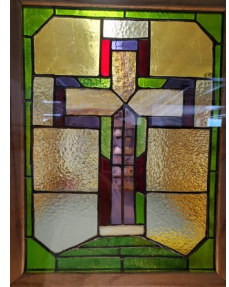




**November 2025**

A monthly publication of the  
East Martin Christian Reformed Church

## **Reflections from the Pulpit**



*The Promise and the Sign: Lord's Day 27 and the God  
Who Does Not Change*

This month, our preaching and teaching brought us to Lord's Day 27, a beloved portion of the Heidelberg Catechism that asks one of the most tender and important questions of the Christian life:

"Why do we baptize our children?"

Lord's Day 27 teaches us that God includes not only believers, but also their children, in His covenant and in His church. This is not based on sentiment or tradition, but on the unchanging covenant character of God Himself. Because God is immutable, the God who embraced believers and their children in the Old Testament is the same God who embraces believers and their children in the New.

From Abraham to Pentecost (Acts 2:39), God continually declares, "The promise is for you and for your children."

If God once welcomed children into His covenant people, and He is a God who does not change, then His covenant pattern has not been revoked. To baptize our children is to confess:

God's promise remains.

God's heart for families remains.

God's grace to generations remains.

God's character remains the same—yesterday, today, and forever.

Baptism does not mean our children are automatically saved, nor does the water itself wash away sin. But baptism does proclaim that God has placed His name, His promise, and His covenant mercy over our children. It is God's signature on the child: "You belong to My church, and My promises run toward you."

Lord's Day 27 reminds us that infants, no less than adults, are recipients of the promises of forgiveness, renewal, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

# The Echoes

They are placed inside the community where faith is nurtured, the Word is heard, and Christ is proclaimed. Baptism is not our testimony to God—it is God's declaration to us, a visible sign and seal of the Gospel.

## **Pastoral Visits and Shepherding**

This month was rich with pastoral visits, prayer, fellowship, and gospel encouragement across our community.

I had the privilege of visiting Phyllis and Larry Tuinstra, praying for Phyllis' leg and for their daughters as they face medical concerns. We also visited Henry and Nancy Tuinstra before they depart for Florida the day after Thanksgiving to serve with Wycliffe. We prayed with gratitude for their faithful ministry and asked God to bless their winter of service.

I was grateful for the opportunity to attend a conference at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, where I was encouraged by the teaching and was able to be reunited with friends and professors.

I also led the membership class for Henry Tuinstra and Cece Sutherland, a conversation that led to Henry's public profession of faith and Cece's baptism. We rejoice in God's faithful work in their lives as we also commit to them as their spiritual family, to love, care, and nurture them in the faith.

This month also included a pulpit swap with Pastor Matt of Martin Reformed Church, strengthening our partnership in gospel ministry here in our township.

A particularly meaningful visit was with Marge Sietsma, Seth's mother, who has been attending our services regularly since Seth, Keri, Luke, and Kelsy joined our church. Hearing Marge's testimony and seeing God's grace in her life was a blessing.

I also met with Pastor Mark Immick of City on a Hill in Plainwell. He graciously toured me around their church and shared stories of God's faithfulness to their covenant community. We hope to have him preach at East Martin CRC in January to share updates about their church-planting work.

Each of these visits—whether over coffee, a meal, or a simple conversation—reminded me how God builds His church through relationships saturated with the Word, prayer, and genuine fellowship.

## **Looking Ahead**

As we enter December, we rejoice in the new communicant members God has added to our family, and we continue to pray for more regular attendees to consider the blessing of formal membership in our congregation.

We also look forward to:

More professions of faith and baptisms before the year ends or early next year.

The beginning of our Advent series on November 30

A visit from Pastor Joshua Amaezechi to share about his work with the LEMA Institute in Nigeria and across Africa

May the Lord continue to knit our congregation together in faith, hope, love, and joyful obedience to His unchanging covenant promises.

## Praying for the Nation: Thailand

Population: 71,255,000  
People Groups: 110  
Christian Adherents: 1.8%

Thailand remains one of the most unreached nations in Southeast Asia. With a strong Buddhist identity and very few Christians, the need for gospel witness is great. Let us lift up this nation to the Lord.

### Prayer Points

Missionaries – Pray for strength, wisdom, and fruitful ministry for all missionaries serving in Thailand.

Mission Organizations – Ask God to bless the work of church planters, Bible translators, seminaries, and mercy ministries.

