



# themilestone

SPRING 2026



# GIFT ACCEPTANCE

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. James 1:17*

At First Reformed Church of Orange City, giving is an act of worship and partnership in God's work. We are deeply grateful for every gift and are committed to receiving and using each one with care, integrity, and gratitude.

## Our Commitment

- Gifts are handled responsibly and in ways that support the mission of the Church.
- Donor information is kept confidential.
- All gifts are acknowledged, and exceptional gifts receive personal thanks from the Board of Deacons.

## Ways to Give

We welcome a variety of gifts, including:

- Cash, checks, and online giving ([frcoc.org/give](http://frcoc.org/give))
- Publicly traded stocks and securities
- Closely held securities and other property (reviewed to ensure they are a good fit)
- Real estate (considered carefully to protect both the donor and the Church)



## Planned Giving

Donors may also choose to support the Church through:

- Bequests in a will
- Trusts or other estate plans
- Naming the Church as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy or retirement account.

Planned gifts can be a meaningful way to care for loved ones while also investing in the future ministry of the Church.

## Using Your Gifts

- Memorial gifts provide support of the Church's annual fund unless designated for a previously approved project.
- Undesignated gifts are used where the need is greatest, guided by prayerful leadership.
- Larger gifts may receive additional review to ensure they are used wisely and in alignment with the Church's mission.

## In Gratitude...

Thank you for your generous, regular giving that supports the church budget annually. If you have more questions about your own giving, we encourage you to discuss it with your financial professional. Of course, deacons welcome any questions you might have about current ministry needs or future plans.

**WELCOME** New Faces

Welcome  
**LITTLE ONES**

Content Not  
Available Online

Content Not  
Available Online

# THROUGH THE EYES OF THE EASTER BUNNY

Written by Josie Kuiper (The Easter Bunny)

To me, Easter has always meant spending time with people I love. It is a holiday built on warm traditions, from sharing a yummy lunch or dinner, to hunting eggs and eating candy until my stomach hurts. I always save room for my mom's famous lemon pie. But this year, I got to experience Easter from a completely different perspective.

When I first arrived to play the Easter Bunny at our Community Easter egg hunt, I didn't know what to expect. I felt a mix of fear and excitement as we started setting up and filming ads for the event. If I'm being honest, that nervousness never fully went away. It was a challenging role because every child is so uniquely different. I had to learn how to switch quickly from being a loud, energetic bunny for one kid, to a soft and gentle friend for the next.

Even with the nerves, stepping into that suit turned out to be truly magical. Everywhere I looked, there was joy. Kids raced across the field during the Easter egg hunt with giant smiles on their faces. The Tulip Court painted colorful designs on little kids' cheeks while grandparents sat nearby, laughing and playing games with their grandkids. Kids bounced

nonstop in the bouncy castles, and the whole RSC felt full of excitement and happiness.

But in the middle of all the fun, I also saw something deeper. Easter is not just about candy, eggs, or even the Easter Bunny. It is really about Jesus and the hope and joy we have because of Him. I loved seeing our church create a place where families could come together, make memories, and feel welcomed and loved.

One of the most touching parts of the day was hearing parents tell me that their children used to be terrified of the Easter Bunny, but this time they felt completely comfortable and excited. Moments like that made me realize how important kindness and connection can be, even in small interactions.

Overall, the experience was incredibly rewarding. While the candy and family traditions at home are still deeply special to me, the best part of the day was seeing our community come together. Through the eyes of the Easter Bunny, I got to see laughter, joy, and little glimpses of God's love everywhere.







# Why Retreats Matter

Written by Ross Enger

There's a moment every year at the middle school retreat when I stop paying attention to the stage and start watching the people in the room instead.

I've been bringing students to this retreat since 2010, but this was our second year having worship in the new Airnasium at Hidden Acres Christian Camp. The room is massive, with concrete floors, stage lights sweeping across rows of folding chairs, and giant garage-style doors lining the sides of the building. More than 700 middle school students filled the room, and when worship started, students rushed the stage while some stayed back in the aisles, quietly singing or standing with their eyes closed, taking everything in from a little farther away. Somewhere in the middle of all of it, I found myself less focused on the music and more focused on the people surrounding our students along the sides of the stage.

What caught my attention were the college students from Northwestern College and Dordt University who were helping lead the weekend retreat. Some would be directing games or leading activities, while others would be sharing testimonies and praying with students over the weekend. But all of them were participating in worship with a genuine excitement and gratitude for God. A number of them had once attended this exact retreat as middle school students themselves, and now they had come back to invest in the next group of students.

These are students from our own communities, people our middle schoolers could realistically picture themselves becoming someday. There's something powerful about hearing a college student talk openly about their faith, struggles, doubts, and what Jesus has done in their life, while standing only a few years removed from where these middle school students are now.

