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Reflections



THE E C H O S

Hope and Forgiveness in the midst of evil

47th Annual Michigan Fall Regional Bible League Conference
September 11, 2026

More than 290 attendees (16 from East Martin, along with middle schoolers from EMCS and home schoolers) arrive at Friendship Christian Reformed Church, Byron Center, Michigan where they hear the personal story of the life of Corrie ten Boom as well as learn about the work of Bible League around the world, reaching kids and adults with the Bible in their own languages—and how we should live our lives for the Lord. Monies raised provide Bibles, including the sale of used jewelry and purses, which garners \$845 = 169 Bibles, in addition to financial support in excess of \$17,000 = 3400+.

To summarize this conference, we've divided our discussion into sections of **bullet points from Corrie ten Boom (bold type)** and then *italic type* introducing *information about Bible League*. For our opening song, we join our voices in "Here I Am to Worship," (Here I am to bow down; here I am to say that you're my God.), with other songs indicated in this article by musical notes plus some lyrics from each. Maybe you will hum these to yourself as you read. Our keynote speaker, Gayle Haas, shares with us the life of Corrie ten Boom, and it feels like Corrie stands directly in front of us.

Every Life is Valuable

Jessie Rose tells of the time she was asked to go on a Bible League mission trip, and she felt she was too old and certainly lacked the funds to undertake such a venture. After praying, however, she commits herself to participating, and her exhortation to the audience is: Don't miss someone's suggestion that you go on a mission trip. "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and He will establish your plans. The Lord works out everything to its proper end—In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps" (Proverbs 16: 3, 4, 9). FYI, Bible League plans three trips in summer 2027: Argentina and Paraguay; Ghana; and Thailand. Come experience the joy of meeting brothers and sisters in Christ and see how God uses your gifts to Bible League to transform lives through His Word. As you visit villages and bustling city neighborhoods, you'll meet children, youth, and adults whose hope and joy come from knowing Jesus. Their stories of faith in the midst of life's challenges will inspire you, strengthen your own walk with the Lord, and give you a fresh appreciation for the power of God's Word to transform lives. Jessie quotes "Ancient Words": Holy words long preserved for our walk in this world, they resound with God's own heart, O let the ancient words impart.

Why does the work of the Bible league matter?

The gospel is not for a small group of seminarians but is for everybody. Bible League President Jos Snoep shares the story of Esteban in Venezuela whose mother abandons him at the local dump and goes looking for other possibilities. Read the full account in the Bible League flyer mailed to donors last month (Mission Matters). Discovered at the dump by a Bible League volunteer (who also happens to be his grandmother), Esteban receives Jesus and learns his true value. He is not garbage but valuable. At age 9, nightly, he

preaches to 30-40 children at the dump. To him Jesus is “a very great God, my Father, my friend, my family, too,” and when he grows up, his desire is to become a pastor!

♪ There Is Power in the Blood, wonder-working power in the blood of the Lamb.

Love Is Stronger Than Hate. There Is No Pit So Deep That God’s Love Is Not Deeper Still.

Corrie narrates: Her family lived in the Netherlands, and World War II was about to change everything. She grew up in the house where a century prior her grandfather began prayer meetings, and as early as 1844, the family prayed for Jews. For another hundred years, the ten Booms met and prayed, and in that same room, in 1944, Corrie’s entire family was arrested; only Corrie survived the horrors of their incarceration. Taken first to Vucht concentration camp in the Netherlands, and later transported by train to Ravensbruck in Germany, (a trip of 4 days or 96 hours, literally standing room only, with a bucket at one end for defecation, not easily reachable), she and her sister Betsie, along with 600-800 other women, lived in a barracks built to accommodate 200. The lice-infested barracks #28 allowed the women to do what they pleased (like engage in Bible study), because the guards refused to enter the barracks itself. Conditions were horrific. (To learn more of Corrie’s life, read her autobiography, *The Hiding Place*.)

