

OVERVIEW

OVERISEL REFORMED CHURCH



Missionary Spotlight: Al & Lisa Gemmen | Inner Change |

We are Al and Lisa Gemmen and we are missionaries with InnerCHANGE. Our kids are Josiah, Gideon, Falande, and Sonia. We serve in the Grand Rapids area. Al's primary focus is spiritual formation in the homeless population. Lisa works with an immigrant women's group and also on the Staff Care Team for



InnerCHANGE. Much of our life revolves around our four teenagers. This is a busy and fulfilling time of life. Josiah (19) is a freshman at Calvin University. He is in the pre-med track and enjoys theater and playing board games as part of college life. Gideon (17) is a high school sophomore. His main hobby is running and he is part of the GR Run running club. Falande (16) is a high school freshman and enjoys reading. Both Gideon and Falande work for New City Networks, which is an afterschool mentoring program that uses music to build relationships with neighborhood kids. Sonia (15) is in 8th grade. She enjoys dancing and singing her heart out with a contagious joyful spirit. They are a wonderful crew. One of the most chaotic and joyful times is when all six of us are having dinner together. The stories, jokes, and sometimes even mashed potatoes fly around the room! Al enjoys mountain biking and playing music. You might find him at the Holland Street Performers during the Summer. Lisa's happy place is the beach and she is often involved in the many activities of our four busy teenagers.

2026 Consistory

Pastors

*Rev. Mike Pitsenberger
Pastor Ken Kleinheksel
Pastor Kevin Kruizenga

Elders

*Steve Schrottenboer
Glenn Kleinheksel
Nate Genzink
*Bob Reimink
Bruce Peters
Jeff Snay

Deacons

Lee Lubbers
David Kraker
*Dean Jipping
Craig Theodore
Scott VanHaitsma
Jonathan Hop

*Executive committee

A Note From Pastor Ken

“The Power Belongs To God”

2 Corinthians 4:7 – But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

There are four words or phrases in the next two verses following the verse above that I would like us to think about in this article. Each one expands the “jars of clay” thought and brings them under the “surpassing power” authority of God.

The first word is “afflicted”. There are those who we know who are afflicted with various diseases and physical calamities. But even in the midst of them they are not crushed to the point of death. These folks continue to express their faith in God and trust Him to deliver them from the disease or ailment.

The second word is “perplexed”. I think we all consider many things in this world as perplexing. How politics operates is just one of many examples that make us perplexed. But we also have the deep conviction that God is in control, so ultimately, we do not have to despair. In fact, we may have a calling on our life to enter situations that are perplexing to bring the wisdom of God to bear on those situations.

The third word is “persecuted”. This is a word that we have not been too familiar with in regards to our religious beliefs, but we are increasingly becoming aware that there is more pressure in this area in recent years. But we also know that there has been religious persecution in the past and there is, even now, religious persecution in other areas of the world now. But we know from historical accounts and current reporting that those under severe persecution are certainly not forsaken by God. So if persecution comes to us, in whatever form, our God will not forsake us.

The fourth phrase is “struck down”. This phrase I would take to mean death. Even if we die we are not destroyed. Our bodies do not just die and decay to be permanently destroyed. Our souls are the life of our bodies and the souls at the timer of death are immediately in paradise, or heaven, where they await the second coming of Christ. At that time our soul is reunited with our new eternal body when the new heaven and new earth come to be. So even in physical death we are not destroyed.

All of this is to say that the surpassing power belongs to our God and all that happens to us on this earth is in God’s providence and plan so that His power may be manifested in us. Think about that in this month of March as we begin to transition from winter to spring. Have a great month and I’ll see you on the journey! All glory to God our Lord!

