

# First's Fruits

a publication of First Christian Reformed Church – Fremont, Michigan  
August and September 2019





## OUR NEW VISION STATEMENT

*"Imperfect people growing with our community in love for God and each other."*

Since the beginning of 2019, we have been rolling out our new vision statement. Developing a new vision statement was one of our major assignments in our Ignite renewal process. After spending a year listening to God, to each other and to our community, the Ignite Team put together the statement above. Council approved the new statement and you've likely seen it on the bulletin, on our website, on our Facebook page, and now, on the west wall of the Narthex, under the stained glass window.



The danger with vision statements is that they have a tendency to exist only on paper (or on the wall!). It's our goal that we live into this statement and make it not just something we say, but something we do.

In this issue and the next, we will look at the vision statement in small chunks and explore what God is calling us to be and to do.

### ***"Imperfect people..."***

We want to be clear that being part of a church does not mean that you have your act together. Sometimes we can make it seem that way but when we peel away the layers, it becomes clear that none of us has "arrived," either as people or as followers of Jesus.

It's not coincidental that the 12 disciples are often portrayed in Scripture as not getting it and not coming from the best pedigree. Matthew was a tax collector. Peter was a

zealot (a rebel against the Roman government) as well as a fisherman. Jesus was from Nazareth, which prompted the disciple Nathanael to say, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" The 12 disciples didn't get it; they were imperfect people.

But that doesn't mean that imperfect people can't be used by God. Look at what the disciples did as they were empowered by the Holy Spirit and began a movement that we know as the early church. Similarly, even though we are 21<sup>st</sup> century imperfect people, the Holy Spirit empowers us to love and serve God and our neighbor; to share the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. In our imperfection, we are perfected by Christ through his sacrifice on the cross and filled with the Holy Spirit.

### **"...growing with our community..."**

Every vision statement needs a verb and our verb is "growing." Life as a follower of Jesus is all about growing, no matter our age and no matter how long we've been following Jesus. There are so many ways to grow: worship, small groups, Core classes, Children in worship, Bible studies, youth groups, etc. It's been said that if you're not growing, you're dying. That's especially true in the Christian life. It's our vision that every person in our congregation and every person that God sends to us will be growing in their faith.

But we grow *in* and *with* community. God created us to live and learn and grow in community. When we listen to others, we're given the gift of other perspectives that help shape our own understanding. Growing in community means that we see each other as God's gifts to us.



We also grow with the community, meaning that we want to reach out to our community, inviting them into a relationship with Jesus Christ. We believe that God has placed us here for a reason: to be a blessing to our community. As we grow in our faith, we want the community of Fremont to be growing with us. We want all that we do to be open and accessible to our community. We're thankful for the opportunities we've had to host community concerts and other events and look forward to how we will continue to make connections with our community.

Some questions for discussion:

- How is God challenging you to live into our vision statement?
- How can we better communicate that we are imperfect people?
- How can we make more and better connections with our community?
- How can our congregation better reflect our community?

## **BACK TO...A WHOLE NEW EXPERIENCE!**

It's August and we have seen the Back To School displays at the stores for a month already! Our minds have started to turn to fall schedules, cooler weather and watching for the school buses.

There is a group of First Fremont members who will need our prayers starting now and through the fall months as they take on all new experiences- our college age young adults! Please take some time now to encourage these young people in their next steps on the journey. The church office will publish a list of addresses soon, so that you can continue to encourage and support them with notes and cards!

**Jon Sturuss-** Jon will begin his studies at Calvin seminary this fall, working toward an MDiv degree.

**Anna Sweetman-** Anna will be moving to Azusa, California in December to begin her studies at Azusa Pacific University in their DPT (Doctor of Physical Therapy) program.

**Joanna Dell'Olio-** Joanna will be moving to Ann Arbor next week to attend the University of Michigan and obtain an MSW (Master's of Social Work) degree.

