



CURC Courier

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UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Living from the comfort
of being in the Lord

Reaching Out to Our Neighbors

by Rev. James Oord

This March, Community will hold our third annual pancake breakfast. The first two years were enjoyable and exciting, but were they successes? How do you measure the “success” of a pancake breakfast? From a purely numbers perspective, you could call our two breakfasts successes because we served an enormous amount of people and we didn’t run out of food (although both years involved some frantic grocery store trips by some dedicated volunteers).

But what is our purpose in holding these breakfasts? I can think of six reasons, and we can use these reasons to gauge our success this year:

1) First, we want to send a message to our community. Rev. Paul Murphy (URCNA church planter in Hell’s Kitchen, New York City) is fond of asking a question like this: if your church suddenly vanished, would anyone from your neighborhood notice?

That’s a hard question, and the answers can be pretty scary. So many times, churches can just exist and the people literally in our backyards can know absolutely nothing about them. A pancake breakfast is just a small start at introducing people to our church. Even if they come



to the breakfast and all they know is “Those people are friendly, they seem to care, they enjoy serving,

and that sausage was delicious” that’s a start.

It’s something that needs to be expanded on. The pancake breakfast can’t be the only piece of the puzzle. But it’s an important first step that we have been taking.

2) Second, we want to make friends in our community. The pancake breakfast has opened the door to some unique friendships. Have you happened to take a peek into the kitchen during the last two pancake breakfasts? If you did, you may

have noticed a special guest pancake flipper, the police chief of Saint John. He volunteered to help out two years in a row, and we hope he joins us again this year.

We’re not sharing that information to pat ourselves on the back or to add to the prestige of this event. But it goes to show that this event has led to some unexpected friendships. Not all of the friendships we made were as high-ranking, but some important relationships have been formed, relationships that have led to further conversations.

I know the fireman who lives in my



neighborhood now. I know what his daughter wants to do when she graduates high school. The police chief sat down with our Outreach Team and discussed the needs of Northwest Indiana. These are great conversations, which can form the basis for further relationships.

continued on page 2

Reaching Out to Our Neighbors

continued from page 1

3) Third, we want to thank those who serve our community. I just mentioned the police and firemen who attend our pancake breakfast. This is a fantastic opportunity to express our support and thanks for those who serve in our community and help in our emergencies. It's becoming more publicly known just how much stress and strain police officers can feel in their jobs. This is a small way for us to tell them thank you and let them know they are appreciated, prayed for, and supported.

4) Fourth, we want to serve our community together. The pancake breakfast provides opportunity for our church members to serve alongside each other. Many times, our acts of service can be inward-focused. We help each other, we feed each other, we walk alongside each other. This is an important part of our life together.

But it's also important that we learn to serve outside our church as well. We serve our community. Not everyone will thank us. Very few people will show up in church the next day. We may not see any new members as an immediate result of the pancake breakfast(s). But serving alongside each other with love and compassion, even when there's no direct benefit for us, is an important exercise in being Christlike.

5) Fifth, we want to provide open doors to our community. In today's cultural climate, most people are extremely uncomfortable entering a church building on a Sunday. It has been found that providing opportunities for people to see your church (the building and the people) in a non-confrontational, low-pressure environment can help break down barriers and melt the ice.

Our goal is to greet, mingle, make people

feel welcome, and answer any questions people might have about our church. Many members of our church have used the last two pancake breakfasts as opportunities to invite neighbors into our church. Perhaps neighbors who for years have refused to step foot in a church on Sundays, but are willing to come and chat over some pancakes.

A year or so ago, our Adult Sunday School studied the excellent book *The Art of Neighboring*, about how to develop



relationships in your neighborhood, relationships that can lead to fruitful and meaningful opportunities to share life together with your neighbors and friends who might now know Jesus.

6) Sixth, we want to create a culture in our church. Let's be honest: the pancake breakfast in and of itself is not effective outreach or evangelism. People are not going to come to Jesus because of a pancake or piece of sausage. Sure, in His mercy and might, God may bless us with a complete stranger who walks in, randomly picks up a Bible, and suddenly becomes a Christian and joins our church. But that's not the typical way these things happen.

The pancake breakfast will only be

effective if it is one part of an all-church culture of loving our neighbors, investing in our community, and living our mission.

