

# ALTO



## REFORMED CHURCH

### ARTICLES

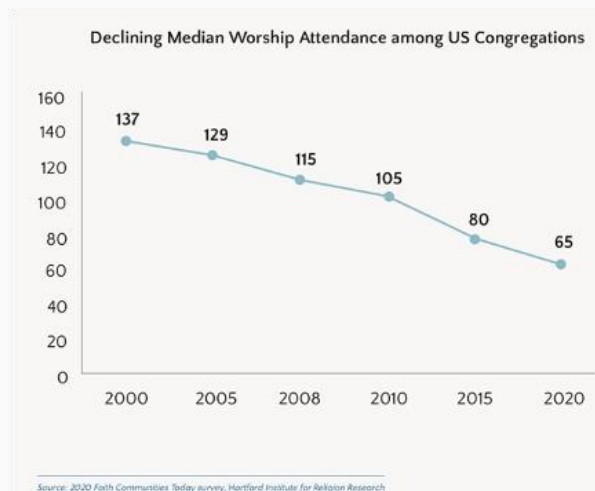
#### Wisconsin Alliance Cluster Update 3/21/23

By Pastor Kevin Van Wyk

On Tuesday, March 20<sup>th</sup> representatives from six churches gathered (some online) and had a great discussion on some of the most pressing concerns of our churches. Read on to find out how we hope to address these challenges and strengthen each other.



First, we discussed the reality of most of our churches. I shared the disturbing data that churches in the US on average have declined over the past 20 years from 137 to 65 in attendance. **We acknowledged that all our churches are on the latter half of the “Church Lifecycle,”** meaning our churches are in the mature, empty nest, retired, aging, or dying stage. We have felt the challenges of declining participation.



We then considered Jesus’ words to Peter in Matt. 16:18; *“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”* Jesus

promised to build/strengthen His Church. He is the true Rock we stand on and He will enable us to bear fruit.

While we trust Jesus to work through us, there is still an urgent call for us to strengthen our brothers in Christ (Luke 22:32, 2 Cor. 12:19). I love Brian Thorstan's nudge to the Church, ***"I don't understand having a lackadaisical attitude toward the survival of a church. Any church. There's too much at stake. What could matter more than... the salvation of lost people and the glory of God?"***

With that discussion we moved on to consider the needs and challenges our churches are facing. They included...

- How do we grow our congregation?
- How can we reach young families and help kids hold on to faith? (How do we prepare for and attract families? How do we deal with time demands of sports? How do we face progressive ideology?)
- How should we navigate educational options and differing opinions? (Some continued discussion after the meeting acknowledged the increased enrollment in Christian schools in Oostburg, Sheboygan, and Waupun, while Wisconsin Rapids is seeing an increase in homeschooling.)
- How should we train, elect, and empower elders to lead and care for the church?
- How do we better collaborate and connect as churches?
- How should we welcome, connect, and teach new members?

**The gathering concluded with some important decisions, including...**

We agreed to meet quarterly to address "best practices" in facing the above challenges. We hope to learn from each other and utilize others in the Alliance to find great solutions.

We also officially formed a Wisconsin cluster and elected a Cluster Leader. I am honored to serve in that role and help us strengthen our churches.

**PRAY:** Holy Spirit, move in our communities, stirring hearts to surrender to your

will. Empower our churches to bring hope and life to our world. Guide our leaders to walk in wisdom and grace. Strengthen Your Church today!

## Equipping Youth Update

By Jessa Ter Beest

The Class of 2023 went on their Senior Retreat at the Ark Encounter and Creation Museum and here are a few things they learned:

Jensen Jahn: Something I learned this weekend was that God guided all the animals to the ark, that Noah didn't gather them up. God showed them where they needed to be and which ones were needed for His plan.



Ryan Lenz: I thought the little exhibits that they had all over were a really neat concept. My favorite of all though, had to be the one that talked about the Grand Canyon, and how it made sense of why it would have been made by the worldwide flood. It explained why the slopes were steep instead of gradual, and would most likely have been made in a shorter span of time instead of being carved over thousands and thousands of years. I also read that deposits of stone would have been quite large if it was a gradual process. It turns out though that the deposits were not large and also indicated that it was a short period of time in which it was made.



Tehya VanLoo: Being able to walk through the living space and bedrooms was very cool. It's intriguing to see possible ways those on the Ark lived for those 5 months. Including things I've never thought about, like how they would have had to grow their own food and preserve it, and needing sunlight to do so.

Ruth Brewer: One thing I learned this weekend was that there were dinosaurs on the ark and they didn't die off during the flood.

Wyatt Guell: I learned that it probably took two peoples' days work every week just to feed all of the animals on the ark.

Spencer Stidham: One thing I learned was how the earth split apart during the flood. I thought it just rained the entire time, but way more actually went on to cause so much damage.

## Equipping Children & Families Update

By Lynnae Loomans

Just like that Bible Class is done. Thank you to every teacher/helper who volunteered every week to help shape these children into who God has created them. I could have not done it without you!

### Reminders:

- No Sunday School April 9th -Happy Easter!
- Pinewood Derby April 17th @ 5:30
- No Sunday School April 23rd - All Church Retreat. Hope to see you there for a fun time with your family :)
- Last day of Sunday School is May 7th

## MESSAGES

Thank you for all the cards and prayers while I've been sick.

-Faye Janey

# EVENTS

**Mark your calendar...**

**Alto Reformed Church**  
*April 2023*

**April 02** **Manitoqua Mission Trip**  
Pray for the group that will be doing work projects at Camp Manitoqua April 2-5.

**April 06** **Maundy Thursday**  
Join us at 7pm as we celebrate the Last Supper.

**April 07** **Good Friday**  
Join us at 1pm as we celebrate Jesus' crucifixion on the cross.

**April 09** **Easter**  
Join us at 9:30am as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

**April 17** **Pinewood Derby**  
Come for a night of racing and family fun at The Community Center 5:30pm.

**April 21** **All Church Retreat**  
Join us for the All Church Retreat at Silver Birch Ranch April 21-23. Sign-up by March 31st.

For detailed information:  
Call 920.346.5505 or email [office@altoreformedchurch.org](mailto:office@altoreformedchurch.org)

# NEWS

## Births

3/18/23 - Nylah Kaye, daughter of DeQuincy & Amber Gordon

3/28/23 - Roman Thomas, son of Logan & Carrie Seibel

## Covenant Partner

3/19/23 - Aaron Legate

## Baptism

3/19/23 - Bentley Michael, son of Aaron & Brianna Legate