

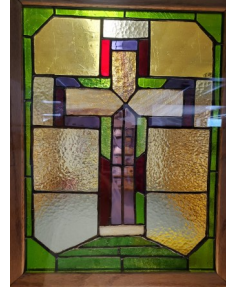


March 2026

A monthly publication of the
East Martin Christian Reformed Church

Reflections from the Pulpit

**Rebuilding, Reforming, and Restoring:
Lessons from Nehemiah**



The Echoes

A People Formed by the Word

Over the past weeks in Nehemiah, we have seen that God is not only rebuilding a city, He is forming a people. A people who belong to Him, are shaped by His Word, and continually return to Him in repentance.

A People Who Belong (Nehemiah 7)

After the wall was finished, God turned His focus to the people. The census reminded us that His work is not about structures, but about a covenant community. We are not meant to follow Christ alone, we are called to belong, serve, and commit ourselves to one another in love. Our belonging is secured not by us, but by Christ, who has written our names in the Book of Life.

Reflection:

Am I truly living as a committed member of Christ's body, or just attending?

A People Guided by the Word (Nehemiah 8)

When the Word was rediscovered, the people found direction, clarity, and joy. God's Word is our roadmap and our strength. It exposes our sin, but also leads us to Christ, our Savior. True renewal begins when God's people hunger again for His Word.

Reflection:

Is God's Word shaping my daily life and priorities?

A People Who Repent (Nehemiah 8:13–9)

As the Word worked in their hearts, the people were led to confession. We were reminded that the righteous life is not a perfect life, but a repentant one. Again and again, God's people return to Him, not in despair, but in hope, because He is gracious and ready to forgive in Christ.

Reflection:

When confronted with my sin, do I return to God or turn away from Him?

God is forming us into a people who belong, who listen, and who return. May we continue walking together as pilgrims, held by His Word and sustained by His grace.

All of these truths find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ and His cross. We belong to God not because of our faithfulness, but because Christ gave Himself for His people. We are guided by the Word because it ultimately reveals Him, the Word made flesh, who lived the life we could not live. And we are able to repent and return to God because Christ bore our sins, secured our forgiveness, and opened the way for us to come home. At the cross, we see that we are more sinful than we imagined, yet more loved than we ever dared hope. And so we walk on as pilgrims, not in our own strength, but in the grace of the One who has redeemed us and will bring us safely home.

Church Membership Updates

God has graciously blessed our church with new visitors and attendees in recent weeks. We encourage everyone to warmly welcome them, take time to introduce yourself, express your joy in their presence, and invite them to continue worshiping with us. Small acts of hospitality can be a great means of encouragement and belonging.

We are especially thankful for Dave and Wilma Persenaire, who recently began attending our church after moving from Chicago. They were faithful members of a Christian Reformed congregation there and have been prayerfully seeking a church home in this area. We praise God that they have decided to transfer their membership to our congregation. They will be presented to the church on April 12. This will be an extra special Lord's Day, as Dave's brother, a retired CRC minister, will be bringing the Word. Let us warmly welcome Dave and Wilma into our spiritual family.

We also rejoice in the encouraging story of RJ Dillinbeck. RJ and his mother, Nikki, first visited our church on the first Sunday of February and have continued attending faithfully, along with RJ's father, Rob, his sister Olivia, his nephew Dallas, and his brother-in-law, Daniel. It has been a joy to see their growing connection to the life of the church. RJ has expressed his desire to become a member, and he will be presented to the congregation as a new communicant member on Easter Sunday. Let us welcome RJ and his family with love and encouragement as they continue to grow in the Lord.

We are also thankful for new attendees whom the Lord has brought to worship with us. Jamie and Tara DeMann have been joining us regularly, and we are grateful for their presence among us. Let us continue to pray for them as the Lord guides them in the days ahead.