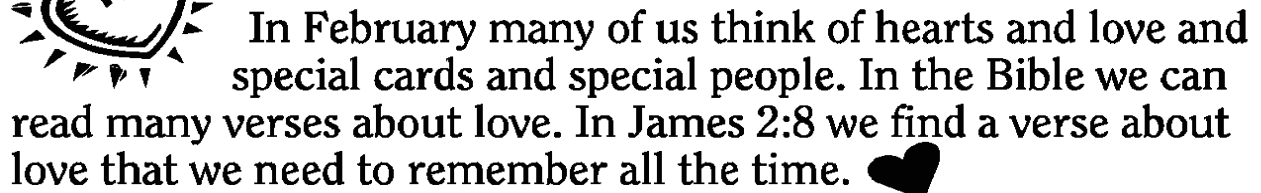
Mission is not something that just takes place overseas. It's not just one line-item in the budget. It's something for the whole church. Evangelism is not one or two big events; it's not reserved for just a few people who "have the gift." The pancake breakfast is not something we can organize, execute, and then say, "There, I've done evangelism for the year."

Each Christian is part of Jesus' mission for this world. And it starts in our neighborhoods, it starts in our communities, it starts by caring for the people around us. It starts by investing, long-term, in forming relationships with people around us and welcoming them into our lives.

The pancake breakfast is not an isolated event, it is one piece in that culture of our church. That's when it makes sense. Spend your whole year developing connections in your community and use the pancake breakfast as one more opportunity to strengthen your friendships with unbelievers. While you're serving, look for conversations, make people feel welcome, give them a smile or a chance to share their story.

I am excited about this year's pancake breakfast. For all the reasons listed above (and more), I always find it a helpful and exciting time. I appreciate the message it sends about our church's priorities and culture. I love the way our members serve together and help each other and express compassion together.

So let's flip some pancakes, let's serve, let's sign up, let's love our community, and let's create a culture.



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GEMS Highlights

by Christine Hoekstra

We have had a great first half of Gems this year! The season was kicked off with a bonfire, and we spent the night with singing around the fire. We had great meetings with lessons, crafts,

and badges. We hosted a taco dinner to support missionaries in the Dominican Republic, Eddy and Carrie Ramos. The year ended the year on a high note with our

Christmas party where we wrapped presents, made crafts, and played games!





Youth Group Update

by Josiah DeBoer

We live in a sinful world. I have friends who cut. I have friends who have depression. One of my friends has regular panic attacks. One almost killed himself this September.

And, fortunately, I've been able to help some of them. Why? Because I had a relationship with them.

Relationships are the way we influence people. We show our love through relationships. Think of it this way. If a stranger comes, sits you down, and tells you that she's worried about you, you're probably confused and a little weirded out. If someone you have a relationship with, someone you respect does that to you, then you listen to them, ask them what they mean.

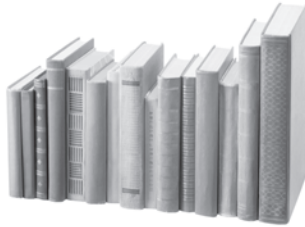
Why can they do that? Because there's a relationship there. That's what we're studying in youth group this year. Relationships.

Approximately once a month, the group will spend an hour or so discussing relationships. And while many will think of relationships as strictly romantic, that hasn't been most of what we discuss. In fact, so far, that topic has not even come up yet. We've talked about how two sinful people can find a way to honor God together. That is the essence of a relationship.

And relationships are a mess worth making.

Monthly Library RECOMMENDATIONS

The Discipleship Committee has added the documentary film *Calvinist* to our church library. This documentary was made last year in commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. It includes interviews and contributions from Shai Linne, Ligon Duncan, Joel Beeke, Kevin DeYoung, and the late RC Sproul. It also includes interviews with



URCNA pastors and authors Michael Horton and Robert Godfrey. The film

discusses the importance and relevance of Reformed doctrine and describes its exciting modern resurgence (such as the "young, restless, and Reformed" movement). Besides being informative and helpful, the documentary is also artfully produced and beautifully directed.

A Cheerful Heart is Good Medicine

Recently these quotes came across my desk from an anonymous donor. They came from Phyllis Diller, which might not mean much if you are younger than 40.

We spend the first 12 months of our children's lives teaching them to walk and talk and the next 12 years telling them to sit down and be quiet.



I want my children to have all the things I couldn't afford. Then I want to move in with them.

Cleaning your house while your kids are still growing up is like shoveling the sidewalk before it stops snowing.

