

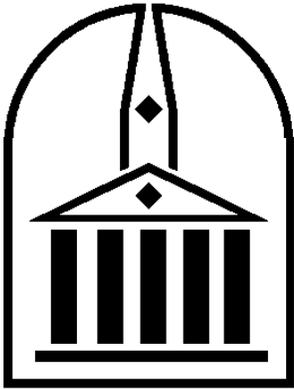
ON Broadway

Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church Newsletter

July 2015

New Space: New Opportunities

Norm Fichtenberg



Loving God, Serving People

Building a community
loved and changed by
Jesus,
loving and changing the
world for him.

With the completion of the renovations and a new addition to the building, AACRC moves into a new era on the journey of loving God and serving people. Coinciding with the expanded space is an opportunity to renew and enlarge our congregation's long history of hospitality and service to guests from other nations within our community. Specifically, AACRC and ISI (International Students Incorporated) will undertake a joint outreach involving tutoring opportunities for internationals during September and October. Three types of tutoring will be offered on a weekly basis at AACRC: English tutoring for adults, ESL for children and American culture tutoring (which may consist of smaller or larger discussion groups).

The goals of the Fall Tutoring Program will be to: (1) show hospitality to visiting scholars, students and others from all nations; (2) provide a service that has value to internationals; and (3) create an opportunity for internationals to meet and establish relationships with caring members of our community.

It is expected that the connections made during the Fall Tutoring Program will extend beyond October, growing and flourishing throughout the time our guests are in Ann Arbor. Accordingly, subsequent to the Fall Tutoring Program, those who attend the program will be offered a variety of additional opportunities to connect with Americans within a range of contexts to promote cross-cultural friendships, learning and personal growth experiences. Such contexts may include English conversation partners, one-on-one Bible tutoring, smaller and larger group Bible studies, dinner at an American home, field trips, and short-term classes on various topics and skills.

In short, the purpose of the Fall Tutoring Program is to extend hospitality to internationals that: (1) offers a service with intrinsic value, (2) engenders cross-cultural relationships and (3) uses our new physical space to open doors of friendship to a wide range of opportunities for serving people from all nations throughout the coming year.

Of course, such hospitality brings opportunities for congregational participation. During the Fall Tutoring Program, tutors will be needed—a role that will not require any previous experience. Afterward, AACRC members will be invited to connect with internationals in various ways as mentioned above. Please give thought to one or more contexts whereby you may be interested in and comfortable connecting with guests from all nations subsequent to the fall program.

For more information: contact Barb or Norm Fichtenberg, Mary Staal, Jim or Priscilla Carlson, or John Groen.

Changing How We Support Missions

Over the past 3 years, the Missions Team has worked through a series of tasks to help us understand how best to do missions at AACRC.

In 2012, we began by asking individuals in the congregation just how familiar they were with each of the 21 missionaries then receiving our financial support. Did they read about them? Pray for or send money to them? Communicate with any of them or get involved in some other way?

We also encouraged small groups, including one Adult Ed session, to consider these questions:

- What kinds of information and activities help the congregation to be most effective with a mission/missionary?
- What factors should be considered in choosing whether AACRC should partner with a particular mission?
- How does the number of missions supported by the AACRC impact: our effectiveness in supporting each mission, our understanding of mission work, and the level of interaction we can have with a particular ministry?

Then, we asked our missionaries:

- Describe some important ways that our congregation can participate in your ministry
- Ideally, would you like to have support from a large number of congregations or more intensive involvement with a few?
- What are the most important things for a congregation to consider in choosing priorities for their missions work?
- Any additional comments

What did we discover? A tremendous passion for missions—no surprise there! But, if we are honest, AACRC supports so many missionaries that people find it hard to keep track of and be involved with them in a meaningful fashion. With one exception, our missionaries prefer to partner more actively with fewer churches. So, the Missions Team decided to reduce the number of missionaries we support so that we could partner more effectively, both financially and interpersonally, with those who remain.

