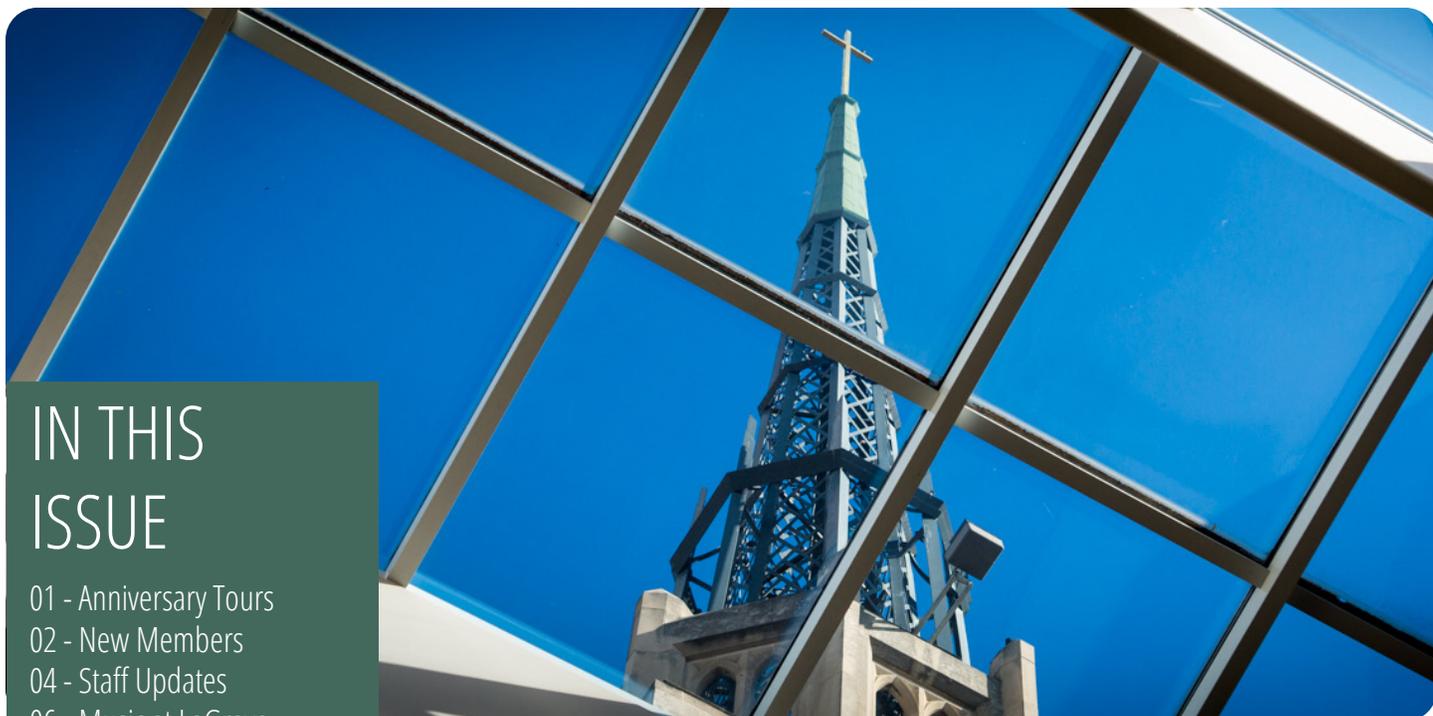




The LaGrave News

February 2023



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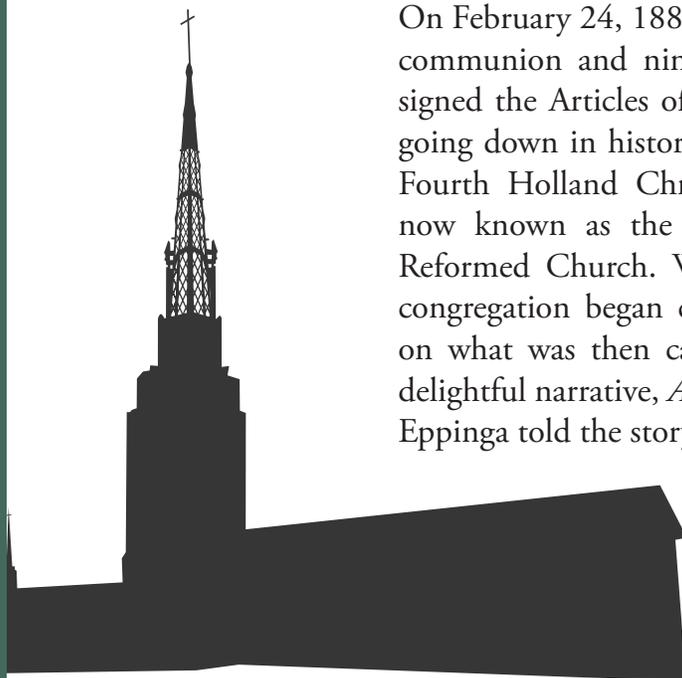
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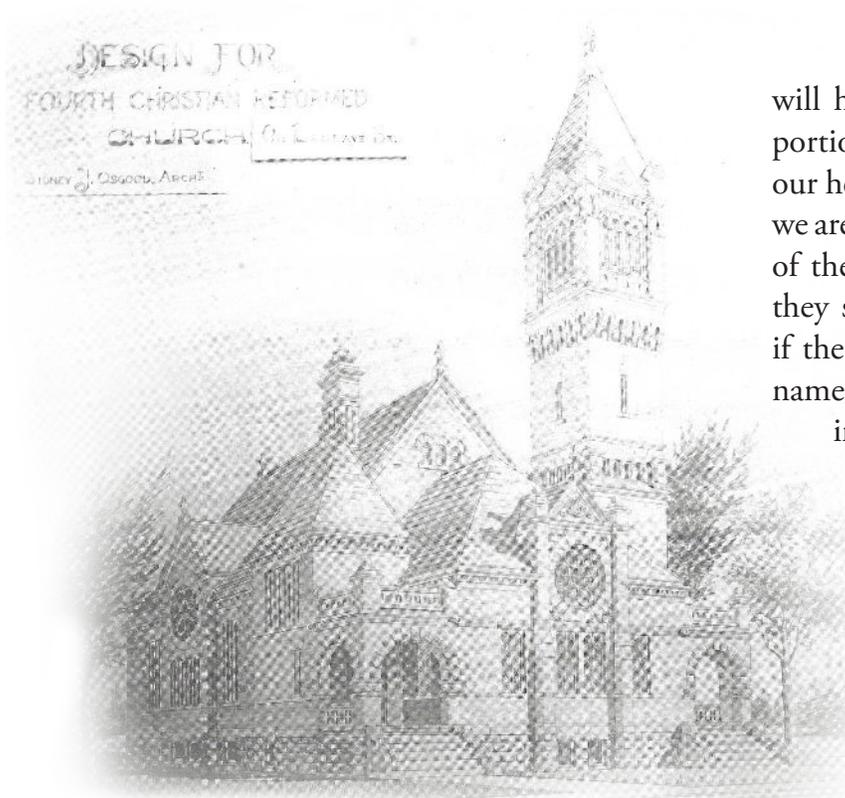
Anniversary Historical Tours