Believers' Safety & Boldness – Pray for protection and courage for Thai Christians who often face cultural pressure and isolation.

Salvation of the Lost – Pray for God to open hearts to the gospel and draw many to Christ from every people group.

More Gospel Workers – Ask the Lord to raise up more missionaries and Thai believers to proclaim Christ faithfully.

## In Contact With Council

Dave opened the Council meeting of November 11 with devotions from Romans 4:18. The devotional dwelt on how God talked to Abraham at different times in his life.



- ♦ Henry and Cece came to Council to make profession of their faith. After hearing from them a motion to approve them as members passed.
- ♦ Minutes from the last Council meeting were read. A motion to approved passed.
- ♦ Pastor's report:
  - A pulpit swap with Martin Reformed Church is planned.
  - A representative from the Martin Resource Center is coming to speak on November 23.
  - Pastor Joel and JC hosted two different families for supper. Met with a retired CRC pastor and discussed the possibly of having him be a mentor. Attended Kalamazoo Classis. Met with Pastor Mark from City on a Hill and discussed future collaboration. Visited with Dean and Carolyn, Doug and Mary, Larry and Phyllis and Marge Sietsma.
  - Our Advent series will be starting November 30.
- ♦ Deacons' report:
  - General fund 15% behind, Ministry Shares 32% behind. A motion to approved passed.
- ♦ Worship committee:
  - Working on the live nativity.
- ♦ Education committee:
  - Approved Jonathan's new material for his class.
- ♦ Outreach:
  - Would like to have a love offering for Josh Amaezecki from Lema Institute.
  - A motion to approve passed.
- ♦ Building and grounds:
  - New handrail was installed and the boiler was checked out.
- ♦ There were three Council visits made.
- ♦ Experiencing issues with the printer. Don put new toner in and it is currently working. A motion to approve \$2,000 for a new printer if needed passed.
- ♦ There were two requests for membership transfers: Sam DeYoung to Dutton URC and Robert and Marlene Leep to Martin Reformed Church. A motion to approve both passed.
- ♦ The policy for non-member use of our facility will be brought up to date.
- ♦ Pastor Joel is planning to attend a MARS conference on November 20.

- ◆ Discussed medical insurance for Pastor Joel and his family.
- ◆ Checking on Christmas baskets to distribute to shut-ins and elderly.
- ◆ A motion to adjourn passed.
- ◆ Cameron closed with prayer and has devotions at the next meeting.

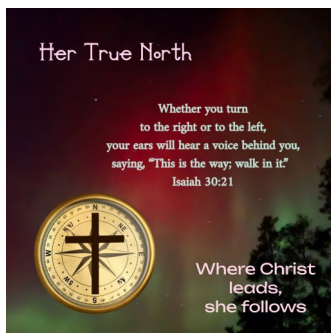
## Live Nativity

EMCRC will again be hosting a live nativity December 21, 5-7 pm.



There are plenty of opportunities for everyone who wants to be involved, and all ages are encouraged to participate! We will need parade walkers, actors (no speaking parts), readers (speaking parts), carolers, set-up workers, cookie donations, various pieces of equipment, and much more.

If you are interested there are sign-up sheets in the narthex. If you have questions, please ask Sara, Scott or Libby.



You may have noticed Her True North listed recently in the weekly calendar.

The young ladies from the youth group have started meeting for Bible study on the off weeks of the main youth group.

They wanted a name and so after some searching, praying and various suggestions given from members, they chose the name Her True North. This is to show that their hearts are pointed to Christ and they are longing to live as He would have them live. Their motto of "Where Christ leads, she follows" and a group verse in Isaiah 31:21, show these young ladies are striving to follow God in all they do.



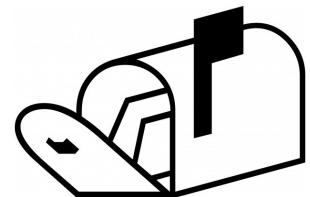
## How Adventurous are You?

Several weeks ago, we met with one of the Disaster Response Services (DRS) team coordinators from World Renew, the humanitarian outreach division of the Christian Reformed Church. The purpose of this meeting was to clarify the objectives for our serve trip and to identify where DRS could most effectively utilize our skills and expertise.

Currently, DRS operates at 11 locations across the United States. Following a thorough review, the number of prospective work sites has been reduced to four: Floyd County, Kentucky; Mitchell County, North Carolina; Madison County, North Carolina; and Carter County, Tennessee.

