

Thorn Creek

Reformed Church

News Review

VOLUME LIX

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Number 1

*Let us not grow weary
in doing what is right,
for we will reap at
harvest time,
if we do not give up.*

- GALATIANS 6:9 (NRSV)





9:00 A.M.

PRAYER CIRCLE

Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. is a very important time at Thorn Creek Church! Anyone in the congregation is welcome to meet for pre-worship prayer. None have to feel they must participate audibly but your presence there lifts those who come and we feel your heart's desires. Prayers are said for the Word/the Message/our Pastor/ to meet the needs of God's people in the worship service and beyond. God is honored in our prayers, praises, tithes and offerings. We have the freedom to do so, let's claim this time while we have it!

We meet briefly in the Sunday School room in the west hallway of the church at 9:00a.m. Be intentional come and join us at 9:00a.m. – this is a great opportunity!

Psalm 84:3 "Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together."

CELEBRATION SINGERS

Who is ready to sing praises to our Lord? Please join us on Wednesdays from 6:30-8:00pm. We sing in our services 2-3 times per month and we need you! There will be a nursery on Wednesday nights so take advantage of it and join the Celebration Singers! God loves it when His people sing!



JUNIOR BELLS

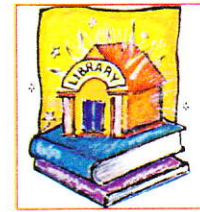
It's that time again to pick up our bells and ring away! We're hoping our past members will be available again for this season. Anyone interested in joining us? We practice on Wednesday nights 5:30-6:30pm the same night as GEMS/Cadets. Hope to see you there!

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Are you ready for Sunday School to begin on September 11, 2016? Summer seems to have flown by, why is it we never say that about winter?

However a new season of Sunday School will begin at 11:00am on Sunday 11, 2016. Did you enjoy the Children's Program presented at the beginning of May? Be sure to have your children come to class and be a part of a wonderful new season.

We do need a teacher/leader for the Toddler Department. Many, many thanks and appreciation to Nadine Krzyston for taking the helm for these little bolts of energy. If you have a heart for 2, 3 & 4 year olds, please see Lorna Bischof.



LIBRARY NEWS

The Library's 2016 Summer Reading Contest ended August 14. Fourteen readers entered the contest with ten of them winning by reading the required number of pages. The total number of pages read was 46,412. Thanks to all who participated! Congratulations to the winners:

- Lorna Bischof
- Joy Blocker
- Renee Dykstra
- Wayne Ebbens
- Carlee Faber
- Jodi Huizenga
- Brenda Kallemeyn
- Linda Miedema
- Thea Stienstra
- Sandy Wagenaar

Your church library encourages everyone at Thorn Creek Church to read. Check your Sunday bulletin each week for new additions to the library shelves. Also check out the library's collection of DVDs. The library has something for you!

2016 Distinguished Alum

The Rev. Melvin De Vries '53

Mel De Vries '53



WTS graduation photo

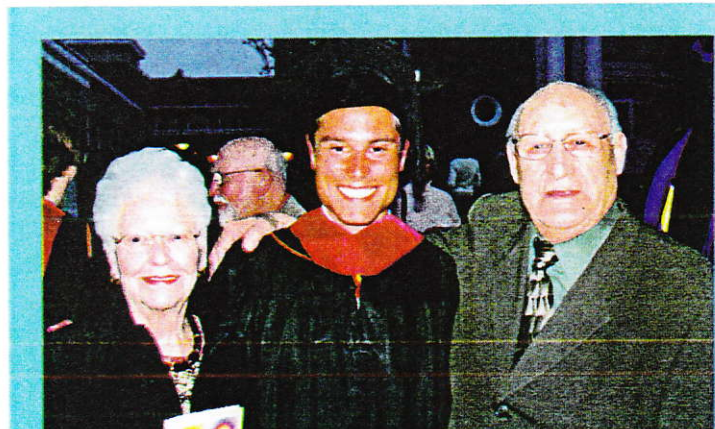
Can you imagine being paid in poultry? Can you imagine hitch-hiking to college with I. John Hesselink? How about burying two wives over the span of a half century? Or burying a brother who died in a farming accident and a Dad who drowned in the pond on the farm? Can you fathom what it would be like to take a pay cut with every single call in ministry?

I have a hard time imagining it, but this was all reality for Rev. Mel De Vries. Mel graduated from Western Theological Seminary in 1953. He was a church planter before being a church planter was the cool thing to do. The Rev. Harold Korver once called him a "cock-eyed optimist." He is known for his sayings like, "whatever we're

going to do, we're going to have fun," and "if it's to be, it's up to me." He has planted three congregations that have all celebrated more than 50 years of ministry. He has retired at least four times and up until a few years ago, he pastored the only Reformed congregation to ever go into bankruptcy. Keep in mind that Mel went to, as he calls it, "Dam Sinus—I mean San Dimas, CA" when the congregation was already in bankruptcy, but Mel went there anyway because he felt called by God to go and pastor this congregation. He is also the worst diabetic ever. Mel has never met a donut or cookie he did not like, especially when it is enjoyed in the living room of a parishioner or around the tables in the fellowship hall with the "Weed & Feed" crew at church.

He has overcome esophageal cancer by God's grace (and the most positive of attitudes) and when asked how to close a sermon, he will say, "Just say Amen."