The late April weather felt like peak spring in Iowa, windy during the day with dust drifting in from nearby fields being planted. Once the sun went down, though, camp felt completely different. The evenings became dark enough that you could barely see between buildings, but it never really felt quiet because somewhere in the distance there were always students laughing, running, or calling out to each other while groups moved back and forth across camp.

Students who had been worried about room assignments or what the cabins might look like had settled in. The girls stayed in one dormitory-style building, the guys in another, and before long, students were racing between activities all day. Inside the Family Life Center, the smell of chlorine from the pool drifted through everything while students bounced constantly between games, worship sessions, breakout activities, meals, and church group discussions.

The speaker for the weekend, John Michael Hinton, kept students locked in with illusions involving Rubik's Cubes that somehow got solved instantly or transformed into Skittles just feet away from a careful observer on stage. Even students who normally struggle to sit still during teaching were completely engaged, trying to figure out how any of it worked.



But honestly, some of the best moments happened away from the stage.

Our church group discussions ended up being some of the loudest moments of the weekend, which honestly made me proud. We met in a fireside room with rows of chairs facing a fireplace that lit on our last night there, and every conversation we had seemed to bounce naturally between serious moments and chaotic stories. Someone always had a story to tell, a joke to make, or a question that sent the entire discussion down a rabbit trail before somehow bringing us back to the main point again. At times, I almost felt bad for the other groups meeting nearby because we laughed so loudly, but underneath all the energy, something really important was happening. Students trusted each other. They were listening. They were opening up.

That's why retreats matter.



Retreats create something different because students are actually living life together instead of just showing up for an hour at church. They're eating meals together, brushing their teeth at the same time, hopefully, walking between buildings late at night, sitting together during worship, and having conversations throughout all the ordinary moments in between scheduled activities. Every part of the weekend becomes an opportunity for discipleship and relationship building. In many ways, retreats create an environment that a lot of adults rarely make for themselves anymore: uninterrupted time focused on relationships, worship, prayer, reflection, and honest conversations about life and faith.

One night during our church group time, we talked about how our lives are like a frame story. Our stories matter, but they are not the main story. They point beyond themselves to God as the main character. That invitation wasn't just for middle school students. It was for all of us: to step away from the noise for a moment and notice what's going on in your periphery. Lift your eyes beyond the small things pulling for your attention and remember the bigger story God is telling.

And for one windy spring weekend in Iowa filled with worship music, fog machines, snack wrappers, dusty parking lots, late-night laughter, and hundreds of middle school students, we got to experience a glimpse of that bigger story together.

That's part of why retreats matter so much.





# Easter at FRC





The resurrection changes EVERYTHING. Not because it erases life's pain, but because it swallows our despair. Like a reverse black hole, Christ's resurrection pulls in our hopelessness and replaces it with eternal hope.



# The Power of “Clickable Moments”

Written by Sarah Kuiper

Lately, I've been thinking about what I call “clickable moments.” These are ordinary moments where something simple, but powerful, suddenly makes sense. If you think about your own life, you probably have a few. Maybe it was tying your shoes, riding a bike, or learning to whistle. You weren't even trying that hard, and then suddenly, it just clicked. The thing about clickable moments is, you usually don't realize how important they are when they happen.

One of my most significant clickable moments goes back to 6th-grade Sunday school. I can still picture it, the beige walls, burnt orange carpet, and brown desks arranged in a horseshoe. Our class was known for being a little “spirited,” so we had a teacher who could keep us in line. Like most weeks, we read Scripture and filled out worksheets. That day's lesson was Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, a story I had heard what felt like a thousand times. When the bell rang, we were ready to leave. But our teacher stopped us, had us sit back down, and said: “Before you leave, I need to tell you something. There is nowhere in this entire world that you can ever go that God won't be with you.” Then he dismissed us. At the time, it didn't feel particularly significant. But something was planted.

I didn't think about that moment again for years. Fast forward to when I was 23 years old. I was lying on my bathroom floor, alone, in the middle of my first miscarriage. Dave was at work, I couldn't reach him, and I was far from family. The weight of loss, loneliness, and confusion felt overwhelming.

As I finally sat up, I closed my eyes and leaned my head against the bathroom door. And, it clicked. Suddenly, I was back in that 6th-grade classroom, the beige walls, burnt orange carpet, and brown desks arranged in a horseshoe, hearing those same words: There is nowhere you will ever go that God won't be with you. Nothing instantly changed. There was still grief, still loss, still a long road ahead. But something in me was anchored. Because years earlier, someone had faithfully opened the Bible, taught a familiar story, and spoken truth. A seed had been planted. So, when the storm came, it didn't blow me off course; it watered that seed. That's discipleship. It's not just teaching information. It's planting truth deep enough that one day, when life falls apart, it clicks.



