

THIRD CHURCH NEWS

THE SEASON OF ADVENT 2023



December 21, 2023

Volume IV No. 50

Advent 2023: The Two Stories

"The King and the Virgin"

Rev. Dr. Ryan Boes on Luke 1:46b-55; Luke 1:26, 38
December 24 at 10 AM

Christmas Eve: The Two Stories

"The Palace and the Manger"

Rev. Janelle Lopez-Koolhaas on Luke 2:1-20
December 24 at 7 PM

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Christmas Eve Special Offering Benefits Resilience

Our offering Christmas Eve will benefit Resilience, formerly Women in Transition. Their mission is to respond to, reduce, and prevent domestic and sexual violence in Ottawa and Allegan counties.

Resilience has experienced a 36% increase in calls to its emergency hot line and a possible 30% decrease in its federal funding. This remarkable agency not only responds to victims of domestic violence with 24 hour crisis response, emergency and supportive housing, and follow up therapy, but focuses on prevention with a violence high risk program, and coaching healthy and respectful manhood in our local schools.

December Income Update

—Dave Vanderwel, Church Financial Officer

In last week's newsletter, it was reported that during the months of November and December, the church needs to receive \$260,000 in income over that critical two-month period to meet our financial goals. Through this past weekend (as of December 18) we have received \$251,467 toward that target. With two weeks remaining before month-end, it looks like we will achieve that objective and go into the new year in a healthy financial position to sustain ministry in the months ahead when revenues tend to fall short of our monthly expenditures.

Thanks to all of you for your generous support of the ministry of TRC throughout this past year and during this important revenue period for the church.

Join Us on Sunday, December 31, for Brunch!

Sunday, December 31, we will have brunch together at 10 AM, followed by a combined worship

service at 11:30. Both events will take place in the Fellowship Hall.

There's no obligation to bring a dish, but we do have a list of dishes needed, so if you'd like to help out, contact the church office.

We hope to see you there!

MARIA Y JOSÉ FUND
Helping families to complete the journey

A new opportunity to make a difference in the lives of some of our members of the El Encuentro service is here! The deacons of TRC want to introduce you to the Maria y José Fund (named after the Holy Family and their journey in this season from Bethlehem to Egypt). This fund will be collected at our El Encuentro services through the advent and Christmas seasons of the church year. This will establish a fund that will be administered by the deacons to assist families of El Encuentro make travel arrangements for family and friends on the final leg of their journeys to the United States--often when their personal resources have already been exhausted on the long journey. We are excited about this opportunity to serve and also partner with our partner ministry at the border, Frontera de Gracia. We invite you to also consider this fund, in addition to your already faithful giving to TRC, as a way to show your gratitude to God and solidarity with other members of TRC who are in need. You can give by writing maria y jose fund? in the memo line on your check or in the Other option in online giving. Thank you for your generosity,

The Deacons of Third Reformed Church

Consistory Update for December

—Mark Hiskes, Vice President of Consistory

Before our meeting, several Consistory members met at 6 P.M. in the Fellowship Hall for a pizza dinner as well as a discussion of the book "Remembrance, Communion, and Hope," written by Western Seminary's J.Todd Billings.

Dr. Madison Pierce led our discussion of Chapters 3 and 4. While the book has been a challenge to read, our teacher clarified the more difficult Reformed theology about the Eucharist and showed how it is relevant to our ongoing discussion at Third. What continues to amaze some of us non-theologians is how different the reality of John Calvin's teachings, which tends toward wonder and mystery and grace, is from the somber, rule-driven view we imbibed as kids. Tough as the book is, it has led to rich discussions. Thank you, Madison!

Pastor Ryan opened the meeting with a devotional exercise the staff uses every Tuesday. It's called "Dwelling with the Word," and it involved the whole Consistory. Before Ryan read Isaiah 9:2-7 and then Angel read the same in Spanish, we were instructed to listen quietly to what the Holy Spirit was saying to us through this passage. Then, after some silence, each table shared with the person on their right, what they heard the Spirit speaking. Next, we shared with the whole group what the person on our right told us. For me, it was a moving example of how when we really listen to the Word and the Spirit and each other in community, we come to a deeper understanding of what God is trying to tell us.

As we began our items for discussion, Jeff Beird then shared the Financial Team Update, which was good news. We are ahead of where we were at this point last year and, as Jeff put it, "Things are getting incrementally better each month." While we can feel good about that, we also need to keep being generous in our giving.

Hunter Brumels, our Pastor of Youth Ministries, updated us on the Faith Formation Team's work. They have met weekly for a long stretch reading and discussing Walter Brueggemann's book "Prophetic Imagination," which Hunter enthusiastically recommends. The group's conclusion is that TRC needs to wrestle with this tension: How can we learn to lament the fact that we live in a post-Christian world while also being energized by the work of Jesus Christ in our lives?