**Katy Ferris-** Katy continues her studies at Grand Valley State University and is applying to graduate schools for a PA (Physician's Assistant) degree.

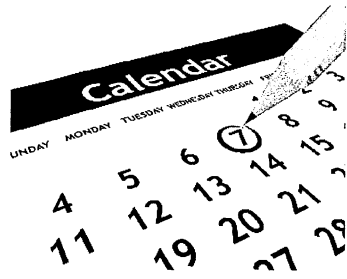
**Leah Sweetman-** Leah will continue her studies with Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, IL although this fall she will be studying abroad in Quito, Ecuador. Leah is earning a degree in cross-cultural ministry and will be working at an internship in addition to studying in Ecuador.

**Colleen Hall-** Colleen will be moving to Gainesville, FL this week to begin her studies in Zoo Animal Technology at Santa Fe College.

**Caleb Minasian-** Caleb will begin his studies in engineering at Michigan Tech in Houghton, MI.

**Lauren Ferris-** Lauren will begin her studies in business at Grand Valley State University.

**Robin Moore-** Robin will begin her studies in Criminal Justice at Grand Valley State University.



## BACK TO OUR FALL SEASON!

Mark your calendars for these new beginnings and watch for more announcements to follow:

**Thursday, August 15-** Back2School/Hand2Hand Ice Cream Social on the lawn at church! Invite neighbors and friends to enjoy a delicious ice cream sundae and bring a food donation to kick-off our Hand2Hand collection! Each student will receive a backpack tag to start off the school year on a positive note! (7:00pm)

**Tuesday, September 3-** Our fall 14-week GriefShare session will begin. If you or someone you know is struggling with a loss in their lives and is looking for healing, this is a wonderful and safe place to do that! Each session includes a video followed by an intimate small group session led by trained facilitators where people can begin their journey from mourning to joy. (6:30pm)

**Sunday, September 15-** Our 10-week CORE classes will begin for everyone! Following our morning worship, we offer classes for all ages from K-adult. Classes will help to deepen understanding of God, his work in our lives and our world, and how we can better love and serve him. (11:15am)

**Friday, September 27-Sunday, September 29-** Several women from church will be attending a Women's Retreat at Grace Adventures featuring author and speaker, Lynn Cowell. Watch your mailbox for details soon if you've signed up!

**Wednesday, October 2-** Ladies Bible Study will begin. They will be studying the second half of the book of Genesis from the Bible and they meet the first and third Wednesdays of each month. They begin with coffee and prayer followed by an informal discussion of the study. You will feel most welcome! (9:45am)

**Watch for announcements coming about High School Youth Group, an all-new middle school group, Wyldlife, and lots more!**

## **Living Hope Ministries Update**

God is continuing to use our ministry to help people grow in their faith. Recently one of our volunteers, who delivers our materials to a motel in Oceana County, was approached by the manager and was told that a lady had recently come to him and said she had stayed there a couple of years earlier and picked up a booklet that she loved and wondered if the box was still there. He pointed it out to her and she was thrilled that the booklet she was looking for was in our box. We're thankful that God is using us to encourage people and help them grow in their faith.

Since February 1 of this year we have placed over 250 New Testaments and Children's Bible Storybooks, both in English and Spanish, and over 250 biblical encouragement booklets.

We are grateful for the work of our volunteers who are truly a blessing to the ministry. They are: Sally Bielema, Marian Breuker, Bob & Joyce Brummel, Frank & Shirley Bunce, Bob & Mary Derks, Joyce Frens, Betty Harmsen, Wayne & Sandy Mast, and Wayne Scott. Our materials are placed in Fremont, White Cloud, Newaygo, Shelby, Montague, Whitehall, and Grant.

Thank you for your support! Please continue to keep this ministry in your prayers!

## Reaching the World with the Living Hope



On the following few pages, you will find the newsletters from two of the missionaries that we support as a congregation. Read through these letters, learn more about cultures far different than your own, notice the joys and concerns these missionaries have, research the countries and people groups they work with, and spend some time in prayer for them!

