HIGHLIGHTS

CARMEL REFORMED CHURCH

"Can't Wait For Sunday"

December 2026

Advent Season has arrived! A new year in the life of Christ's Church begins with Advent. It is a celebrative time of the year. It is a reflective time of year. God Himself in the person of Jesus was born into this world as a gift of God the Father to bring redemption to all who received Jesus as their Savior and Lord. We reflect upon that truth. We celebrate that reality.

For most of my years as a pastor, the most peaceful and reflective moments of the Advent season and Christmas celebration have been the moments after the Christmas Eve service and I was on my way to our home. When I say moments, for most of those years it was moments (across the parking lot in Armour, across the street in Aplington, half a block in Sanborn, 8 miles when at Maurice, 7 miles when living in Lennox etc…)

The Christmas Eve service was the Sunday School Christmas program for Armour and Aplington, and a candlelight service in Sanborn, Maurice and Lennox. But as I would leave the church – usually I was the last one out, and the joy of that service still filling my soul, with the anticipation of a family celebration at home – it was a peaceful walk or drive, even if it was momentary as far as the quietness went.

In the moments if felt like the world had stopped. The busyness of the season was taking a break. The chatter of celebrations was still to come – but for the moment it was a precious time of peace and joy, uninterrupted by the expectations of the world.

I truly enjoy the special worship services of the season. I cherish the church and family celebrations. But in those few moments, it has always felt like "it was Jesus and me" alone in reflection.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **7** Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

May God Bless You with a Merry and Joyful Christmas!

-Pastor Gary and Julie



December 6: Kristi Van Voorst, Rachel Van Roekel, Ava Van Roekel, Ruthie Vanden Brink

December 13: Nikki Hulstein, Ruth De Jager, Charlee Punt, Slayden Sandbulte

December 20: Amy McAlpine, Edan Bomgaars, Marcus Van Voorst, Brody Van Voorst

December 25: Amber Nettinga, Courtney Mesman, Ava Sandbulte, Hannah Van Roekel

December 27: Amy Davelaar, Hannah Smolders, Akenna Sandbulte, Tacey Van Kekerix

January 3: Brynn Van Voorst, Kassidy Robinson, Sadie Janisch, Morgan Terpstra

PLEASE find a substitute or trade with someone, if you are unable to be in the nursery. **Please substitute an adult for an adult!**

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REFRESHMENT SCHEDULE

R - serve on Sunday morning; C - each bring 5 dozen cookies.

December 6-R– Denny De Jong, Glenda Van Meeteren
C– Glenda Van Meeteren, Hazel Haverhals, Donna Renes, Rachel Van Roekel, Doree Wolfswinkel

December 13-R–Chad Robertson, Jerry Noteboom
C–Gabi Noble, Sandi Vonk, Amy McAlpine, Rachel Terpstra, Kaye Kuyper

December 20-R– Jerry Renes, Becky Ochsendorf
C– Misty Zwart, Clarice Van Maanen, Carmen Maassen, Amy Rozeboom, Frieda Bartels

December 27-R– Gene Sandbulte, Jack Soodsma
C– Erica Robertson, Teresa Sandbulte, Allison Leusink, Sarah Nibbelink, Fonda Post

January 3-R– Jared Terpstra, Mike Haverhals
C- Cheryl Lange, Sherri Wolfswinkel, Lin De Jong, Cheryl Sandbulte, Ronda Leusink

If this schedule does not work with you please switch with someone



. Call the church office by noon on ***Monday***, to let us know who your special music will be. If you are unable to have special music at the scheduled time, please try to exchange with someone.

Special music schedule is for the morning worship service.

December	6 – Art Van Ravenhorst
December	13 – Milt Van Ravenswaay
December	20 – Rod Van Ravenswaay
December	27 – Loren Van Regenmorter
January	3 – Verlyn Van Regenmorter

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TRANSFER

At the November elder's meeting they received the membership of Amanda Van De Berg from the Good Shepherd Church of Sioux Center, IA. Please welcome her into the Carmel family.

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Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Brandon Sneller (Megan Punt) who were united in marriage on November 14, at Carmel Church.
May God bless them with a long and happy married life.

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OFFICE HOURS

The church office will be closed on Friday, December 25 and Friday, January 1, 2027. You have any concerns please contact your care elder.