Discipleship isn't about age; it's about formation. In kids' ministry, we plant seeds early. In youth ministry, we help students wrestle with and own their faith. In young adults, we help them decide if it's really theirs. In small groups, we help people live it out. In care ministries, we sit with people in both their hardest and most joyful moments. In connections, we create spaces of belonging. In missions, we show faith in action. In digital spaces, we reach people we may never meet in person.

Different environments. Same calling. We are all planting seeds that we may never see bloom.

Most of those moments won't feel significant. They'll feel ordinary. Repetitive. Maybe even ineffective. But those are often the exact moments God uses later, when someone needs them most.

We may never know which moment is "the moment". Which lesson sticks, which sentence clicks. But that's not our job. Our job is to plant seeds, faithfully and consistently, and trust that God will use them to change lives.

Because the truth is, the person who planted that seed in me probably thought they were just finishing a Sunday school lesson.



# CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE

**This is Hope. This is Espwa.**

*COTP Spring 2026 Update*

Every other year, the board of Children of the Promise seeks to be present-to walk the ground, sit with leaders, and witness firsthand what God is doing in Haiti. In recent years, those plans have often been interrupted by instability and uncertainty. Once again, we stepped forward in faith, hoping conditions would allow us to go. **This year, they did.**

As we gathered in the volunteer house, there was a sense of familiarity-places and rhythms we recognized. Yet, woven into that familiarity were unmistakable signs of change.

Leadership has shifted and grown, with a National Executive Director now serving on the ground in Haiti, and a Development Director from Minnesota. The foster homes, once filled to capacity, have less children on campus, while nearby, a school building is steadily rising, brick by brick, vision becoming reality.

Walking the grounds, we saw something **deeper taking root.**

Family strengthening is no longer just an idea, it is happening. Through thoughtful programs and sometimes simply through the dignity of employment, as mothers and fathers are given opportunities to provide for their families. We are witnessing the next generation of staff being raised up; young men and women stepping into roles in IT, finance, healthcare, and leadership. The seeds planted years ago are now **bearing fruit.**

The board had the privilege of sitting with this next generation of leaders. Yes, survival mode is still a reality at times. But even in that space, we heard **vision.** We heard **conviction.** We heard dreams for what Children of the Promise can become. These leaders believe deeply that every child carries God's promises. And because many of them have lived that story themselves, they know that strengthening families and educating the next generation is where lasting hope is found.



The idea that things will simply work out is mere optimism.

**Instead, we have hope. This is espwa.**

Hope is choosing to dream and to act because we know God is at work. It is the quiet but steady confidence that even when circumstances are hard, there is still reason to press forward.

While travel to Haiti remains limited, our commitment is unchanged: **to continue bringing you close to what God is doing.** To share the stories of transformation. To invite you into the unfolding work of hope. Hope that is growing, building, and taking root in ways we could not have imagined. Because of God's faithfulness in the past, a new chapter is being written. One where families are strengthened, leaders are rising, and together, we continue to dream.



*Board of Directors Left to Right: Clarence Wassink, Graeme Esau, Sara VanZee, Rebekah Miner, Heidi Pender, Esperandieu Pierre, Guenson Charlot*

# Trusting God in the Delays: Guaymas, MX

Written by Sara Van Zee

It was mid-March and our team was gearing up for Guaymas, Mexico. For many on this trip, it was our second time serving alongside our brothers and sisters there. And when it is your second trip, you often feel like you “know what to expect.”

You pack your bag better than the first time. You can picture the airport pickup and the route into town. You are more prepared for the variety of foods and the rhythm of the days. There is a comfort that can quietly settle in.

But this trip was different.

We were scheduled to leave early Monday morning. The Sunday before, one of those unexpected spring blizzards rolled in. The airport shut down, roads became dangerous, and even church was cancelled. We did everything we could from our end: monitored road conditions, adjusted rides to the airport, and changed departure times.

When we arrived at the airport the next morning and saw our flight status still reading “on time,” it felt like an answer to prayer. Maybe we were still going to make it after all.

We boarded the plane knowing our connection would be tight but manageable. Then we sat on the runway. Minute after minute passed as we waited for de-icing and watched the line of planes ahead of us grow longer. It became increasingly clear that we would miss our next flight.



Still, we hoped there might be some way to get to Mexico later that day. But once we landed, reality set in. Not only were we not getting there that day, there was no certainty about the next day either. Flights everywhere had been delayed or cancelled, and customer service agents were trying to sort through impossible logistics and limited seats.

We felt defeated as we watched our “work days” slipping away. The disappointment felt heavy, especially knowing people were waiting for us on the other end. A few even quietly said, “If we need to go back home, we can.”

