



## Count Your Blessings....

There's an old hymn that talks about counting your blessings as you walk with God in your life, as a way of cultivating gratitude and taking note of his amazing work. It goes like this:

*Count your blessings  
3139 name them one by one,  
Count your blessings,  
see what God has done.  
Count your blessings,  
name them one by one,  
Count your many blessings  
see what God has done.*

On a similar note, a DJ on a radio station that I was listening to years ago said that when God does something amazing, helpful, grace-filled in your life that you should put up a mental altar as a way to remember that when times get tough God is and has been faithful. (You could build an actual physical altar if you like, but God is so good your yard would soon be FILLED with altars 😊.)

Another way of remembering and celebrating God's work in our lives and in the world around us is personal testimony. We do this often in our worship services as "glimpses (or billboards) of grace".

As we've navigated these first few months after Pastor Matthew took a call elsewhere, if you're anything like the search committee, there's been a mixture of emotions: gratitude for the time we had with Pastor Matthew leading our congregation, awe at the work God has done among us, but also some sadness and a bit of apprehension for what the future holds. What I like to call the mantra of West Leonard (say it with me) "Do Not Be Afraid!" helps a lot; but if we're honest, there can be moments of uncertainty.

As we've adjusted and some time has passed, we've started to see all the ways God has blessed us in the 5 months since the transition happened - and even really before that - preparing the way as he always does. And it's staggering how many things God has done among us to sustain us but more to encourage

us that he has a lot more work for us to do here at Powers and Leonard. Julie and I have come up with a "list of blessings" that frankly is becoming a bit unwieldy! It keeps growing and we keep adding to it. There are small and sweet things that God does daily, but he's also done big and unexpected things that made the list. (We're thinking of adding it to our church profile that prospective pastors will see!) Here goes:

## *list of Blessings*

- A unified council that has worked so hard for us and is Spirit-led.
- Council members that agreed to serve even though they knew Pastor Matthew was leaving (now that's faith!).
- An interim pastor to lead us in these next months.
- Vibrant worship on Sundays.
- Search committee members that said yes right away when asked.
- A search committee that is unified in its work.
- The first school-supply event in the transition brought us more kids than ever before!
- The first Diaper Depot event in the transition brought us so many more families than ever before!
- Alex Flanders, Cory McCallum and Julie Vander Slik took over our Wednesday night Bible study and have done a great job. We haven't missed a beat! (You should join us!)
- On the last Sunday of our 2024-2025 fiscal year, the deacons received a check that completely covered the deficit.
- That check also included a big chunk of money for the boiler fund.
- In the weeks since then, we've had other great gifts and large collections.

## *Speaking of boilers.... (it should almost be a separate list)*

- ✓ An initial total that was so much less than anticipated.
- ✓ Great contributions from within our congregation including a few big gifts.
- ✓ Donations from both of the other "west" churches.
- ✓ Donated electrical work to the tune of \$10,000.00.

- ✓ The change and the pop can drives contributed more than we could have imagined!
- ✓ During the work the company installing the boilers found even more savings to bring the total down even more.
- ✓ In the end NO LOAN was needed and much less money from the endowment was needed than we anticipated. WHAT A MIRACLE!!

I'm sure you could add to this list, and we encourage you to do so. God knew we would need encouragement during the time of transition and he is providing, in ABUNDANCE! Our God knows just what we need - when we need it - and he will continue to provide. In these next weeks and months, keep your eyes out for things that you could add to the "list of blessings". Remind yourself every day of the things that he is doing among us and be encouraged. WE are!

- Amy Vander Slik

*West Leonard CRC Search Committee  
 Mary Bouwkamp, Ryan Bylsma,  
 Melody Flanders, Liz Nguyen,  
 Marla Roedema, Natalie VanderMeer,  
 Amy Vander Slik,  
 Mike VanderWall, Ann Wiersma*

**WINTER/SPRING CELEBRATIONS!**



80+ Birthdays

- February 15 Thelma Zeinstra (91)
- February 19 Dave Brinks (81)
- February 26 Joe Polonowski (80)
- April 27 Carol Tyler (93)

Anniversaries

- February 15 Ed & Barb DeKorte (41)
- March 13 Brian & Deb Veenstra (34)
- April 14 George & Jane Deremiah (19)
- April 30 Bill & Bonnie Wiersma (55)

Missionary Birthdays

- April 19 Ken Van Weerdhuizen

**FELLOWSHIP NIGHT BIBLE STUDY  
 ENLIGHTENS ALL!**

Fellowship night is pretty cool in itself and Gems and Boys Club have fun and learn a lot. For the adults, there is Bible Study. The past few years were spent studying the book of Acts. We found the book of Acts to be inspirational in many ways: how the early church took care each other, the amazing rescues of Peter and Paul, the way the Holy Spirit filled believers and how this spilled over to touch the early church.