Sunday, December 20, 6:00 p.m. – Sunday School Christmas Program.

Friday, December 25, 9:30 a.m. – Christmas Morning Service.

There will be no evening service on **Sunday, December 27 or Sunday, January 3.**

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CONGREGATIONAL MEETING RESULTS

At our Annual Congregational Meeting on November 16, the following were elected to serve on the consistory. Elders: *Scott Van Kekerix and Verlyn Van Regenmorter*; Deacons: *Brad Beukelman and Marlin Sandbulte.* If there is any scriptural reason why these men should not serve, please contact one of the elders. Installation will be on Sunday, January 10.

At our Annual Congregational Meeting, the congregation voted 119-11 in favor of moving forward with exploring the possibility of engaging an architect for our building project. Thank you to everyone who participated in this important vote and for your continued interest, support, and commitment to the future of our church!

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PIGS-IN-THE-BLANKET

The freezer in the Moses Room is stocked with pigs-in-the-blanket and those yummy pigs will no doubt be flying off the shelves.

The pigs are $15.00/dozen.

Please DO NOT take pigs from freezer if they are NOT paid for.

Sign the sheet and place your money in the box on the counter.



The Sunday School mission project this year is Hope Haven Wheelchair Ministry. Since 1994, Hope Haven International Ministries has been a global leader in refurbishing, manufacturing, and distributing custom-fitted wheelchairs – provided free of charge- to transform lives of children and adults in desperate need. Each wheelchair is carefully selected and tailored to meet the unique needs of the recipient, ensuring comfort, mobility, and independence. The second Sunday of each month the Sunday School offerings goes towards the mission project. The amount of offering to date is **$396.00** and our goal is to **raise $4,000.00 by April 2027.**

A gift of $9.00 from each student would help us reach the goal! If you'd like to help us, please prayerfully consider giving during one of the remaining offerings. Gifts of any size are welcome. Thank you for encouraging our students and supporting the work of Hope Haven International Ministries!

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OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD



Thank you to everyone who packed a shoebox for Operation Christmas Child, we collected 94 boxes this year! Each box represents more than a gift, it carries a message of love, hope, and the joy of Jesus. The impact reaches far beyond one child – a single shoebox has the potential to introduce others to the love of Jesus Christ. Thank you for being part of spreading the love of Jesus around the world!

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WOMEN'S LIFE CHRISTMAS BUNCO

- Wednesday, December 2
- 6:30 p.m.
- The North Place
- Bring a holiday snack or appetizer to share!

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

The Christmas season is a special time to celebrate the greatest gift of all – Jesus! We invite everyone to join us Sunday, December 20, at 6:00 p.m. for our annual Sunday School Christmas Program!

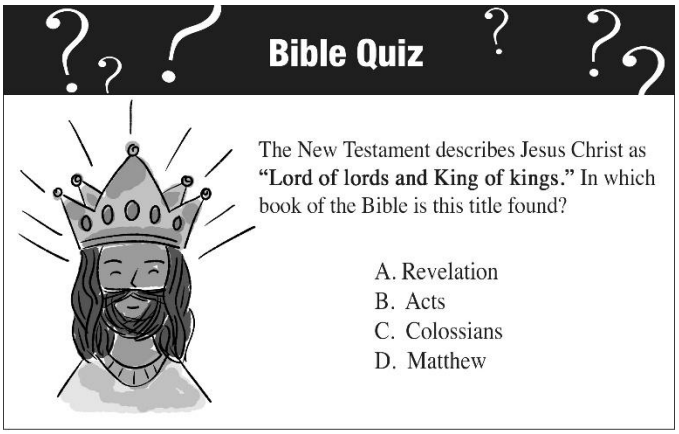
Our students are excited to share the story of Jesus' birth through songs, speaking parts, and special presentations they have been preparing over the past several weeks. Come enjoy an evening filled with Christmas joy as our children help lead us in celebrating the true meaning of the season. Bring your family, invite your friends, and come share in this special night!



Any youth (preschool-high school) that would be interested in sharing their musical talents, whether it be playing an instrument, piano, singing, etc. during the prelude of the children's Christmas program, please contact Brooke Byker.