The term "they don't make them like they used to" is about the best way to summarize my good friend



Mel and Bette celebrate with Matt Waterstone at his graduation from seminary, 2008.

and colleague in ministry. I first met Mel at the Alpen Rose Restaurant in Holland, MI when I was a 24-year-old senior at Western Theological Seminary. Mel was the calling pastor at the First Reformed Church in South Holland, IL. The twinkle in his eye and the cackle of his laugh were infectious from the moment I met him. He is the kind of genuine, hard-working, faithful pastor whom every WTS graduate should aspire to be. In fact, in a lot of ways, I was only called to that congregation because of Mel. He is the one who stood up in front of the consistory during a time of great change and loss and said, "You either have to sell the building, do nothing and die, or start changing." Thankfully, they decided to start changing. He was my biggest supporter, warmest encourager and daily chaperone in his big black Buick, paving the way in the congregation for me to lead and pastor.

At a Glance

Melvin H. De Vries

Pastor, Planter, Pioneer

b. Holland, NE 12/30/1924
Married Marcia Schoeneman in 1952 (d. 1979)
Married Bette Boer in 1982 (d. 2015)
Children: John, Ann, and Alan
Six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren

B.A. Central College, 1950
B.D. Western Theological Seminary, 1953
Lifetime of Service:
(1953-56) Strasburg Reformed, Strasburg, ND
(1956) Missionary Pastor, Bismarck, ND
(1957-60) Bismarck Reformed, Bismarck, ND
(1960-74) Trinity Reformed, Kent, WA
(1974-85) Valley Community Drive-In Church, San Dimas, CA
(1985-91) Tinley Park Reformed, Tinley Park, IL
(1991-95) Minister Evangelist, Thorn Creek Reformed, South Holland, IL
(1995-97) Riverside Community, Hammond, IN
(1998-2013) Minister of Evangelism and Outreach, First Reformed, South Holland, IL



Preaching in 1974.

No one should be surprised by any of this about Mel. He is the 91-year-old who has few pictures in his home commemorating the past because that is not where he lives. He lives in the present, pressing forward to the future. Why else would he go door to door in the early 1990s, inviting neighbors to church and, in so doing, disciple the first African-American to join Thorn Creek Reformed Church at a time when that was definitely not the norm in South Holland? Why else in the 60s would he leave a thriving congregation in Bismark, North Dakota, to plant a church in the Seattle area all because the city was hosting the World's Fair in 1962 and it would be a great opportunity for evangelism? This is just the kind of pastor Mel DeVries is and always has been. To this day, he continues to host block parties for

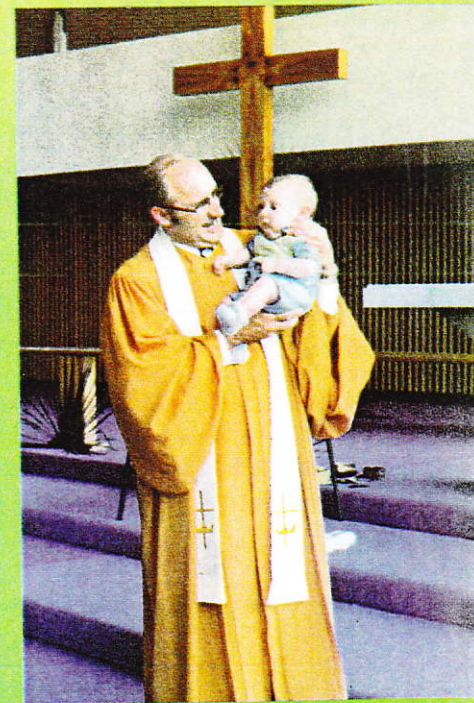
by saying, "Well, that's exactly where I want to go. They need the Gospel!" In Strasburg, South Dakota, he would preach a Sunday morning sermon, lead Sunday School and then drive across the river to lead Bible classes for Native Americans and others who could not make the 20 mile drive into church, then go back to preach at night, and then lead the youth group.

He closes most funerals by telling the story about the headstone on his first wife Marcia's grave. I'll do my best to re-tell the story. He always gets a little emotional at the part when he says, "In a little cemetery 20 miles west of Waterloo there's a headstone that reads, 'Lord is my Shepherd. That's enough.' And ya know what, He is." The Lord has been enough for this good and faithful brother for all these years. He may

not have written books, and there may not be additional degrees and letters before or after his name, but what makes Mel DeVries a distinguished alumni has nothing to do with books or degrees. What makes him distinguished are all the saints he has buried, all the babies he has baptized, all the congregations he has planted, all the new member classes

he has led, all the bedsides where he has prayed, and all the individuals he has led to Christ. Mel is distinguished because he is a pastor in the truest sense. The kind of pastor I aspire to be every day.

by The Rev. Dr. Matt Waterstone
Sr. Pastor
First Reformed Church
South Holland, IL



Mel baptizing his granddaughter.



High School, 1941.



Mel and Marcia in Bismarck, ND, 1957.



The three Central College and WTS classmates, reunited:
 Gene VanderWell, Mel De Vries, and I. John Hesselink.

his neighbors on Parkside Avenue in hopes of inviting them to worship.

Mel has always had a heart for the marginalized. Long before diversity was in every congregation's mission statement, Mel sought ways for the Church to look more like heaven. He once was told, "You don't want to go to that church—it's where all the divorced people go." Mel responded