In 2013, we began with an attrition approach – not replacing missionaries who retire and missions whose ministry ends. We also started developing new criteria to guide our mission support decisions. We relied on Synod's five streams (faith formation, servant leadership, global mission, loving mercy/doing

justice, and gospel proclamation/worship) metaphor to identify our ministry priorities. The image is of streams converging into a river where God is present, blessing the nations.

We also want missionaries with whom AACRC could be active partners, who fit the passions and talents of our congregation. We ask, what will the congregation's commitment be? Will the missionary / mission have ways for volunteers to participate? Will they provide support/mentoring and evaluation of volunteer experience? Will they communicate in ways that involve and inform us and help us to be better partners?

From 2011 to the end of 2015, we will have reduced the number of missionaries from 21 to 15. We will continue to use the criteria to phase out other missions, but we want to give them ample notice so they can plan for the change in their budget. The total missions budget is not changing, so the funds available when missionaries retire or missions are dropped will be distributed among our existing missionaries. Our challenge will be discerning how to distribute those funds to increase support for those missions who will be able to develop a much closer relationship and more active partnership with the congregation (including youth, families, reciprocal visits, and interactive communications) with the missionary and/or those served.

If you have questions or want to know more, you can email missions@aacrc.org. You can also talk to Jim Steenstra (734-747-9398) or Teressa Streng (734-756-8691).

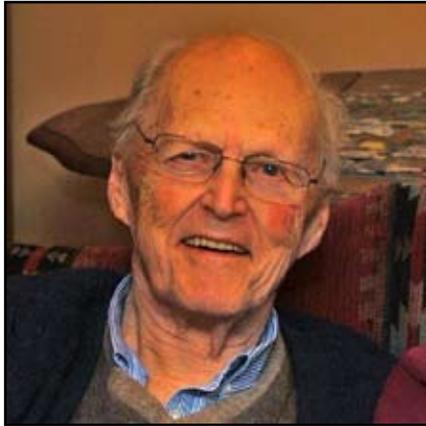
Wall of Blessings

Mary Admiraal & Kerry DeKraker

It is good to give thanks for the blessings God has deposited into our lives. Our Wall of Blessings is designed to get the Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church, old and young, excited about and see how God has blessed our faith community. Our Wall of Blessings is located in the Elementary Sunday school hallway between the restrooms. Prepare a blessing ahead of time. Write or draw the blessing on the paper (4 ½" X 4 ½") provided. Then clip the blessing to the wall with a clothespin. We will continue to collect our blessings through the 2015-2016 program year. Let's continue to count our blessings!

Memories of Ken Ludema

The Ludema Family



Ken Ludema died April 13, 2015, just two weeks before his 87th birthday. He was born April 30, 1928, in Dorr, Michigan, to Otto and Johanna Ludema. He was the oldest of their six children.

Ken grew up on a muck farm where they mainly

raised celery and onions. At age 15 he moved with his family to Coopersville, MI, where he began working in his father's welding shop. He loved work and held a wide variety of interesting jobs before and after serving one and a half years in the army, including bicycle repair, auto renovation and resale, driving a school bus, picking up milk from dairy farmers, operating a bulldozer, hauling gravel, transporting mobile homes across the country, working for Heckman's bakery and Ford motor company, and owning a root beer stand.

In 1948, he began an academic career that lasted 67 years. He entered a pre-engineering program at Calvin College and received Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Michigan. He then completed two Ph.D. programs, one in Material Science at Michigan and one in Physics at Cambridge University, England. He went on to pursue a career as Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Michigan, specializing in the friction and wear of materials. He was still working on his latest book at the time of his death.

In the early 1950's while studying at the University of Michigan, Ken saw a new version of the Bible in a bookstore—the Revised Standard Version. He bought one and began to read it. For three weeks, apart from attending classes, he read that Bible from cover to cover. After those three weeks, the man who had many questions about the Christian faith became a firm believer.

A few short years later and after a courtship conducted primarily through hand written letters, Ken married Johanna Kroese of Hull, Iowa, on June 15, 1955. They

settled in Ann Arbor so that Ken could finish his studies and soon after they started a family.