Pastor Ken

march birthdays

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Sally Loser	4 Chad DeJonge	5 Jeremy Cortright	6 Jeff Harrington	7 Nancee Kleinheksel Adam Snay
8	9	10	11 Mary Becksvoort Carrie DeNeef Joe Stafford	12	13 Ella Folkert	14
15 Lewis Bueschel Jim Hoekstra Dave VanDussen	16	17	18 Evelyn Barnum Morgan Caswell Scott Lickley	19 Barb Hoving Tori VanderKamp	20 Tsinat Immink Rebecca Smith	21
22 Carla Borr John Naber	23 Matthew Schrotenboer	24 Mike Heavener Raymond Nyhof	25 Aryn Machiela Alexander Pothoff Carter Pothoff	26 Nate Genzink Cohen Koopman	27 Austin DeHaan Betsy Veldman Margo Wilson	28 Delores Nienhuis Mikayla Schrotenboer
29	30 Lisa Gemmen	31 Jill Koopman Adam Laarman Eleanor Overweg Martha Ramos de Tirado				

Milestone Birthdays



march

anniversaries

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Matthew & Mary Beth Bueschel	3	4	5	6 Foster & Maryn Kooyers	7
8 Dale & Elaine Flokstra Arturo & Lois Sanchez	9	10 William & Niki Dyke	11 Scott & Susan Lickley	12	13	14 Eldon & Roxanne Schans Larry & Debra Timmer
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 Jerry & LuAnn Broekhuis Steve & Annie Hamstra Kevin & Sue Schierbeek	26 Rick & Sandy Stob	27	28 Joe & Pam Stafford
29	30	31				

Milestone Anniversaries

 3/14 - Larry & Debra Timmer (40 years)

 3/26 - Rick & Sandy Stob (50 years)

Mary's Monthly Meal

Creamy Chicken Pot Pie Tater Tot Casserole

INGREDIENTS:

- 2-3 cups cooked chicken - shredded
- Frozen tater tots
- 12-16 oz. frozen peas & carrots
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- ½-1½ cup chicken broth OR ½ cup milk
- 2 t. onion powder
- 2 t. garlic powder
- 1-2 t. black pepper
- 2-3 cups shredded cheddar cheese



INSTRUCTIONS:

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees
- Grease 9x13 pan
- In a large bowl mix cooked chicken, frozen vegetables, cream of chicken soup, seasonings, and 2 cups of cheese
- spread into dish, then cover with tater tots
- Bake 30-40 minutes until bubbly. Then top with 1 cup of remaining cheese and bake another 5-10 minutes or until cheese is melted.

IMPORTANT CHANGE IN OFFERING SCHEDULE

Please be aware of the following changes to the 2026 Offering Schedule:

- March 1st is no longer Hand to Hand, but will now be for The Gideons.
- June 14th is no longer open, but will now be for Hand to Hand.
- June 21st is no longer Alaska Bible Institute, but will now be for The Gideons.
- June 28th is no longer Gracie Immink, but will now be for Grant Me Hope – Helen Zeerip



**COST
\$5**

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AND DRINKS
AVAILABLE FOR
EXTRA COST**

MINI GOLF

FUNDRAISER

13 MARCH, 5-8 PM

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OVERSIEL REFORMED CHURCH

**HOSTED BY
RADIATE
YOUTH GROUP**

(269) 751-8744 | hunter@orcministries.org
orcministries.org



10TH ANNUAL

LOVE & LEAN WALK/RUN FOR MENTAL HEALTH



Saturday, April 25, 2026
Starts at 9:00 AM

Zeeland High School
Stadium Parking Lot
9900 Riley Street



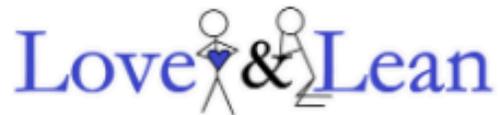
Scan QR code or
use link below
for registration
and sponsorship
details

<https://runsignup.com/Race/MI/Zeeland/LoveLeanWalkforMentalHealth>

Register by April 14 to be guaranteed event shirt

Register before March 31 and receive 2 drawing tickets. Enter ticket by the gift of your choice for a chance to win. Drawing boxes will be available at Early Check-In and before the event on April 25.

