

# Shepherd's Staff

March 2016

*We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.*

***"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!"***

*Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church*

*Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m. ~ Life Plus Wed., 6:30 p.m.*

## Empty Cross, Empty Tomb

This month we will be celebrating Easter, the time we remember that our Lord and Savior rose from the tomb. The marvel of that return to life, resurrected life, is well worth celebrating. The days of Lent that lead up to the cruel death of Jesus have finally been placed behind Him. Yet for some reason I could not get the thought out of my head as to which is more astounding. The cross, standing empty having done its cruelest, violent work or the tomb with its cold dark uncertainty.



Death has always gripped humanity in fear with the unknown of what happens when we die. Maybe that is why as Christians we hold so tenaciously to the symbol of the cross as a source of hope. Seeing the body of those we have loved and held close after they have been prepared for burial gives us closure but not all the answers. What was it like to die? Where do we go and how soon? Some holding that this life is the end of all life must really have questions. Perhaps this is why God sent Jesus to die. So we could be certain of the way to glory in the presence of God. After all, we know that Jesus is there and the promise He gave to the thief who believed is still dear to us.

The symbolism of baptism is that we are buried with Christ and raise a new creature in His power. Buried and rising do take new meaning with Jesus leaving the tomb on Easter morning. Still it is difficult to leave our loved ones behind at the cemetery. The "tent" is how we know one another on this earth so how will we know those we love when we see them in glory? Paul reminds us that we sow the perishable to become imperishable. Still we wonder, will we still have the same eye color or what will our other features be like? The tomb may be open but still holds many mysteries.

Still it is an amazing gift that God gave us at Easter time. The simple fact that Jesus came to endure death so we may know peace because it is through death that we too will see God. It is equally amazing that we know that the tomb is also empty because it assures us that death is not able to prevent us from being with Christ. While we may not understand all the intricacies of death and what happens with burial, we know that God's Son was willing to go through both so that we might not fear either.

It is also remarkable that we need both. The tomb would not have been necessary if it were not for the cross bringing death under the curse for us. The tomb was only needed to show that death will be defeated for us as it was for Jesus. Rising to new and glorified life is what we have in Christ because of God's gracious gift, received only through faith by grace. Why God would choose such harsh realities to show the extent of His love can only speak to the power of God's love for us.

Pastor Rus

## Congregation Photo

We will be taking an overhead picture of the Congregation on March 6 immediately after the morning service.

This is for a digital scrapbook for our 125th Anniversary. Please, Please, try to be in attendance for this picture.



## Volunteers needed!!

As the 5K approaches, we will need lots of volunteers. Easy ways to help out and fun at the same time.

Here is a list of ways you can help:

- 1) donate breakfast items (egg bake, water bottles, cinnamon rolls, muffins, fruit, etc)
- 2) Help serve breakfast to participants
- 3) Registration table
- 4) Hand out packets to runners/walkers
- 5) Timers
- 6) Spotters/Cheers around the route
- 7) Help construct the "tomb"
- 8) 2 to 4 people on golf carts to check on runners/walkers throughout route

This event will not take too much of your time. Everything should be completed 10 am.

**Please sign up in the fellowship hall.**  
**Easy, fun, quick... everyone can help.**  
Thanks!



## 125th Anniversary Congregation Meal APRIL 15 PLEASE RESERVE THAT NIGHT!!

An invitation to the meal will be in your mail slot next Sunday. Please return your choice of entrée and dessert. Again, we are hoping for 100% for this meal.

## 5K T-shirts

What a great response to our upcoming 5K Run/Walk to the empty tomb. For those that would like to order a T-shirt or sweatshirt and NOT participate in the walk, you may do so. A copy of what the shirts will look like is on the table in the fellowship hall. However, I will need to know TODAY if possible if you would like one. The cost of the T-shirt is \$11. Crew sweatshirt \$15; Hooded sweatshirt \$20.

## **DID YOU KNOW??**

A listing of those serving during our Sunday services is listed under the multimedia link on the church's website. We have added to the servers our valet parking as well as the Sunday School teachers.



## March Birthdays/Anniversaries



### Happy Birthday

3/9 Michael Stirling  
 3/11 Kathleen DeGroot  
 3/15 Kay Swanson  
 3/18 Greg Allspach  
 3/24 Teresa Hay  
 3/26 Naomi Allspach  
 3/28 Rhonda Meester

### Happy Anniversary

3/19 Pat & Deb Prier  
 3/21 Don & Annie Allspach



**Reminder:** If you have anything you'd like included in the Shepherd's Staff, please try to have it to Wendy Mulder by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. The goal is to have the newsletter in your mailboxes on the last Sunday of the month.

