



# SUSSEX CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

## February 2025 Newsletter

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### **A Note From Pastor Kendall: The Grace of Community**

If I were to say the term, Christian Community, what comes to mind? Maybe some vague picture of people all sitting around singing Kumbaya together. Maybe an idealistic picture of believers worshipping, serving, and doing life together in perfect harmony. Maybe the Biblical example of Acts 2:42-47 comes to mind--believers one in heart and mind, gathering in each other's homes, praying, reading the Scriptures, giving to support anyone in need. Oftentimes, we have this idea of community that we want to see, but reality doesn't even come close to measuring up. Because in reality, Christian community involves people. People who are sinners in need of a Savior (like we are). Whenever we come together as sinners in need of a Savior, there are bound to be problems. We just don't vibe with that person. We've known that person too long and will never see them as more than who they were when they were teenagers. We argue over convictions and preferences. We are easily offended and too easily offend others. Keep reading in Acts and we see quickly that even with this wonderful description of Christian community there are so many problems for them to sort through. So when we don't see the picture of community we dream of, we can be left disappointed or disillusioned with the people God has called us to be in community with.

It reminds me of a quote I read this week from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*. Now Bonhoeffer was a German pastor and seminary professor during the 1930-1940s. He is probably most famous for his fierce resistance of Hitler and Nazism, even being put to death for his resistance. But his theological work on community is what I remember most from him. *Life Together*, which I HIGHLY recommend (it's a short and pretty easy read!), challenges our ideas of what we think Christian community SHOULD be, and helps us see a bigger picture of what Christian community really is. Listen to the quote:

"The person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the person who loves those around them will create community."

When we have a picture in our minds of what community is supposed to be and try to get God and others to fit our vision, we're bound to mess it up and call it a failure. We may even blame others, crushing them under the weight of our unrealistic expectations. So if the love of community lets us down, we must instead learn to love the real people God has already placed around us. Only in genuine love for people will we build community. Community is not something we can manufacture on our own. It is a spiritual reality in the grace and forgiveness of Christ

Bonhoeffer also says,

"Even when sin and misunderstanding burden the communal life, is not the sinning brother still a brother, with whom I, too, stand under the Word of Christ? Will not his sin be a constant occasion for me to give thanks that both of us may live in the forgiving love of God in Jesus Christ?"

While we don't celebrate sin, what we can celebrate is that in our sins we have the opportunity to demonstrate the grace of Christ to one another, reminding each other of the grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Christian community is where we point others to our shared salvation in Jesus.

As a church we're looking to better foster that type of love in community. But it takes the Spirit of God helping us to see the saving work of God through Jesus Christ in one another, loving them the way God loves us. Only in that spirit of love may we become a stronger Christian community.

## ABOUT SUSSEX CRC

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Sussex, NJ 07461  
973-875-5591  
sussexcrc.org

## STAFF

### Senior Pastor:

Pastor Kendall Everett

### Admin. Assistant:

Rachael Klein

## February Birthdays

2: Helen Kuperus

4: Rosina Byma

5: Tina Brands, Colton

Lobban, Felicia Mann

7: Zachary Caton, Tucker

Moore, Melissa Niedergall

8: Meadow Birchenough,  
Patrick Lobban, Tyler Nie-  
dergall

10: Asher Jurius, Sloan

Van Wyk

12: Amy Caton

14: Joan Aukema, Char-  
lene Westra

16: Cheryl Brands, Rena

Kuperus, Stephen Sulli-

van, Madison Tallamy,

Chelsea Westra

17: Rita Yanoff

18: Minnie Fox, Brian Van

Den Broek, Rick Vander

Ploeg

20: Grant Fox, Maeve Fox,

Joshua Kuperus, Lisa Van

Wyk

21: June Sytsema, Wyatt

Valkema

25: Samuel Olinger, Luke

Vander Groef

27: Dale Meyer

28: Christine Byma

29: Josiah Thiessen

## At Sussex CRC

## Council Notes from the January Meeting

- Mutual Censure occurred as Holy communion will be celebrated on February 16.
- The deaconate reported a YTD budget Surplus of \$33,321.23.

## December 2024 Financial Statement

	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Benevolent</u>		<u>Monthly Budget Needs</u>
Beginning Balance	\$77,215.70	\$25,459.52	Amount Needed	\$32,640.90
Income	\$83,086.21	\$1,386.00	Offering Received	\$68,099.17
Total	\$160,301.91	\$26,845.52	Difference	\$35,458.27
Disbursed	\$46,625.62	--	Previous month Surplus	\$(2,137.04)
Ending Balance	\$113,676.29	\$26,845.52	YTD Surplus	\$33,321.23

  

	<u>Special Cause Donations</u>		<u>Special Fund Donations</u>
Christmas Day (SCS/NCS/VCA)	\$4,041.33	Benevolent	\$1,823.30
Hope Thru the Valley	\$4,138.01	Missions	\$1,353.31
Sussex Christian School	\$1,198.00	Tuition Assistance	\$1,374.01
My Brothers Place	\$75.00	Cap. Improvement	\$100.00
World Renew-World hunger	\$76.30		
World Renew-Helene Efforts	\$66.30		
Today's Choice	\$46.00	Classical Shares Paid through Dec 2024	
Grief Share	\$28.50	Denominational Shares Paid through Dec 2024	
Market Street Mission (Thanksgiving)	\$4,080.00		

## Baptism & New Members

On January 26, we celebrated the sacrament of baptism with Brian & Brittany Bosloper in the baptism of their daughter, Audrey Esther.

