

# ON Broadway

Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church Newsletter

February 2017

## Introducing Circles Washtenaw

*Peter Boldenow for the Service Deacons*



Circles is an innovative program being launched by Friends In Deed focused on changing lives by empowering families to move out of poverty and achieve economic independence.

Although Washtenaw County can appear to be affluent, the poverty around us often hides in plain sight. A 2011 report found that one third of children in Washtenaw County received benefits under the Women, Infants and Children program, 12% of the population received food stamps, and there were schools in both Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti where more than 80% of students qualified for the free or reduced price school lunch program. These statistics bring to mind the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 where the people ask "When did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a

stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?"

Friends In Deed and many of the other organizations in Washtenaw County that AACRC supports offer temporary or transitional support to families struggling with poverty. However, while these existing programs provide critical short term relief, they do little to address the core issues that often keep families trapped in poverty, and they have not been effective in aiding people make lasting changes in their lives.

The Circles Program is designed to empower participants struggling with poverty to accomplish lasting change in their lives and break the cycle of generational poverty in which they are trapped. This is accomplished by empowering program participants to be Circle Leaders and be the center of the Circles program. Circle Leaders work to develop goals and plans for their journey out of poverty. Then they are matched with a team of two or more middle income partners referred to as "Allies," who will walk with them on the journey out of poverty as their friend. That circle is part of a group of circles (10-12 to start) that meet weekly. Starting with a family meal and including programming for the Circle Leaders' children, the weekly meetings address instructional topics to help people on their journey. Additionally, weekly meetings are used as fun community-building events and organizational meetings for advocacy on issues affecting the Washtenaw community.

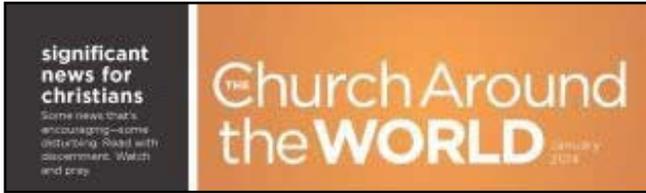
An adult education class on March 12 will focus on the Circles program. Bill Dahms and Tom Larson, who are involved in launching the Circles Program, along with Suzanne Van Dam, the Circles Program Coordinator, will be presenting more detailed information about the Circles Program as well as how members of our church can be involved.

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## Loving God, Serving People

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



**Two articles from the January 2017 CATW<sup>1</sup> bulletin follow:**

**Thousands Accept Christ in Kenya**

Thousands came to Christ in Kenya after 640 missionaries came together to pray for revival and to preach the gospel. The missionaries traveled to the village of Kakamega, Kenya, to pray that people's lives would be changed by the gospel. Their goal was to show God's love in everyday life. They visited prisons, provided treatment for those who were sick, and preached the gospel to anyone who would listen. Tens of thousands of people reportedly heard their message, and 6,944 gave their lives to Christ after hearing the Good News.

**South Sudan Refugees Pass One Million Mark**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has reported that the number of South Sudanese refugees fleeing the country has passed the one million mark. With this milestone, South Sudan joins Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia as countries that have produced more than a million refugees.

UNHCR spokesperson Leo Dobbs said, "Most of those fleeing South Sudan are women and children. They include survivors of violent attacks, sexual assault, children that have been separated from their parents or travelled alone, the disabled, the elderly, and people in need of urgent medical care."

He noted that more than three-quarters of the recent arrivals have crossed into Uganda, but a growing number of people have entered Ethiopia's western Gambella region, and others have been heading to Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the Central African Republic (CAR). "These countries have commendably kept their doors open to the new arrivals," Dobbs said.

<sup>1</sup> The Mission Team decided to discontinue the monthly distribution of "The Church Around the World" (CATW). We will continue to share news about the worldwide church, which may include select articles from this publication.

**WorldOutreach—Mark & Mary JaneVanderput  
An Imprisoned Pastor**

As I write this email newsletter, I sit in a warm room listening to praise music. I am safe. Comfortable. But there is a pastor in prison right now in Turkey and he is certainly not safe or comfortable. His name is Andrew Brunson and this is some information we can share about him:

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*Andrew Brunson has been charged in Turkey with membership in an armed terrorist organization and sent to prison by the officiating judge. Brunson, an EPC pastor (like I am), has been held without charge in a detention center in Turkey since October 7. He was interrogated without notice on December 9 and imprisoned.*

*If convicted, Pastor Andrew could face many years in prison based on extremely serious-but false-charges.*

*At the time of Brunson's detention in October, his activities were considered by the Turkish government to be "against national security." However, no other reason was given for Andrew's incarceration and no formal charges had been filed against him.*

*As of December 8, he had been held without charges for 63 days. In more than two months of detention, Andrew has been permitted only two U.S. consular visits.*

*The Brunsons have lived in Turkey since 1993, where he has been the pastor of two churches. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (our denomination) firmly believes that Andrew Brunson's detention is unfounded. The Brunsons have absolutely no connection to any armed terrorist organization in the country where he has lived peacefully for more than 20 years and where they raised their three children.*

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Dear friends, please lift up this man—and his family. They love the people of Turkey and suffer for the cause of Christ there!



# Prayer Powwow

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## **Let's talk! Let's pray.**

All are warmly invited to gather for prayer and discussion on Thursday, February 9th at 7:30-8:30 AM in the Prayer Room downstairs at church. Let's embark on the challenge of working together despite our differences.

As we gather to pray, the Spirit will lead. Why do we think the way we do? Where is God leading us? How can we love our neighbors and 319,000,000 fellow Americans as Jesus would? What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness in the current political climate?

## **Let's talk, let's pray!**

Here is an invitation to share our hearts about the recent election. It's been something we don't talk about at church, which is difficult when we as a congregation are trying to do God's work in the world. Who did you vote for? Why? How is God leading us on immigration, creation care, the economy, national security, the role of science, care of the unborn and born, indigenous justice, restorative justice, healthcare, public education, refugees, poverty and hunger, international relations, just to name a few issues?

Let's pray for our leaders, our nation and our world. Let's pray for OURSELVES! How can we as a community of Christ-followers best respond to, interact with and make a difference on the issues raised during the presidential campaign and beyond?

Our first prayer meeting will be on Thursday, February 9th at 7:30 to 8:30 AM. We'll meet in the prayer room, and if there are too many of us, we can relocate. Roughly, we'll pray from 7:30 to 8:00. Then, we'll open up optional discussion from 8-8:30 over light snacks. Feel free to stay for discussion or not! Our goal is to meet once a month, as the Spirit leads.

For this first meeting, we'll use Scripture and resources from the Office of Social Justice of the Christian Reformed Church to guide our prayer. Check it out at [www.justice.crcna.org](http://www.justice.crcna.org). Barb and Godwin Okonkwo and I will lead the first meeting, but we will open it up to others each month to lead this sacred and powerful time.

