

ALTO



REFORMED CHURCH

ARTICLES

Why Read This...

I hope you are at least a bit curious about our staffing plan and some of the huge changes happening with the Alliance. Also, I hope you are greatly encouraged and strengthened by the articles and updates. So, read on and be in the know...

Deeper Thoughts on Elyssa's Song

By Pastor Kevin Van Wyk

Just a couple weeks ago, Elyssa, my youngest, [sang a song](#) she wrote with some help from her brothers after hearing [Jean Stelsel share her testimony](#) at youth group. Jean has an inspiring story of faith in the midst of a severe battle with COVID and now with cancer. Elyssa took that message and shared a song with an interesting twist to the ever challenging moment of what to say when someone is dying.

I've been at the bedside of many people as they struggled to stay in this world. Most recently, it was Arlene, a sweet, faithful follower of Jesus. I've prayed many times with her and for her to be strengthened that she might continue to serve God by blessing others in her care facility and her family. Those prayers quickly changed to prayers for God to take her home and to end her suffering here.

For many of us, death is a joy we look forward to. When life is hard, death

seems pretty appealing.

A few years ago, Libbi, a high school student at the time shared her testimony and the challenges she had faced in life. I will not forget her words, "It's harder to live than die." As I recall, this was not so much a looking at the joy of heaven, but that even with a completely unknown future, that seemed more appealing than the trials of life.

While we rightly pray for God to take some home in the midst of their suffering, we can not lose sight of the God who is far bigger than our suffering. I love that Elyssa's song is not so much a message of faithful believers praying for healing as it is God speaking into Jean; calling her to persevere. Here's the lyrics to the chorus and bridge...

*You said come alive
And open your eyes
You said come O breath
And live again
Come and stand on your feet
And praise the one who gives us peace
And with the breath of Your spirit, Come alive*

*It's not time to go; It's not to leave;
God wants you here; God wants you here*

APPLICATION:

As you consider your life, your busyness, your boredom, your stress, your pain, your conflicts, your loss, your weariness, your sin, your indulging, and your every decision... God wants you here. It's not time to give up. It's not time to go home. It is time to stand on your feet; to praise the one who gives us peace.

This reminds me of Paul's challenge as he sat in prison in Rome, aging and weary of life, yet filled with the joy of Christ. He wrote this to the church in Philippi.

...Christ will be exalted in my body, whether I live or die. 21 For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. 22 Now if I am to go on living in the body, this will mean productive work for me, yet I don't know which I prefer: 23 I feel torn between the two because I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is

better by far, 24 but it is more vital for your sake that I remain in the body. 25 And since I am sure of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for the sake of your progress and joy in the faith... (Philippians 1:20-25 NET)

So, whether you're 98 or 9, God's got you here for a reason. You can run your own way or you can join Paul in living for Christ working productively to see others progress in their faith. Let this passage and this song be an encouragement to push forward in faith!

Pray: Lord, help me keep my eyes on the goal, not just to attain heaven, but to bring as many people with me as I possibly can. Help me live in a manner worthy of the gospel and walk in your joy! AMEN.

Equipping Youth Update

By Jessa Ter Beest

Youth Ministry Celebrations and Prayer Requests:

- Hibicki baptisms and covenant partnerships during the youth service! Let's continue praying for these girls as they follow God and get to know Him more! Make sure you stop and congratulate them on this most exciting and important decision to follow Christ!
- A GREAT year with Wyatt Guell as our worship and youth intern. Pray for clarity for him as he follows God's call into ministry.
- High Schoolers and young adults are stepping up to disciple our middle school students over the summer! It's so exciting to see God working. Pray for those relationships and that God will continue to raise them up!
- Pray for our coaches as they make the decision to continue coaching or to follow God in another direction for next year. We truly want it to be God's calling on each of their lives to be involved in youth ministry.
- Pray for our new coaches! God is already raising people up - it's so exciting!
- Praise that our young adults group keeps growing! Continue to pray for those leaders and for growth in numbers and relationships with Christ.
- Corey Ruis, one of our incoming seniors, started a youth led Bible study at the Union in Waupun on Thursday nights for 7-12th grade. Pray that that will continue to go well and grow!

