

# ON Broadway

Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church Newsletter

June 2018

## **Droplets & Oceans: Exploring the Intimacy and Depth of the Psalms**

The Psalms have always been a cornerstone of Christian faith, worship and practice. They have served as prayers for centuries, offering people, hope, comfort, joy, and a release of pain. The Psalms are complex. They range from celebrations of God's faithfulness to questions of God's existence. They range from joy and wonder at what God is doing in the world and raging against the chaos that God seems to allow. While these prayers offer the depth of human experience in their words, they also offer a window into the writer's soul. By reading and praying them, we also are invited to share in the experience. They offer intimacy as well as depth.

Wherever we are in our journey of life, the Psalms offer us a place to find ourselves. The prayers become our prayers. When the psalmist rejoices, we rejoice. When the psalmist asks questions, we are invited to question. Extended to us in these prayers is a chance to encounter the great love and grace of God—wholly, personally, communally.

We are thrilled to journey with you this summer through a selection of these Psalms. We will learn more about God and ourselves as we plumb the depths of these prayers. And, as our community continues to transition in to a new season of ministry together, they will serve to meet us wherever we are on that journey. They will be our words hope as we look ahead. They will give us words of comfort as we grieve what we might fear is lost. They will give us words of confidence as we remember we serve the Lord God Almighty.

Following is the list of Psalms we are going through this summer:

Psalm 145 & 146	Psalm 24
Psalm 33	Psalm 23
Psalm 42 & 43	Psalm 136
Psalm 77	Psalm 121
Psalm 78	Psalm 113–118
Psalm 103	

We hope you will read along and be blest by the Word of God richly this summer!

Grace and Peace to you all.

*Pastor John & Pastor Ryan*

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### **Loving God, Serving People**

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

## Arwen's Journey: Next Steps



Parents: Seth & Becca

Kids: Arwen (10), Caspian (9), Elora (7), Gwyn (4), Irene (9 months)

From: [mallaysonamission.blogspot.com](http://mallaysonamission.blogspot.com)

*"I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will."  
Acts 13:22*

David's life and deeds are worth pondering. I've been reading through 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles over the past few weeks. In the 12th chapter of 2 Samuel, David was about to lose and Bathsheba's first child, stricken ill as a consequence for David's own sin. David was in absolute anguish. He spent seven days on the ground without food as he prayed for the Lord for his son's deliverance. The baby died.

It's rather a discouraging story on its face. I honestly can't think of a loss greater than the early death of one's own child. I've seen that sorry firsthand. I was about five years old when I watched my own parents as well as my grandparents each suffer the loss of a child. I also

think back on the Togolese mother who lost her baby in childbirth last Christmas. This is one of many examples, but I don't think I'll ever forget the contortion of absolute grief in that mother's face when I told her that her baby had died. I wrote about that story in the post titled A Christmas Miracle." Naturally, such application is affliction is averted if at all possible, but for some it arrives all the same.

How does one approach the all-powerful, creator God who allowed such tragedy? I can assure you that there are as many reactions to grief as there are opportunities to express it. The element of David's story that caught my eye this time was his response once his child had died. David got up, washed himself, and went to the house of the Lord and worshipped. David worshipped the Lord at the pinnacle of his sorrow. The very same God with whom he had just been pleading for the life of his child. That is a man seeking the heart of God. That is God's own power at work.

For our own child, for Arwen, we are still imploring the Lord to heal her body: we still believe we will see it. Yet in the slumps, after feeling the defeats, our ambition is to worship the Lord. After carrying Arwen into the emergency room covered in vomit, worship the Lord. After losing all her hair, worship the Lord. After holding her hand while she's screaming in pain, worship the Lord. After staying up all night for hospital admissions, worship the Lord.

Recently, Arwen had some scans repeated to assess the progress of her chemotherapy. By all appearances, there has been little to no change. After the misery of four cycles of chemo and all the associated side effects, we're tempted to again to be fearful and discouraged when we don't see fruit. It is the Lord who truly sees and He who will be glorified. We know this to be true. We worship the Lord.