### *Greeters*

### *Ushers*

### *Coffee\**

3/6 Sylvia & AnnaMae (N)  
 Mike & Stacy (S)  
 3/13 Dave & Betty (N)  
 Larry & Mary (S)  
 3/20 John & Karen (N)  
 Joel & Brandy (S)  
 3/27 Frank & Betty (N)  
 Ryan & Stacy (S)

Delbert Cordes  
 Ken Meester  
 Ken Johnson  
 Ken Kramer

John & Karen  
 Kamie & Cory  
 Paul & Darlene  
 EASTER – Coffee served  
 before church

\*If you are unable to serve coffee on your Sunday as listed, please find your replacement. Thank you.

**Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ of the Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church,**

We thank God for His many blessings of grace which bring you to celebrate this festival of praise and thanksgiving; the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary -April 6,1891 - April 6 , 2016! A Church begun in faith and trust has followed God's leading, believing His promises , trusting His testing and sharing His blessings through out the community and world by outreach and missions. You have ever been faithful ! May it ever be so !

We have been highly privileged that God in His providence called us to serve as pastor of the Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church following graduation from Calvin Seminary. We ::myself and wife Joyce with 5 children- Bob ,Dan, Marilyn, Sheryl and Steve arrived with a lot of questions searching for answers.. It didn't take long for them to be answered by your interest, patience, compassion and love. It is at these times-celebrations- that memories come back to life. Our children are all living ,Bob is retired from maintenance work and 24 yrs of coaching girls soccer;Dan is COO at Grand Haven Hospital ,Marilyn is dairy farmer wife-now leaving the farm in Ca, Sheryl is teaching school in Wa., and Steve is a District Judge in Newton, Ia. Sheryl lives alone and the others have families . If we get together we number 65!

Without a doubt our ministry among you we came to understand the challenges and blessings of Celebrating Births,Professions of Faith, Courtship counseling and Weddings, and bringing loved ones to the " City of Resurrection. We/ were with you when you purchased land for the new Church ,celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, asked to Preach on April 25, 1976 the evening Message for the Dedication of the New Church Building,and returned to celebrate with you on your 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ,May 26,1991 with a message at the evening service "Thanks, God! From Philipians1:3-6.

You truly are Brothers and Sisters in the Lord ! We look forward with great anticipation. God has been good in granting you to celebrate this 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with joy- to the only God our Savior be glory,majesty,power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!Amen" ( Jude 24,25 )

Yours in Christ Jesus,, in Cristian love,  
Rev.& Mrs. Robert J. Holwerda

From the desk of Chaplain Fred Rietema

Parkersburg, Iowa Christian Reformed Church

Congratulations on the occasion of the celebration of the 125th Anniversary of the founding of the Church. I played just a small part in that history as the Pastor from 1967-1970. I came out of Seminary in 1967 and the good folks in Parkersburg trained me for about four years! I went on into Home Missions and Chaplaincy ministries after leaving Parkersburg.

I have good memories of my time in Parkersburg. I learned a lot about preaching, teaching, and grief counseling during my time with the church. The elders trained me well and were quite helpful to a young, inexperienced pastor.

I hope to share some memories with you as my wife, Trudy, and I plan to be with you over the April 17, 2016 weekend and celebrate with you.

God has been good! Praise be to Him for his faithfulness to us!

In His Service,



Rev. Fred Rietema

Dear Followers of Jesus in Parkersburg CRC,

We have in one way or another been associated with your congregation since the early 1980's. My father came to be your pastor and we were then serving as missionaries in Liberia. In 1981, I came down with hepatitis, nearly recovered, but then fell into a relapse and the doctors sent us home. And so Parkersburg became home for the next few months. You helped us to setup house where we lived just down the street from the church, you absorbed our two school aged children (Erica and Joel) into your Christian school, and us into your community. We have never forgotten that.

In 1985 we were back again for a Home Service, this time after having spent our first year in Mali. Again, we appreciated being part of your community for some months.

In more recent years, you have become our supporters in our ministry in Mali and we have visited you on a number of Home Services. It has always been a pleasure to come back and spend time with you. Your support and prayers have been much appreciated by ourselves and by a slowly growing community of followers of Jesus among the Fulani. They too are a result of your service to the Lord.