On February 24, 1887, seventeen members in full communion and nineteen members by baptism signed the Articles of Incorporation, their names going down in history as charter members of the Fourth Holland Christian Reformed Church... now known as the LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church. Within a year, the fledgling congregation began construction on a sanctuary on what was then called LaGrave Street. In his delightful narrative, *A Century of Grace*, Rev. Jacob Eppinga told the story of the first 100 years.

On Sunday, February 26, in recognition of our 136th anniversary, members of the Historical Committee

Continued →





will host tours after the morning services of those portions of our facilities that are significant parts of our heritage. Each week we worship in a space where we are surrounded by our past... but what is the story of the space? What message do ministers see when they stand at the pulpit? Have you ever wondered if the artist of the stained glass windows signed his name? Were any elements from the 1887 structure incorporated into the current sanctuary?

The Heritage Center on the lower level will also be open, where you'll have the chance to see artifacts and photographs from our first 136 years, including the pulpit from the original church. Complimentary copies of *A Century of Grace* will also be available.

Welcome, New Members!



Andrew Balk
Joined: October 10, 2022



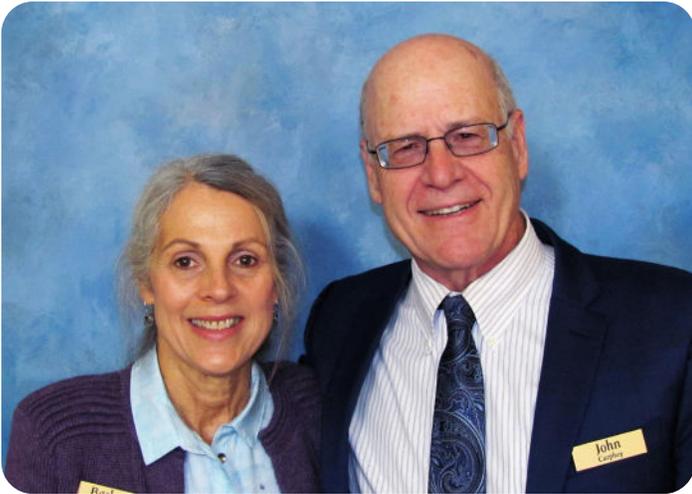
Lindsay Jonker
Joined: October 10, 2022



Miles and Sarah Colago
(Malachi, Aaliyah Marietta, and Mariyaah Galilee)
Joined: December 12, 2022



Jana Baatenburg
Joined: January 9, 2023



Barbara Curphey
(Her husband is a retired Presbyterian minister
and therefore couldn't officially join)
Joined: January 9, 2023



Cora Sinke
Joined: January 9, 2023

Staff Updates

Look Who's Back (Part time)

I am back! My husband Drew and I had our first baby, a son, Brayden Miles VanDyk, on September 7, 2022. After taking 12 weeks off to be home with Brayden and establish our new 'normal' as a family of 3, I am happy to be back! I am working in the office two days a week, so a little different than the 4 ½ days before Brayden. It has been a wonderful balance of home and work life; I missed the office staff and the office shenanigans as well. What a blessing it is to enjoy my job and the people I get to work with. God is good and faithful! Drew and I are so thankful for the support of the LaGrave community and all the wonderful congratulations, cards, support, and love we have received from everyone!



New Part-Time Secretary

My name is Jamie VanHekken. Most of you already know me. I have been a member of LaGrave for 40 years. I grew up in Ada, MI, and attended Ada Christian School, Grand Rapids Christian High School, and Calvin University. I graduated with a nursing degree and worked at Blodgett for several years. I married Jon VanHekken in September 1994. We have two children, Ally and James. I started working at LaGrave as a secretary on November 28, 2022 after volunteering during Lindsey's maternity leave. I am looking forward to continuing working part-time (Mondays and Tuesdays) as a secretary in the church office. My email is jvanhekken@lagrave.org.



