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## Articles

### The State of Our Soul

**By Kevin Van Wyk**

Soon our president will give a State of the Union address. I am sure he will celebrate the good things he has accomplished and boldly speak of what he intends to do in the coming years. Many other presidents will do the same thing for their organization or school. In fact, I've done this for the church some years.

As we move into 2019, I'd like to reflect on the state of the soul, particularly your soul. It's tempting to make some bold statements about the condition of American Christians, the decline of the church, and the political tension we live in. I could blame the democrats or Trump or the Superior Court for all the problems in our country, but that is a fruitless and destructive direction to go.

Instead let's take John Wesley's question to open up all his small groups: "How is it with your soul?" John knew how to go deep. He did not ask our common question: "How are you?" to which we expect and often get: "Fine." I'd like you to reflect quietly for a moment.

How is your soul?

What word comes to mind to describe your heart?

Do any of these resonate with you? Stressed,  
Bitter, Anxious, Conflicted, Numb, Weary,  
Disturbed, Irritable, Downcast or Depressed.

My guess is that it is not quite where you want it. Maybe it's severe and you are venturing into escapist behaviors like binge watching TV, drinking during the day, spending beyond your means,

viewing pornography, or hiding behaviors. Maybe your soul is not quite so troubled, but you know it's not at peace. Regardless, we could all use some more peace and joy in our soul.

Jesus speaks this to us... *“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29 NLT).*

Sounds like a great invitation.

**“Jesus, I’ll take 2lbs of rest... make that 30lbs. What it’s not for sale? I need to come, take your yoke, and learn???”**

When Jesus says, “come,” he infers a humble, repentant following. When he says, “take my yoke,” he refers to God’s mission to the world. And when he says, “let me teach you,” he invites us to be an apprentice. **Bottom line:** rest comes from a daily walk with Jesus. A relationship where we listen, learn, and love.

If you are looking for a bit more connection with Jesus, I strongly encourage you to join us in “Experiencing God.”

1. Come Jan. 13<sup>th</sup> for messages on how to know and do the will of God.
2. Sign up by Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> to get a “Seven Realities For Experiencing God” devotional workbook. Please put \$10 in the offering if you are able.
3. Signup for a discussion group at the info table.

## **It’s Always Good To Be Home**

**By Doug Shotsky**

*Hebrews 13:14-16*

***14 For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.***

During the holidays many of us travel to many places. We go visit our in-laws, siblings, friends, and many others to celebrate the birth of Jesus and to enjoy a time of year that is like no other. But, no matter where we are or what we’re doing, there’s

just something about being home that is like no other place.

After Christmas, my family went to spend 6 DAYS! with my in-laws. They are very gracious hosts, and treat us very well, but it doesn’t take long to know that you are not at home. Aside from sleeping on the couch and not having free reign over the food in the refrigerator, I am much more aware of how noisy my three kiddos are. The running, jumping, and thumping around the house is not something appreciated by my father-in-law, so I get the fun of policing all of my kid’s movements, which are normal in our own household. I absolutely want my kids to learn to respect other’s homes, but this certainly makes Christmas vacation a little more stressful for old dad.

So yesterday we came home. The kids are back to running, jumping, and thumping around the house, and I am as happy as a lark to ignore all such noises!

This scripture from Hebrews reminds us that here on earth we are not in our permanent home. No matter where we are, or what we’re doing here on earth, deep down inside our hearts are longing to be at home with the Father. The stresses, worries, tears, and pain that we endure during our time here, will no longer be our reality on the day we meet Jesus face to face.

So, if you feel out of place, unsatisfied, discontent, and are yearning for more, have no fear. Our Heavenly Father is waiting for us, and has prepared a place for us that we will one day call home for eternity.

## **Faith Like a Germ?**

**By Adrea Daane**

It never seems to fail that at least one family get together during the Christmas season ends with some sort of bug getting spread around to everyone. This year...the flu! How easy it is to all have a day together, enjoying each other’s company and some food when all of a sudden, a few days later people are dropping like flies, each coming

down with the same set of symptoms. It's something we don't even have to try to do, those germs are just catchy, no effort required!

Then comes New Year's and everyone is buzzing with resolutions, hopes, and goals for themselves for the upcoming year. What would this next year look like if we would all strive to have our love for Jesus be caught by others as easy as those pesky germs during a Christmas party. What a task that is...to make our faith so intertwined as a part of ourselves that we share it with everyone we come in contact with.