We wish we could be with you on this special day but we will still be in Mali, but we can pray from here that God will continue to bless you and guide you, to uphold you and watch over you.

Blessings and much Thanks, Larry and Ann, also from Erica, Joel, Anna, Suzanne.

PS. Our children are now all grown, married, with children of their own, and loving the Lord. Erica & John and Joel & Julianne are in Minneapolis while Anna & Nat are in Saudi Arabia teaching at an American curriculum international school, Suzanne & Ryan are in Venezuela doing the same.

Dear Friends and Brothers and Sisters at the Parkersburg CRC,

Oh, so many wonderful memories of our 4 years with you in the Parkersburg CRC! We are so thankful to God. And so many firsts for us as a family and as a pastor in his very first congregation:

- first HOUSE to live in; before it was 3 or 4 room apartments. And the parsonage had been freshly cleaned and painted. How nice! How exciting for us!
- first baptisms to perform, including our daughters Ingrid and Rachel.
- first funerals to preside over... Mrs. Plesscher was the very first, I believe, and I was even with her when she died in her house across the street. This began my very valuable experience with death and dying and funerals. There were so many at Parkersburg in those four years – rich experiences, every one – because as Christians we do not grieve as those who are without hope.
- first weddings to perform, as well as my first experiences in pre-marital counseling.
- our first garden to plan and plant, behind the parsonage.

There was so much more that was memorable. We enjoy recalling these things still today.

Moving to Iowa and living in a farming community was all new for us. You probably recall that we were both city kids. You generously provided new experiences for us. Norm remembers watching a steer being butchered. He got to walk beans and help with baling hay. Our children were thrilled to see baby pigs and kittens, and someone had a pony they loved to visit. Abram knew what kind of tractor everyone had and the name of everyone's dog. Someone provided the use of a little John Deere tractor for them to ride. It was all great.

The church building was quite new, and we had the exciting experiences of seeing the bell tower and steeple erected. We loved hearing the church bell ring at 6 pm on Saturday. Of course Norm needed no reminder to get ready for Sunday.

The congregation was quite experienced in having inexperienced pastors, and so we were strongly supported and accepted, even though we both had a lot to learn. You offered us your friendship and shared your lives with us.

We worked with the Young People; Marge Mulder babysat for Abram and Ingrid and then Rachel so we could serve as leaders together.

We had an adventurous trip to Dordt College with a car full of high school students in the dead of winter. It was a borrowed car and we remember sliding off the icy road while listening to a popular song...."Slip sliding away."

I remember vividly how I enjoyed driving all over the countryside to visit people. I got to know the back roads pretty well. Once, it was after dark and a heavy fog descended. I was heading north from Grundy Center and got off on the side roads to drop in on Herman & Lena Meester. I had to keep careful track of each intersection and remember which way was north and west so I wouldn't get lost. Around town I could ride my bike or walk and take care of lots of visits.

And then there was that time when Barbara and I traveled on our skis on the snow and ice-covered creek all the way west to the Kneppes farm. What a warm welcome we received there.

I had the lovely experience of living with Willie and Katharine Karsjens and Mr. Groeneveld for about a week while I took my classical exam. We weren't going to move in until I knew I'd passed the exam. I was sitting on the sofa at the Karsjens house and Katharine kept reminding me that I was supposed to go over to Richard and Ethel Mulder's house for "dinner." I didn't know "dinner" was the noon time meal! I also learned that "lunch" could be served anytime, and it really was lunch! Sandwiches and bars usually. I enjoyed those lunches at our council meetings.