Goodbye

It is with deep sadness that Renee Vande Wege, our children's and youth choir director, has resigned from her position. Renee's increased responsibilities in her teaching position at Rockford Public School, the changing needs of her family, and the management of three positions have resulted in an all-too-full schedule that was simply not sustainable.

Over the past two-and-a-half years, out of genuine love for LaGrave's children and youth, their parents, and the congregation, Renee has shared her musical gifts generously, effectively, and superbly. She developed our fully graded choral program successfully and overcame overwhelming challenges during the pandemic and beyond. She went above and beyond her position to help us produce a virtual version of the *Hallelujah Chorus*, developed creative ways to teach children via Zoom and recordings, and even assisted with hand motions for the Romans 12 memorization project. In the short time Renee was with us, she quickly became a well-loved part of our church family, making it especially difficult to bid her farewell so soon.

Renee is deeply grateful for the opportunity to have served at LaGrave and writes, "My position at LaGrave has been incredibly healing. The congregation has been appreciative and supportive, affirming my work with the children and welcoming my family into the fold. My time at LaGrave has been a gift that I will cherish always."

We extend deepest thanks to Renee for her exemplary work, leadership, and service among us and ask for



God's richest blessings as she soon begins a new chapter of life.

Jess Hollenbach and Trish Brummel are temporarily filling in during the search for someone to fill her position.

Music at LaGrave

Special Upcoming Worship Services

- Wednesday, February 22, 6:15: Ash Wednesday Service
- Sunday, March 5, 6:00 p.m.: The Calvin Alumni Choir, Sean Ivory, director, musical guests
- Sunday, March 26, 8:40 and 11:00 a.m.: Christian Education Sunday, the Calvin Christian High School Wind Ensemble, Sarah Horton, director, musical guests
- Sunday, March 26, 5:00 p.m.: Koinonia Service focusing on Prayer, with a meal following
- Sunday, April 2, 8:40 and 11:00 a.m.: Palm Sunday
- Thursday, April 6, 7:30 p.m.: Maundy Thursday Tenebrae and Communion Service
- Friday, April 7, 12:00 p.m.: Downtown Ecumenical Good Friday Service at Westminster Presbyterian Church
- Sunday, April 9, 8:40 and 11:00 a.m.: Easter Sunday Service
- Sunday, April 23, 6:00 p.m.: The Grand Rapids Christian High School Chamber Chorale, musical guests
- Sunday, May 7, 5:00 p.m.: Koinonia Service focusing on 2023 Graduates, with a meal following

Instrumental Carol Sing Makes a Comeback

The scores were distributed, then rehearsed at home, the fingers, hands, and embouchures were prepared, the musicians found their seats, the instruments were tuned, and at the downbeat of Karel de Waal Malefyt's baton, for the first time in four years, LaGrave's all-church orchestra made beautiful music celebrating the birth of our Savior at the annual Instrumental Carol Sing. Held on Sunday, December 18, the service had been cancelled for the



Continued →

past four years due to the pandemic or inclement weather. How wonderful it was to gather again with a 50-piece orchestra made up of virtually every orchestral instrument played by beginner band and orchestra students sitting next to professional symphony players, with everything in between. The orchestra played the prelude, accompanied several Christmas carols sung by the congregation, and the postlude. A good time was had by all, and each instrument was tuned for praise, giving glory to the Newborn King.



Chancel Choir Invitation

You are cordially invited to join the Chancel Choir for the Lenten and Easter season. Lent begins February 26, and Easter is April 9. The LaGrave Chancel Choir enjoys a rich and long tradition of excellent singing in worship. Rehearsals are rigorous,

meaningful, and FUN! Every rehearsal involves voice exploration, and the singers in your section will help you feel confident. Come experience the joy of Christian fellowship through singing. You won't believe what you've been missing.



Still have questions? Contact Jim Borst at jborst@lagrave.org. There is a place for you in the Chancel Choir!

Ring Out, Wild Bells (1850) by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light;
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more,
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.



A Partnership Celebration

In November, LaGrave celebrated the long-standing relationship between the LaGrave congregation and Christian brothers and sisters in Cuba. A Koinonia evening worship service was held and a “Cuban Dinner” followed with participation of over 200 supporters of Cuba. The church welcomed Yordanys Diaz and his family from Cuba to the celebration. Yordanys, previously a pastor in Havana and President of the CRC in Cuba, was forced by the Cuban government to flee Cuba in November. He and his family have since relocated this December as refugees to Grand Rapids. The family will begin a new and unexpected chapter in their lives. The family has been overwhelmed by the support they have received from many in our community—thanks to all who have been involved.



An Epidemic of Hunger



2022 was an extremely difficult year for Cuban churches and their members. The economy has been devastated by high inflation, unemployment, Covid, natural disasters, power outages, and hunger. Political pressures on the churches have increased. Basic daily needs, which we take for granted, cannot be met. Yet the work of the churches has continued. The Henry Beets Cuba Committee and others have been able to provide some support and will continue to do so. Pray for the Christians in Cuba.

Joining in His Spirit

Steve and Chis Van Zanen, missionaries supported by LaGrave, serve at LCC International University in Lithuania. About 80% of the LCC students arrive with little real understanding of the Christian faith. Steve introduces them to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and teaches advanced courses for theology majors, while Chris helps staff and provides hospitality for many students.

At the university's December graduation, 25 students with 15 different native languages received their degrees. Steve asked one of the Ukrainian students to participate in a multi-lingual Scripture reading using her native language. She is from Kherson, a primarily Russian-speaking city recently liberated by Ukrainian troops. She said she would be glad to read Micah 6:8 but wanted to use the Ukrainian language, which she also speaks, as part of her protest against the destruction of her country by Russia's president and army. Steve honored that request but thought

it was tragic that her joy in her native language had been taken from her by the unjust war.