To help everyone feel ready for the big evening, here are some practice dates:

- Wednesday, December 2 – big kids
- Wednesday, December 9 – big kids
- Sunday, December 13 – Full practice
- Wednesday, December 16 – Full practice
- Sunday, December 20 – Review songs



Answer: A. Revelation (See Revelation 17:14)

SEARCH COMMITEE

The Search Committee continues to review candidates and is thankful for the progress being made. We have a second interview scheduled for December 9 with one candidate and are planning a first interview with another candidate in January.

Please continue to pray for:

- Wisdom and discernment for the Search Committee.
- God's clear direction in leading us to the pastor He has prepared for our congregation.
- Wisdom, peace, and clarity for the candidates and their families.
- Unity and patience within our congregation.
- Trust in God's perfect timing throughout this process.

Thank you to everyone for your continued prayers, kind messages, and encouragement. If you would like to recommend someone for consideration, please contact Tim Gesink or any member of the Search Committee. Our next meetings are December 9 and January 6.

Search Committee Members:

Tim Gesink
Randy Van Der Weide
Janice Luevano
Matt Smolders
Phil Hooyer
Alex Koedam
Adam Nibbelink
Rebecaa Sandbulte-Banks

Carmel GEMS

Thank You to all who donated to our Operation Christmas Child challenge! We are so excited to share we made over 30 boxes and the GEMS families added 19 boxes! Each child who receives a box will hear the gospel truth of Jesus Christ! With all the donations the GEMS learned about giving and blessing others!

CARMEL GEMS
Christmas Celebration

Come and celebrate the birth of Jesus with a meal, devotions, and surprises! Wear something festive!

Dec 9, 2026

Come anytime after 5:45 pm to Carmel Church!
We will plan on eating at 6:00 pm.
If your GEM is unable to be there at 6:00pm- come anytime- we will be sure to have enough food for her when she arrives.

Pick Up at 8:30 pm



GEMS Christmas Giving Project

This Christmas season, our GEMS girls are leading a special collection to bless a few families within our church family, and we'd love for our entire congregation to join us!

We will be collecting donations now through December 9.

Suggested items include shelf-stable groceries, snacks, paper products, cleaning supplies, laundry detergent, toiletries, personal-care items, and grocery or gas gift cards.

Donations can be dropped off in the church library anytime through December 9.

Or you can give them to Becky Ocshendorf, Kris Van Voorst, or Kristi Segar.

Our hope is not only to provide some practical support for these families, but also to give our GEMS girls an opportunity to see our church family come together in generosity and care for one another.

Thank you for partnering with our GEMS girls to bless others this Christmas season!

Merry Christmas & Have a Blessed New Year!

Deacons Corner — DECEMER

Outreach Fund – The Outreach Fund is available to assist Carmel Reformed Church members participation in mission projects/trip by providing financial assistance for registration and travel expenses. This does not include normally scheduled JR/SR youth group trips. The fund will reimburse ½ of travel and registration costs up to $750.00 per individual per calendar year. Please contact the Outreach Fund deacon Chris Van Essen or one of the other deacons for an application form.

Christian Care – The Christian Care Fund is available to assist with financial needs for those who are encountering difficult circumstances and are struggling to cover their basic financial needs. Please see the Christian Care Fund Deacon, Adam Nibbelink and Elder, Dennis De Jong if you need assistance.

Adoption Fund – For those considering an adoption please consider inquiring as to whether you will qualify for the Carmel Reformed Church Adoption Assistance Fund. This fund makes available up to $1,500 to assist active Carmel Reformed Church members with adoption costs. See any deacon for details and a copy of the application form. All requests will require consistory approval.

Online Giving – Supporting the ministry at Carmel Church is easier than ever with our secure online giving option. Whether you're traveling, working, or watching from home, you can give anytime—anywhere. Simply visit carmelchurch.org and click the "Give" button. You can make a one-time gift or set up recurring donations in just a few steps.

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

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Thank You, Carmel Church Family!

On behalf of Diamonds Women's Ministry, we want to extend a heartfelt thank you for your continued prayers, encouragement, and financial support, especially for our recent CLOTHED retreat!

Because of your generosity, 45 young women, 10 leaders, and 10 adult speakers were able to be part of this incredible weekend at no cost to attendees.

Throughout the weekend, God reminded us that we no longer have to hide behind our shame or carry the weight of our past. Through Christ, we are clothed in righteousness, made new, and called to live as His chosen, holy, and dearly loved daughters.