The next step in Arwen's journey was supposed to be a near total surgical removal of the main tumor. The expectation was that everything would have diminished in size. Since that is not the case, the operation will go on as scheduled, but likely will not result in removal of as much cancer. The next phase of therapy would have been stem cell transplant with immunotherapy in the distant future. Based on the scan results, however, the immunotherapy will be moved up and stem cell transplant postponed. All of this is just man's small part. The Lord is indeed our Shepherd—we will not want for anything.

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We have enjoyed a couple of weeks home together as a family. Arwen has been feeling mostly well and usually is in good spirits. A few weeks ago, on a day when Arwen was actually feeling particularly ill, it was her turn to pray for someone during family devotions. Generally we think of a friend or missionary family to pray for. Arwen prayed for her mom and dad ... we cried as she prayed for our strength and encouragement. These are honestly very precious moments as we spend time together and continue in family devotion together. We are learning new things about the grace that God extends toward us. Scripture repeats often that God's love is steadfast and that his mercies are unending. We encourage you all to turn your face toward Him no matter the circumstance. Worship the Lord.

### Prayer Requests:

- We fight discouragement whenever we hold onto a hope or a plan that is taken from us. Would that our only hope was in Christ.
- God has provided for our living the US and we expect that He will continue to meet our needs.

*If anyone would like to be included on e-mails related to caring for the Mallays when they are in Ann Arbor for Arwen's treatments, you are invited to reach out to Anita Lautenbach (anita.lautenbach@gmail.com).*

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## Worship and God's Mission: Gathering, Word, Sacraments, and Sending

Jen Boes

With 37 million Christian churches around the world, do their worship practices have anything in common? What might a worshipping congregation in Costa Rica have in common with us in Ann Arbor, Michigan?

Churches from a wide-range of traditions, from free worship to traditional liturgy, all follow a similar fourfold pattern of worship: gathering, word, table, and sending. In different traditions you might find a different emphasis. For instance, the Table was central in medieval Roman Catholic practice, while the Word is central in many Protestant traditions today.

Why this pattern? Worship is about God, God's mission in the world and our call to join in this mission.

**Gathering:** God calls us to worship and we answer.

**Word:** God speaks to us and we respond.

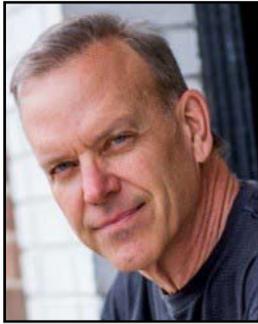
**Sacraments:** We remember and find hope in our baptism and around the table as we find our place in God's story as God's people.

**Sending:** God sends us out to continue to live out his mission in the world and we are challenged to live into this mission.

Each worship section is creatively planned according to the practices and resources of the local church, in an idiom that makes sense in the local context. The next time you are in worship, I'd encourage you to listen and watch for this pattern. *How do we at AACRC gather, center ourselves in God's word, celebrate sacraments, and find ourselves sent out on God's mission?*

**Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines that Shape the Church for Mission by David E. Fitch**

*Teresa Stren*



Pastor-scholar David Fitch argues that we have lost the intent and practice of the sacramental ways of the historic church. Setting aside baptism and marriage as one-time events, he recovers these disciplines that have been with the church since its inception: the Lord's table; reconciliation; proclaiming the gospel; being with the "least of these"; being with children; fivefold gifting; and kingdom prayer. Fitch recounts many examples and stories to show how these disciplines can help the church take shape in and among our neighborhoods, transform our way of life in the world, and advance the kingdom.

I began reading this book very recently. I haven't even finished it, and already I feel at home. I can see so many areas in which our congregation does what Fitch describes and so many more in which we might grow. The operative word is WE. Fitch gives US ideas and language WE may ponder and prayerfully consider, if WE so choose. Those who choose to read can share. Those who choose not to read can pray, ask good questions, listen, and share. Whatever WE do, WE can be confident that God will be in OUR midst.