The Spirit works powerfully through our missionaries, and the Missions Committee aims to support and encourage them in this work. If you are interested in being part of the committee, please get in touch with Peter Ackerman.

(616-308-4321, peterackerman@hotmail.com)



Social Concerns Committee

Psalm 133 is a song of ascents - a psalm that God's people sang together on their journey up the mountain to Jerusalem for a festival. This particular Psalm begins, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity," and ends, "For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore." Friends, we are indeed on a journey together - church members and neighbors - and when we share life together, we experience the blessings of God.

During the Christmas season, members of the Social Concerns Committee spent time at Verne Barry Place Apartments celebrating the gift of being neighbors with a party! We want to say THANKS for all the ways you, the LaGrave family, made this party possible: 11 bags of Chex mix, more than 200 candy canes, 100 handwritten Christmas cards, and more Christmas candy than any one party should have! We also want to say THANK YOU for the generous supply of toys for The Other Way Ministry Christmas Store. It took two stuffed carloads to deliver all the toys!

The Social Concerns committee is running a "Love Your Neighbor" Backpack Drive in February.

We will be collecting backpacks that will be distributed at our Spa Day events. Backpacks can be dropped off in the MPR or the amazon link in the email blast and on socail media can be used to delivered it directly to LaGrave.



4th Quarter 2022 Special Offering Totals:

October: Oakdale Neighbors, \$7,250

November: World Renew, \$13,791

December: Camp Tall Turf, \$4,877

The Henry Beets Mission Society

Throughout its history, LaGrave Church has faithfully honored that command by generously supporting missionaries in spreading the good news worldwide and in the United States. The LaGrave budget earmarks funds to support the missionary work of the CRC.

The Henry Beets Mission Society, however, was formed at LaGrave more than 75 years ago to assist missionaries not supported by the CRC. We are currently privileged to assist 30 missionaries serving in 20 countries, including the U.S. Monetary support is critical, but we also strive to build a personal connection between them and LaGrave.

HBMS is not included in our church budget and is funded by three special offerings each year (May, September, and Thanksgiving). Unfortunately, due to decreased giving in 2022, we could not increase our level of support to our current missionaries, and it was impossible to add others who requested support.

“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

Mark 16:15

We live in a world in desperate need of Christ. If you are able, please consider giving to Henry Beets during one of the special offerings or any time of the year by placing a donation in the offering plate using a marked envelope. Contributions can also be made online through Elexio.

PS If you would like to know more about the history of HBMS, we encourage you to check out the booklet about its history found in the church library.

Evangelistic Outreach

One of the specific mandates adopted by The EOC is: "The Evangelistic Outreach Ministry will encourage cooperation with outreach ministries in our community."

Jabez Ministries is one community outreach ministry supported by our church. Jabez Ministries is a campus ministry, at GVSU, primarily for students

with disabilities. This is a ministry by people with disabilities and for people with disabilities. This ministry seeks to develop the God-given gifts of people with disabilities for kingdom service in their churches and communities.

We see the word "disabled" as a secondary descriptive term that, while part of our being, does not,

Continued →

ultimately, define us. We are defined as sisters and brothers in Christ. In Christ we have our identities, not in labels.

We believe that God calls us not because of our abilities, nor does he not call us because of our inabilities. He will equip and gift us for the work he

calls us to do. It is, perhaps, best summed up in these words by Joni Erickson-Tada: "it is not a disability ministry until the disabled are ministering."

Please contact Rev. Peter Gordon, director of Jabez Ministries, for more information. (peter927alberta@sbcglobal.net)

Running Errands, Getting Coffee, and Showing Love

Helping someone can be one of the best ways to share Christian love. Volunteers in Service (VIS) offers lots of opportunities, like the ones below, for LaGrave members to help others. If you're interested, please contact David, dlundberg@visgr.org or Rosemary, rtymes@visgr.org or call 616-459-7500.

Transportation: URGENT

Due to decreases in funding and community services personnel, VIS receives many requests from people who need help with:

1. Driving them to and from medical appointments
2. Picking up and delivering pantry items
3. Bringing them to and from the grocery store (most people don't need assistance inside the store)

Friendly Visitor

Scott is 57 and has developmental delays and a hearing impairment. He lives near Alpine and 4 Mile, works part-time, but is lonely. He would like a friendly visitor to play cards with, get coffee, or go to a movie.



Cleaning Help

Lisa is 63, lives near Ball and Leonard NE, and struggles with her health. She would like help with a one-time cleaning, including vacuuming, mopping, bathrooms, and wiping down walls. Lisa has cleaning supplies, vacuum, and mop.

**Thanks for your
willing hearts and
hands!**

Mission Trip Banner

LaGrave members have served communities by sharing their skills and talents as they addressed needs in many locations both in and outside of the United States. The LaGrave Mission Committee sponsored many of these service projects. Jerry Kruyf organized the first of several trips to Romania in 2001. Tom and Marilyn Walma participated in the 2013 trip to Ozd, Romania, and in the fall of that year, Marilyn created a banner using team T-shirts from several of the trips. The Walmas presented the banner to Jerry in gratitude for his work in planning and organizing this ministry.

Tragically, Marilyn and Tom were killed in an automobile accident on January 23, 2014. Jerry has passed the wall hanging to the Historical Committee as it portrays one facet of our congregational life at LaGrave.

The mandate for the Historical Committee includes the responsibility to “collect and preserve materials and artifacts that are relevant to the history of the congregation.” The banner and its story help us remember our story.