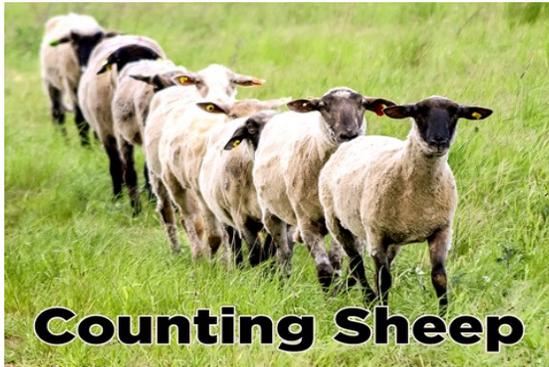
This year when we sat down to decide what we would study together, we agreed that we needed to study something that would be encouraging to our congregation -- a book or books that would remind us how God keeps his promises to his people. To that end we choose Habakkuk and Zechariah. What ??? You say. Both of these books showed us much more than we thought they would and were amazing in the way they spoke to our church! Habakkuk and Zechariah showed us that it is okay to cry out to God in unsettled times and how God will keep his promises of salvation and always is there to help you.. In fact, Habakkuk was so great that we joked we should make t-shirts that said "Habakkuk? Who knew?" Zechariah reminded God's people about the coming of the Messiah, what kind of a messiah he would be and how God would send the Messiah to his people. And also that this Messiah would come again.



For the second half of the Bible Study year, we asked "What's next?" Similar to what West Leonard Church is asking ourselves after doing all the things that need to be done between pastors, in deciding what to study, Alex again came up with the winning combination :2 Peter and 1 John. We have just begun the book of 2 Peter. In the first chapter Peter tells us how to keep our faith fresh and vibrant. He goes on to remind us to make our calling and election sure. Peter tells his readers that they can believe everything he tells them about Jesus because he was an eye witness! We are just starting the adventure that is 2 Peter. After this we will jump into 1 John. We are so excited about everything these books can teach us!

We three leaders (Alex Flanders, Cory McCallum and Julie Vander Slik) have become even better friends through this and enjoy sharing insights with each other. In this way we have already been blessed. Come and check out Fellowship night Bible Study and blessings will abound for you as well!

- Julie Vander Slik



Every fall our denomination, the Christian Reformed Church in North America, asks every church within our denominational structure to send a report for their records. Some of what is requested is confirmation of basic information of what is already on file. Some of what is requested is demographic: ethnicity of our members, average worship attendance, the start and end of our budget year, contact information for those serving our church in various roles, etc. Some of it is how our church functions as part of the CRCNA: The roles we offer to women, implementation of a written abuse prevention policy, questions about accessibility for those with special needs, availability of a website and online worship and more.

But by far the most detailed part of the report deals with membership, and this is to be reported from August 1 of the previous year until August 1 of the current year. The denomination is interested in how many members have come into the church from evangelism, from another Christian Reformed church, from another denomination? They also request information about people who are no longer members of our church because of death, resignation, lapsed membership or even excommunication. (There are specific definitions for these last two categories.)

However – just in case you are curious – here is the count of our West Leonard sheep – those who are members:

Active professing members – 108

Active baptized members – 26

Inactive professing members – 28

Inactive baptized members – 11

Total families – 44

(The number of families is also determined by guidelines set by the denomination.)

And so you have been officially counted as part of our denomination of just over 1,000 churches (75% in the United States and 25% in Canada), and globally as a part of the “great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:9)

Sue Lettinga

### **Gratitude for a Shared Burden: The Boiler Fund at West Leonard CRC**



When Scripture speaks of the Church as one body, it reminds us that when one part struggles, the whole body responds in care. Over the past months, West Leonard CRC has experienced that truth firsthand through the overwhelming generosity shown toward our boiler fund-- and we give thanks to God for every person, church, and organization who stepped forward.