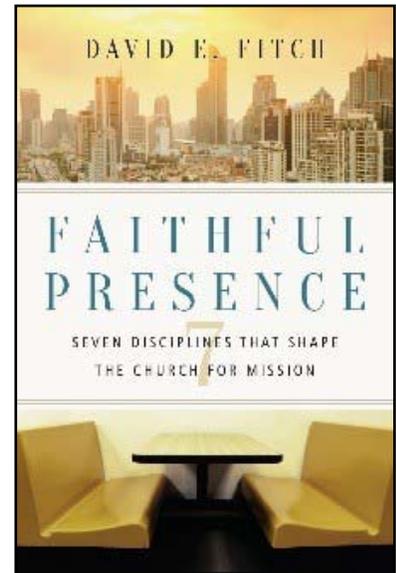
Consider the words of Amos Yong,\*

David Fitch can write this book not just because he has a heart for mission, but because he has attended faithfully to the presence of the Spirit of the living Christ poured out on all flesh. If you want to know more about Spirit-empowered mission, read this book. But be careful, as it will transform—discipline, even! —your life, your family, and your church according to the shape of the coming reign of God.

The Mission Team is committed to reading this book. Would you consider it as well? Reading together may help US continue along the journey WE've already begun: How might the AACRC re-vision "church" as the living embodiment of Christ, and embrace our call to dwell in and reflect God's faithful presence to a world that so desperately needs to experience it?

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\*Theology and Mission Professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, author of *Hospitality and the Other*. See also, <https://www.ivpress.com/faithful-presence>.



## Social Justice Renewal at AACRC

*Norm Fichtenberg, Chair, SJC*

During this reset year at AACRC, while we as a faith community are examining our worship, a renewal of the Social Justice Committee (SJC) has also been taking place. This renewal has involved:

1. Adult Education classes on John Calvin and social justice in late January and early February;
2. reconstitution of the SJC Committee in March;
3. Adult Education presentations on "The Social Conscience of the Early Church" in March;
4. hosting Professor Matthew Tuininga at AACRC to preach and lead an Adult Education class in April; and
5. inviting participation in the Bread for the World Offering of Letters in May.

The objectives of the SJC are

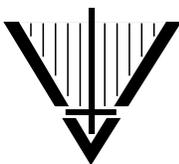
1. to educate the congregation with respect to matters of public justice within the biblical framework of the Reformed faith and,
2. to provide opportunities to "do justice" consistent with priorities set forth by the CRC's Office of Social Justice and other denominational agencies.

The Core SJC members at this time include Jon Cooper, Bill Dahms, Barb and Norm Fichtenberg, Dave McLaughlin, David Learned, and Peter Boldenow as Deacon Liaison. SJC supporters who have expressed a commitment to participate in SJC activities include Megan Boes, Phil Boonstra, Cathy Green, Veena Kulkarni-Rankin, and Godwin and Barbara Okonkwo. Of course, widespread congregational participation in SJC activities is a major goal.

Looking to the future, primary issues to be addressed by the SJC will include sanctity of life, hunger and poverty, criminal justice reform, prisoner reentry, migration and refugees, and creation care. We will be sharing information about the work of the SJC in venues that include *On Broadway*, the weekly bulletin and Adult Education classes

Please pray for the leading of God's Spirit as our congregation seeks to be salt and light even as God fulfills the petition Jesus taught us to pray: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Please send to:



**On Broadway**  
**Ann Arbor Christian**  
**Reformed Church**  
John Groen, Pastor of Worship Ministries  
Ryan Boes, Pastor of Family & Youth Ministries  
1717 Broadway, Ann Arbor, MI 48105  
734-665-0105  
office@aacrc.org • www.aacrc.org  
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10:50 am Sunday School  
11:10 am Adult Ed