- ✓ 5K Walk/Run (includes shirt) - \$35
- ✓ 1.5 Mile Walk (includes shirt) - \$20
- ✓ 1.5 Mile Walk (shirt not included) - FREE
- ✓ Virtual 5K Walk/Run - \$45 (shirt, medal & bib shipped)



5K Walk/Run and 1.5 Mile Walk

Engage in various meaningful activities such as memorial pictures, motivating interaction, sidewalk chalk inspiration, and encouraging message signs



Post-Event Refreshments

Enjoy a variety of refreshments after the event



Mental Health Foundation of West MI, iUnderstand, Team Be Better & Winning At Home

Supporting 4 amazing organizations! Through your participation, the funds raised will provide broader awareness of mental health education, counseling, support and prevention programs.



Interested in being a sponsor?

Find more information on our website

LOVE yourself and know that your pain is real, but so is hope.

&

LEAN on others (faith, family, friends, teachers, neighbors, co-workers, coaches, counselors, healthcare professionals and community) for help, because the more you lean, the stronger you grow in mental fitness.

Get Event Updates at:  Instagram - loveandlean15



Love & Lean/ZAKImpact

Excerpt from Decision Magazine 2022

You may ask, “What is the message of the Bible?” The message of the Bible is Jesus Christ.

The Bible is concerned only incidentally with the history of Israel or with a system of ethics. The Bible is primarily concerned with the story of man’s redemption as it is through Jesus Christ. If you read Scripture and miss the story of salvation, you have missed its message and its meaning. The story of Jesus can be traced through the Bible.

- In Genesis, He is the Seed of the woman.
- In Exodus, He is the Passover Lamb.
- In Leviticus, He is the Atoning Sacrifice.
- In Numbers, He is the Smitten Rock.
- In Deuteronomy, He is the Prophet.
- In Joshua, He is the Captain of the Lord’s hosts.
- In Judges, He is the Deliverer.
- In Ruth, He is the Heavenly Kinsman.
- In 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles, He is the Promised King.
- In Nehemiah, He is the Restorer of the nation.
- In Esther, He is the Advocate.
- In Job, He is my Redeemer.
- In Psalms, He is my Song.
- In Proverbs, He is Wisdom.
- In Ecclesiastes, He is my Goal.
- In the Song of Solomon, He is my Satisfier.
- In the Prophets, He is the coming Prince of Peace.
- In the Gospels, He is God in Christ Jesus, come to redeem.
- In Acts, He is alive in the church.
- In the Epistles, He is Christ at the Father’s right hand.
- In Revelation, He is the Mighty Conqueror.

The message of Jesus Christ, our Savior, is the story of the Bible – it is the story of Salvation, Gospel, Life, Peace, Eternity and Heaven. The whole world ought to know the story of the Bible.

Missions Updates



Spreading the Good News of
the Gospel around the world.



Dear Overisel Reformed Church:

The new year has just begun, and we know that God is already moving! The first weekend of January was Chicago Alive Youth Camp's Winter Camp and many of the children and teens from our neighborhoods had the opportunity to attend. Although many of them face difficult home and school environments, this camp is a space where they can feel safe to play, learn, and rest. We have also continued our Community Mornings this year. Not only is the warm breakfast and shower uplifting for the men and women who visit, but so is the Word of God. We have witnessed hearts softening to His truth. We also welcomed our After School Program children back last week. There is much to look forward to and celebrate as we enter 2026. Thank you for choosing to give to Family Empowerment Centers. We cannot continue this good work without you!

Blessings.
Scott

Stand With Us!

a mission to live by - Ez. 22:30

La Misión Church

*"My Father is glorified by this,
that you bear much fruit, and
so prove to be My disciples."*

John 15:8 NASB

KNOW - SERVE - GROW - SHARE

*"Living a practical live of
simple faith, for the glory of
God and for the good of
others"*



Just a reminder of how this got started

In The Gap Ministries exists to bring hope and opportunity to children and their families by investing in both spiritual formation and education. By addressing cycles of abandonment and neglect, the ministry provides consistent biblical guidance, discipleship, and compassionate support to families in need.

The vision behind In The Gap comes from Ezekiel 22:30, where the Lord says: *"I searched for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, but I found no one."* This powerful passage reflects God's desire for people willing to step forward on behalf of the vulnerable. In response to this call—and Jesus' words that *"the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few"* (Matthew 9:37)—we have committed ourselves to serve faithfully where the need is great.