Move now to today, to Syria and Jordan and consider the story of Amira, whose family (she and her husband and two boys) flee Syria, because of ISIS, to a refugee camp in Jordan. There Amira meets a Christian woman who visits these camps, and she leads Amira to Christ. As a result, her husband leaves, taking the two sons with him to Europe, starts a new family and turns the sons against their mother, one of whom texts her to say that if she were standing in front of him, he would kill her. Amira starts over and has a daughter. Despite difficult days, Amira’s mantra is “I trust the Lord for the thorns in life as much as for the flowers in life.”

And then there is Miracle Damanka in Africa. Once a lesbian, she realizes she needs something else, and she meets, through Bible League, Someone else. She establishes Eden Montessori School, where she teaches and disciples 700 children, boys and girls who live for the Lord because of Bibles and study materials provided by Bible League. And these kids are so happy and thankful for their new lives.

♪ Wonderful Grace of Jesus, greater than all my sin. Wonderful the matchless love of Jesus.

I Cannot Forgive. Or Is It Will Not?

Forgiveness is not a feeling; it’s a decision we can make or otherwise place ourselves in the prison of unforgiveness, Corrie shares with us. While conditions in the concentration camps were inhumane and overall intolerable, Corrie watches as a guard beats her frail sister Betsie. Corrie can push herself into the prison of unforgiveness, or she can take Betsie’s advice and forgive. After the war, following a speaking engagement, a man approaches Corrie and tells her he is now a Christian. And he wants to shake her hand. To her dismay and consternation, she recognizes him as that guard from Ravensbruck, and she cannot extend her hand in return. She thinks “I cannot forgive. Lord, only You can help me with this.” And He does.

Bethany Cunningham (GEMS) identifies the theme for girls as *Loved*, pointing out that forgiveness is essential. She then shares four steps to making that happen. (1). Name the hurt. (2). Remember your own forgiveness in Christ. (3). Surrender the need for revenge. (4). Ask God for the strength to love. As we look back on the lives of Corrie, Esteban, Amira, and Miracle, we see children of the Lord willing to forgive.

♪ Amazing Grace/My Chains Are Gone, My chains are gone, I’ve been set free; my God my Savior has rescued me. And like a flood, His mercy rains, unending love, amazing grace.

Worship Leader Sara Denzel, piano, and Karen Misner, organ, lead us in our singing. But Sara also provides special music, the powerful song “The Goodness of God.”

♪ I love You, Lord, oh, Your mercy never fails me. All my life You have been faithful. All my life You have been so, so good. I will sing of the goodness of God.

Worry Is Utterly Useless. Worry Is Sin. Worry Makes You fear, And Fear Can Make You Stupid.

Corrie highlights these truths. And she makes the distinction between worry and concern. *Concern* you can do something about. *Worry* can lead to frustration, and frustration can lead to anger and disobedience. The ten Booms “ran” a hiding place, for Jews, and for soldiers who rejected Nazi practices. Eventually, the officials discovered their secret, because a supposed “suppliant” betrayed them. While Corrie, her father, sisters, and brother all came under arrest, those hidden remained safe.

Why do we (Bible League) do this?

God chooses to use us, His children, to do His work. Also, there is so much value in the Word. Furthermore, we can coordinate efforts, thus using the power of compounding to increase our impact.

Bible League presents a video with Romi Barcena in the Philippines. Romi not only shows us how they print the Bibles for these “out of the way places” peoples, but he also introduces us to several Bible League workers who bring the Word to very remote—and dangerous—areas of the country. The trek requires arduous travel, taking these men and women to areas where the people have been known to become extremely violent, killing those who “trespass.” Every last individual involved in this work affirms s/he would die for the gospel. Thus, what we witness is people in these remote villages beaming because of the Word! Perhaps now is the appropriate time to tell you that, with Bible League, worldwide, every three and a half hours a church is planted!

♪ You Are My Hiding Place. You always fill my heart with songs of deliverance.
When I am afraid, I will trust in You.