GEMS

Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior

Our LaGrave GEMS Club continues learning more about what it means in our daily lives to Act. Love. Walk. from the Micah 6:8 verse: Act Justly, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly with our God. We continue to welcome girls and their friends in grades 1-8 and meet the first three Wednesdays of the month during the school year. Our activities are both indoors and outdoors. We do fun and silly things, as well as serious activities.

In December we delivered the Christmas Card bags we made, which the congregation filled with cards for our LaGrave home-bound members. The Christmas party at 3 Mile Project with the LaGrave Boys' groups is always fun. Our GEMS girls/fathers or "Special Hims" night at Great Lakes Glow Golf and Games was a BLAST. A couple of photos are included here, and many more are on the LaGrave Facebook page.

Our future plans include a February Taco Bar for our fundraiser, a "love on the girls" night in the Vault in February, and a to-be-decided-based-on-the-weather outdoor event in March.

April will be a fun and memorable time. On April 19, we will be having a mother-daughter fashion show. This event will be extra special because we are inviting ALL of the women in the church to join us. Not all of LaGrave's women are mothers of GEMS girls, but in our Covenant Pledge at baptism, we all promise to help raise the children in the way of the Lord. We will celebrate all who have had a motherly role in our GEMS girls' lives. Watch the bulletin for more information as the time gets closer.

We finish April with GEMS Sunday at the 11:00 a.m. service on April 30. In everything we do (badges, activities, lessons), we look for ways that we can better learn to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

Watch the LaGrave bulletin for weekly activity information and the News and Opportunities email blast for photos of our activities.

Call Tina Rooks, Club Coordinator, if you have questions (616-723-3041)



Middle School Ministries

Middle School Ministries (MSM) has been having a great year at LaGrave! The sixth through eighth graders meet most Sunday nights in the MPR for a time of worship, devotions and games. Our favorite nights are when we are off-site for fun activities. This fall we enjoyed capture the flag and pumpkin carving at the Scholtens', a hayride at Versluis' Orchard and an epic Christmas party at the Hollenbachs'. Middle school youth group has been a great time to build our faith, as well as build our community. New middle schoolers are welcome to join anytime. Contact Jess Hollenbach (616)821-3694 or Bob Grussing with any questions.



Christian Education Committee

The Christian Education committee wishes all of the LaGrave families a Blessed New Year. In a few short months, we'll be working in earnest to connect with those of you who are interested in participating in the LaGrave Christian Education program for the 2023-24 school year. Look for information in the bulletin beginning in March defining our enrollment timeline/process occurring in April. We hope that your children are enjoying their current school year and are blessed in their coming semester.

The LaGrave Christian Education Committee.

College (and Young Adult/Career) Ministry

Were you aware that LaGrave has over 200 members between the ages of 18 and 29? Surprising, isn't it? I am Heidi Glover, and I was recently hired to be the new College Age Ministry Coordinator. After 35 years of teaching/working for Grand Rapids Public Schools, God nudged me to listen to him and led me to this new position. I wasn't sure I was qualified for this job, but God places us exactly where we are called to be at precisely the right moment.

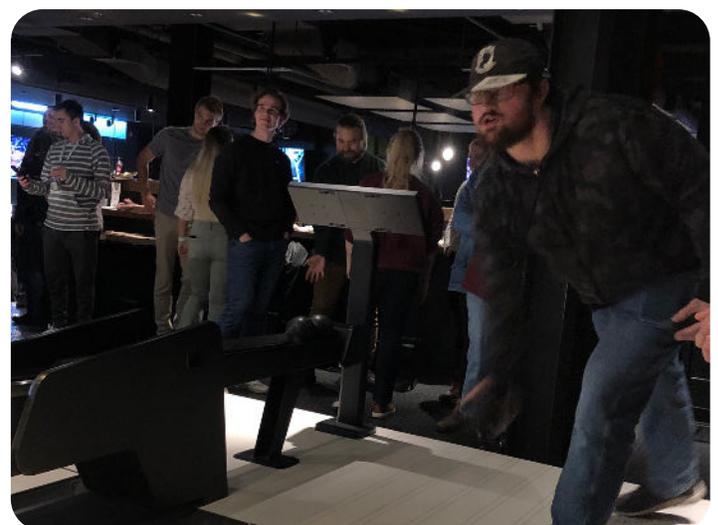
LaGrave is committed to Growing Young. Many young adults enjoy LaGrave's more traditional style of worship. The council and staff recognized that our young adult members were an underserved part of the congregation. However, college-age isn't just 18–22-year-olds. The “emerging adult” community can reach from 18-29.

I started by reaching out to every name on the list. From this, I discovered a core group of emerging adults that are eager for connection. This includes college students and those who are working/starting their careers. Each of these groups is uniquely different. Yet, all are emerging young adults trying to find their place in the church.

My time has been spent getting to know the college students at LaGrave through campus visits, one-on-one or small group meetings, or through texts, letters, or phone calls. At Christmas, many received a care package and letter letting them know that they were being prayed for daily.

At church, the focus has been on group fellowship through Bagel Sundays. Recently, we had Cinnamon Roll Sunday, with close to 30 people enjoying homemade cinnamon rolls graciously provided by LaGrave members. We've also volunteered at Kids Food Basket and gathered for pinball, duckpin bowling, and games. We typically have between 15-20 people who participate.

The goal is to support these emerging adults in their faith walk and encourage them to become an integral part of the fellowship of believers at LaGrave. If you see a young adult around church, I encourage you to greet them and get to know them. If you would like to partner with the College and Career Ministry, we welcome you!