As we start our second semester of children and family opportunities here at the ARC I am challenging myself and each of the programs here to try to equip each of us, no matter the age, with a mission to spread those metaphorical "germs". The impact that goal could have is such an amazing thought. God works so easily through each of us, if we only let him....so, what sort of germs can you spread???

## **Memphis Mission Trip 2019**

### **By Jessa Ter Beest**

June 15-22 the high school youth group will be heading down for a mission trip in Memphis, TN with the Servant Life organization. During this week we, along with several other teams, will work to impact multiple communities with the good news of Christ. Teams are involved in Backyard Bible Clubs as well as other service projects throughout the course of the week. Other service projects could include sports camps, relational ministry, or community service projects.

A few times during the week, teams are part of a worship service together before heading into the communities again the next morning. The goal of this mission trip is to impact these children's lives by meeting them where they are at and running Backyard Bible Clubs in their neighborhoods, where they feel most comfortable. Through this organization we will also strive to meet the needs of

the community and love them the way that Jesus Christ loves us.

While we are in Memphis, we will also have the opportunity to visit the National Civil Rights Museum. When I visited this museum during the National Youth Workers Convention Jesus opened my mind and heart to the pain I, fortunately, have never had to experience here in Alto. My hope is that together we will learn to have more of Jesus' empathy for those different from us.

There are 30 spots available on this trip and sign-ups for high schoolers will be due February 20<sup>th</sup>. If we have remaining spots at that time, we will open the trip up to members of the congregation. Final numbers are due March 1<sup>st</sup>. If you are interested in attending, please let me know!

## **Library Update**

### **By Pauline Peters**

Now that we're through the Christmas Season, and the long winter months are here, it's a good time to warm up your spiritual life. We have a special room which used to be the Pastor's study, where we have many resources for a deeper level of reading. We have DVDs, study books, and many other books that have been used for previous Bible Studies such as Jonah & The Shack, & more information about the Reformed Church faith (What We Believe). We have references for Marriage, Hope for the Hurting, Praying Women, Praying the Lord's Prayer, & 10 Commandments among many more topics. Some of the authors are among the Who's Who of the Christian faith, such as Max Lucado, Priscilla Shirer, & Beth Moore.

Also, don't forget about our regular library where there are books to warm your heart also, stimulate your mind, & let yourself go back to a different time zone in some cases. There is also always the children's books plus many DVD's for entertainment. Good news is we have the DVD "I Can Only Imagine". Enjoy the time God gave us to relax & reflect.

## Golden Lifers Update

By Roxy Schouten

Recently I finished reading a book that had been on my book shelf for a number of months –

Wurmbrand – Tortured For Christ. It was not a pleasant book to read as it detailed the starvation, beatings and mind-altering techniques used on the prisoners to try to break them down and deny Jesus Christ. Today I have no doubt those techniques are being used successfully in all parts of the world.

Amazing as it is, the Christians in those circumstances have been and are praying for our country even as they were being tortured. One can wonder what we would do under those circumstances and also being in our blessed freedom that we do not pray more for those who suffer for their faith. This is not noted to make us feel guilty for our abundant blessings because we acknowledge that all these blessing are from our Father in Heaven. But what do they know about themselves and God that we find absent from our relationship with God?

At our Christmas gathering Golden Lifers enjoyed abundant delicious food, lavish hospitality from Keith and Donna Bruins at their Mill facility, catching up on news, and inspired by our speaker and missionary we help support – Jersey Hoffner. She shared how God was working in her life to bring her to the point of working at an assignment in Zambia. The people who she witnessed and worked beside have far less than we do in material possessions and conveniences that make our life so much easier but when they come into a relationship with Jesus Christ they are rich.

Please join in prayer for our brothers and sisters in Christ: Heavenly Father – Our Father, we thank you for blessings in such abundance and know it comes from your merciful hand. We repent of our selfishness and unthankfulness knowing that when we have Jesus Christ as our Savior we are rich beyond measure. We lift up to Your Throne of Mercy to provide for the physical and soul needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. May Your

protection surround them, provisions for their needs and that their witness be fruitful in hungry souls. Continue to lead and provide for all the people who are bringing Your Good News around the world. Help us to “bloom where we are planted” and be the witness to our loved ones and those whose path crosses with ours. We pray this not because we are worthy but only on the merit that Jesus Christ paid for. Amen

## Understanding the Next Generation

### Instagram Party Accounts

**What they are:** Middle school through college students are using Instagram [to organize parties](#) away from the eyes of concerned adults.

