



CENTRAL LIFE

FALL 2008

Editor: Marti Beebe

THERE IS NO WRONG TIME TO PRAY

by Dr. Louis Lotz

Prayer is appropriate anytime, anyplace. In Psalm 88:13 prayer is offered "early in the morning." In Psalm 55:17 prayer is offered three times a day "evening and morning and at noon." In Psalm 119:164 the psalmist prays "seven times a day." Mark says that Jesus prayed "in the morning, a great while before day", and "when evening came" (1:35, 6:47).

Although the Reformers were leery of the ritual prayers of Catholicism, they too, had ideas about specific times to pray. Luther said prayer should be our first business in the morning and our last business at night. "Fall asleep with the Lord's Prayer on your lips," said Luther - a good reminder for those of us who fall asleep with Vanilla Fudge ice cream on our lips. Calvin said prayer should be offered before every meal, and before retiring at night.

There is no wrong time to pray. But certain occasions somehow seem especially appropriate: in the morning, before meals, when beginning a journey or undertaking a project, at bedtime. I hope you would pray too, before coming to worship. Pray for yourself, asking God to enable you to worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), and to deliver you from guilt, doubt, and distraction. Pray for those who have responsibilities in worship: the choirs, the pastors, our Minister of Music, the Elders who serve you the Lord's Supper, the Deacons who collect our tithes and gifts, the ushers and greeters who welcome you, the persons who will worship with you. There is no wrong time to pray, but prayer before worship is an especially right time.

I look forward to seeing you in your proper place on Sunday morning. Invite a friend to worship with you. Pray that the service will be to the strengthening of our church family, and to the glory of God.

BY THE NUMBERS

4635 dollars raised by Central members in this year's Hunger Walk... **1678** hungry neighbors were served at Addie's Pantry in 2007 (up from 1650 in 2006)... **84** Prayer Shawls have been created by Central stitchers and delivered to people in need since this wonderful ministry began in 2007... **64** dollars per active adult member is this year's assessment charged to RCA churches in Michigan... There are **503** active adult members on the rolls of Central Reformed Church, plus **161** children... **929** folks were served a hot meal, with a side order of human dignity, at Addie's Diner thus far in 2008... **6** Central members volunteered last year as tutors in local schools, changing a child's life a half-hour at a time... **30** dollars is all you'll pay for your flu shot at Central Reformed Church on Sunday, October 12!

THE CENTRAL PULPIT

September 21—Care Fair

Sermon: *If God Seems Late, Wait*
Habakkuk 2:1-4, John 11:1-16
Dr. Louis Lotz, preaching
Bibles presented to 3rd & 6th graders

September 28—Ordination Service

Sermon: *Good Grief!*
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, John 11:17-37
Dr. Louis Lotz, preaching

October 5—Worldwide Communion Sunday

Sermon: *The Lord Is My Shepherd, Go Find Your Own*
Psalm 23, Amos 9:11-12, John 10:16
Dr. Louis Lotz, preaching

October 12—Flu Shot Clinic

Guest Preacher, Dr. Trgy Johnson,
Dean of the Chapel, Hope College

October 19—New Members Join

Sermon: *It's Hard To Ask For Help*
Psalm 69:13-21, John 19:28-29
Dr. Louis Lotz, preaching

October 26—Blood Drive

Guest Preacher, Dr. Stan Mast,
LaGrave Christian Reformed Church

CHURCH PARKING

Central Reformed Church has signed a one year lease with Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), allowing students and faculty to park in our lot Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. During those times, church staff and visitors are asked to park in the southeast corner of the lot, by the east door. There are 22 such spaces, and they are clearly marked as "Church Parking." Sunday morning parking is not affected, and midweek events such as a funeral will be accommodated. This arrangement benefits GRCC and generates income for the church. Thank you for your cooperation.

CHURCH HERALD

That empty space in your mailbox is this month's Church Herald magazine that didn't arrive. For more than a decade, a subscription to the RCA's denominational magazine was a benefit of membership. Every member of a Reformed Church received a subscription, with the cost covered in the annual assessments paid by churches. Last year's General Synod voted to change that policy; henceforth, members will have to subscribe to - and pay for - The Church Herald on their own. Your Consistory urges all members to subscribe. You can order a year's subscription via e-mail at herald@rca.org, or call the magazine at 616-698-7071. Dr. Louis Lotz is a regular columnist for the magazine, but don't let that stop you. RCA members need the Church Herald, and the Church Herald needs our support!

ADULT EDUCATION

ADULT EDUCATION 2008-2009

You are invited to join us for another exciting year of adult education. On Sunday mornings we will focus our attention on three areas: *Exploring the Word*, *Growing in Spirit* and *Living the Faith*.