- Praise for over 20 kids that have come through the Waupun and Laconia Bible clubs over the last school year. Pray that even more will come next year! Pray for the possibility of starting a before school Bible Club in Randolph High School. Wouldn't it be awesome to have one in every school in our area?? Let's pray for it.
- Praise for the start of summer! Pray for our various activities to provide great spiritual growth and fun opportunities for kids to bond.

Equipping Children & Families Update

By Lynnae Loomans

Important Dates:

Vacation Bible School June 19th-23rd

Summer Jam June 11th & 25th

Family Night June 21st

Library News

As the snow leaves and the temps rise I tend to gravitate toward being outside. Therefore, reading goes on the back burner. But then, relaxing in a lawn chair on the patio in the evening, I like to have a book nearby.

We have the wonderful privilege of a well stocked church library with new books coming all the time. No worries about getting that book back and paying a fee (within reason). I know there are many "regulars" that visit the library but if you're not one of them I encourage you to give it a try. We have most everything you may be interested in. There's always a friendly librarian to help you on Sunday morning or come and browse yourself during the off hours. If you find something your like feel free to check it out by leaving the card in the back of the book on the desk with your name on it and someone will file it for you. Return the book to the basket on the desk when finished. Hope you enjoy reading and see you soon.

MESSAGES

Our church family truly is a "Family of God". So our family would like to thank everyone from the ARC for your kind words of encouragement, cards, calls, visits, and food brought in and most of all your prayers for Rich during his battle with cancer. Thanks to Pastors Doug and Kevin for your visits. We know Rich

is in the arms of our loving God. So thanks again and God bless you all for your kindness.

-Charlene Kamphuis, Scott & Becky Kamphuis, Lisa & Darrell Vande Zande, Melanie & Brad Wiese, and "the boys".

Thank you so much for your donations and help in providing 84,964 bag meals for the Ukrainian Refugees. A rice bag (4,324) meal serves a family of 6 and an oatmeal bag (80,640) feeds a family of 8. That provides a meal for 671,964 hungry people!! These meals and items that were donated will aid the humanitarian relief efforts for our hurting brothers and sisters in Christ. The Orphan Grain Train trailer left Waupun this past Tuesday and will be on its way to Ukraine shortly. Please continue to Pray for the safe delivery of the shipment and the Refugee efforts.

On behalf of The Orphan Grain Train organization, Pella Lutheran, Karla Ceman and Susan Buwalda, Thank you again.

EVENTS

Alto Reformed Church
June 2023

June 04 *Middle School Bonfire*
Incoming 6th graders through outgoing 8th graders are invited to a bonfire on the church hill at 6:30-8pm.

June 08 *Mount Olympus Trip*
Middle & High Schoolers signup by June 4 for our trip to Mount Olympus. Cost is \$15.

June 11 & 25 *Summer JAM*
All 3 year olds - incoming 5th graders are invited to join us for Summer JAM (Jesus and Me) during the service. Kids will be invited to the basement before the sermon starts for games, activities or crafts focused around a Bible lesson just for kids (split into PreK & elementary groups).

June 14 *High School Color Wars*
The incoming freshmen through outgoing seniors are invited to Color Wars on the church hill.

June 19-23 *Vacation Bible School*
All 3 year olds - incoming 5th graders are invited to join us for a Keepers of the Kingdom June 19-23 at 9-11:30am.

June 21 *Family Night*
Join us at 5:30-7:30pm on the church hill (weather permitting) for food, games, and fellowship.

June 26 *Camp Manitoqua*
Pray for the kids that are headed to Camp Manitoqua for the week.

For detailed information:
Call 920.346.5505 or email office@altoreformedchurch.org

NEWS

Baptism

5/14/23 - Anna, Ruby, Lily, and Rose Hibicki

Covenant Partnership

5/14/23 - Anna, Ruby, and Lily Hibicki

What just happened at the top of the Alliance?