One of the primary ways this vision is lived out is through **Los Seguidores**, an after-school discipleship program that combines biblical teaching with English education in a safe and relational environment. Beyond the children, the ministry intentionally reaches parents by inviting families into **La Misión (The Mission)** church, creating opportunities for lasting transformation across generations. Your partnership makes this life-changing work possible.



https://mysc.onlinegiving.org/donate/guest_donate?&fund=In+the+Gap&lf=1

Back to Classes

67 students have already joined our 2026 discipleship program — **Los Seguidores**. I'm happy to say this is the largest group of students we've had since we got started.

Through this after-school program, children are being guided in biblical values while discovering their God-given gifts through free English lessons, music, art, and more.

Thank you for being part of this mission. Your generosity is planting seeds of faith and helping shape lives for God's purpose. Together, let us continue trusting Him as He transforms hearts and futures.

Thanks to your generosity, on enrollment day each student received a package of school supplies and a special surprise gift. They are ready and excited for the new school year.

Los Seguidores Bible verse:

Then He said to the crowd: *"if any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me"* Luke 9:23 NLT



For donations please go to:

https://mysc.onlinegiving.org/donate/guest_donate?&fund=In+the+Gap&lf=1

Mission Teams

Brenda Stephens

From **February 27 to March 6**, we are excited to welcome our dear friend **Brenda Stephens** back to In The Gap Ministries. Every time Brenda visits, she brings so much joy, energy, and love to our students—through engaging English lessons, singing, dancing, and her genuine enthusiasm for children. Her continued visits have left a lasting mark not only on our hearts as a ministry and family, but also on the hearts of every child she connects with.

Brenda and her husband Thomas are **founding partners** of In The Gap Ministries, and their faithful friendship and commitment have helped shape who we are today. Moments like these remind us how powerful it is when people serve using the gifts God has placed in them. We warmly invite you to consider coming alongside us—whether through teaching, serving, or simply sharing your talents—to love, encourage, and impact our kids and families.



Gabe Smith - Living Water Church

From **March 25 to April 1**, we will be welcoming a construction mission team led by **Gabe Smith**, along with friends from his church, who are coming to build a home for a family in need. This project is a powerful example of what your partnership makes possible.

Gabe has invested countless hours raising funds and inviting others to be part of this vision, and it's a beautiful reminder that your support goes far beyond numbers—it helps provide something as tangible and life-changing as a safe home and a solid roof. Thank you for standing with us and making moments like this possible. We warmly invite you to continue being part of what God is doing—whether through prayer, giving, or coming alongside us in person. 🏠



PRAY, COME, GIVE, SHARE!



Thank you so much:

I promised to my self be short in creating this newsletter but, its so much going on already that is impossible not to share it with you, specially because you are making this possible. To every supporter who stands with in The Gap Ministries—thank you. Though your names may not appear in print, your impact reaches far beyond these pages. Through your prayers, generosity, and obedience, you are standing in the gap and helping spread the good news of Jesus to children and families. We are honored to serve together.

Prayer Wall

- Pray for God's grace, guidance and wisdom be upon ourselves, to lead us reaching more people for Christ.
- Pray for provision. We just got noticed by the landlady that renting is going to raise this year.
- Pray for the Lord to lift more leaders in our church that could serve in the different areas of need.
- Pray for more teams and interns who feel led to come and serve alongside us—teaching English, arts, math, sharing the Gospel, helping with construction, and finding other ways to serve and meeting practical needs in our community.

Amen!

<https://www.facebook.com/inthegapgt>

<https://www.instagram.com/inthegapgt/>



@INTHEGAPGT



Thank you so much for standing with us!
Your partnership is crucial and has been a powerful tool in God's hands to help us get where we are. May God richly bless you.

We love you all.

Elio, Andrea & the kids

2025 Year in Review

Dara Vanden Bosch

A glimpse at what your support made possible

The first several months of 2025 were full of big changes for us as a family. Our much-needed extended home assignment wrapped up in May of 2025 with our youngest two daughters finally becoming U.S. citizens and obtaining the necessary documents to legally secure our family of five. This was greatly celebrated after many years of uncertainty and questions. Through your prayers and steadfastness, we embraced this victory. We were also able to spend time with many family and friends, travel, spent a week processing and debriefing with other missionaries, and visit churches. Throughout this time, we also were able to settle our oldest daughter into her next chapter of life in West Michigan. Again, through your prayers and many of you caring for us, and her, she has settled in well and is thriving.

