



A.M.E.N.

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ARTICLES

Get the Ball

By Pastor Kevin Van Wyk

All three of my kids are playing on basketball teams. The moments I love the most are when I see players diving, scrambling, and wrestling over a loose ball. For those without knee pads, floor burns are a painful badge of honor. I love the hustle, the dedication, and the passion! It's inspiring to see great effort on the court.

So what ball are you chasing? What consumes your time, money and energy? This might be something completely out of hand and destroying your soul, family, and finances. Something like an addiction to gambling, porn, alcohol, or drugs might come to mind. You might be chasing down something that has the potential for great good like academics, sports, music, or carpentry.

Paul tells us "Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people..." (Col. 3:23 NET) We are told to work wholeheartedly, with passion and drive. If you know what ball

you are chasing, go after it in a way that glorifies God. Your intense work ethic honors God and reveals Jesus to others whether you are on the court, in the shop, on the stage, or in the home. We should be people who go enthusiastically after the ball!

Whether you are chasing hard after some ball or uncertain what ball you are to go after, **I have a challenge for you.**

It's time to chase a new ball: God! Check out what the Bible says about Jehoshaphat: **“His heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord; furthermore, he removed the high places and the Asherah poles from Judah.”** (2 Chronicles 17:6) Notice, he got rid of the worldly balls that were leading he and others away from God. Before you begin a full pursuit of God, you should consider pushing the pause button on some things that are consuming hours of your day.

However, I want us to focus on devoting ourselves to a new ball... the ways of the Lord. Practically speaking the New Testament gives lots of instructions on how to do this chase after God. Consider two verses...



*“They **devoted** themselves to the **apostles’ teaching** and to **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to **prayer.**”*
Acts 2:42

*“When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul **devoted** himself exclusively to **preaching...**”* Acts 18:5-6

Let me make these things memorable with the current theme.

We must devote ourselves to the BALL.

Bibling - apostles’ teaching (1 Tim. 4:13)

Asking - prayer (Col. 4:2)

Loving - fellowship (Rom. 12:10)

Leading lost to Jesus - preach (Romans 15:20)

How are you doing on those four things? Will you join me in wholeheartedly pursuing the BALL?

We All Have a Story to Tell

By Pastor Doug Shotsky

It's nearly unbelievable that my family and I are back in Alto Reformed Church. The first Sunday that we were sitting in the service it was a surreal feeling that had me asking myself, “Are we really here?”

and “Did we ever really leave?”

Praise Jesus! We really are here, and this is where our story continues. In the midst of life’s journey we face many opportunities, crossroads, and decisions and we only see clearly in hindsight. I’m sure I’ll preach on this at some point, but a devotional by Dennis Kinlaw was recently shared with me, and it’s just too good not to share here:

Stumbling Into the Future

In the Hebrew language, the future is behind a person and not out in front. Instead of striding confidently into the future, the Hebrews talked about stumbling backward into it. We can see the past, but we cannot see the future, and we can never tell exactly where our foot will land. Isn’t this an accurate description of life’s uncertainties? Christ asks us to put our hand in his because he can see the future as well as the past. He is the one who transcends time’s boundaries. He is the Lord of tomorrow as much as he is the Lord of today and yesterday. He can see exactly where each footstep will go. It is never irrational for us to put our hand in the hand of God. In fact, it is the only rational choice for us, considering our vantage point in life. If we choose to go alone, we will most certainly back into something destructive.

As a Christian you do not know what the future holds, but you know who holds your hand. If you get ready to put your foot down in the wrong place, he will stop you and nudge you in another direction. He will shift your direction often, and as you look back on the way he has led, you will find that he has never guided you into a dead-end street or into a destructive situation. When your hand is in his and you come to the end of the way, you will be able to say, “I never lost a day.”

The Essence of being a Christian is putting your hand in the hand of Christ and turning your back on any rights to the direction of your life. Your future becomes his, and he leads you.

(The Day With the Master, 2002)

What a different perspective to think that we don’t look to the future, which is what we commonly teach and think of. The reality is that we can only see clearly in hindsight and we truly are stumbling into the future regardless of how much we plan or try to chart our own course.

I don’t pretend like every decision that I’ve made has been correct, or even that God “called” me to here or there at times, but I do know in hindsight, that He has been sovereign, faithful, and graceful through it all, and I trust Him more with my life now

than I ever have. Joy, blessings, trials, and uncertainties all lie ahead, but what I know for sure is that I want to be all His, and I am thankful that my family is here in Alto!