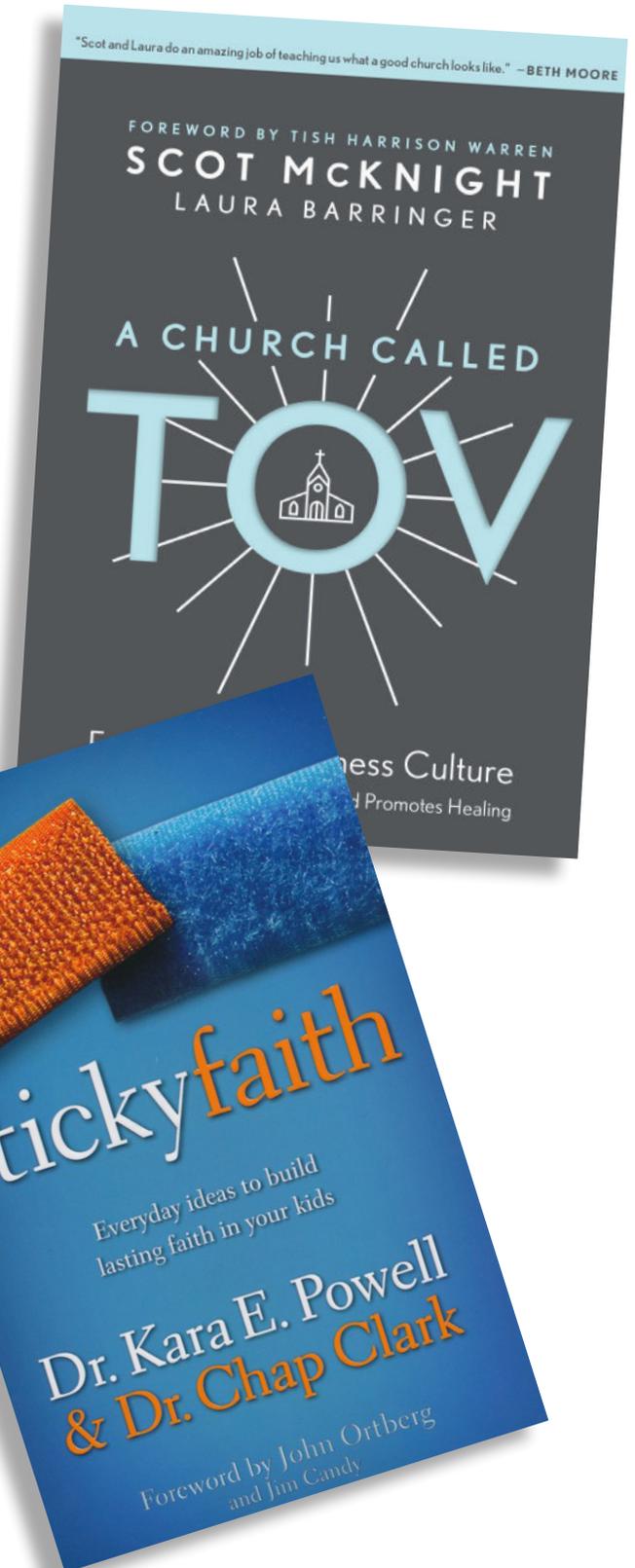
Growing U Book Study

Growing U book study coming soon! Join us this Lent as we journey together in learning through two different book studies. We will provide books to all participants, so please let us know if you plan to join us! We are setting aside the weeks of Feb 26 - March 26 this Lent to gather in smaller groups to do book studies and encourage one another on the journey of living our faith and of raising our children. There will be two different studies going on during this time: *A Church Called Tov* and *Sticky Faith*.

A Church Called Tov: The LaGrave LiveSafe Team is eager to host the book study on *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing*, by Dr. Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer. In response to recent revelations of abuses in many churches, the authors explore ways to make the church “grace dispensers,” leading to healing and transformation for all.

Sticky Faith: Parents and anyone wanting to instill faith in young people - we invite you to join Bob Grussing as we study the book *Sticky Faith* by Dr. Kara E. Powell and Dr. Chap Clark. This study will equip you with insights and practical ideas for nurturing children and empowering them to develop a living, lasting faith. We will also encourage one another on the journey of raising children and share ideas about technology, curfews, driving, and the like.

To ensure we have enough books for everyone, please RSVP to the Growing U Coordinator, Emily Redder at eredder@lagrave.org.



A Lending Library - for Walkers?

A small but important ministry offered through the Pastoral Care Committee at LaGrave is the Durable Medical Equipment lending program. Headed by Dick Kanten, this valuable resource helps our members through medical challenges, whether long or short-term, by lending out equipment like walkers, knee scooters, and shower chairs, to name a few. Many members have used this fantastic resource when recovering from surgeries, illnesses, and