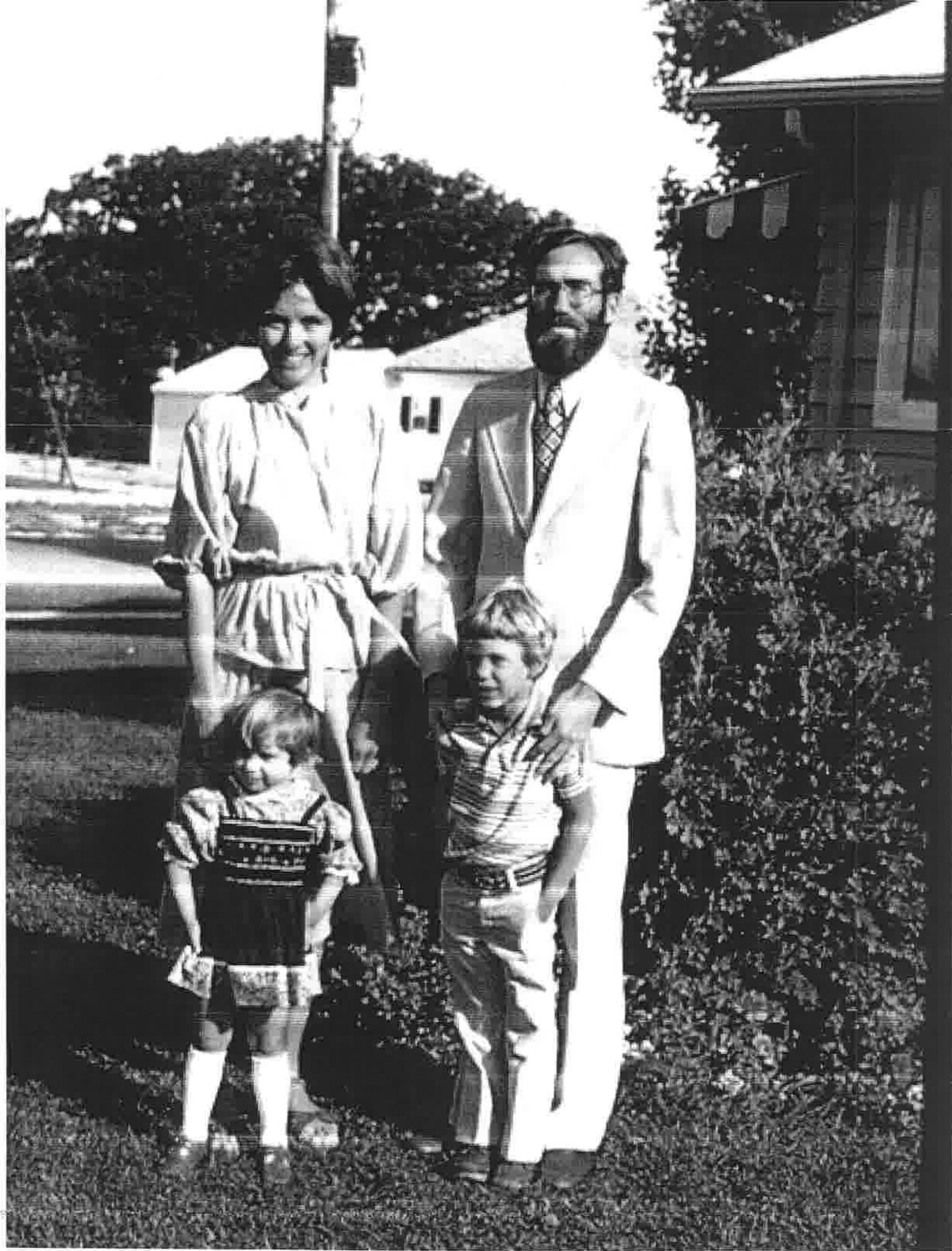
We loved living in Parkersburg, walking around town, swimming at the pool, playing basketball at the high school gym, attending games there, sledding down the hill by the school, eating at Polly's or the White Bear, shopping at Trey's, getting to know friendly people all around town, enjoying coffee and donuts at the sale barn on cold winter days.

And the worship, Sunday after Sunday, and on the holidays, Good Friday, Easter, Christmas Eve, Thanksgiving Day and New Year's Eve services. We had six good pianists/organists! What riches! And the people enjoyed singing together. So there was much joy in the Lord, as I'm sure there is today, after 125 years.

Again, thank you so much for your important role in all of these blessings from God which have deeply touched our lives and the lives of our children.

With love, your brother and sister in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Norman & Barbara Steen



My six month stay in Parkersburg began with a shocked surprize. Linda and I had anticipated a quiet stay with opportunities to visit with old friends made during our days in Ackley. There would be time to make new friends also.

The work began in the days right after the tornado, work of listening to people's stories. We sat for hours in the Vet center. People just wanted to talk. By the third or fourth week we heard of new visions, healing hurts and recovering. There were lessened words of lament over what was lost and could not be recovered.

The people of Parkersburg Church and of the town behaved as those who soon recovered hope and never lost their love for each other. Our unique task as the weeks passed into months included secretarial work, answering many phone calls from individuals and churches that wanted to help. The mailbox brought in many thousands of dollars in aid. We even reached the place where the deacons instructed me to tell eager helpers, "We have enough."