We have also had the joy of welcoming Auke and Joreen Bruinsma, along with their four daughters, who have visited our church several times. They recently moved from Washington State and are now living in Otsego. As they seek both a church home and a school for their children, let us lift them up in prayer, that the Lord would lead them clearly and provide what is most beneficial for their whole family.

May we continue to extend warmth and encouragement to all whom God brings into our midst.

Praying for the Nation: Saudi Arabia

Population Total: 36,947,000

Population in Unreached People Groups: 34,900,000+ (over 94%)

Christian Adherent: ~2% (mostly expatriates)

Saudi Arabia is one of the most restricted nations in the world for Christianity. Islam is the state religion, and public expression of other religions is not permitted. Conversion from Islam to Christianity can bring severe social and legal consequences. Yet even in such a closed context, God is at work drawing people to Himself.

Prayer Points:

Spiritual Awakening: Pray that many would encounter Christ through dreams, Scripture, and personal witness, and come to know Him as Lord and Savior.

Boldness Amid Risk: Ask God to strengthen believers to stand firm in faith despite pressure, fear, or opposition.

Underground Church: Pray for protection, unity, and growth of secret believers and house gatherings.

Gospel Access: Pray for creative and safe ways for the gospel to reach those who have little or no access to it.

Leaders & Authorities: Ask the Lord to soften hearts in leadership and open doors for greater religious freedom.

Perseverance & Hope: Pray that believers would not grow weary, but remain steadfast, trusting in God's promises.

Revival: Ask the Lord to bring spiritual breakthrough in a land where the gospel is costly, and to build His church for His glory.



In Contact With Council

- ◆ Dean Wubben opened the March 9 Council meeting with a devotion on how God uses brokenness to mold us and opened with prayer.
- ◆ The minutes were read from the last meeting. A motion to approve passed.
- ◆ Pastor's report: met with Paul and Betty DeMann, Jaime and Tara DeMann, the Bruinsmas and RJ.
- ◆ Pulpit supply: Ron Bouwkamp and Bruce Persenaire on April 12. Pastor Joel's last Sunday will be May 10.
- ◆ Deacon's report: General fund is 2% ahead and ministry shares 21% behind. A motion to approve the offering schedule passed.
- ◆ Worship committee: discussion on updates for the sound system.
- ◆ Outreach committee: Pinewood Derby will be held on March 18. Planning Vacation Bible School with daycare kids at school.
- ◆ Building and Grounds: Met with Martin Public regarding use of our church in an emergency.
- ◆ Council visits: two were made.
- ◆ A motion to approve mission trip support in the amount of \$2,500 passed.
- ◆ A motion to support Jen and Violet Tuinstra to go to Uganda passed.
- ◆ Old business: Visa update meeting with Mike Koetje scheduled for March 12.
- ◆ September 1 immigration to make a decision. The Trinidad's are hoping they can return the end of October or first part of November.
- ◆ Discussion took place on how to fund the Trinidad's while in the Philippines.
- ◆ New business: look at possible date for congregational meeting in May.
- ◆ Dave and Wilma Perasenaire are transferring their membership from Illinois.
- ◆ Elder and Deacon names for open positions.

- ◆ A motion to adjourn passed.
- ◆ Don Wubben closed with prayer and has devotions in April.

Good Friday and Easter Services

Good Friday service at Martin Reformed
at 6:30 pm
8 am Sunrise Service
9 am Breakfast
10 am Morning Worship
There will be no evening service.

Spring Break Serve Trip 2026 World Renew Disaster Response Services

The Spring Break Serve Trip team left church Saturday morning at about 6 am. The 17 members piled into 4 vehicles and headed for Elizabethton, Tennessee. They will be staying at the Lynn Valley Baptist Church during their work week. The team is working through World Renew DRS (Disaster Response Services). The long-term recovery organization in Elizabethton is Carter County Long Term Recovery Group, and they will be deciding what homes our teams will be working at.