It was a beautiful weekend filled with worship, vulnerability, prayer, fellowship, and the life-changing truth of the Gospel.

Thank you for investing in the next generation of women and partnering with us in what God is doing through Diamonds. What a privilege it is to serve the Lord alongside such a supportive church family!

To God be all the glory!

With love and gratitude,
The Diamonds Leadership Team
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DECEMBER

2- Harv Sandbulte
3- Mrs. Brooke Byker
Mrs. Nicole Rozeboom
Mrs. Marcella Langstraat
4- Emberlynn Franken
Brad Oostra
5- Mrs. Carmen Maassen
The Alex Koedam's
6- Kyzer De Jager
Shanelle Soodsma
Brad Beukelman
Darwin Post
Lloyd De Jong
7- The Steve Sandbulte's
The Virgil Houtkooper's
9- Christina Boogerd
Mrs. LaVonne Van Essen
10- Bryce Meendering
Mrs. Shari Kruid
11- Kley Hulstein
12- Levi Smolders
Mrs. Danica DeMeester
Mrs. Amy Rozeboom
Wilbur Van Grootheest
14- Wyatt Leusink
Mrs. Suzanne Den Herder
15- Nova Dibbet
16- Seth Sandbulte
17- Attleigh Franken
Rashaylee Soodsma
Matt Smolders
Mrs. Mary Lou Verburg
18- Mrs. Taya Steendam
Treyton Sandbulte
Mrs. Carrie Maassen
The Ken Altena's
19- Hope Vander Zwaag
Mrs. Megan Sneller
Eric Sandbulte
20- Josh Leusink
Mrs. Misty Zwart
Mrs. Linda Prins
21- Reagan Maassen
22- Mrs. Becky Ochsendorf
Sara Sandbulte
Mrs. Dorene Vander Zwaag
23- Mrs. Carole Kleyer
25- Stan Prins
26- Truett Van Ginkel
27- Cobyn Sandbulte
28- Hezekiah Vanden Brink
Cole Bomgaars
Mrs. Ashley Vande Vegte
29- Karlee Leusink
31- Brayton Van Kekerix
Glenn Lange
Mike Haverhals



PUZZLE

Christmas Riddles

Read the riddles below. Do you know the answers?

1) In a stable I was filled with hay
And became a bed where a baby lay.
What am I?
Luke 2:7

2) Our voices loud were heard on high!
The shepherds were frightened when we filled the sky!
Who are we?
Luke 2:9-13

3) I was shining in the Bethlehem sky that night.
The Magi followed my light so bright!
What am I?
Matthew 2:2

4) We watched our sheep in the night so still;
Then angels praised God and woke up our hill!
Who are we?
Luke 2:8

5) I was at Mary's side for the special birth
And raised the child as his "father on Earth."
Who am I?
Luke 2:16

6) "My heart in song to God I lift"
Said the young mother of God's special gift.
Who am I?
Luke 1:46-55

7) A baby boy, the Promised One!
A gift from God, His beloved Son!
Who am I?
Matthew 1:18

8) The city of David, the little town,
Where the Baby was born and the star shone down.
What am I?
Luke 2:4

9) From the East we traveled far.
We found the child by the light of the star.
Who are we?
Matthew 2:1

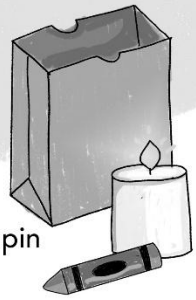
Answers: manger, angels, star, shepherds, Joseph, Mary, Jesus, Bethlehem, wise men



Paper Bag Luminarias

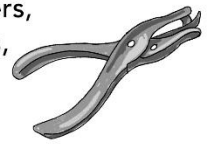
Light the way for family and friends while celebrating the birth of Jesus.





What you need:

- Pencil
- Brown or white paper lunch bags
- Hole punch or pushpin
- Cardboard
- Sand
- Battery-operated LED tea lights
- Optional: markers, crayons, stickers, or stencils



What you do:

1. Draw a Christmas design or word on each bag, such as a star, manger, heart, or "JOY."
2. Place cardboard inside the bag. With adult supervision, punch holes along your design.
3. Add about two inches of sand and place an LED tea light inside.
4. Set the bags along your walkway, porch, or patio. Turn on the lights at dusk and enjoy!