The Alliance Board has decided to move away from the dual leadership model they established to launch the denomination. Dan Ackerman will be stepping aside. Tim Vink will continue in his role and Dale Ringerwole will be stepping into a new CEO position.

Why would Marty and I skip the Alto Fair in 2023?

It really is with much consternation we have decided to head to Denver for the first Alliance Gathering. Unfortunately, they scheduled it right on top of the Alto Fair. There are several reasons I'm going, but I'll share two here...

1. Establishing a healthy network of churches to guard the mission, purity, and unity of the church is essential to kingdom work and our local church. George Peters noted, "The independence of the local church is beautifully balanced by the interdependence of the churches . . . Indeed, no one liveth to himself, not even the local church. There is strength in the proper mobilization and coordination of our interdependence which results in unity of purpose and action. This needs to be emphasized again and again..." (*Biblical Theology of Missions*, 225). Dave Harvey has written a fabulous book on our need for this kind of collaboration, it's titled [*Stronger Together: Seven Partnership Virtues and the Vices That Subvert Them*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2023).

2. Apathy will destroy our partnership. Apathy of conservatives in the RCA is killing it. Seven years ago, when I came to Alto, I was coming from a long season of church planting. I heard of the division in the RCA, but had complete trust in the 75% conservative majority to hold our ground on issues like universalism and marriage. I soon watched the failure to get two-thirds of the classes to support marriage being between one man and one woman. The slide escalated from there, and my apathy regarding denominational involvement shifted.

The PCA has held its ground lately, but they have met resistance even with their clear conservative views. Jim Shaw of the PCA recently wrote "How to Kill a Denomination in One Easy Move." What is the move? Don't send reps to their General Assembly. He writes "Therefore, watch over her and maintain her good health. Send your pastor to do the unpleasant work of maintaining the denomination that you love. Ruling elders, take from your time and treasure to protect the denomination that you love. Don't regret to one day see your church lying lifeless on the field of battle, a casualty to your false security and casualness." (<https://theaquilareport.com/how-to-kill-a-denomination-in-one-easy-move/>)

As you are enjoying the fair, I ask that you keep those of us in Denver in prayer.

Huge shift happening with ordination!

I've been blessed to be part of the Global Alliance Ordination Team from the start. Much of this has been easy transfers of well trained, experienced RCA ordained pastors. However, we have also realized we needed more clarity on what we should expect of pastors who are young and sensing a call into ministry.

Dr. Nathan Hitchcock has earned my greatest respect and appreciation for his efforts in leading a team to create clear competencies for pastors. Some of these are "core," meaning they are essential for every pastor to have before they step into a position. There are then another 144 competencies to work toward in the coming years.

I love that there is a good balance between the head, heart and hand competencies. There is a huge need for knowledge, character, and practical

skills our future leaders need, and the Alliance Pathways is looking to hit them all well.

There is a lot more going on with this ,so if you are sensing a call to ministry or know some one who is, have them contact me for more information.

Should We Partner with the Upper Mississippi Valley Network?

Yes, we just joined the Dakota Network, which may be renamed very soon, but so have many others. The latest count I've heard is 74 churches in the Dakota Network and more are coming. Several of these are in eastern Iowa and western Illinois. They are creating a cluster or three, and planning to form a network in the near future. I, Kevin, have had a couple conversations with them and look forward to sorting through this possibility.

What's the staffing plan for Alto?

The Executive team has met several times in the past month to consider possible positions, the vision discussions of the consistory, and options for help. The consistory has overwhelmingly sensed a call to raise up the next generation. This includes continuing to reach and disciple our children and youth, and increasing our efforts to reach and disciple young adults and families. After reviewing the current hiring conditions, the consistory approved a recommendation from the Exec Team to hire Slingshot Group to help us in the discernment and search process. We will share more information as we move into this relationship.