As the Ludema family grew, so did Ken's love for God and the church became his passion. In the late 50's, Ken and other members of the church tramped through many weed-filled lots looking for a place to build a permanent home for the AACRC. In 1960, the current location was purchased and Ken became the chairman of the committee that guided the construction of the original building. Later he became the "master" of the church boiler. These were jobs that needed to be done—and so he did them.

While he enjoyed and understood the necessity of maintaining the physical structures of the church, it was more important to him to share the gospel. Although he didn't feel adequate to the task, this too "needed to be done". He shared the truths of the Bible with colleagues, taught catechism to teenagers, and invited any international person he met to his office or his home for Bible study. He served on council twelve times (with one of his terms being extended for an extra year) for a total of 37 years. The highlight of his week in recent years was the two men's Bible/book studies he attended from 6:30 to 9:00 each Wednesday morning.

In an interview at the time of his retirement, Ken summed up his priorities. "My family and church have been my prominent interests. My wife had the responsibility of raising our six children. To a great extent, I feel she accomplished much more than I did. I have those plaques on the wall, he says, pointing to his numerous awards, but the six kids are her glory. My University career was interesting, but would hardly have been worthwhile alone. The children were our career, and they now reward us with their time and expressions of thanks...I would not know how to function without them".

Brother Ken, by God's grace we will learn how to function without you, but we will miss your twinkling eyes and stunning bow ties.

Thoughts about Legacy

Barb Okonkwo, RN, FCN

Do you ever have those times when you are thinking about one thing and the next minute you are way off on another topic of thought altogether and wonder how you got from there to here? Well, bear with me a bit, if you will, because I have been having one of those times and want to let you in on my “flight of ideas”.

After my mom died last fall I waited awhile to clean out her file drawer and sort her papers. Those of you who have had to do this know it is not an easy task. Besides stimulating a lot of memories it also causes a quandary: What should I keep and what should I throw away. And if I elect to keep it, why? What will I do with it? What good would it do to keep it in a drawer until my kids have to clean it out. But these pictures and papers were important to mom and a part of her life.

This led to me thinking about legacy and from there to the verses in Isaiah (40:6-7) that says we people are like the grass, just as its beauty and longevity quickly fade and wither away so do we. So mom’s legacy is not in the papers, pictures, newspaper articles, church and school anniversary booklets I eventually threw away. It is in what she has left us of her character, her faith, her grace.

David Solie in his book *How to Say it to Seniors* calls this an organic legacy, one that “...arises from the mists of a life well lived.” But he asks “How do we get to core issues of our own or another person’s life?” One way is by telling or listening to stories. What happened when...? How did you handle that...? What was...like?

But the majority of us don’t live around the corner from mom/dad or grandma/grandpa anymore and so are not privy to frequent story telling that would reveal the details of their earlier lives. So then I thought wouldn’t it be helpful to have a list of questions to ask our moms, dads, grandparents, or aunts and uncles when we do get together with them. This could lead to some interesting stories and conversations as well as serve as a sort of life review that is important to all of us when we begin to wonder if our life has had meaning/significance.

So here are some questions for you to begin asking: (a great thing for kids do do)

- What do you know about your grandparents early years? Where did they grow up?
- What do you remember about your grandparents or what stories have you heard about them?
- Were there other relatives who were special to you or who played a role in your upbringing?

- What do you remember most about your mother/father from your childhood?
- What special traits did you value most about your mother and father?
- Who in your family do you most look like?
- How did you and your family spend time together?
- Where did you go on vacations? Tell about a favorite one.
- What were one or two of the worst/best times in your family like?
- What is your first memory going back as far as you can?
- Did you get an allowance? How did you usually spend it?
- What parts of school did you like best/least?
- What activities in school were you involved in?
- What was the best gift you ever got when you were young?
- What was the best gift you ever gave?
- How did you meet grandma/grandpa?
- What attracted you to each other?
- What kinds of things did you like to do together?
- Describe your marriage proposal.
- What did your parents say when you told them?
- What is the funniest thing that ever happened to you?
- What was your proudest moment/most embarrassing moment?
- What was the saddest or most painful time?
- What are some of the best books you ever read?
- What do you think is special or unique about our family?