We couldn't be more thankful and humbled at the opportunity to be back here to raise our family and to lay our lives down with all of you, to serve our Lord with all we are!

Save the Date!

By Adrea Daane



This summer's VBS is set for the week of July 20th-24th. Blast to the Past will take the kids back in time to explore God's everlasting love. Through worship, Bible stories, and all of our different station activities we will dive into what it means for God's love to be **INCREDIBLE**, **FAITHFUL**, **INVINCIBLE**, **UNCONDITIONAL**, and **REAL**. Look for more information about registration, CD's, volunteer opportunities, and decoration days as summer gets closer!

Questions

By Jessa Ter Beest

Here is a list of the questions our middle and high schoolers have been asking this semester. I hope you are inspired by our students' quest for truth. They are deepening their faith through asking questions that are meaningful to them and relevant to their lives. If you're ever curious to see the answers to these questions, feel free to ask Jessa for a print-out of the answers. I'd love to share, the answers are just too long for an Amen article!

- Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?
- How do we know God is nice when he lets bad things happen?
- Can Satan escape Hell?
- Will my favorite food be in heaven?
- What is Judgement Day?
- How many genders are there?
- If you kill someone while serving our country is it a sin?
- How did Jesus forgive sins before he died? I thought his death was supposed to wipe away our sin but Jesus did that before he died.
- What is the difference between all the Christianities? (Referring to denominations)
- What is the point of church membership?

- Is it wrong to go to other churches?
- What are the beliefs of our church?
- What is the RCA? Why are we talking about leaving it?
- Where does the word revelation come from?
- Why hasn't God exiled us like he did to the Israelites?
- I want to be a missionary but I don't want to go full time - would that still be good?
- What does God say about getting high?
- Will God forgive me?
- Are we going to be perfect in heaven?
- If we are made in God's image shouldn't we be perfect?
- How were Adam and Eve supposed to know that disobeying God was evil if they hadn't eaten from the tree of good and evil yet?
- Do any non-Jews go to Heaven in the Old Testament?
- What if someone has a mental disorder that causes them to sin - is it still considered a sin? Can they still be saved?

Women's Ministry Update

By Tiffany Arndt

We have a great group of women again this year who are ready for some spiritual growth and bringing friendships together through fellowship. We are working on our planning process for our Spring event. It may have something to do with cooking and a little bit of eating, you will have to wait and see! Looking towards the end of April.

Our Fall Bible study is now resuming into our Winter study on Tuesdays starting February 25th at 9:30am or 6:30pm. This is The Gospel of Mark: By Frances Chan. Contact Stephanie VanWyk or Marlaina Shotsky or just show up!

We are teaming up with Adrea and the bible class children to have a friendly competition of "Who Can Collect More?" food pantry items for the month of March. Details were sent out this week.

We were able to donate to the Library this month and help them out with book improvements. Have you checked out their selections? Check it out!

We are looking to continue some painting updates to cover some wear and tear. This project is going to require some scaffolding. If anyone is interested in this project, feel free to contact us.

Library Update

By Mary VanderKooi

God communicates with us through His Word. We communicate with other people using words. What kind of words are helpful? When Jesus wanted to help us experience different things vicariously, He told stories. Those stories were an effective and helpful way to teach.

Do you wonder how people of all ages and in different periods of history, long ago or currently, dealt with life situations? Check out our church library for every kind of story to “experience” how ordinary people have lived and the ways they have made decisions in good times and in hard times.

The library is very well organized, thanks to the capable ladies who are in charge, so it is not difficult to find something that would suit you. You can look at the comprehensive listing available in the library and if you have any questions, there will be someone who can help.

Golden Lifers Update

By Roxy Schouten

The weather outside may be “frightful” but March calendar heralds the first day of spring. Can the celebration of Resurrection Day be far from that?

As we anticipate that day we begin

focusing on the approximately 300 prophecies that were fulfilled at Jesus first coming and anticipating the nearly 500 prophecies yet to be fulfilled with His second coming. Jesus proclaimed that He was the fulfillment of them all. However, we have distanced ourselves from Old Testament practices ordained by God and thereby we sometimes miss the significance of events surrounding Jesus' trial, death and resurrection. For example, the freeing of Barabbas versus Jesus loses its significance.