A Burden Too Small To Be Turned into Prayer Is Too Small to Be Made into a Burden

How does Bible League choose where to work?

Bible League utilizes surveys to assess where and which are the most underserved areas, where the Word of God is very hard to find, where the shortage of Bibles is the greatest, where reading the Bible is most restricted. Jos Snoep notes that there are 500 million Christians in the world that have issues obtaining the Word of God, 125 million of whom have absolutely no access at all. So the central aim of Bible League is to ship Bibles when they have the power to do so. He identifies some of these difficult areas. For example, in the Congo there is no infrastructure, limiting the ability to get Bibles into the hands of people. In western Africa, homes are raided and Bibles burned. In Malaysia it is forbidden to give Bibles. In Eritrea, while people have phones, these are checked, and any Bible apps are removed. In China, apps for phones are blocked, making access via phone impossible. In some countries, one out of every five homes lacks electricity, so this also limits the possibility of reaching people hungering for the Word.

One effective strategy, however, is Bible-based literacy programs. These help introduce people: Teach them to be literate, with the Bible as the text. Since the most restricted country is Afghanistan, they have needed to become creative. They ship boxes of vegetables from Pakistan, with Bibles in the bottoms of the boxes. However, merchandise is inspected at the border, all except for those transported by the Taliban. So they use the Taliban to bring Bibles in—without their knowledge, of course.

♪ Wonderful, Merciful Savior, precious Redeemer and Friend...You rescue the souls of men.

Don't Pray When You Feel Like It. Make an Appointment.

Corrie reminds us that prayer should be a regular part of our lives.

Why is it so important to act now?

To reach the next generation. In Africa, 60% of the population is young people. Furthermore, kids are great sharers of the Gospel (Think Esteban.).

What happens when a believer is equipped?

The result is that the work is multiplied. In 1938 Bible League began with one man and his wife going door to door in the US. Now it's in 66 countries. Also, it gives structure to ministry. It reaches two to three million people a year. It demands accountability. People can see God's heart.

After the war, Corrie feels God is asking her to go to Russia. Discovering that people out on the street literally run away when she begins sharing the gospel, she questions: How is she to reach people if no one will listen? One lady, frightened practically to death, informs her that the government has "bugs" in all of the hotel rooms, and the listeners on the other end have to eavesdrop and record what people say behind closed doors. Typical with "Corrie ten Boom sense of humor," when Corrie and her associate return to their hotel, Corrie speaks directly into the microphone and then starts discussing with her secretary what they believe about Jesus! So God brings the gospel to all those listening in, who then have no choice in the matter!

Fast forward to now, and, thankfully, in Kenya today there are 750 public schools looking to implement Christian materials in their classrooms. They simply need the Bibles. For \$5, a Bible can come into a person's hand. So the League hopes to reach a goal of \$25,000 from our conference. While the final numbers are not yet available, if that goal were to be realized, our conference would reach and impact 5000 lives.

Another source of funds comes through Legacy Thrift, with locations in numerous places in our area. Deanna Van Zwol encourages us to donate, volunteer, and purchase, because this equals Bibles reaching the underserved. Therefore, go online to discover the locations in southwest Michigan, and participate. Type in legacythrift.org.

Corrie also challenges us to pray and ask God to remind us of someone who needs encouragement. Then, write a note on a card, letting that person know we are praying. Mail it to her/him.

♪ Take Time to Be Holy, speak oft with the Lord.

♪ Lord I Need You, Every Hour I Need You, my one defense,
my righteousness, Lord, how I need You.

(Gayle Haas superbly assumes the persona of Corrie ten Boom, and what a blessing that is! If you have already read *The Hiding Place*, check out her other book, *Don't Wrestle, Just Nestle*.)