One of the most difficult things about being a missionary in another country is being away from family and familiarity. There is nothing more encouraging to them than a personal email or mailed letter from home! Please consider blessing our missionaries in the next couple of months with a card or letter of encouragement.

If you need assistance with address or postage, check with Becki in the church office!





July being the month of America's Freedom got us thinking of how this country became known. And how many of our friends and supporters no nothing about the land in which we live and where we are. So, we thought we would share some history and fun facts about this island and it's people.

**Dominican Republic** is on the **island** of **Hispaniola**. The country borders the Atlantic Ocean to the north and the Caribbean Sea in the south. The island is shared with the nation of **Haiti** in the **west** and the **Dominican Republic** on the **Right**.

Christopher Columbus founded the Dominican Republic in 1494. **Our city** named **Puerto Plata** was established in 1502, and got it's name from Columbus when he stood atop the mountains and looked down at the ocean. He said it looked like silver "Port of Silver."

Shortly after its discovery the Indigenous people were dying off which caused the Spanish to quickly grant permission from Spain to use **slaves** to work the plantations. In 1510, the first sizable ship consisted of 250 Black Ladinos (Spanish-speaking Blacks), 8 years later; African born **slaves** were brought here in massive numbers. The start of British involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade began in Puerto Plata in 1563, in which 20 million people were forced into slavery.

The island has seen many wars, which divided it into two, Haiti and Dominican. **Race** unfortunately still plays a huge part in this society. There is a lot of prejudice and hatred between the Haitians and the Dominicans.

The **flag** was designed with color blue is for liberty, red for the blood of heroes, and white for salvation. And it is the **only flag in the world** with a **Bible on it**. And the verse John 8:32 "Y la verdad os hara libres"

The Major religion is **Catholic** but most do not attend church. The Dominican Republic's currant populations is 10,882,996 . With the **population** here in **Puerto Plata being 118,496**.

The only aerial tramway in the Caribbean is located here in Puerto Plata.

Many tourists visit the island because of its beautiful beaches. In 2015, Carnival Cruise Line opened a cruise port in Puerto Plata.



**Thank you for your PRAYERS!**

- We have 20-25 regulars attending Sunday worship each week. This past Sunday we had 46. Praise God!
- Pray for Spiritual growth.
- Pray for walls to come down and trust to be built with us here.
- Pray for safety as we travel around our city.
- Pray for physical strength and health. Protection from illness and diseases.
- Pray for physical and emotional stamina. "Never get tired of doing good"

**Baseball** is the most popular sport. Many Dominicans have become famous major league players in the United States.

70 percent of the people are affected greatly by **poverty** and unemployment is high.

**Prostitution** is legal. It is estimated between 60,000 and 100,000 women work as **prostitutes** in the country, many from neighboring Haiti.

**Dominicans are very friendly and hospitable people.** They are animated and loud. Men shake hands firmly when they greet and close friends embrace. Most women kiss each other on the cheek, and a man who trusts a woman will also kiss her. **So, there's your mini history lesson in a nutshell.**

**Ministry** continues as usual. It has been a lot of work this month, but also a ton of fun. This past week, our Sunday worship service had 46 people, the most so far!!! Yay!!! 12 were from the states enjoying a vacation; the rest were from the island. But, what excited us the most, and was so amazing, was that a large group of Haitians came. **First time ever!** Before the service began we noticed a large group just hanging out under our trees. We went out and talked with them and invited them in. They came!! Dominicans and Haitians don't normally worship together because there is such discrimination between these 2 cultures. The Haitian and Dominican hatred is huge, and to have this group feel comfortable enough to come in and worship together with us was awesome! Gloria a Dios! We have been praying for this and God delivered! Will they come again? We don't know, God does. But we will keep praying, keep inviting, and keep sharing the love of Christ with ALL!