1) *Exploring the Word*, will include a Bible study on Genesis, an Advent Bible study, a class on Reformed basics, one on Infallibility vs. Inerrancy and a Bible study on the Psalms in honor of Jim Karsen and utilizing his notes.

2) *Growing in Spirit*. Classes in this section include a Book about C.S. Lewis, Prayer in Writing, Prayer Beads and a section on Lectio Divina and Imagination in Prayer as well as a class on Men's Spirituality.

3) *Living the Faith* includes a wide variety of practical topics: Homelessness, Violence, Diversity, Racism, as well as a section illuminating us about the ministries of the various organizations that effect the lives of people right here in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

You are also invited to participate in a small group experience as well. For those of you who would like a brief but intensive small group experience, join our GROW groups which meet on four Sunday evenings, November 2 through November 23. These groups will be studying the book of Jonah. For those of you who are searching for a longer and deeper group experience, our Central groups will meet the first Sunday of every month, October – May. This group will be growing together using the Disciples curriculum.

Our adult education continues through the week as well, with a Beth Moore Bible Study, a monthly Spirituality Book group and retreats. Will you please join us as we explore, grow and live together as God's people in this place? We will save a seat for you!

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

GREETERS AT NEW ENTRANCES

Remember the "old days" when greeters were located only at the then north entrance to the church? The addition of the Atrium has provided the **Hospitality Committee** with more opportunities. Have you noticed that there are now greeters at both the north and east entrances to the Atrium? And, thanks to elders, deacons, and ushers, worshippers who enter the office/education wing and College Avenue entrances will also receive a friendly welcome.

In addition, the Visitor Hosts have been positioned near the new north entrance to the sanctuary. A "Welcome Center" will soon be placed near the Visitor Hosts. The Welcome Center will have gifts for first-time visitors, including the famous Lotz' honey, a special book mark, and a brochure.

TEACHER IN RESIDENCE

We are proud to introduce our 2009 Jeanette R. Baas Teacher in Residence, author and professor **Rev. Dr. Laura Smit**.

Laura is a **Professor of Theology at Calvin College** and the former Dean of the Chapel there. She is ordained in both the Presbyterian Church (USA) and also the Christian Reformed Church. She has written numerous articles on the ascension, aesthetics, epistemology and ethics. She is the author of a Bible Study on Second Corinthians, *Serving in Weakness* and a recent book, *Loves Me, Loves Me Not: The Ethics of Unrequited Love*. Laura's book in process is, *Iconoclastic Beauty: Retrieving the Value of Beauty for the Reformed Tradition*.

This book was the topic of her lecture for Calvin College 2007 January Series. For Central Reformed Church, Laura will be our guest from March 15-22, 2009. A noted preacher, she will grace our pulpit and lead Adult Education and an evening discussion on the Doctrine of God. We look forward to seeing you there.

SPELLING BEE

If you would like to participate in our Teacher in Residence offerings, please join us for the 2009 Teacher in Residence Spelling Bee! The tradition and the rivalries continue on October 11 at 7 PM as word sponsors and teams of spellers raise funds and combat for honor, glory and honey.

TEACHER IN RESIDENCE ENDOWMENT FUND

We are very grateful for a recent generous donation by **Jack Baas** in honor of his late wife, **Jeanette Rylaarsdam Baas**. This seed money will be used to establish an endowment fund to support our annual Teacher in Residence Program at Central Reformed Church. Jeanette was passionate about Christian education and adult discipleship and throughout the years served in many leadership capacities here. If you would like to support future Teacher in Residence offerings or would like to celebrate the life of Jeanette please mark your check appropriately. We thank you for your generous support!

CARE FAIR

The Congregation is invited to a **Care Fair** to find out more about the care ministries of Central's Care Team next Sunday, **September 21** at 10:45 in the Atrium to increase awareness and involvement. One of Central's priorities of ministry is "*Christlike Caring*", the expectation of excellence of care whether it comes from Staff, Consistory, or other members of the Congregation.

Monthly Blood Pressure Screening
Prayer Shawl Ministry
Flu & Pneumonia Shot Clinic
Blood Drive Sunday
Meals Program
Updated Improved Prayer Chain
Funeral Receptions and much more!