First and foremost, we are deeply grateful for our own congregation. Many gave quietly and sacrificially-- not for recognition, but because they love this church and believe in its ministry. Your faithfulness reflects the spirit of the early church where believers shared what they had so that no need would go unmet.

We also extend our sincere gratitude to individuals outside our congregation - but part of

the Church - who shared generously in this effort.

Our gratitude extends as well beyond our walls to our fellow congregations in the Christian Reformed Church. Westend CRC and West View CRC demonstrated what it means to be connected as sister churches—not merely in name but in tangible support. Their partnership strengthened us more than they might have realized.

In addition, we are thankful for the support of local organizations who came alongside us. Rite Way, Peach Ridge Farms, and Windemuller each contributed generously, showing that community care often flows through faithful businesses and organizations who see their work as service. Their involvement reminds us that God often answers prayers through unexpected hands.

The boiler fund was about more than equipment. It was about keeping a place warm where worship happens, where fellowship grows, and where Christ is proclaimed. Because of you, that ministry continues.

To all who gave, prayed, shared, or encouraged: thank you! May God bless you richly, and may this experience continue to remind us that we are never alone in the work God has called us to do.

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”  
(Galatians 6:9)

- Alex Flanders, President of Deacons

## NEW IN THE CHURCH LIBRARY

### The Brother Cadfael Series

by Ellis Peters



Do you enjoy reading an intriguing murder mystery? Even one that takes place during the Middle Ages? Then you'll enjoy the tales from Brother Cadfael! A former soldier of the First Crusade, Brother Cadfael turned monk and herbalist at the Benedictine Abbey in Shrewsbury. Brave and resourceful, wise to the world's illusions and all too aware of the potential for good and evil within the human heart, time after time he plunges to the core of a mystery and reveals its secrets.

Our library was given seven of the Brother Cadfael series. The complete series is 21 books, but each can stand in its own merits once the reader gets acquainted with Brother Cadfael and his surroundings and lifestyle.

But the books also contain some quite thought-provoking and humorous quotes – often related to aging. Here is just a sample:

- (He was) virtually senile but doctrinally safe, and had the capacious if capricious memory of the very old.
- I never do anything without due thought – even if the thought sometimes has to shift its feet pretty briskly to keep up with the deed.
- Did you ever get up to do something, and then clean forget what it was? And have to go back to where you first thought of it to bring it back to mind? No, surely not, you're too young, for you to think of doing a thing is to do it. But ask the elders like me, and they'll admit to it.
- God forgive me the lie, he muttered to himself, and turn it to truth.
- Why should I be of less use today than I was yesterday?
- Past the three score, men don't take kindly to change.
- Then sleep easy, said Cadfael, for God is awake.

Ellis Peters (a pen name for Edith Pargeter) wrote the Brother Cadfael series. The author of over a dozen mysteries and historical novels, Peters decided in 1977 to combine the two pursuits and launch her series of Brother Cadfael mysteries, ultimately telling 21 tales of the sleuthing twelfth-century Benedictine monk. She died in 1995 in Madeley, England, just three miles from her birthplace.

Please remember that books taken from our church library are loaned on an honor system, so with these books – and any others – please make sure to return them promptly when you are finished. Happy reading!

### Tales from the 'Hood

## **Thank You for Being a Friend!**



**Not a great picture, but here is a time when I gave my window watch to kitty so I could take an uninterrupted nap!**

Dear friends,  
Happy New Year to you!! I hope that 2026 has started out well for you. For me – not so much! If you have been reading my column for these many years, you are well aware that cats are not my favorite of God's creatures; but by default, when I was adopted, I was paired in my new home with a somewhat nutsy but small feline named Mona. Early on it took us a l-o-n-g time to understand the art of living together. She understood immediately that I outweighed her by 50 pounds and that if she didn't finish her dinner, I would readily take care of it. I learned straight away about her mean right hook and that she could stand on her hind legs and whap my face with both front paws. Thankfully those paws are clawless. My grandma told me that if Mona had claws, I would no longer have eyes!