God gives commands to storms. He also raises up grace and mercy until it is enough.

Pastor Al De Vries

p/s I also came back to Parkersburg to recruit a wife. Good choice!

The period between the First Gulf War and 9/11 was mostly a quiet time in our nation's history, and also in Parkersburg, IA. These were our years of ministry, from 1992-1999. The greatest excitement was football, and particularly the 1993 championship. No tornado during this time. Just a gentle whirlwind of activities. Nevertheless, there is much to recall. I remember that the routine of preaching, teaching, and pastoral visiting was pleasant. I remember that you (members) were friendly and committed to the church and to the Lord. Other memories include steak suppers, Easter sunrise services, Couples Club, the start of Life Plus, and my favorite bulletin secretary. Also memorable were the group trips to Willow Creek Church, the Worship Conference at Calvin College, and the Youth Unlimited Convention in Colorado. Classis Northcentral Iowa, being small, kept me busy in various ways. The ministerial association was outstanding.

As to our personal lives, we came to Parkersburg as a whole family, but left as empty nesters. Our children graduated from APHS in 94, 96, and 98, having been well prepared for the next steps in their education. Claudia enjoyed her social work job at the Blackhawk Grundy Mental Health Center. The biking was great. We enjoyed singing in the Metropolitan Chorale of Waterloo/Cedar Falls. We often saw deer and turkeys along Beaver Creek on our drives to the city. All in all, good memories! We thank God for the years in Parkersburg. May God continue to bless you richly in the coming years.

Pastor Dave and Claudia Zylstra



*Emmanuel*  
christian reformed church

February 15, 2016

Dear friends in Parkersburg,

Congratulations on celebrating your 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a congregation. It doesn't seem possible as we were just celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary about 12 years ago. I still have the commemorative plate hanging on my wall. How could 25 years fly by that quickly?

There are a lot of fond memories from our time with you. Kenny Johnson and Don Mehmen showing up on our front doorstep to move us out to Parkersburg. Paul Janssen teaching me how to run a council meeting. Young people meeting on the parsonage living room floor. Sunshine Circle and Friendship Circle and the steak dinners they served. And of course the mandatory football games at Parkersburg High School.

There were lighter moments as well. Birds getting drunk on overripe Mountain Ash berries in the church yard and flying intoxicated in the parsonage windows. Mary explaining a funeral to our son Michael in such a way that when I returned from the luncheon, he came running greet me with the exclamation: "Daddy, you're alive." And of course, when he heard that people were hesitant to tell the minister's wife joke, Denny Schipper made it his personal mission to keep a fresh one on hand for every time he saw her.

I still remember someone telling me that "Parkersburg CRC is a great place for a young pastor to start out because no matter what mistakes you make, with a 100 years of history behind us, we can handle them." But even more, Parkersburg was a great place for our young family to find some roots. With Parkersburg CRC natives Milt Mulder and Sara Johnson my current congregation, I think of you often.

God's blessings on your 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary and beyond,

Rev. Tim Koster

Dear Parkersburg CRC Congregation:

One hundred and twenty five years of congregational life and ministry. And the Lord has blessed. Betty and I feel honored that we have been and continue to be part of your life.

We remember first arriving in Parkersburg, snow and ice and cold. What a difference from the warm weather of Tucson, AZ. Thankfully, your warm reception soon warmed our hearts. It was not long before we felt at home in Parkersburg. And what a joy it was to reconnect with high school friends and acquaintances from ninth grade in Aplington H.S.

Thinking about our years of ministry among you, rejoicing at times of weddings, baptisms, professions of faith, crying with you at times of death and funerals and separations, yet always feeling God's faithfulness and care over each one. What a wonderful God and Savior we have.

I remember the blessed times we had, gathering together on Wednesday mornings for prayer, leading the Sunshine Circle in Bible studies, meeting with many of you for special occasions, whether preparing for a wedding or crying because of a death. These are all precious memories.

And then we had the physical work, remodeling the parsonage kitchen, repaving the parking lot, re-shingling the parsonage and church roof. What work and what a tremendous cooperation from all involved.

Probably one of the most memorable times we had was the Council allowing me to accompany our daughter Wendy to China in order to get her adopted daughter, and the welcome and baptism of our adopted granddaughter Melody.

Yes, many fond memories, but also some tears. And then, not a farewell, but a retirement party held in our honor. We are honored to still be a member of this wonderful congregation. And we thank God for his faithfulness.

*Frank and Betty Pott*