For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:14 (NLT)

Some of our visitors



Learning to be Strong like Daniel!

Dios les Bendiga (God bless you all)  
Kingdom building with you,  
*Bruce & Janine*

Bruce +1(849) 340-7234 Email: [bcoker3400@gmail.com](mailto:bcoker3400@gmail.com)  
Janine +1(849) 352-7234 Email: [jcokerart@gmail.com](mailto:jcokerart@gmail.com)  
[www.cokerconnection.blogspot.com](http://www.cokerconnection.blogspot.com) or Find us on FaceBook: BruceJanineCoker

#### Helps Ministries

1340-J Patton Avenue, Asheville, NC 28806 828-2773812

#### WAYS TO DONATE:

**Automatic Debit** The most efficient method of regular giving! To give by monthly automatic debit, please sign up online: [www.helpsministries.org/give](http://www.helpsministries.org/give)

**Check or Money Order** Please send and make checks payable to: "Helps Ministries" at 1340-J Patton Avenue, Asheville, NC 28806. Please write *Coker Support* in the memo and an attached note.

# Thankful Hearts

.. until everyone know someone who truly knows Jesus!

May 2019

Dear Friends, and Family,



As most of you know we established and continued to be a part of **Human Resources, Leadership Development and Member Care** Team since 2007. We have worked with a wonderful team of godly, passionate, loving, and very capable men and women. A little over two and a half years ago Steve asked to step out of the leadership role to focus more on Member Care. One of our regional leaders took Steve's place. We had also been praying for several years to find a national leader to fill this position. In January 2019 Ayhan and Neşe a national couple who we have been friends with since we first came to Turkey, agreed to accept the role. We Praise God for their addition to our team and believe they will lead well.

We have enjoyed encouraging our long-term staff in leadership development and meeting with our short-term teams over the past years. It has been exciting to see them first decide to come overseas, then step out in faith and share the gospel and the love of Christ with those they meet. We will include a photo of one of the groups we debriefed this month.

**A year ago**, we worked in a new ministry in Antalya with our organization called **Deep Waters**. Staff from our region in Central Asia, Turkey, and a few Expats participated. The desire is to engage with many of our staff leaders who want to

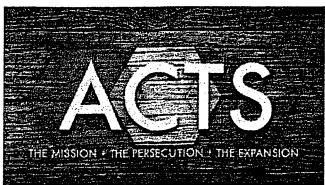


grow deeper in their walks with the Lord. We want them to develop habits for life of listening more to the Lord and not just doing ministry. So each year we will have maybe 10-15 staff taking part in this program. We want them to be more emotionally as well as spiritually healthy. We want to make sure they learn how to take sabbath time to meet with the Lord and to practice being in our Father's presence not just "doing things" for God. Of course, we all need balance between the two. As we participated in this program last summer the Lord began to tug on our heart strings. We wanted to care for our staff but also longed to be a part of something new. We kept seeking the Lord, while fasting and praying. We also desired to make more time to share the gospel and disciple others. In Antalya there is an international church plant they want to begin and a couple new Turkish churches which have already begun. We are excited and challenged by the opportunities. It reminds us of the call God first gave us when we came to Turkey. So, we applied to transfer from Istanbul to Antalya.

In May we found a place to live that is more restful with fruit trees, grass and flowers. It is near the sea and a short drive up to the mountains. Our desire is to continue to have a place for family, colleagues, and other friends to come to be refreshed and spend time with the Lord. We moved this past month just in time to renew our residence 2-year permits in Antalya.

We look forward to spending time with some of our new neighbors and new acquaintances in the community. As many of you know this last thirty days Muslims around the world have been praying and fasting for the month and now, they celebrate Eid for 4 days with family and friends. We have already stopped by and visited with some of these neighbors this week. Pray for our times with Abe and Penny. They very friendly.