This led us to a very different return to Mozambique as a family of four. Though the transition back has held many challenges, there have also been many ways the Lord has moved. In particular, I was given an amazing opportunity in which we traveled to Botswana to share at the African Palliative Care Association Conference (pictured below left). I was able to share my Master's research on using the arts in palliative care. This experience was deeply encouraging to me as a nurse and an excellent opportunity to meet others who are doing similar work and to encourage one another in such valuable care at the end of life.



African Palliative Care Association Conference and Fernando (pictured in green shirt).

And finally, because of your great generosity, our team has been able to support a young man to get further medical treatment than we could provide. Our dear friend Fernando (pictured above right in the green shirt) has had a wound on his leg that we were not able to cure with over five years of trying. With your help, we have been able to pay for him to go to a private clinic every day for dressing changes and this wound is closer than it has been for nearly six years. The gratitude that Fernando expresses to us is profound and will forever change his life and has given him much needed hope for his future.

Our challenges in 2025

The adjustment back to ministry after our time in the USA was more challenging than anticipated. In addition, because of funding changes and foreign donors, the health care system in Mozambique has experienced more challenges than in prior years. The local hospital that usually provides resources my team uses have not always been able to provide what we need. This not only has changed how we operate but it greatly affects the population and entire community around us. People are often trying to utilize the health system for things like malaria tests and the hospital doesn't have tests or treatment for this serious illness. Thanks to you, we have been able to purchase many supplies privately so we can still provide holistic care to our palliative care patients. But this also leaves my team and me in a constant state of being pressed to help beyond our target population of those at the end of life. The need for adequate primary care is so great that people look to us to provide this as well. We are in a constant state of discerning when the Lord is prompting us help and when we need to refer to other resources. This is rarely easy when very ill people don't know where else to go for help.



Malaria test/treatment and our palliative care team at Christmas

Please pray

Please pray for me and my palliative care team (Rabeca J., Mariana, Dorca, and Rabeca F.) as we make weekly visits to the patients on our census and for all of the losses we experience through death. Please pray the Lord will continue to sustain us and give us a glimpse of His kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven." May we always shine a light as we strive to be the hands and feet of Jesus to all we serve and everyone we encounter.

Pray for the health care system and the support that it needs to provide even the most basic care to the people in great need. Pray for leaders to have caring hearts and to consider the impact of their actions. Pray for honest servants within the health care system to do their best with what they have been given. Pray for discernment as we too often have weighty decisions to make without all of the tools to make these decisions with adequate information. May the Lord lead and guide us.

Please pray for me personally to have eyes and ears to see and hear the voice of God leading a guiding me as a mom, a wife, a nurse, a friend, an employer, an artist, a homeschool teacher, a leader. Pray for a larger community of support for our family and for deeper connections that encourage us to keep pressing on to what the Lord has in store for his kingdom and our part in it.



Support Our Mission

<https://www.rca.org/global-mission/missionaries/chad-dara-vanden-bosch-2/>

Give The Gift Of Hope

<https://giftofhope.rca.org/>



2025 Year in Review

Chad Vanden Bosch

A glimpse at what your support made possible

Thanks to your generosity, we are one step closer to having an audio recording of the entire Bible in the Makua Shirima language from Northern Mozambique. The Makua Shirima people number about 1 million and are considered to be a “minimally” reached people group with high levels of illiteracy. This recording has been a long-term project in which we were able to make significant progress in 2025. It is our hope that one more recording session in early 2026 can bring this important project to a close. Following the finalization of the recording, we hope to distribute the first audio Bibles to the Makua Shirima people by Easter. We pray that this Easter, they will be able to hear the amazing salvation story in their own heart language.