However, kitty was older than me and I figured that her time to leave would arrive before mine. Yet I was not prepared for the events in our house right after Christmas. Mona quit eating (what??), crawled in small places (like a shelf in the closet) and cried almost all the time. Grandma told me that it was probably "her time," and I wasn't sure what that meant. Then on January 2, kitty was loaded into her carrier and grandma brought her close and told me to say "goodbye." I looked astonished and frightened, but I gave her a little nuzzle. An hour or so later, grandma came back without her and her face was streaked with tears! Protector of the house that I am, I forthwith began a careful cat search in every room and every nook and cranny of the house. Alas, no kitty! Honestly, this hit me harder than I thought it would. No kitty??!! Really??!! I volunteered to take care of the rest of her food and treats, but grandma donated them to someone who has a cat. And so I'm kind of surprised with how much I miss that crazy cat, but I'm grateful that we had some good times together; and yes I would call it friendship!

This brings me to my point! As you know, grandma and I hear some encouraging stories from folks as we patrol our neighborhood! Since winter weather doesn't provide us with many new conversations, let me relate some of what we (yes, we dogs eavesdrop) have heard:

- Oh, you're the church who gives away free diapers, right? Diapers are so expensive! Such a blessing in a time of need!
- My kids were able to get some school supplies at your event when I was struggling to afford what they needed.
- I remember Coffee Break at your church. The women there were so kind, and my child just loved Story Hour.
- Around Christmas time, my kids came home from school with some gifts and candy. I knew these things came from a church. Was it yours?
- I came to worship at your church. I was struggling. You welcomed me, you prayed with me.
- People from your church come every year to help me with chores and yardwork so that I can stay in my home.
- Wednesday nights are so much fun! And the food is great!

- I rang your front bell because I needed help so badly. You gave me vouchers at the grocery store and the thrift store to help me over a rough stretch.

A while back, grandma had the opportunity to help someone from her past by sending him a few items. He asked, "Why would you do that for me?" Grandma said that she didn't quite know how to answer, but a pastor friend of hers (and mine) told her to give this response: "Because that is what Christians do." And from what I've heard, that is what West Leonard people do: "Growing devoted followers of Jesus who share his love . . ." Thank you for being a friend!



Nova

P.S.

I have bragging rights! Last September I was chosen for a spot on WZZM TV 13's segment "13 Loves



Pets!" Several months before, grandma had sent them a bit of information about me, along with my best glamor shot, and I had my 20 seconds of fame! I thought that a Hollywood agent would contact us soon, but grandma said that contact information is not provided by the TV station. I therefore will be very content to remain self-declared defender of my city block and queen of my neighborhood.

## PASTOR'S CORNER

In the New Testament the church of Jesus is compared to many things. She is referred to as the People of God, God's Flock, the Bride of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Household of Faith.

But the most common one is The Body of Christ. This image is mentioned and described at length in 1 Corinthians 12-14. But what exactly does it mean that we are the Body of Christ? Two things come to mind.

The first is that just as the human body has many parts/organs that work together for the good functioning of the body, so the church is made up of many people who have different gifts/abilities which enrich one another. Furthermore, no one gift is less or more important than the others. To give you one example: Even though it is not mentioned in the Bible, some people are adept at technology - phones, computers, sound boards. (That is one gift I definitely do not have.) Take the Sunday worship service. Who is the most important person in the worship service? Contrary to the first reaction, it is not the preacher. I spend much time preparing a sermon and then deliver it on Sunday. But all my efforts and good thoughts are in vain if it isn't for the sound board operator to amplify the sound of the singers or the sound of my voice.

When my son Scott was in grade 5, he already loved to "play around" with computers. One day, walking together from home to Westend Church and West Side Christian School, he said to me, "I don't want to disappoint you, but I don't think I'll become a preacher like you." I answered, "That's okay. We need a computer geek in the family more than another preacher."

As the body of Christ, the church secondly, is the "agency" through which Jesus Christ, the head, gets his work done in the world. Our human brain is the "control center." But the brain needs a body (arms, feet, arteries, colon, lungs and liver, etc.) to get its work done. Christ the Head of the Church looks to us his Body, to get his kingdom work done on earth. God uses us to get the message of salvation out. God uses us to show love and help to needy people. If we don't "step up," God's kingdom work doesn't get done.

So how does this apply to our congregation? For one thing, even though we are a relatively small church, so many of us "pitch in" with the talents and resources we have and are. (I think of the many people that are involved in the diaper distribution ministry.) Also, it has been a blessing to observe how our church has an outward focus. God's work is being done through us. That not only delights every pastor, but it brings a smile to God's face.

- Pastor Henry Admiraal