Please pray for us as we continue to settle into our new home and the work the Lord has for us here. We are entering a new season of life and praying it will be full of sowing, watering and harvesting fruit. May we serve with humility and offer wisdom and guidance to our young staff and young believers in the faith. Pray our marriage would remain strong and reflect how Christ loves the church. Pray that we would be patient and serve each other and enjoy exploring our new community and get more exercise!



This month Steve and I began reading the Book of Acts with fresh eyes. It is our prayer that we would share more boldly like the apostles, filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Pray our marriage would remain strong and reflect how Christ loves the church. Pray that we would be patient and serve each other and enjoy exploring our new community and get more exercise!

OUR TEAM: Becky Bob Steve Joy Seda Julie



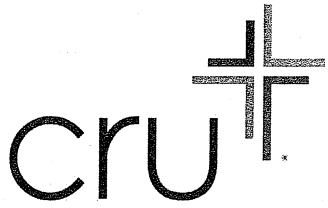
*We could not do this ministry without the prayers, support and encouragement of you our faithful partners. Love you all!*

*Joy and Steve*

To give a gift to us go to: <https://give.cru.org/0245850>

steve.vansloten@postca.net joy.vansloten@postca.net

+1(517) 203-4320



A caring community passionate about  
connecting people to Jesus Christ

# Deep Waters 2!



Pictures: Summer fun times included rafting, swimming and exploring the city and nearby waterfalls. Each day, there is a program for both the staff and their kids!

Spring 2019

Dear Friends,

**Deep Waters with group 2 has been fruitful and fun!** This year, we moved the program from Istanbul to Antalya, we will continue to hold the modules going forward. The number of participants grew from 4 to 11 and included both local and international staff serving in Turkey, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The sessions were taught in English and translated into both Turkish and Russian.

**We kicked off the summer with a week-long focus on spiritual formation, led by ministry partner Karen Cartmell and spiritual director at Biola University.** Later, we heard from Dr. Gary Runn, Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives for Cru. He spoke on the perspective of leadership as servant, shepherd, and steward. Karen Bradley, who served in the area many years and now serves with Christian Embassy in New York, shared in-depth about pain and loss through her own experiences. Other speakers covered topics about character, community, and forgiveness. It was a wonderful month!

**At the mid-year week, we were blessed to have Andrea Buczynski and Marc Rutter, global and national directors of Leadership Development for Cru.** They taught on the heart of a leader, the importance of boundaries and what kind of leaders are at risk. During the module, we had great discussion times, a panel to hear from area leaders, a talk on sabbath and project presentations.

**In May, we wrapped up by synthesizing lessons learned and emphasized the importance of self-leadership, cultivating authentic community and leading change.** We heard from licensed counselors Dr. Greg & Anne Fallows and PACT director Dan Kroll. Participants presented their projects to the area leadership, and we celebrated their graduation! In July, Deep Waters will start anew with the next group. There are 13 participants and all are local or national staff from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey. The coaches are from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and the US.

We also have more teammates joining us, and we are raising program funds. It has been a full year, with a lot of new things and transition. But, God has provided at every turn and been our guide. **We praise God for all He has done and is doing through DeepWaters! We are grateful for the fruit of the body of Christ serving together.**

Sincerely,

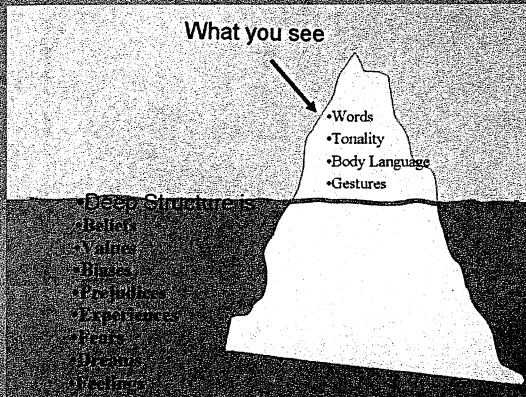
The Deep Waters Team



**Praise God for:** new teammates, great translation and translators

**Pray For:** on-going leaders for kids' program and finances needed to run Deep Waters

*(Please let us know if you have interest or ideas!)*



### What is beneath the iceberg?

This was one of the key questions we considered together. Others questions were: How is it with my soul? What comes to my mind when I think about God? What is my view of pain and suffering? With whom am I deeply processing life? Where am I a leader at risk? Am I leading from the heart and listening to God?