The workday begins at 6:30 am with devotions, breakfast and everyone packing their lunches for the day. The teams head out a little before 8 am and work until 4:30 to 5 pm. Once back at church it's time to wash up and prepare supper. After supper there will be a time of devotions and clean up chores as well as preparing the evening meal for the next night. By 10 pm it is time to head to bed and rest up for the next day.

The team plans to leave Elizabethton on Saturday, April 4, around 6 am and hopefully arrive home by 6 to 7 pm.

The team this year consists of Mary and Randy Bouman, David and Jacob DeYoung, Glenn and Nancy Leep, Les and Rena Lynema, Bruce Mejeur, Adrian Norris, Cece Sutherland, Isaac Suk, Bruce Tiemeyer, Violet and Henry Tuinstra, Dean and Don Wubben.

Pray for travel safety as they go to and from Tennessee and safety on the job site. Pray for the clients they work for. May the team be a light in the life of those they meet. Pray for the people in Carter County as they continue to wait and work for their homes to be repaired after the flooding from Hurricane Helene in 2024. Pray that all that is done during the trip is glorifying to God and He is praised in all.

Welcome Waylon John



Congratulations to Steve and Sara Heffron on the birth of their son, Waylon John. Waylon was born on February 28 at 5:48 pm. He was 21 1/4 inches long. He is a very healthy and content little guy. It was a bit of an adjustment for Sadie but she is absolutely loving her little brother. Mom and Dad are absolutely in love with their little man and can't wait for everyone to meet him.

Congratulations to Steve, Sara and Sadie.

Pinewood Derby

The Pinewood Derby was held on March 18.

The GEMS and Cadets battled against each other for the fastest car. The winner was Easton Mandela with William and Henry VandeBunte coming in second and third. Their sister, Ellie, was awarded the Best of Show for her Minion themed car.

Congratulations to all the kids who entered a car. It was a very fun evening and the food was great.

Be in prayer for our GEMS and Cadet programs and their counselors.



What's New in Our Library

AMBUSH OF THE HEART—MARY CONNEALY (Rocky Mountain Marshalls #1)
WHITEOUT—LYNETTE EASON & DANI PETTREY
TAMING LADY TEMPERANCE—KAREN WITEMEYER (Secret Society of Spinsters #1)
DEADLY CURRENTS—ELIZABETH GODDARD (Hidden Bay #3)
NEW BEGINNINGS—LINDA BYLE (SEEKERS #1)
RAGING WATERS—DANA MENTINK (ELEMENTS OF DANGER #3)

THE ANGEL OF SECOND STREET—BARBARA TIFFT BLAKLEY (ENDURING HOPE #1)

THE UNDERCOVER HEIRESS OF BROCKTON—KELLY GOSHORN (ENDURING HOPE #2)

THE DAUGHTER SHILOH—TERRI J. HAYNES (ENDURING HOPE #3)

THE CAREGIVER AT WOUNDED KNEE—DEBBY LEE (ENDURING HOPE #4)

These four books are historical regarding how America dealt with the things we think are normal today. Women, black people and Indians were treated differently in places of employment. All are historical fiction with a lot of true facts. Enjoy.

Our sincere thanks to the Outreach Committee who prepared the luncheon following Communion on March 8. It was delicious and the fellowship was great!!



A big thank you to Lorraine, Keri, Rena, Linda, Renee, Wilma, Jeanine, Deb, Darlene, Nancy M., Jen and Nancy L. who made cookies, provided Nature Valley and Kind bars and chocolates and came to help pack boxes for Jonah, Kendra and Luke.

Thanks so much for all your help.



Martin Area Resource Center

When you are grocery shopping in April please remember those who are less fortunate in our community. Martin Area Resource Center needs the following in April:

pasta/rice; pasta sauces; hamburger helper; mac and cheese; stuffings, boxed foods and meals

Wild Game Dinner

The East Martin Christian School's Wild Game dinner was a great success. They raised approximately \$29,000 thanks to the generosity of those who attended and contributions from the sponsors and local businesses.