This is by no means an exhaustive list but just one to get you started. Maybe your family could begin to make a book of answers to these and other questions as you share the stories of your heritage.

July Special Offering • July 12

Youth Unlimited is an organization who helps churches challenge youth to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and transform this world for him. The Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church has partnered with YU for many years as a means for summer programming. Both our middle school and high school students have participated in YU’s week long SERVE projects and have grown greatly from the experience. In fact, in the summer of 2016 our middle school students (ROOTS) will be headed to SERVE. Please consider supporting this non-profit who helps our youth encounter their Savior through service and deeper relationships with Him.

Divine Presence in the Mountains and ...

Rev. Don Postema

We could sense it as we drove into the valley surrounded on all four sides by mountains with snow-capped Mount Sopris towering almost 13,000 ft. above all the lush green meadow in Snowmass, Colorado. There is something about being the midst of this wonder of Nature that evokes breath-taking awe in the Presence of the Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork."

Elaine and I unpacked in our octagonal hermitage/cabin, perched on the side of a mountain with a panoramic view of the mountains and the valley where St Benedict's Monastery is nestled. We ate dinner and then went to the monastery chapel for 7:00 pm Vespers [evening prayers]. Our awe in the Presence was enhanced as we entered the chapel where so much prayer and praise has been offered every day, many times a day. (The monks believe their ministry is praying for the people of the church and the world... even for those who do not pray.) This is a sacred space. Peace and tranquility pervade the sanctuary as the monks enter in silence and the abbot begins chanting, "O God, come to my assistance," and we join in, "O Lord, make haste to help me." Acknowledging right away our dependence on God: "Glory to the Father Almighty, to his Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord, to the Spirit who dwells in our hearts, both now and forever, Amen."

The quiet, meditative pace of the service is calming: singing a hymn, chanting 4 or 5 psalms (they recite almost all 150 Psalms every two weeks!), reading Scripture, offering prayers, all interspersed with silence for reflection. As we leave the service, the abbot sprinkles us with holy water, reminding us of our baptism. So we go into the night embraced by God's grace. The monks go into silence for the rest of the night until morning prayers [Vigils] at 4:30 am!!

Since Elaine and I have been here many times before, we came with keen expectations. Perhaps this attitude of expectancy opens our minds and hearts to experience the holy atmosphere. I wonder whether living with such expectation every day we might notice a lot more, be alert to the Presence all around us and in us.

I was a member of the Snowmass InterSpiritual Dialog [SISD] for 23 years. We met here often since Fr. Thomas Keating, a long time Benedictine monk in this Snowmass Monastery, was one of the founders of the group. Elaine accompanied me a number of times. In fact, four years ago was a very memorable

visit: she celebrated her 80th birthday here... with a Buddhist teacher, a Hindu swami, a Hasidic Jewish rabbi, a Sufi Muslim imam, a Catholic priest/monk, a New Age healer, a student of the Dali Lama, and me. I dare say not many CRC ministers' wives have had that experience!

This time in May we had the whole place to ourselves since all the registered retreat ants had cancelled their reservations. There we were, two would-be contemplatives alone together on the mountain for five days in solitude! No Internet, TV or cellphone access. Ahhhh ... How refreshing. How often do we sit and watch the clouds for half hour at a time? Watch the sunrise gradually reveal the mountain and valley, or watch the sunset paint the sky orange, pink, purple? Or have long leisurely times to read? Or take vigorous walks in such scenery, hoping we won't meet a bear? Or pray whenever we feel like it [and you do 'feel like it' here] as well as at scheduled times with the monks?

We experienced, what Celtic Christians from Scotland and Ireland call, a 'thin place.' A thin place is where the ordinary and holy meet. Celts believe there is a more-than-meets-the-eye-Reality surrounding and infusing everything, only a thin porous veil is between the mundane and the sacred. A thin place is anywhere our hearts are open; it is a means of grace when we realize that God is not somewhere else but right here. "In him we live and move and have our being."

Thin places can be nature, or music, art, Scripture, poetry, or suffering, grief, or other people, where for a moment or two we realize we are in the midst of the Holy, embraced by the Spirit.