February 2018

Birthday & *Anniversary Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3 Jacob Terpstra Karla Zandstra
4 Alexis Van Der Noord	5 Leo Kooy	6 Hendrik Voskuil	7 Jak Klapak	8	9 Christine DeYoung	10 Amos Terpstra Ray Veenstra <i>*Bill & Alvina DeBoer</i>
11 Lucas Dykstra Dan Falb Cindy Poortenga	12 Samuel Jacobs, II Barb J. Zandstra	13 Danielle Bultema	14 Allison Aardsma Roger Moes	15 Dan DeYoung <i>*Justin & Jodi Bultema</i>	16	17 Deb Oord Holly Root
18 <i>*Dan & Carol Rottier</i>	19	20	21 Elias Martin	22	23 Neil Krooswyk	24 
25 Camden Eenigenburg Loran Jacobs Andrew Pinson Tim Vander Laan	26	27 Judy Rottier	28 <i>*Bill & Marissa Heim</i>	{29} Janet Terpstra		

FEBRUARY 2018 Schedules

FEBRUARY 4		AM	PM
COOKIES		Abby Jacobs, Jennifer Jacobs, Loran Jacobs & Jill Johnson	
COFFEE		Deb DeBoer	
GREETERS		Bill & Alvina DeBoer Jordan & Jess Hoekstra	Karen Zandstra Steve & Alison VanderWoude
	Floater	Dave Bakker	Ross & Alexis VanDerNoord
LIBRARY		Diana DeBoer	Sandi Eenigenburg
NURSERY	Infant	Diane Krooswyk	Jodi Klapak
	Floater	Marissa Heim	
	Toddler	Loran Jacobs	James & Joanne Klapak
USHERS		Josh Eenigenburg, Keith Eenigenburg & Phil Eenigenburg	Joel Eenigenburg, Kevin Eenigenburg & Kyle Eenigenburg
WELCOME WAGON		Dan & Deb Zandstra	

FEBRUARY 11		AM	PM
COOKIES		Jodi Klapak, Denise Kooy, Allison Krooswyk & Diane Krooswyk	
COFFEE		Deb DeBoer	
GREETERS		Grace Terpstra Gerry & Sandi Swets	Bryan & Debra Punter Dan & Carol Rottier
	Floater	Derek & Jennie Terpstra	Scott & Vicki Ooms
LIBRARY		Kristen Huizenga	Sandi Swets
NURSERY	Infant	Denise & Reagan Kooy	Cheryl Terpstra
	Floater	Clarissa Ortiz	
	Toddler	Olivette & Becky Ortiz	Lori Mitchell & Deb Punter
USHERS		Josh Eenigenburg, Keith Eenigenburg & Phil Eenigenburg	Joel Eenigenburg, Kevin Eenigenburg & Kyle Eenigenburg
WELCOME WAGON		Steve & Alison VanderWoude	

FEBRUARY 18		AM	PM
COOKIES		Lisa LaReau, Sarah LaReau, Donna Leep & Sharon Leep	
COFFEE		Deb DeBoer	
GREETERS		Dennis & Laurie Mitchell Joseph & Linda Novosel	Terry & Diane Krooswyk Eric & Sarah LaReau
	Floater	Mark & Lisa LaReau	Jordan & Jess Hoekstra
LIBRARY		Jorie Rottier	Karla Zandstra
NURSERY	Infant	Deb Oord	Ann & Julia Oostema
	Floater	Raylene Oord	
	Toddler	Abbie & Gabriel Martin	Holly & Annalise Root & Jorie Rottier
USHERS		Josh Eenigenburg, Keith Eenigenburg & Phil Eenigenburg	Joel Eenigenburg, Kevin Eenigenburg & Kyle Eenigenburg
WELCOME WAGON		Tim & Lori Eenigenburg	

FEBRUARY 25		AM	PM
COOKIES		Abbie Martin, Nancy Martin, Bev Mesman & Laurie Mitchell	
COFFEE		Deb DeBoer	
GREETERS		Nick & Ashley Frederick Howie & Karen Hoekstra	Darren & Caitlin DeBoer Keith & Sandi Eenigenburg
	Floater	Eric & Sarah LaReau	Bill & Alvina DeBoer
LIBRARY		Vicki VanderLaan	Judy DeBoer
NURSERY	Infant	Caitlin Terpstra	Alison & Bella VanderWoude
	Floater	Amos Terpstra	
	Toddler	Jennie & Luke Terpstra	Niiki, Tori & Lexi Terpstra
USHERS		Josh Eenigenburg, Keith Eenigenburg & Phil Eenigenburg	Joel Eenigenburg, Kevin Eenigenburg & Kyle Eenigenburg
WELCOME WAGON		Kevin & Kathy Eenigenburg	

February 2018 Giving Schedule

AM		PM
Feb. 4	Bethshan	Illiana Christian High School
Feb. 11	Providence Christian Academy	Sioux Falls URC
Feb. 18	Elim Christian School	Tornoto Mission
Feb. 25	Crown Point Christian School	PASS