MUSIC AT CENTRAL

BARKER SERIES CONCERT

Mark your calendars for Central's upcoming Barker Concert Series! We begin our concert season with a performance on **Sunday, November 2nd at 7:30 PM** when concert organist, **Christoph Keller** from Ludweiler, Germany presents an evening of classical organ favorites. Since February 2005, Mr. Keller has served as organist at an historic Stumm Organ in the Huguenot Church in Ludweiler and has worked as a freelance artist and a regular substitute organist at the Papal Basilica St. Johann in Saarbrücken as well as supervising the carillon of the City Hall. Central hosts for Mr. Keller's visit will be Grace and Jim Gunn.



Additional concerts in our Barker series will be:

December 31, 2008 at 9:00 PM – Dr. Craig Cramer, Professor of Organ and Artist in Residence at the University of Notre Dame, performs as part of our traditional New Year's Eve pops concert.

February 22, 2009 at 4:00 PM – Valparaiso University Chorale under the direction of Christopher M. Cock.

April 19, 2009 at 7:30 PM – Ensemble Montage, a collective of eleven professional musicians based in Grand Rapids.

Of course, we also extend the invitation to you to be a part of our music program for the 2008 – 2009 church year. Our **Chancel Choir** is once again leading us in our weekly services with wonderful and meaningful anthems, including John Rutter, George Handel, and other well-known composers. We also have the pleasure of welcoming guest soloist **Mary Tuuk** and oboist **Nancy Summers-Meuuswen**. We also invite you to be a member of **Klokkenkoor** – our adult handbell choir which participates in our worship service throughout the year.

Please contact **Brian Bartusch** or any choir member if you are interested. We'd love to have you!



Mystery Trip 2008

Last night, I was awed by the amazing turnout at our first night of Clubs. 15 junior high students included 11 new seventh graders...and we were missing a few of our regular attenders! We headed to dinner, where we were greeted by 24 parents, present for our fall parents' meeting. If all that wasn't exciting enough, we had 17 students in senior high (near-perfect attendance!). Add four volunteer youth ministry staff for this year, and I start to wonder if last night was a dream.

You know what though? If I were going to dream something for Central's youth ministry—or for my own life's impact in this world—last night was far from it.

For many of the 14 students in the above picture, it was their first experience with our youth ministry. While their number was impressive, their energy as individuals and as a team was

downright inspiring. And yet, they have much to learn...much growing to do. Will they be ready? Will I be ready? Will mom and dad be ready? Will Central be ready to help them grow?

Readiness to grow. That's what I dream. I pray that the lesson best learned through our youth ministry is that *there are always lessons to be learned*. Being "transformed by the renewing of [our] minds" (Rom 12:2) is an ongoing process, but...

When I wonder if we are achieving that result, images like these pop into my head. Pray with me that we will all continue to be both renewed and transformed...and all for Jesus!

His boy...todd <><



...after

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WEDDING HOSTESSES

Our new program of weddings for non members of Central Reformed Church will be facilitated by two friends who share the same first name. **Jennifer Webb** and **Jennifer Andrew** have been contracted by Central to work on a commission basis to be our Wedding Hostesses. Their role extends from the first contact with prospective brides and grooms to ensuring that the wedding day flows smoothly.

Please give them your encouragement as they work to extend Central's hospitality to non-member weddings.



Jennifer Webb on the left
Jennifer Andrew on the right

JOYFUL NOISE

Joyful Noise is beginning for 2008-2009, and it is bigger and better than ever! We now offer two levels of participation.

The first level: games, movement, song and musical fun with **Mary Beth Timmer** meets on Sunday mornings and it is open to everyone! This group learns to work together to sing in worship several times in the fall and spring and it includes participation in the chorus for our Christmas and spring productions. Children who do not wish to participate in our choir that sings in worship and participates in our productions, should be picked up from their Worship Centers at 10:45 am (for Worship Centers I & II) or 10:50 am (for Worship Center III.) They are welcome to attend *Walk with Me* (Kids Education Hour) at 11:10 in their respective classrooms, but please note that there is no supervision for children in their classrooms until 11:10 am. Please plan accordingly. Thank you.

The second level of our Joyful Noise program this year goes one step further by adding in some more complicated dramatics. To facilitate our growing talent, our Christmas production on December 14th will be an adaptation of Charles Dickens classic tale, *A Christmas Carol*. And in the spring, Joyful Noise will be presenting a Central classic, *Noah's Flood!* To facilitate the individual attention that these shows need, Joyful Noise Wednesday nights will be dramatic rehearsals for the **cast members only**. Some additional rehearsals on Saturday (mornings or afternoons, depending on cast schedules) will also be required. Auditions for the speaking roles in *A Christmas Carol* will begin on **Wednesday, Sept. 24th**. We hope that you can join us as we add another chapter to the great dramatic tradition at Central Reformed Church!