Your continued partnership has allowed New Harvest Farm (NHF) to continue to extend its ministry footprint in the local community. This year the farm was able to expand and further develop its agroforestry test plots. It has also been able to continue its effort to re-introduce two native, drought resistant crops. These crops (finger millet and a local variety of black-eyed pea) have huge food security potential for this particular area. The farm also saw a significant improvement in infrastructure by adding a new irrigation pond that will expand the irrigation capabilities. Another exciting development at the farm was the groundbreaking for a demonstration farmstead. This one-acre farmstead will demonstrate what a sustainable family farm could look like in this particular context. We will be developing this farmstead over the next two to three years. This farmstead will give the farm another platform in which we can expand our Bible-based agricultural training program. 2025 also saw an expansion of New Harvest Farm’s training materials beyond the borders of Mozambique. NHF is now producing training videos, which have the potential to bring hope to communities around the world.

Thank you for your continued partnership!

Our challenges in 2025

2025 had no lack of ministry challenges. One of the major challenges faced was a persistent banking issue. This challenge meant that we struggled to receive project funding for a significant portion of the year. The issue was caused by a combination of financial law changes in Mozambique, as well as banking changes with our partner organization in the U.S. We had funds available, but were not able to get them to Mozambique. This created a major challenge to pay the monthly project costs, let alone further develop our projects. Praise the Lord, this issue has now been resolved.

Another major challenge in 2025 was the extreme weather. After a poor rainy season, drought conditions set in. Our area didn't receive significant rainfall from April until November. This was compounded by extreme temperatures, causing significant loss of crops in the local community. The rains finally came in November, and they didn't stop for seven weeks. During that time period, we received nearly 40 inches of rain, causing widespread flooding, extreme erosion, and more crop loss. As you can imagine, this has created yet another food security crisis in our locality. Praise the Lord, the agroforestry test plots at New Harvest Farm were able to withstand these extreme weather events and are acting as a shining light to the local community of the Lord's provision through sustainable agriculture.



Please pray

- Pray for the successful completion of the Bible recording in the Makua Shirima language. Pray that the Lord would prepare the hearts of those who will soon be listening to his Word in their own language.
- Pray for the ministry of New Harvest Farm as they continue to bring Bible-based agricultural training to local community. Pray for new opportunities to share and that many farmers would catch the vision of what "Growing with God" can look like.
- Pray for our family as we navigate the daily challenges of ministry, homeschool, and life in a challenging context.



Gateway Mission

Good afternoon Church Partner,

Gateway Mission currently has several career opportunities available, and we are prayerfully seeking individuals who feel called to serve men, women, and children in need in our community. Working at Gateway Mission is more than a job – it's an opportunity to be part of life-changing work rooted in hope, restoration, and service.

You can view our current openings and learn more about joining our team here:

<https://hopefoundhere.org/about/careers>

One of our greatest current needs is at our Gateway Women & Children's Center, specifically within our state-licensed daycare. Open positions include:

- Child Care Lead Teachers – Gateway Women & Children's Center
- Child Care Assistant – Gateway Women & Children's Center

Thank you for your continued support,
Jason Parks | Community Relations Coordinator



DEAR OVERISEL REFORMED,

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR
CONTINUED PARTNERSHIP WITH
LOVE INC! WE ARE HONORED
TO JOIN YOU IN HELPING OUR
NEIGHBORS IN NEED.

BLESSINGS,

MARY
PALUMBO

& THE LOVE BOARD



FROM THE CHAPLAIN



THE GREAT THAW: *Finding Hope in the Extremes*

As we stand at the threshold of a new year, looking out across the frost-dusted fields of Allegan County, it is impossible not to notice the peculiar

rhythm of our Michigan winter. Just this past week, we woke up to a world blanketed in heavy, white snow, the kind of cold that bites through your coat and makes the world feel still and frozen. Yet, within twenty-four hours, the wind shifted. The temperature climbed into the high 40s, the sun broke through the gray, and the ice began to weep into the pavement.

In Michigan, we have a saying: *"If you don't like the weather, wait five minutes."* But as I walk the halls of the Allegan County Corrections Center, I am reminded that this unpredictable climate is more than just a local quirk; it is a profound illustration of the human soul and our walk of faith.