But we pressed on.

Nearly 36 hours after we were supposed to arrive, we finally made it to Guaymas.

The next morning we began the work we felt like we “should” have started days earlier. That evening, our team sat together with those from Guaymas and shared where we had seen God through the journey.

For most of us, it was in the surrender.

It was in the questions we wrestled with:  
Does God love this ministry even more than we do?  
Do we trust His timing and His ability rather than leaning on our own?

Does our pride sometimes come from what we can do for ministry?

The delays reminded us that ministry is never ultimately dependent on our plans, schedules, or productivity. God was already at work before we arrived, and He remained faithful even when everything felt uncertain.

Sometimes the greatest work God does is not through us, but within us.

# A Moment in Missions

Spring Clean Up Day



*"I love being on the giving end of "how can we help?" but when the roles are reversed, and you are the one being asked that question, it is much harder and humbling. Despite my attempts to get you to go somewhere else, someone who needed it more, YOU SHOWED UP. We shared a meal, we prayed and laughed and cleaned up the yard, washed windows, fixed some flapping siding, talked, laughed some more, and encouraged each other. Then, as we lingered around the table sharing our dessert in sweet community, God was glorified. In our weakness, He provided. Tasks that were too much were completed with joy and generous hearts. As it says in Galatians 6:10, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." We are so blessed to belong to this body of believers. Thank you for showing up, rolling up your sleeves, and sharing your joy so generously. We are forever grateful for your hands, your hearts, and our true community."*

— Rachael Brunsting

# Kingdom Network Global Gathering

Several members of First Reformed Church attended the Kingdom Network Global Gathering held April 22–24, 2026, at Faith Church in Dyer, Indiana. Representing FRC were Pastor Fred De Jong, Larry Dokter, Amanda Haverdink, Pastor Mark Haverdink, Mary Tracy, Sara Van Zee, and Jay Wielenga.

The gathering brought together Kingdom Network pastors and church workers from across the globe, including attendees from across the United States as well as Mexico and Brazil. Centered around the theme “Awakened,” the event challenged leaders to continue leading faithfully within their congregations and ministries, awaken churches to expect the work of the Holy Spirit in their communities, and renew their commitment to missions and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ both locally and globally.

The gathering also provided meaningful opportunities for worship and prayer, both individually and corporately, including one-on-one prayer with ministry leaders and a concluding celebration of the Lord’s Supper together. Throughout the event, participants were able to attend multiple breakout sessions focused on specific ministry topics such as Mental Health and the Church, Discipleship, Awaken to the Holy Spirit, Spiritual Formation for Mission Trips, Wisdom in the Age of A.I., Redemptive Compassion, and many others.

The Kingdom Network Global Gathering also included a brief business meeting with pastors and elders that focused on reaffirming the Kingdom Network covenant and welcoming new churches. The Kingdom Network currently includes 49 churches across four networks and will soon expand to 56 churches within five networks.

Another highlight of the gathering was the opportunity for participants to connect with others serving in similar ministry roles and responsibilities. Senior pastors, associate pastors, mission directors, elders, worship leaders, and administrators each had dedicated time together, creating meaningful opportunities for encouragement, collaboration, and shared learning.

Events like this help FRC maintain close relationships with fellow believers and partner churches while sharing ministry ideas and learning from one another. It was especially meaningful to reconnect with mission partners from City Church Compton and Guaymas, Mexico, as well as pastors from Brazil.

The Vision Core Team will also be facilitating a Zoom call with fellow Kingdom Network churches that have established leadership development ministries. These conversations will focus on how churches are equipping and implementing leaders for service within both the local church and the broader Kingdom. This ministry focus aligns closely with FRC’s vision and ministry priorities related to leadership development.

The Kingdom Network Global Gathering will take place again in the spring of 2028, with a pastors’ retreat planned for 2027. According to those who attended, the gathering was a community-rich, Holy Spirit-filled, gospel-centered experience. If you would like to learn more about the group’s time in Indiana, feel free to connect with any of those who attended.



# Upcoming Events

## **Summer AM Service Schedule**

Sundays, June 7 - July 26

One service @ 9:30 AM

## **Vacation Bible School**

Sunday, July 12 - Wednesday, July 15

6:00 PM - 8:30 PM

## **Hot Dogs and Ice Cream Social**

Sunday, July 19

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

## **Rocky Mountain High Youth Retreat**

Saturday, July 25 - Wednesday, July 29

## **Return to Two AM Services**

Sunday, August 2

8:30 & 10:30 AM

## **Brazil Mission Trip**

Friday, August 28 -

Sunday, September 6

## **Wednesday Night Laughs**

with comedian Bob Smiley

Wednesday, September 2

5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