Hunter assured us that the group was encouraged by how much Third is already doing about Faith Formation. (As a side note, I learned from Hunter after the meeting that we have a group of young people who meet weekly on their own at 6:30 A.M. for Bible study; we have another younger group meeting on their own to discuss how they can care for and improve the environment during the next week. That should fill us with hope!) When asked what actions might come out of this group's work, Pastor Ryan reminded us that the group was asked to form a faith-formation track that would go beyond youth to include adults—including how we "enfold" those who are new to Third. Pastor Janelle suggested it would be wise to let staff look closely at the group's report so that they can determine where we are doing well with faith formation and where we could do better. It was also suggested that some congregational input would be helpful.

Pastor Angel then introduced the “Maria y José Fund.” Oh my. In a way only he can, he had us imagine the plight of an immigrant who, over the course of two or three weeks, travels— often by foot—from the southernmost countries of Central America and arrives at the U.S. border exhausted, penniless, to wait for permission to cross into the U.S.A. Once they are granted such permission, they are often stunned at the vastness of our country—at the hundreds of miles they have yet to travel in order to be reunited with family or friends.

The “Maria y José Fund,” is to help such folks on the final leg of their journey. It’s an idea initiated by the members of our El Encuentro congregation. During Advent and Christmas their offerings will be directed toward this fund. Also, members of our 10 o’ clock service can feel free to contribute as well.

Then, I reported on an idea from the Governing Elders to form a group we’re calling “the Environmental Witness Task Force.” Their mandate will be as follows:

- To create a plan that will challenge and guide TRC into the years ahead to place its responsibility and care for God’s creation at the center of decision making regarding its environmental impact and energy footprint.
- To create measurable, challenging, and achievable environmental-impact and energy-reduction goals that will bear witness to our community that, especially as the climate warms, TRC takes seriously God’s mandate to care for His creation.
- To submit their recommendation to the Consistory by April 1, 2024.

Consistory members were then asked to consider members of TRC who would be a good fit for this group and submit them to Mark Hiskes.

The last item for discussion was the Consistorial Report from Holland Classis. Pastor Ryan read the dozen, or so, yes-or-no questions, urging us to feel free to respond or challenge. We responded “yes” to each question about whether we are living up to our Christian call here at the corner of 12th and Pine.

The one item for decision on our agenda, “Housing Allowance” for our pastors, wasn’t detailed enough yet for a decision and was tabled until our next meeting.

Pastor Ryan closed the meeting with prayer.

But as we filed out, having flipped off the lights and locked the doors, we found a homeless brother, wrapped in a heavy blanket from head to toe, sleeping outside our main entrance. Of course Pastor Ryan and Pastor Angel knew him by name, as he knew them, and they quietly chatted and gently directed him to a place he could find a warm bed for the next night.

The grace and love they extended to him reminded me, once again, of two things worth remembering this Christmas season: that the opportunity to welcome the homeless Marys and Josephs among us confronts us daily at borders both far and near, and that we have a pastoral team who not only know that, but also quietly act as the hands and feet and heart of Jesus.

Just another reason to be grateful for the Third Way.

The Justice and Equity Team of Third Reformed Church Presents

Faith, Freedom and the Founders: The Revolutionary Roots of Equality in America

Saturday, January 13, 2024 @ 7 PM

In the current debate around the founding values of this nation, important facts about the founding citizens of this nation and Michigan have been lost, including their actions towards freedom and equality. In this inspiring talk, Dr. Cox will detail new historical discoveries that reveal the ways that people of faith and the churches of the Revolutionary era were involved in moving those values forward, and how we can look to this past to give us hope for the future.

Flyer can be found at the end of this newsletter.

Profession of Faith

Beginning in the new year, 10 students and 10 mentors will start the Profession of Faith process at TRC. This process is a time for questions, learning, and relationship building. Please keep these students and mentors in your prayers as they spend time in God's word and think about how their faith connects with their lives, actions, and relationship to Christ.

- Anna Stewart - Kay Stewart
- Lucy Green - Chris Walvoord
- Faith Millen - Anna Bierd
- Kimia McMullen - Susan Boes
- Rilla Carpenter - Madison Pierce
- Lucy Carpenter - Laura Baer
- Jana Honeycutt - Jane Dalman
- Remi VanFarowe - Megan Boes
- Miriam Lopez-Koolhaas - Kathy Schoon-Tanis
- Lorena Lopez-Koolhaas - Bethany Bulthuis

Hey there! Pastor Hunter has a message for you about this fundraiser.

Thank you to those who have already volunteered to help with this fundraising event! In having some conversations with staff and others, I would love to open up the opportunity to provide gifts or skills to parents/adults who would care to support the youth group.

As I was thinking about this, I thought that it might be cool to have parents and adults offer their own skills or contributions on behalf of their students! In no way does this absolve students from providing their skills and gifts, but hopefully it will increase the amount of items individuals can bid on and the amount of funds we can raise.

So, with that being said, if you (parents and adults) have some contribution, please feel free to contact Pastor Hunter if you'd like to sign up.

TRC Mission Fundraiser

Agenda

Dinner	Learn about
Skill/Gift Auction	student trips!