The sites we are currently considering were either damaged by hurricane Helene in September 2024 or by severe flooding from heavy rainfall in July 2022. We aim to establish a site by late November. Please pray that God will direct us in finding a location where our abilities can be most effective, as well as for the skills needed to assist those impacted.

## Christmas Card Service



The High School Youth Group will provide a Christmas card delivery service beginning the first Sunday of Advent, November 30. Just place your Christmas cards, along with your donations, in the basket by the church mailboxes. The cards will be delivered to the proper mailboxes by the Youth Group.

The Christmas program for East Martin Christian School will be held on Thursday, December 4, at 6:30 pm at our church.



The play is called "Touch of an Angel". It focuses on times God used angels to communicate with His people like with Moses, Shadrach, Meshack, Abednego, Daniel, Peter, Elijah, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph and the shepherds. All students preschool through 8th grade will participate.

Come start off the Christmas season with the students at EMCS.



**Recycle  
your  
corrugated  
at MARC**

Don't forget to recycle your corrugated at the Martin Area Resource Center. Use the brown door at the end of the driveway. Place your flattened corrugated in the bins. They will turn it into cash to benefit the less fortunate in our community.

## The January Series 2026

Calvin University's award winning lecture series is back! Tune in from January 19 thru January 30 either in-person at the Covenant Fine Arts Center on Calvin's campus, online or at a remote site. The presentation begins at 12:30.

The January Series is free thanks to the generous underwriters, but if you want to watch the talks online, you must register at [januaryseries@calvin.edu](mailto:januaryseries@calvin.edu)

## St. Nicholas Cookies

1 cup margarine  
3/4 cup white sugar  
3/4 cup brown sugar  
1 egg  
2 cups flour  
1 tsp soda  
1 tsp salt  
2 tsp cinnamon  
1 tsp nutmeg  
1 tsp cloves  
1 cup rolled oats

Make into balls and flatten with glass dipped in sugar.

Bake at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes

Suggestions from the baker: use 1 stick of real butter and 1 stick of Land 'O Lakes margarine. Put the dough in the refrigerator for 45-60 minutes before baking.



## Martin Area Resource Center

needs the following in  
December:

Cleaners: laundry soap, window wash, disinfectants (toilet and household), mops, brooms, sponges, hand soap, fabric softeners, dish soap, dishwasher soap.



## Tithes and Offerings for October



General Fund	\$13,078.00
Ministry Shares	2,095.00
Faith Promise	
Shaarda	290.00
Smit	265.00
Tiemeyer	290.00
Walker	175.00
Education Assistance	10,000.00
East Martin Christian School	1,441.00
Elim Christian School	303.00
Martin Area Resource Center	223.00
The Luke Society	245.00
Wycliff Bible Translators	207.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$28,612.00</b>

General Fund 14.98% behind  
Ministry Shares 31.96% behind

## Offerings for December

December 7: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM—Martin Resource Center  
December 14: AM—East Martin Christian School; PM—Reach the Forgotten  
December 21: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares  
December 25: Benevolence  
December 28: AM—East Martin Christian School; PM—Zion Christian School

## Greeters

December 7: AM—Ron & Lorraine VanderBerg, Vern Klaasen; PM—Rebekah Westendorp & Thomas Westendorp  
December 14: AM—Seth & Keri Watson, Wayne Leep; PM—Harold Wykstra  
December 21: AM—Bruce & Renee Aukema, Dave Misner; PM—Nativity (to be assigned later)  
December 25: Joe DeKoekkoek  
December 28: AM—Randy & Mary Bouman, Cameron Tuinstra; PM: Marcia Bouman

## Ushers

December 7: Kevin DeKoekkoek, Chase DeMaagd, Dave DeYoung  
December 14: Jacob DeYoung, Joel DeYoung, Levi DeYoung  
December 21: Jonathan Kalkman, Bob Katje, Bram Katje  
December 25: Glenn Leep, Wes Leep, Bruce Mejeur  
December 28: Dave Mejeur, Tom Rook, Keith Smit

## Nursery

December 7: Laura DeMaagd  
December 14: Riley and Addison Tuinstra  
December 21: Jessica Tucker  
December 25: Rebekah Westendorp  
December 28: Jen, Violet and Willow Tuinstra

## Library

December 7: Carolyn VanderMeulen  
December 14: Linda DeYoung  
December 21: Ida Westendorp  
December 28: Rena Lynema

*Give thanks  
to the Lord  
for He is good.  
His faithful love  
will last forever.  
I Chronicles 16:36*