***"To forgive is to
set a prisoner free
and discover the
prisoner was you."
--- Corrie ten Boom***

In Contact With Council



The Council meeting of September 8 was opened with devotions and prayer by Dennis DeYoung. Dennis read from Psalm 139:1-6

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

Pastor's Report: Pastor Joel and family had to move again due to flooding. Things are going well otherwise.

Deacon's Report: The General Fund is 45.88% ahead; Ministry Shares is 36.88% behind. A motion made to approve the offering schedule passed. Seth Watson gave a presentation on E-giving (electronic giving). Information is needed on how much usage E-giving gets.

Worship: October 4 Josh Sharda will fill out pulpit. A motion to approve the Live Nativity on December 20 passed. No date is set for the candlelight service. September 20 will be Sunday School Sunday.

Education: Three Bible studies are ready for the new season. GEMS and Cadets ready to start.

Building and Grounds: Ordering new batteries for defibrillators.

Four Council visits were made.

New Business: Classis is October 13. Delegate: Keith Smit. Cameron and Ryan to prepare sacraments. Mutual censure was observed.

A motion made to adjourn passed. Keith closed in prayer. The next meeting is October 13 and Vern has devotions.

From the Archives -- The Bell

The bell that was located behind the bulletin board on the east side of our church has an interesting history. Much of this material was taken from a book entitled "The History of Allegan County" which was written in 1880.

"The first Presbyterian Church in Martin was built in 1852 and was located one mile south of Martin, known as Monteith Junction. The building soon became too small and in 1871 a larger church, now known as the United Presbyterian Church, was built and dedicated and surmounted by a cuploa and a good bell."

The bell was made by the Cincinnati Bell Company of Ohio and weighed nearly 1,000 pounds. It was probably shipped via the Indiana and Grand Rapids Railroad that was completed in 1870. The church was located on the property where the Red Barn Restaurant (now known as the Clipper Café) stands.

We do not know why the United Presbyterian church was disbanded, but in late 1921 the building, with the bell, was sold to the newly oranzized East Martin Christian Reformed Church for \$650.

In June, 1922, the building was cut in sections and move by team and sleighs to East Martin where the building was reassembled and the bell raised into the belfry. The small group was happy that they could soon worship the Lord in their own building.

Joy soon turned to sorrow as on March 12, 1923, a severe windsstorm leveled the building and the bell to the ground. The bell landed in a large pool of water and was spared serious damage.

Once again the building was reassembled and the bell raised back to the belfry, where for nearly 44 years it tolled forth loud and clear as a call to worship.

Randy Bouman tells of ringing the bell for his dad, the custodian at the time, and once in a while accidentally pulling the rope too hard causing the bell to overturn resulting in having to climb to the belfry to undo the rope.

In 1966 our present church was erected and for 29 years the bell was silent. This spring (1995) Al Bishop and I asked Council for permission to try to redo the bell so it could be rung electronically before each worship service. The work on the bell is now completed and soon we will once again hear the bell as it sends out its message before each service as we gather to worship our Heavenly Father.

A special thanks to Al Bishop for the many hours he gave for this project; also to Dave and Matt Double and Jason Brinkhuis for the structure holding the bell, to Gary DeKoekkoek for the electrical work, to Harv Leep for moving and resetting the bell and to Henry Tuinstra and several others who helped.

Anthony Wykstra

Cookie Time – we will be packing cookies for our military personnel and those attending college (living away from home). 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. The boxes for will be packed mid October. Watch the bulletin for further details.



New Books in our Library

THE UNEXPECTED CALLER—SHELLEY SHEPARD GRAY
WHEN THE SILENCE BREAKS—ELIZABETH GODDARD (MERCY BREAKS #1)
TWILIGHT TACTICS—LYNETTE EASON (SOLDIERS SHADOWS #1)
GELATO AT THE VILLA—ROBIN JONES GUNN (take a trip to Italy)
MIRIAM'S LITTLE GENTLEMAN—ANNE BLACKBURNE