Participants have life groups (one pictured below), coaching, readings and projects.

### Key Components

**Project topic:** "How do we practically and effectively do ministry, grow spiritually and develop godly character in the context of our staff community?"

**Books read:** *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* (P. Scazzero), *Where is God when It Hurts* (P. Yancey), *Humility* (A. Murray), *The Attributes of God* (A. Tozer)



**We would love to connect with you!**

**As we partner,**

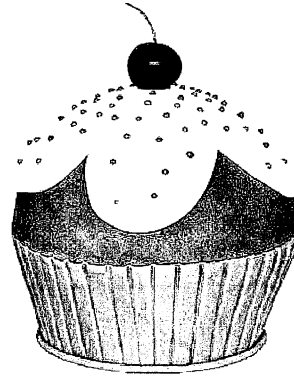
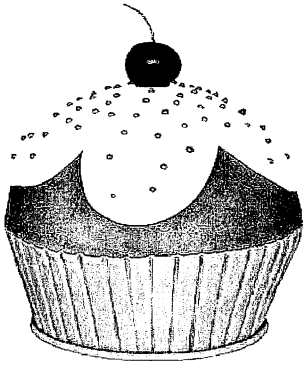
**We trust God will do even more!**

**Vision:** to see staff engaged in the growth process, continually formed by God as leaders in community and deeply impacting the spiritual landscape of PACT!

Deep Waters is a PACT ministry.

PACT stands for Persia, Armenia, Central Asia and Turkey. It is the name of this area of the world with Cru where we live and the people we seek to minister and serve.





### AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Anita Meeuwenberg
- 4 Jim Teusink
- 4 Clare Tubbergen
- 6 Louise Pearson
- 7 Sharon Baddis
- 7 George Bunce
- 7 Lisa Maynard
- 9 Aria Powers
- 16 Kathy Buitendorp
- 21 Cameron Ames
- 21 Lew Deters
- 21 Mark Witte
- 23 Keith Breuker
- 23 Samantha Jacobs
- 26 Wilbur Karp
- 26 Nevonda Lankhorst
- 27 Dale Breuker
- 27 Milan Schipper
- 27 Gil Taylor
- 28 Nancy Henley
- 29 Paul Breuker
- 30 Wayne Scott

### SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 01 Jodi Ferris
- 03 Judy Bell
- 03 Helen Witte
- 04 Carolyn Frens
- 06 Kate Deters
- 07 Eleanor Witte
- 10 Candy Breuker
- 13 Kathy Teusink
- 18 Don Pell
- 19 Pastor Drew Sweetman
- 22 Rich Cosens
- 23 Bailey Baddis
- 23 Landon Bartolameolli
- 25 Dawn Taylor
- 26 Bob Derks
- 26 Thea Hoekman
- 27 Caleb Minasian
- 30 Larry Brinkman

# Happy Anniversary

## AUGUST

Bob & Mary Derks, on August 1  
Lewis & Edith Deters, on August 9  
Sid & Anne Luchies, on August 11  
John & Jan Frens, on August 12  
Gil & Dawn Taylor, on August 12  
Clare & Elaine Tubbergen, on August 14  
Brian & Lisa Maynard, on August 21  
Mark & Vicki Hall, on August 25  
Les & Sandy Kolk, on August 25  
Ron & Sally Bielema, on August 26  
Bob & Joyce Brummel, on August 28