Tom Maher shared his life story about trusting God when life doesn't go as planned and still finding joy in the things you love.

Watch for the date for the Wild Game Dinner 2027. You won't want to miss it.

Golf Outing

The annual East Martin Christian School Golf Outing is Saturday, June 20th, at Mullenhurst Golf Course in Delton. The day includes 18 holes of golf, a shirt, Chick-fil-A lunch, and a chance at prizes. The 4-person golf scramble begins at 8 a.m.

If you are interested in playing or sponsoring this event, please call/text Kelvin DeVries at (616) 481-3872.

Hope and Forgiveness in the Midst of Evil

Save the date for the Bible League Conference which will be held on Friday, September 11, at Friendship CRC in Byron Center.

The featured speaker will be Gayle Haas as Corrie ten Boom. Wife, mother, grandmother, speaker and prayer warrior, Gayle is a devoted servant of Christ who upholds biblical values of faith and family. She brings to life the testimony of Corrie ten Boom, who helped shelter Jews in the Netherlands during the Nazi occupation.

Special guests from Bible League will be President Joe Snoep and Andrew Earnshaw, along with a powerful ministry update from Romi Barcena in the Philippines.

This conference is hosted by Bible League Volunteer Ambassadors to strengthen the body of Christ and raise funds for children and youth ministry worldwide.

Perfect Easter Breakfast

Place 10 mini croissants in a 9x13 pan.

Add:

1 cup of frozen blueberries

1 cup of frozen raspberries

In bowl mix together:

5 eggs

1 cup 2% milk

1 cup heavy cream

1/2 cup sugar

1 tsp cinnamon

1 tsp vanilla

Bake at 350 degrees 40-45 minutes.

Sprinkle with XXX sugar when ready to serve.

The Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us.

***We have seen his glory,
the glory
of the
one and only Son,***

who came from the Father,
full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 NIV

Have a blessed Easter,

The Echoes Staff

Greeters

April 5: AM—Bob & Ruth Katje, Don Wubben;
PM—No PM Service
April 12: AM—Joe DeKoekkoek, Harold
Wykstra; PM—Kenlee Funk
April 19: AM—Steve & Sara Heffron, Kevin
Bouman; PM—Glenn & Nancy Leep
April 26: AM—Jonathan & Amy Kalkman,
Doug DeMann; PM—Wes & Darlene Leep

Ushers

April 5: Glenn Leep, Wes Leep, Bruce Mejeur
April 12: Dave Mejeur, Justin Rillema, Scott
Rillema
April 19: Tom Rook, Keith Smit, Don Smith
April 26: Bruce Tiemeyer, Henry M Tuinstra,
Scott Tuinstra

Nursery

April 5: Rebekah Westendorp
April 12: Jen, Violet and Willow Tuinstra
April 19: Laura DeMaagd
April 26: Riley and Addison Tuinstra

Library

April 5: Ida Westendorp
April 12: Rena Lynema
April 19: Linda DeYoung
April 26: Ida Westendorp

Shaarda Correspondence

April 5: Keith & Deb Smit
April 12: Scott & Jen Tuinstra
April 19: Randy & Mary Bouman
April 26: Dennis & Linda DeYoung

Bible Sunday is scheduled for May 3.

Tithes and Offerings for February



General Fund	\$ 7,848.75
Ministry Shares	2,239.00
Faith Promise	
Shaarda	400.00
Smit	100.00
Tiemeyer	100.00
Walker	100.00
East Martin Christian School	879.50
Rehoboth Christian School	514.00
Freedom in Christ	375.00
LEMA Institute	557.00
Growing Hope Globally	275.00
Martin Area Resource Center	1,155.25
Total	\$ 14,543.50

Offering Schedule for April

April 5: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares;
PM—No service
April 12: AM—East Martin Christian School;
PM—Martin Resource Center
April 19: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares;
PM—Pine Rest
April 26: AM—East Martin Christian School;
PM—Reach the Forgotten