WHAT'S IS LEFT OF THE NIGHT—MARK BUCHANAN
PRETTY AS A PEACH—GRACE HELENA WALZ
CANDY APPLE KISSES—AMY CLIPSON
THE RELUCTANT HEALER OF HALIFAX—TERRIE TODD
PEARL IN THE SAND—TESSA AFSTAR (A Novel)
THE LADIES HALL -- VANESSA MILLER
THE CAREGIVER AT WOUNDED KNEE—DEBBY LEE
THE GIRL FROM TOMORROW'S TOWN—NAOMI MUSCH



83rd Annual Harvest Sale

East Martin Christian School's annual Harvest Sale will be held on Saturday, October 10. The doors open at 4 pm; dinner will be served from 4:30 to 6:30 pm and the live auction begins at 5 pm. If you would like to donate or sponsor this event, please contact Stephany Williams at (616) 206-9042 with items/description to be included in the Harvest Sale booklet. Please be sure to bring all donations (excluding perishable items) and auction items to the school office by October 2. Thank you for your support of the Harvest Sale and Christian education at EMCS.

Apple Pies

East Martin Christian School is teaming up with Moline Christian School for their annual Apple Pie Fundraiser. All of the money we raise as a school will help support EMCS & Daycare. **Apple pies are \$20 each or 3 for \$55. Orders are due by October 12 along with payment. Pie pick up is on October 24 at Moline Christian School.** These pies are delicious and freeze well! They are great for Thanksgiving and upcoming family gatherings. If you would like to place an order, please pick up a form from the school office or email office@eastmartin.org.



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.



Offerings for August

General Fund	\$50,906.00
Ministry Shares	1,694.40
Faith Promise	
East Martin Missions	5,000.00
Shaarda	2,852.50
Smit	2,752.50
Tiemeyer	2,752.50
Walker	2,752.50
East Martin Chrisitan School	2,450.00
Reframe Ministries (Back to God Ministries)	527.00
World Renew – General	10,000.00
Martin Resource Center	1,401.55
Gideons	297.00
The Luke Society	308.00
Project Hope	427.00
LEMA Institute	509.00
Grand Total	\$84,629.95

Offering Schedule for October

October 4: AM – General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM – World Renew – DRS
October 11: AM – East Martin Christian School; PM – Martin Resource Center
October 18: AM – General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM – Elim Christian School
October 25: AM – General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM – Growing Hope Globally

Greeters

October 4: AM - Steve & Sara Heffron, Ryan Tucker; PM - Libby Dendel
October 11: AM - Jonathan & Amy Kalkman, Cameron Tuinstra; PM - RJ Dillenbeck
October 18: AM - Bob & Ruth Katje, Seth Watson; PM - Kenlee Funk
October 25: AM - Glenn & Nancy Leep, Harold Wykstra; PM - Wayne & Denise Leep

Ushers

October 4: Bruce Aukema, Joe DeKoekkoek, Kevin DeKoekkoek
October 11: Dave DeYoung, Jacob DeYoung, Levi DeYoung
October 18: Carsen DeMaagd, Chase DeMaagd, RJ Dillenbeck
October 25: Steve Heffron, Jonathan Kalkman, Bob Katje

Nursery

October 4: Jen, Violet, and Willow Tuinstra
October 11: Laura DeMaagd
October 18: Riley and Addison Tuinstra
October 25: Jessica Tucker

Library

October 4: Carolyn VanderMeulen
October 11: Linda DeYoung
October 18: Ida Westendorp
October 25: Rena Lynema

One Bowl Apple Cake

2 eggs
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups sugar
2 heaping tsp cinnamon
1/2 cup oil
6 medium Gala, Fuji or Honey Crisp apples
2 cups flour
2 tsp baking soda

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl mix eggs, sugar, cinnamon and oil. Peel and slice the apples and add to the mixture. Mix together the flour and baking soda. Then add to the rest of the ingredients. Mix well. Pour mixture in a 9x13 pan or 2 - 9 inch rounds. Bake for 45 minutes.