Worship can be a thin place, if we are intentional about being in the Presence of God and provide spaces during worship to reflect on that experience. The services at the monastery do that particularly well.

I awoke early for Vigils and as I walked to my car in the dark I was surrounded by a sky full the stars - the Little Dipper right overhead! I entered the chapel in silence with the monks... some who looked as sleepy as I was. The service begins with the words: "O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall declare your praise." Appropriate first words to begin the morning. The service is mostly in the dark; only the reader of the Psalms, scriptures and other spiritual readings, has a light. This is followed by a half hour of silent meditation or centering prayer.

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The monks go off for spiritual reading, writing, and I imagine a little nap! They return at 7:30 am for Lauds and Mass. This is an hour service of a hymn, Psalms, prayers, other Scripture readings (silence), a short homily (silence) and a complete liturgy of Holy Communion followed by another period of silence (5 minutes). People from the surrounding valley join the monks for worship; especially on Sunday when 40 or 50 people show up.

People come because they sense something special, as we do. Worship is about creating a sense of the sacred; open to and nourished by the Mystery. We experience the singing, the Scripture, the homily, the sacrament as 'thin places' where our ordinary lives and the sacred intersect, and we may just be in touch with the Spirit ... or the Spirit in touch with us.

Then the monks are off to work in the fields or in the study or in the kitchen, also done with a consciousness of God's Presence and dedicated to Jesus. After lunch there is time for some rest, more work, dinner and then back for Vespers to round off the day. The day is surrounded by and infused with worship, prayer and silence.

Such a rhythm and routine is attractive and a stimulus for our prayer life at home, where in it seems more difficult. One monk encouraged me with this provocative statement: "You have to want to do it." That simple, that challenging.

One of the highlights of this trip was an opportunity to visit with Fr. Thomas, the 92-year-old monk, world renowned spiritual leader, theologian, mystic, engaging speaker, author of 20 or more books, co-founder of Centering Prayer and Contemplative Outreach, who became a friend during those 23 years with SISD. He has been a great inspiration to me on my spiritual journey – in person and through his writings, so this visit was very special. His quiet presence manifests God; his words led into a depth of understanding and experiencing the Divine Mystery. At the end, he gave me his blessing!

We were reluctant to leave this sacred place. But we were off to the second of two graduations of grandchildren in Boulder. We drove away filled with gratitude, recalling words of Fr. Thomas: Though being in the mountains and monastery vividly reminds us of God's Presence, we do not have to go anywhere special to find God. Our Divine Friend is so close, right here, around us and within us every minute of every day, closer than our own breath, always loving us. Special places and times merely remind us that God is also present in ordinary places and times of our lives.

We are in the **Divine Presence in the mountains and ... every where else.** We all live in the midst of the Holy in the city, at work, at school, at home, in the kitchen, in the back yard, walking around the neighborhood, and in church [maybe even in the new Prayer Room] ... we simply need to be awake, alert, observant. We can develop 'noticing' as a daily spiritual practice. Once in a while we stop for solitude and silence and prayer simply to remember that the Risen Jesus assures us: "I am with you always, day after day after day after day ..." A 'thin place' is right where we are right now.

**Habitat for Humanity
2015 House of Faith – Final Thoughts**

Marian Ijzerman

At the dedication ceremony on June 14th, Pastor Corey Parker reflected on Proverbs 24:3 "By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established." The House of Faith was built by human hands but our God was the master designer that made all things possible. The house turned out perfectly and despite the storms that day, not a drop of water was found in the house. Maybe God provided the storms to leak test our finished product?

Before wrapping things up, two people need to be mentioned in order to complete the list of those who volunteered this year. Louise Gruppen took photos of our volunteers on April 18th and Lillian Kuiper wrote the volunteer thank you cards. Thank you to the entire team of volunteers for blessing the Walker Family through your gifts of service.

Our next build is only nine months away and I am excited to let you know that Tim Johnson will serve as your 2016 House of Faith Coordinator. May God be glorified through the lives we impact in our community.