We also welcomed Jeanette Vander Groef, who transferred from Reformed Bible Church in Lafayette.



## Have Something for the Newsletter?

Next newsletter Date: **February 28**. Stories are due: **February 21**.

Newsletter articles can promote upcoming or recap recent events, highlight a Bible study, youth program, or small group, or give an update on a missionary or organization we support. If you have any questions about or something for the newsletter, contact the church office.

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## Changes by Numbers for 2024 (Corrected)

*The Annual Changes by Numbers list posted in the last newsletter was missing a few names. Below is an updated list. We apologize for the error.*

### Marriages (3):

John Vander Goot & Elinor Halma Frech  
Matt Kuperus & Nicole Sweetman  
Austin Niedergall & Paige Bordner

### Baptisms (18):

Howard Kuperus  
Freya Talen  
Willow Talen  
Colton Lobban  
Maeve Buske  
Josephine Dykstra  
Angelina Accettulli  
Grace Miedema  
Amilya Rivas  
Jonas Rivas  
Meadow Birchenough  
Peyton Birchenough  
Levi Birchenough  
Bennett Orr  
Hailey Woodell  
Derek Kuperus  
Ada Moore  
William M. Sytsema

### New Members (36):

Annette, Lucas, & Peyton Kuperus  
Katie Kuperus  
Dan, Jules, Annabelle, Cora, Elaina, & Maeve Buske  
Christopher, Dana, & Angelina Accettulli  
Jason, Karen, Peter, & Grace Miedema  
Taylor Vander Ploeg  
Kayleigh Jeltema  
Madison Tallamy  
Clay Sytsema  
Corey Vander Groef  
John Pabst  
Jonas, Yessica, & Amilya Rivas  
Scott, Kristin, Evan, & Hailey Woodell  
Trevor, Gillian, Meadow, Peyton, & Levi Birchenough  
Megan Sytsema

### Members Who Left (0):

### Deaths (1):

Henny Sytsema

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## Missionary Updates



*We wish you a  
MERRY CHRISTMAS*



*and HAPPY NEW YEAR  
the Starkenburg family*



### Update from the Starkenburgs in Nicaragua

In their Christmas letter update, the Starkenburgs gave us some updates about their school:

- There is a total of 984 students currently enrolled at the three schools that make up Nicaragua Christian Academy, with the historical total of 3,681 students who have attended NCA schools.
- NCA International is in its 34th year since its foundation in 1991.
- 22 countries are represented in the student body
- 93 missionary kids (MKs) attend, with a historical total of 525 MKs attending over the years

*(Cont'd next page)*

They also shared some of their family's highlights from 2024:

- This past summer, the Starkenburgs went on a trip to Pictured Rocks in Michigan
- Caleb, Belen, and Judah had important roles in the school musical
- Caleb graduated and now attends Calvin University and Asher graduated from 6th grade
- Belen and Asher played a lot of soccer and Asher participated in an international tournament in Honduras
- Liam, Caleb, Judah, and Asher led worship playing various instruments, such as piano, drums, ukulele, bass, and electric guitar

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## Update from the Spalinks



As they mentioned in their last newsletter, Larry and Ruth are retiring from Resonate. Larry reflected how when was 27 years old, his seminary studies were ending and he mentioned to Ruth about talking to Christian Reformed World Missions. Now at 72 years old, he and Ruth are back in the United States after serving for 45 years in Japan. They are currently staying with Ruth's mom in Pennsylvania. The Spalinks hope to visit supporting churches to give updates on what has been going on.

One of Larry's main ministries during the past few years in Japan involved helping churches grow and create better evangelism. Larry noted that the church in Japan is aging and shrinking, as is the Japanese population. For example, one church, Kawagoe Reformed Church, has two elders and they both turned 80 this year. Larry recently heard from a Pastor that one new elder and two new deacons were going to join the church's council. He also heard from another Pastor at Tokorozawa New Life Church that two of Larry's former Sunday School students were going to make Profession of Faith and baptize a child.

For continued missions in Japan, Perrin and Jodi Werner are taking over most of Larry and Ruth's work. Another couple, Charles and Hensel Oh, will be transferring from service in the Philippines to Japan this year as well. There are plans for one or two church plants, as well as initiatives for outreach towards the increasing non-Japanese population in the country.

For financial support, the Spalinks' work with Resonate will continue through May and Resonate will continue to accept donations for them through April. Larry also asks that you consider supporting the new missionaries in Japan, the Werners and the Ohs. If you would like to donate towards the new missionaries, you can look up their donation pages on Resonate's website at [resonateglobalmission.org/support/our-missionaries](https://resonateglobalmission.org/support/our-missionaries) and type in their names.

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## Who We Support

World Renew - <http://worldrenew.net/>  
Today's Choice - [www.friendsoftodayschoice.org](http://www.friendsoftodayschoice.org)  
Prison Ministry - [www.cpministries.org](http://www.cpministries.org)  
Campus Ministry - InterVarsity

Johnny and Kim Gryglewicz (Resonate-Haiti)  
Larry and Ruth Spalink (Resonate-Japan)  
Liam and Jessica Starkenburg (Resonate-Nicaragua)  
Sussex Help Center and Family Promise