**Why you should know about them:** Party organizers don’t use their personal accounts to hype the event; instead, they create a brand-new, private account (something like @ChristmasParty2018). From there, hopeful party-goers who are approved to follow the account are allowed to attend the event (though more stringent rules—e.g. must follow the hosts’ personal accounts—are often implemented). What’s also interesting: Many of these parties [never come to fruition](#), sometimes because the “hosts” are just looking to gain more followers. This whole thing reminds us that: 1. Teens still need wise, calm guidance; 2. There are always ways around restrictions, and our tech-savvy kids will find them; so 3. We can’t stop having conversations with them (about exclusivity and how it impacts those who aren’t deemed “worthy,” the need for “followers,” partying, etc.).

## Messages

We would like to thank the congregation of Alto Reformed Church for all of your love, prayers and support as we mourn the loss of our daughter, Hazel. Thank you so much for choosing our family for the Love Offering and your overwhelming generosity. *Love, Noah, Mackenzie and Silas Mulder.*

We would like to thank you for the love, support and prayers that was shown to us and our family when Hazel was born and now as we morn her passing.

*Bob and Michelle Mulder.*

*Mark 10:14 he said to them" Let the little children come unto me".*

I would like to thank everyone who remembered me with cards this Christmas and for the beautiful poinsettia. I also appreciate the visits from the pastors and those who bring the bulletins each week. Best wishes in the New Year.

*Sylvia Schouten*

We thank you for the basket of fruit we received and appreciated Keith's visit.

*Paul & Audrey Elenius*

We would like to thank everyone for their expressions of sympathy in the passing of Scott's brother Craig. The love and support we have received from our church family has meant a lot to us.

*Thanks again,*

*Scott and Jill*

Thank you for the delicious fruit basket we received and for the nice visit from Keith Loomans

*Barrie and Ardyce Tenpas*

Thank you for the beautiful basket of fruit and for Ann in delivering it.

*Bev Kowalski*

Thank you for the really nice fruit basket.

*Jerry & Dorothy Mills*

We were blessed by the gift of a special fruit basket from our church family. Thank you Rollie & Barb Schroeder for the delivery and fun visit.

*Dave & Donna Henker*

Thanks for the fruit basket and Bob Pluim for delivering it. It was appreciated.

*Bob & Bev Kastein*

Thanks to the church and Judy Bossenbroek for bringing the fruit basket. It was nice to receive.

*Marcella Vande Berg*

Thank you for the cards, prayers and basket of fruit that I got.

*Annice Hopp*

Thank you to everyone for all the prayers, love, concern that's been shown to me while I recover from back surgery. Thanks too to Pastor Kevin, Pastor Doug, also Elder Paul Bruins for their visits. Special thank you to the women's ministries for the prayer shawl. I've appreciated it all. God truly is good.

*Bonnie Vande Zande*

Ties to Home – ARC Family-

Thank you for the card and gift card! It was a nice surprise while away from home.

*Love- Meghan Flier*

I have been a member of this church for 72 years. I love this church and our wonderful Lord and I have been truly blessed. I want to thank all of my wonderful friends here at the ARC. Thank you for your prayers, love, hugs, cards, and visits. Because of your prayers when life was tough God always answered your prayers. To get more from our church get involved and seek the Lord with all your heart and get to know Him by studying His precious words in the Bible. I would like to end by quoting from Psalm 37:25 "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging for bread. They are always generous and lend freely, their children will be blessed. Turn from evil and do good then you always will live securely. For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake His children."

*With Love –*

*Helen Straks*

I enjoyed the basket of fruit at Christmas time and Ann Boerson's visit when she delivered it. Also, it's great to get cards and the photo ones are especially nice. Many thanks and wishes for a happy and blessed 2019.

*Donna Kastein*

# Events

February 3 – Dave & Char Alexander here to share during Sunday School.