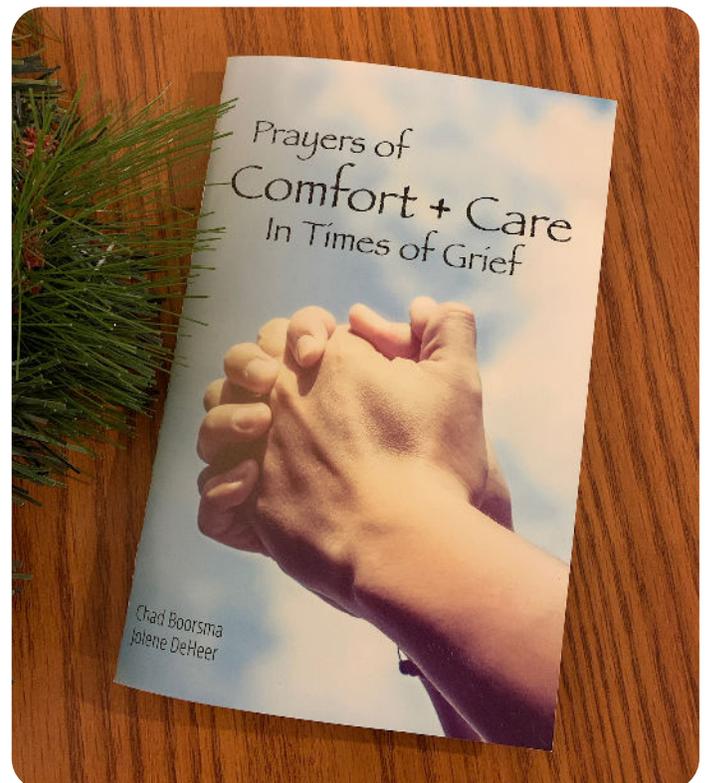
accidents. Not only do we lend the equipment, but we also take in equipment that is no longer needed to keep for use by anyone. If you have anything you would like to donate to this program or if you need to borrow something, please contact Jennifer Schroder, chair of Pastoral Care (jennschroder@gmail.com).

Grief of All Kinds

Back in 2020, LaGrave first published *Prayers of Comfort and Care in Times of Grief*. Now in its second printing, the book includes prayers you can pray for yourself, as well as prayers you can pray for others. Some have used it as they process their grief; others have used it in a variety of different ways. We encourage you to do the same.

Are you or someone you know struggling with the loss of good health, the loss of a marriage, or the loss of a job? Perhaps it's the loss of hope or dream. Grief can take various forms, and the scripture-based prayers found in this book can help navigate that journey.

Books can be found on the rack next to the church office. Feel free to take one for yourself or multiple copies to give to others. If you need a copy mailed to you or have any questions, let Chad Boorsma know by calling the church or sending him an e-mail at cboorsma@lagrave.org.



How Are You Doing—Really?

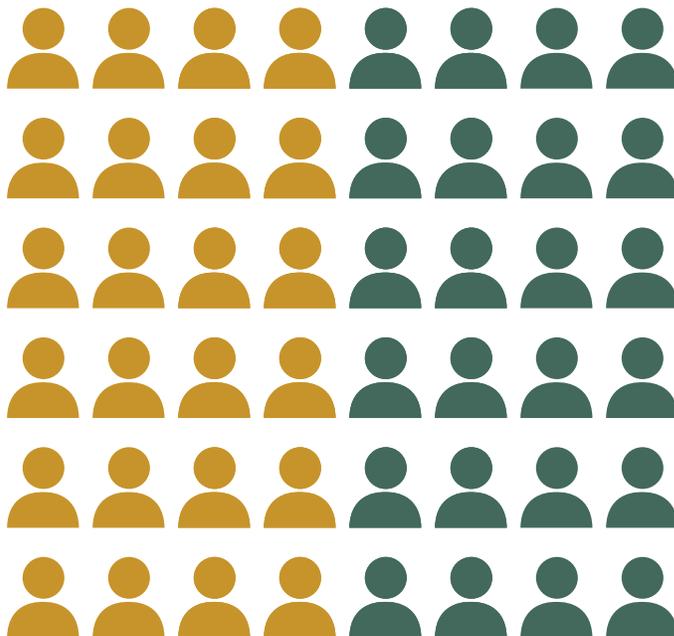
Winter and grey days can get anybody down. If you're struggling, don't struggle in silence! You're not alone.

Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services reports that 48 million people deal with anxiety disorders annually; more than half of people with mental illness went without treatment in 2020; and that depression and anxiety disorders cost the global economy \$1 trillion in lost productivity each year. Talking with someone who cares can help.

LaGrave households have access to the Church Assistance Program through Pine Rest. You can access an online library of resources, legal and financial consultations, as well as counseling services. Call 1-800-442-0809, press 1, and mention you have CAP with LaGrave Church.

* "Mental Health by the Numbers." NAMI, 2022, <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>.

48 Million People deal with anxiety disorders annually



more than half went without treatment in 2020

Divided into Districts

Did you know that LaGrave's membership is divided into districts, and those districts -- ten in all -- are based on where we live? Each district is also assigned a pastoral care elder and a pastoral care deacon.

Some people may not know what district they're in nor who else is in their district, but this summer, you will have an opportunity to find out. The Fellowship Committee will host district gatherings in the Parlor and courtyard on various Sundays after the morning worship service.

Stay tuned for more details to come.

Join the LiveSafe Team in Prayer

January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month. That month is dedicated to raising awareness about human trafficking and educating the public about how to identify and prevent this crime. As shared by the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, Convent Station, N.J., please join in praying for the end of human trafficking.

God of freedom, beauty and truth
we believe that your deepest desire,
your most powerful energy,
is that all creation might know abundant life.

We raise our voices in anguished prayer
for our sisters and brothers,
women and girls, men and boys,
who are modern day slaves;
They are your beloved daughters and sons,
exploited sexually or forced to work
because of human violence and greed.

Fill us with your holy anger
and your sacred passion
that those who are trafficked
might know healing and justice;
that traffickers will come to
repentance and conversion;
that all of us might live in such a way
that others are not made to pay the price
for our comfort and convenience.

Hasten the coming of the day when
all people and our precious Earth itself
will be treated, not as a commodity,
but as radiant images of your
freedom, beauty and truth.

Amen.