As recorded in Mt 27 and Lk 23 in the “trial” Jesus was not freed but the convicted Barabbas was freed at the will of the people. To some Barabbas may have been a folk hero as he led an insurrection against Roman domination but the Jewish leaders held that Jesus was the bigger threat to their “establishment”. When looking at this superficially we may view this as an example of the drama surrounding the trial and it makes for some fodder for movies. But this was much more than drama. It was yet another example of Bible prophecy being fulfilled. Nothing in Scripture is there without a reason for it down to the last “dot and tittle” that will be fulfilled.

If one reviews the book of Leviticus 16 one can read of the selection of two goats and

the ceremony of choosing one of the goats to be sacrificed and the other one released with the sins into the wilderness. The goats must be very similar. In relating this to the Barabbas and Jesus incident we might think that these two could not be further apart but they did share one important commonality and that was in their name or what they became known as. "Bar" = Son and "Abba" means God. Barabbas name meant "son of God". Jesus is given the title of "Son of God"

Now we may think this is a stretch but names in ancient times were important. A name carried a meaning of some characteristic, circumstances of their birth, etc. That is mostly not true today. Therein we also miss much when we pray "in the Name of Jesus". When we pray that it is like having a right to use His Name on the "checks" we write or the requests we have. The checks with our names on hold no authority but when we become one of God's children by doing the work of God by believing in Jesus we are signing Jesus Name to our requests, praise and thanks. It has to be Jesus Name.

Barabbas was the "scapegoat" released into the wilderness and he "escaped". Jesus was the "goat" that was sacrificed. Jesus became the sin atoned

for – the ransom price paid for as described in Psalm 103:4 "who redeemed your life from the pit". In Hebrews 10 we are promised that no more would this take place because "we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". That promise is to all the Barabbas that are still in the wilderness that are getting tired of being out in the wilderness with the heavy burden of their sins clinging to their backs. Come to Jesus! Whether you are an old Barabbas or a very young and vigorous Barrabas the invitation is to you.

March begins the resumption of Golden Lifers meetings for fellowship, prayer and Bible study. We are studying Romans and discovering anew the riches we have in Jesus Christ. We invite and welcome all present members and all potential "newbies". See you soon?

MESSAGES

Thank you Pastor Kevin, Pastor Doug, the Women's Ministries and our ARC family. We have been beyond blessed by all your calls ..texts..visits..prayer shawl.. gift cards..food and your amazing love and prayers.

Love Brent and Lisa, Logan - Casey - Charlie Flier

Thanks to all who faithfully remembered

Katherine Prange with prayers, cards and visits in the past years. She was very thankful and grateful for each and every one of you.

Thank you so much for thinking of me through all of my years in school. Thanks for the gift cards and treats you have sent to keep me motivated.

Thanks again,
Bryce Daane

Thanks for always thinking of me during finals. I appreciate all of your prayers and encouragement as I continue my education. I have always enjoyed all of the treats and gift cards.

Thanks again,
Brittany Daane

EVENTS



Crops,
Livestock, &
Industry
Prayer
Service
Sunday,

March 8 at 2pm



Volunteer
Appreciation
Lunch
Sunday,

March 15 at 12pm

RSVP to Adrea or Megan

NEWS Updates

The staff has been working on setting some goals to help us live out our vision to develop and deploy Christ-like leaders. These goals centered around what we call our strategic priorities: Unite people around our mission, our vision, and our core (values, beliefs, behaviors); Equip people to live missionally; Care for people well; and Inspire people to worship God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

One of those goals was completed much faster than anticipated with the re-hiring of Doug as our Equipping Adults Pastor. It's great to have him back and we pray they have smooth transition.

The Executive Team has been working to function as recommended by the Classis as a Personnel Team. This has lead to good conversation with staff and the consistory as a whole. With that we've

clarified some things in our church by-laws and revamped Adrea's contract to give greater flexibility at 3/4 time.

very thankful for all the prayers for him and his family.

At the the Classis level, I, Kevin, have been in contact with some Wisconsin pastors, three Regional staff members, an RCA Vision 2020 Team member, and the Chair of the Discernment Team for the Classis of Dakotas. Please pray for the classis meeting on March 10 and the RCA Conservative Collaboration in Denver on March 11-12. I will be attending both and plan to update the congregation during Sunday school on March 15. Our Task Force will meet later that Sunday and the Consistory will meet the following Tuesday night.

Address Change

Aaron Zeatlow
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Dave Rumley
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OSF Saint Francis Medical Center
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Davis is now at the rehabilitation center having therapy six days a week and is