JOIN US!
Friday, January 19th, 2024
@6:30pm to 8:30pm
Third Reformed Church

CONTACT US IF YOU WANT TO HELP!!
WE NEED FOOD AND DESERTS!

616-834-1822
hunter.brumels@gmail.com



RCA Restructuring Virtual Event January 8

From General Secretary Eddy Alemán:

Dear friends,

On behalf of the RCA restructuring team, I warmly invite you to a denomination-wide, virtual roundtable event on Monday, January 8. You will hear restructuring team members present the second (not final) draft of our proposal, and you'll have the opportunity to provide the team with your feedback.

*If you plan to attend, please fill in this **simple RSVP form**. Anyone with a heart for the RCA is invited to attend. Please share this invitation with anyone else who may wish to attend.*

I hope you will join us for this time of connection.

What: Virtual roundtable event to hear updates from the restructuring team and to provide feedback

When: Monday, January 8, 8:00-10:00 p.m. Eastern

Where: Zoom meeting

I hope to see you online next month!

Office Closing

The week between Christmas and New Year's the church office will be closed. The staff will be working a flex schedule throughout the week, however, the door alarms will not be turned off. Please plan on waiting until the following week to come into the office, or visiting us prior to Christmas week. Of course, pastoral staff is always available by email or, in time of need, by calling the office at 616-392-1459



You are invited to join a new book club!

It is tentatively titled the **Intergenerational Classics Book Club**, started by Aspen Boes, Mark Hiskes, and Harper Schoon-Tanis.

Other current members include Megan Boes, Lorna Cook, and Kathy Schoon-Tanis.

The first meeting will be Wednesday, January 17 during LIFT.

The first book is *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens.

Please join us!



Announcements

El Encuentro Christmas Party

The El Encuentro Christmas Party will be on Saturday, December 23, at 6 PM in the Fellowship Hall. If you would like to attend, please email office@trcholland.org to let us know.

Thanks!

Winter/Spring 2024 Mosaic Classes

We have a draft version of our [Mosaic Class schedule](#) for next semester available now. As you can see, we will be making some updates in the near future.

Prayer Requests

Pray for the following:

- Phyllis Brown in Holland Hospital.
- Son and daughter-in-law of Mike & Beverley Rannow with a difficult pregnancy, pray for the health and safety of mother and child.
 - For those recuperating from sickness, surgery and hospitalization:
- Sarah Menkveld who had surgery last week and is now at home.
- Carl Folkert who is at home.
- Steve Van Grouw who is at the Inn of Freedom Village.
- Bill Helder recuperating from hip replacement surgery.
- Janelle Sievert healing from surgery
- Dean Miedema recuperating from hip replacement surgery
- Jonathan McMullen for healing.
- Kathleen, daughter of Charles Hunt dealing with advanced cancer.
- Steve and Laurie Orlow's son, Jeremy, dealing with cancer. Steve and Laurie are in England with Jeremy and his family.
- For all migrants and refugees throughout the

world. Pray for the new families that have arrived in Holland.

- For all the church activities for Christmas, El Encuentro Christmas party, services on Sunday morning and evening.
- For Marcia Callicoa's son who is currently serving off the coast of Israel on an aircraft carrier and others who are serving in the military.
- For peace and justice in Israel and Palestine and all countries dealing with war.
- For those who are hungry and homeless: those who have broken hearts and homes in this world.
- Hospice Care: Margaret Doorenbos

Prayer Spotlight

The Inn or Assisted Living at Freedom Village: Martha Beld, Esther DePree, Charlotte Garlough, Mary Heideman, Shirley Hoksbergen, A.E. Lacy, Linda Parchert.

Remember in Our Prayers

Joanne Kuiper, Larry Loss, Dennis and Nancy Gebben, Mary and Harry Boersen, Bob and Elle Kuiper, Barb and Gordon Mummert, Tom Norman, Linda Parchert, and all others who find themselves in difficult and lonely situations.

The Justice and Equity Team of Third Reformed Church Presents

FAITH, FREEDOM AND THE FOUNDERS: THE REVOLUTIONARY ROOTS OF EQUALITY IN AMERICA

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 2024 @ 7 PM
THIRD REFORMED CHURCH OF HOLLAND

In the current debate around the founding values of this nation, important facts about the founding citizens of this nation and Michigan have been lost, including their actions towards freedom and equality. In this inspiring talk, Dr. Cox will detail new historical discoveries that reveal the ways that people of faith and the churches of the Revolutionary era were involved in moving those values forward, and how we can look to this past to give us hope for the future.



Anna-Lisa Cox is an award-winning American historian who specializes in the history of racism in the 19th century, with a focus on the North. Her recent book, *The Bone and Sinew of the Land*, on the long-denied history of African American pioneers who settled the Midwest before the Civil War, was honored by the Smithsonian Magazine as one of the best history books of 2018. Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. praised it for being "a revelation



of primary historical research that is written with the beauty and empathic powers of a novel," and New York Times best-selling author Professor Ibram Kendi lauded it for being a "groundbreaking work of research."



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