Do you know about LaGrave's LiveSafe Team? Under the Pastoral Care Committee, we are a team committed to equipping LaGrave's community with abuse awareness, prevention, and response. If you or someone you know or love is experiencing abuse, LaGrave's LiveSafe Team is here to help. Contact Tricia Bosma (triciabosma@att.net), Deanna DeVries (devries-deanna@att.net), Jane Elzinga (jane.elzinga@gmail.com), Kristy Manion (kmanion@lagrave.org), or Joy Winkle (joywinkle@yahoo.com) for confidential, honest, non-judgmental listening and resources.



Dancing with a Star: A Review

Note: In November, I received the e-book edition of Neal Plantinga's newest book with the understanding that I would write a review of it for some social media source. Below is my review as posted on Goodreads and possibly Amazon. Robert Otte

Why should you read Neal Plantinga's latest book, *Under the Wings of God: Twenty Biblical Reflections for a Deeper Faith*? Dr. Plantinga has written twenty reflections on Bible passages. Each chapter begins with a Bible passage, centers on the author's meditation, and ends with a prayer. In reading this book, you will be inspired, informed, and even entertained.

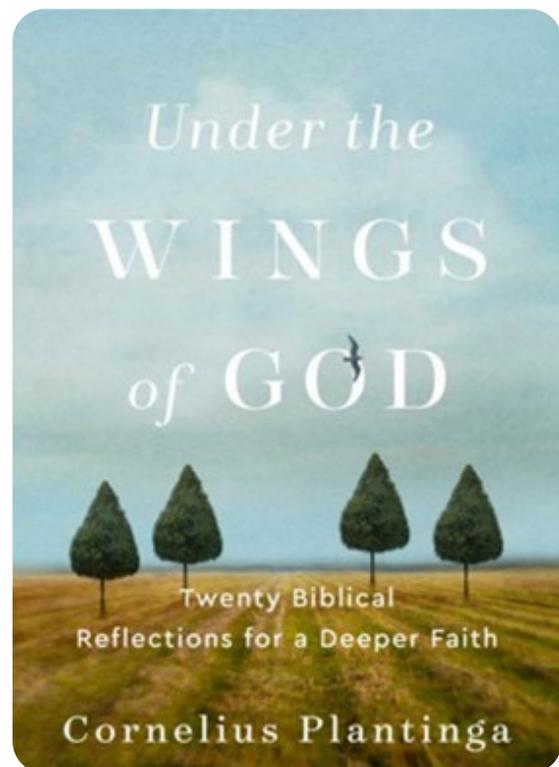
I will use the author's first name throughout this review. You see, some years ago, my wife and I took dance lessons with Dr. Plantinga and his wife, along with many others. Neal, the name I associate with him, is, or at least was, a very good dancer. I only mention his dancing skills because so much of his book reminds me of dancing. Words dance on the page, whether through his skillful use of the English language, his use of often surprising phrases, his quoting of authoritative sources, and mostly his gift for including illustrative stories. The reader would be well off reading this book with some soft waltz or even some tango music playing softly in the background.

Neal has mastered the use of parallelism to gain musical effect, much like many writers of the Psalms. For example, in chapter 14, "Afraid of Easter," Neal wrote three short parallel sentences. "Evil hurts us. Evil threatens us. Evil threatens to

undo us." A little later in the same chapter, he again begins three sentences with "They are afraid." Every time this happens in the book, the prose music dances on the page.

In addition, Neal's use of a surprising, or at least unexpected, word or phrase acts like light cymbal crashes. The title of chapter 2, "God is on the Loose" is one such crash that jars the reader to think a bit more deeply. What does that mean? Later, he writes about God coming after us. And a little later in the same chapter, he writes of a wilderness Savior. Toward the end of the book, Neal writes that Pentecost is dangerous. How is Pentecost dangerous?

In chapter 12, Neal uses the history of the Mafia in America to illustrate his point about self-deception. He writes, "The Godfather's wife doesn't know where his money comes from and seemingly never asks. She



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doesn't know why...her husband's chauffeur looks like a piece of heavy farm machinery with sunglasses." Have we seen that man's picture on posters for films? That is just one of the surprising and, in this case, humorous examples found in this book.

In reading this book, I, an old man who has read many books and heard over four thousand sermons, found myself often thinking, "I never thought of that." Or, "Wow, that is really interesting!" Neal is not afraid to talk about some of the more challenging passages of Scripture.

Neal is humble enough to refer to and even quote other authors, often authorities, to support and amplify his writing. Here is a list of just some of those references: Jonathan Edwards, C. S. Lewis, Paul Tillich, Justo Gonzales, Lewis Smedes, Martin Luther, Karl Barth, and Anne Lamott. Neal uses a cloud of witnesses, saints on earth, and saints above. All these good people strengthen and broaden the scope of Neal's book.

Finally, Neal uses numerous stories to help the reader. In one chapter, his use of the story of the film "Enemy of the State" with Will Smith illustrates well what it means to be watched, which the author uses to explain that our God is inescapable. In chapter 8, he uses a longer story about Craig and Sharon to explain the connection between idolatry and adultery. That story explains the Israelite's desire for a golden calf on their journey through the wilderness. All his stories greatly enhance his explanations.

For those four reasons, I found my mind dancing with the music of the prose, all so interestingly presented that I had to force myself to pause between chapters to absorb them.

So, dear reader, please read *Under the Wings of God*. You will be inspired, informed, and even entertained.

MPR

You may have noticed some work happening this past week in the MPR. After many months of planning, waiting for equipment delivery and scheduling install we finally have replaced the AV equipment in the MPR. There is a new projector, new speakers and other updates that will not only improve the quality but also make it easier for members to use for various events with minimal training or experience. The updates were designed

and installed by Livespace, a locally based AV company along with input from members of our communications committee and our AV staff team. We are excited to have new, updated equipment that will allow us to continue ministering to our congregation, community and guests.



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