK—KIMBERLY
WOODHOUSE (World War II)

THE SECOND STORY BOOKSHOP—
DENISE HUNTER

THROUGH WATER AND STONE—KAREN
BARNETT (Zion National Park Novel)

A ROYAL CHRISTMAS—MELODY
CARLSON

AT MORNING LIGHT—LAURINE
SNELLING (Home to Green Creek)

AN AMISH CHRISTMAS STAR—GRAY,
HUBBARD, LAUER

Thank you so much for the cards, e-mails, picture memory, condolences, prayers, care and love shown to us with the passing of our Mom. Her last words to us were, "I love you" and "God bless you."



It was such a sudden and unexpected event, but we have this assurance—that we will see her again in heaven one day.

Ron and Sheryl VanderRoest

MARC



In January the Martin Area Resource Center could use the following items:

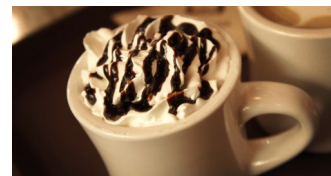
Shampoo/conditioner
Bar soap/body wash

Toothpaste/mouthwash

Razors/deodorants

Lotion, diapers and wipes

Slow Cooker Hot Cocoa



1/3 cup Cocoa powder

1— 14 oz can sweetened condensed milk

1/4 tsp salt

2 tsp vanilla

1 1/2 cups heavy cream

6 cups of milk

1—10 oz bag of semi-sweet chocolate chips

Cook on low for 3 hours, stirring occasionally, then switch to warm. Serve with whipped cream, candy canes, M&Ms, sprinkles—whatever toppings you love.

Greeters

January 4: AM—Chase & Laura DeMaagd, Tim Westendorp; PM—Libby Dendel
January 11: AM—Joel & Jen DeYoung, Dean Wubben; PM—Kenlee Funk
January 18: AM—Steve & Sara Heffron, Don Wubben; PM—Bob & Ruth Katje
January 25: AM—Jonathan & Amy Kalkman, Harold Wykstra; PM—Glenn & Nancy Leep



Tithes and Offerings for November

Ushers

January 4: Bruce Tiemeyer, Ryan Tucker, Henry M Tuinstra
January 11: Scott Tuinstra, Luke Watson, Seth Watson
January 18: Thomas Westendorp, Bruce Aukema, Randy Bouman
January 25: Joe DeKoekkoek, Kevin DeKoekkoek, Chase DeMaagd

Nursery

January 4: Laura DeMaagd
January 11: Riley and Addison Tuinstra
January 18: Jessica Tucker
January 25: Rebekah Westendorp

Library

January 4: Linda DeYoung
January 11: Ida Westendorp
January 18: Rena Lynema
January 25: Linda DeYoung



General Fund	\$16,708.76
Ministry Shares	2,439.40
Faith Promise	
East Martin Missions	250.00
Shaarda	770.00
Smit	420.00
Tiemeyer	70.00
Walker	65.00
Education Assistance	1,165.00
GEMS	2,487.00
GEMS—Denomination	317.00
East Martin Christian School	2,535.75
Kalamazoo Christian High School	625.00
Rehoboth Christian School	285.00
Sr. High Youth Group	720.00
Vacation Bible School	75.00
Right to Life Education	365.00
Reframe Ministries	75.00
Resonate Global Mission	150.00
World Renew—DRS	145.00
World Renew—General	25.00
Bible League	295.00
Bethany Christian Services	150.00
Martin Resource Center	645.00
Mel Trotter Mission	294.00
International Campus Ministry	301.00
Total	\$31,378.66

Offering Schedule for January

January 4: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM—Reframe Ministries
January 11: AM—East Martin Christian School; PM—Project Hope
January 18: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM—Martin Resource Center
January 25: AM—East Martin Christian School; PM—East Martin Christian School—Tuition Assistance