THE EBB AND FLOW OF FAITH

Our faith often mirrors Michigan weather. There are seasons where our spirits feel "frozen," cold, distant, and hardened by the circumstances of life. We feel the "winter" of the soul, where God seems silent and the path forward is obscured by a blizzard of worry or regret. Then, unexpectedly, a "thaw" comes. A word of scripture, a moment of prayer, or a kind gesture from a stranger brings the warmth of the Holy Spirit, reminding us that spring is never as far away as it feels.

This ebb and flow is a natural part of the

Christian journey. We are not meant to live in a perpetual, unchanging heat. Rather, we are called to trust the One who remains constant even when the thermometer of our emotions swings wildly. Hebrews 13:8 reminds us that *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."* He is the steady ground beneath the melting snow.

A REFLECTION OF THE JAIL MINISTRY

This "weather" of the heart is something our volunteers and I witness every day inside the jail. When men and women first enter the corrections center, they are often in the depths of a bitter winter. They arrive feeling down, discarded, and "forgotten." The weight of their mistakes or the uncertainty of their future creates a frost that can be hard to penetrate.

But then, something beautiful happens. Through the work of Reach the Forgotten Jail Ministry, the "warmth" of the Gospel begins to move in. When an inmate encounters Jesus through a Bible study, a one-on-one mentoring session, or a simple conversation with a volunteer, the atmosphere shifts. We see the ice begin to melt. We see faces that were once downcast start to lift. They leave our presence, and eventually the facility, different than when they arrived. Not because the "weather" of their life has become perfect, but because they have found the Light that keeps them warm in any season.

CHRISTMAS BEHIND THE WALL

We saw a spectacular "thaw" this past December during our Christmas celebrations at the jail. While most of the world was gathered around fireplaces and dinner tables, our team brought the joy of the Nativity to those housed in the Allegan County Corrections Center.

It was a powerful reminder that the Light



of the World shines brightest in the darkest places.



Thanks to your prayers and the dedication of our volunteers, we were able to share the message of hope and the love of Christ with the inmates. Seeing the smiles and hearing the carols echo through the pods was a testament to the fact that *no one is beyond the reach of God's grace*. We aren't just providing a program, we are facilitating an encounter with a Savior who chose to be born in a lowly manger so He could reach us in our lowest moments.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we move into this new year, I want to thank you- our supporters, our volunteers, and our community partners. You are the "warm front" that God uses to change the climate inside the Allegan County Corrections Center.

Whether the days ahead are snowy or sunny, let us hold fast to the truth that our God is moving. May we embrace the ebbs and flows of our own faith, knowing that every "thaw" is a gift and every "cold snap" is an opportunity to lean harder into Him.

Blessings for a Hopeful New Year,
Chaplain Sarah

Allegan County Jail
640 River Street
Allegan, MI 49010

Chaplain Sarah Montgomery
269-673-0350
SarahM@jailministry.org



@RTFjailministry



jailministry.org



@reachtheforgotten

BREAKING BREAD
FROM THE ACTING DIRECTOR



Rev. Dr. Rick Eschenburg

Recently, I had the privilege of attending a JailTalk in one of the counties we serve. JailTalk is RTF's version of a "lunch & learn," inviting community, business, and church leaders to share a meal while learning about our mission and the work God is doing in our jails. We never tire of sharing how God continues to show up daily in our county jails!

This JailTalk came with a built in bonus - it was hosted inside the jail! The community inside the jail shared stories and broke bread with the community outside, and it was a beautiful moment. Watching God connect these two communities, rediscovering our common humanity, if only briefly. I listened to my brothers in Christ, Mike and Tyler, shared their stories and spoke to the importance of RTF's presence in the jail- the same brothers I had been swapping "bad dad jokes" with while setting up lunch.

It was a day for the Church of Jesus Christ to be encouraged, to meet friends and family we didn't yet know, and to thank many while inviting others to join us in this work of jail ministry. It was a good day- one made possible through your prayers and generous support. Thank you. It is truly a privilege to serve alongside you.



Ways to Give:

Phone:

616.784.4620

Online:

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RTF counties in Michigan

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