# News

## Baptisms

12/30/18 – Zackary Jay, son of Marlie & Brittany Page

12/30/18 – Patrick Benson

## Profession of Faith

12/30/18 – Patrick Benson

## 2019 Elder/Deacon Rolls

**Vice President** – Larry Mulder

**Clerk of Consistory** – Paul Bruins

**Chair of Deacons** – Cory Kok

**General Treasurer** – Jason Vande Zande

**Benevolent Treasurer** – Ned Derksen

**Clerk of Deacons** – Matt Schultz

**Care Ministry Team** – Scott Van De List, Mark Zeatlow, Reuben Hopp, & Gary Navis

**Equipping Ministry Team** – Randy Bruins & Joel Bruins

**Outreach Team** – Steve Daane & Matt Schultz

**Worship Ministry Team** – Jack De Jager & Chad Loomans

**Facilities Team** – Joel Buwalda, Matt Plum, & Jason Mulder

## Missionary Update

Long Lay the World in Sin and Error Pining

My (Bob) favorite Christmas Carol is O Holy Night.... "Long lay the world in sin and error pining - Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth - A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices - For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn."

As we think of the ministry the Lord has called us to, we can't rid our minds of the world of sin and error that children are exposed to. Recently while in Africa we learned of one boy in our Remember Nhu

homes who had been chained and left outside the front door of the home he had been living. For years he lived the horror of the sin and error of this dark world. But now, in a Remember Nhu home, I watched this young man running, laughing and playing football (soccer) with his friends; now Christ has appeared in a very real and tangible way in this boy's life and his soul feels it's priceless worth... a worth that is infinitely more than a commodity to be chained and sold.

He, along with us, are rejoicing... for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn for all of us who receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. We are rejoicing not only of the freedom in this world but freedom for eternity through the Word becoming flesh and moving into our lives. Would you rejoice with us... for even though there is sin and evil pining we have the thrill of hope for yonder breaks a new and glorious morning.

A thrill of hope... the weary world rejoices!

- 100 homes! On average it takes 12 years to begin a children's home (conception, funding, acquiring land, building, identifying house parents, etc.). In 12 years, the Lord has allowed Remember Nhu to open 100 homes in 16 countries with over 2,000 children!! A one hundred fold increase.

- Africa! In early December I (Bob) was able to travel to Africa...
  - o We began by hosting a parenting conference in Kenya with roughly 100 house parents and high school seniors. The Lord is raising up a generation who will be a redeeming force for this nation.

- In the next five days we were able to visit over 400 children and dozens of house parents in 13 Remember Nhu homes across three countries (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda).

- o In the midst of the rejoicing, I was reminded of this weary world. I was stunned to learn that a couple tribes in one of these countries still practice child sacrifice. Because of this horror, there is a risk of child sex slavery as well.

o As I visited with a pastor running his own children's home of over 40 girls, I learned he begged daily for food to give the girls at least one meal per day... a world of sin and error pining! It was then that we were both informed that Remember Nhu would be bringing this home into our ministry... we both cried tears of joy

- Our Supporters New Home...

o A new and glorious morn is dawning as two of our supporting churches have formed a partnership to adopt Remember Nhus's most recent home in Kenya. I had the honor of visiting the home.

- Bookmarks and posters...

o I had the joy of delivering over 100 bookmarks and posters made by Josiah's and Judah's school (Oostburg Christian) and Silver Creek Reformed church.

- Board of Directors...Because of your support of our ministry we have been named to the Remember Nhu Board of Directors. Bob will be representing us in that role. We are humbled and honored by this opportunity. More news coming soon...

A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices...

- As we rely 100% on financial support for our daily living and ministry expenses, we are grateful that we received support for the cost of our African trip.

- We began 2018 at just under 50% funded and end the year near 70%. THANK YOU for YOUR faithful support in ending child sex slavery through prevention.

Prays in a weary world... would you continue praying with us for:

- Most of all... protection of the children who remain at risk across the globe.
- Sponsor families to support children who are at risk of the sex trade - visit Remember Nhu to sponsor a child today <http://www.remembernhu.org>.
- Emotional, spiritual and physical health for our family. Every time we have an event, trip,

opportunity to share, etc. with regard to the ministry we face spiritual warfare in our daily life.

- 100% funding of our living and ministry expenses in 2019... partner with us at

<https://remembernhu.org/staff/abel/>

Thank you for hearing our hearts.

May the grace and peace of Christ fill you now and always!

Amy, Bob, Josiah and Judah