

*“Above all,
keep loving one another earnestly,
since love covers a multitude of sins.”*

1 Peter 4:8



*Rock Valley United Reformed Church
Newsletter
Winter, 2014*



"Been Thinking About Sochi 2014"

Sochi and Security; whenever the topic of the Winter Olympics came up in the news, so did the subject of security. By now of course you've noticed that the Winter Olympics are always held in some place cold and mountainous. This year's Winter Olympic venue is Sochi, Russia and the concern for security has never been higher. Located in a region that borders several Islamic countries, combined with the history of antagonism and warfare between Russia and former satellite Islamic states and the ongoing conflict with regional freedom fighters, not to mention the fatal attraction of terrorists to the Olympic Games in general, no matter where they're held, all make for a very nerve racking and potentially dangerous situation. Goal - Performance and Gold; at least to do one's best - that's something golden. Concern - Security and Protection from those who are ruthless, evil and would do us harm.

Many of the Winter Games require mountains, but mountains cannot give us security. Mountains can give us many things, but not the kind of security we need and the kind of security for which our hearts truly long. The Psalmist had this figured out when he said, *"I lift my eyes to the hills (mountains). From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth"* (Psalm 121:1-2). Mountains give us many things, but they cannot give us the one thing we need the most - help from God. Mountains give us scenery but they cannot give us security. Mountains give us perspective but they cannot give us safety. Mountains give us elevation and inspiration but they cannot give us protection; in fact, mountains are fraught with their own inherent dangers: flash floods, avalanche of snow or rock. Through all the risks of life, God is the Only One Who can really give us security.

Why do we love the Olympics? It's a lot of things we can all relate to: the challenge, the competition, the achievement, the thrill of victory, the agony of defeat, the reward of hard work, the recognition from our peers, the glory of winning, the prospect of silver, bronze or even gold. There's something about the Olympics that's a lot like life in general; I think it's called the risk! Whether its relationships, new business ventures, whatever we attempt - there's going to be challenges, competition, hardship, and setbacks; but there's also the opportunity to be part of something bigger than ourselves, the prospect of reward and recognition. What if we could face all that with the assurance that God is looking after us? That the Almighty Himself 'will not let your foot slip'. That 'the LORD will keep you from all evil; He will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going and coming in from this time forth and forevermore.' Calvary was just one more mountain until the LORD came to help us there by dying in our place.

'I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.' Think like a Christian. Live like a Christian. Win like a Christian. Think with hope, live with courage, and win by faith in the Son of God.

Pastor Joel Vander Kooi

Thanksgiving Appreciation Breakfast



Our Youth Group wanted to begin Thanksgiving Day 2013 by showing their appreciation to the congregation for all its support throughout the year, and so they treated us to breakfast before our Thanksgiving Day Worship Service. Rolls, muffins, fruit, yogurt, juice and coffee were served, and all we had to do was come to church early and enjoy...and that's just what we did!



Thanks to the Youth Group, the leaders and the Youth Group parents for providing a delicious breakfast for the congregation on Thanksgiving Day morning. It was a great way to start the day!



AH HA!
Gloria, I finally got ya! No hands in front of your face!



Jakson must have had enough breakfast at home.



John and Aria not only get two Thanksgiving Dinners, but Thanksgiving Breakfast, too. Dual citizenship has some perks, eh?





Have you ever wondered how the Lord uses our weekly offerings to advance His Kingdom? The "Thank You" notes we receive help us to see His work.



Attaining Truth, Love And Self-control

From Rev. Allen Vander Pol and MINTS: I wish to thank you and the Rock Valley congregation for your generous support this past year for my work with MINTS International Seminary. Your gifts were vital in enabling me both to write courses and to teach them overseas. As we continue in a new year, I ask that you continue your support. I believe that the work serves an important role in training leaders of Christ's church in less privileged countries.

From Hope Haven: "Please extend our thanks to your congregation for your recent gift to the ministries of Hope Haven. Hope Haven International recently delivered our **100,000 wheelchair** in Guatemala to 6-year-old Claudia. The result? She is no longer sharing a wheelchair with her 10-year-old sister, Maria, and they are no longer taking turns going to school. We also hold Spiritual Retreats around the world to give people with disabilities the opportunity to come together and learn about God's grace and worship as a group. You helped equip Hope Haven to share Jesus' love with people locally as well as all over the world. Thank you."

"Thank you for your generous financial gift. Your support of the ministry is greatly appreciated. Blessings on your New Year!" **ATLAS of Sioux Center**

"Thank you for your support of our ministry here at **Mid-America Reformed Seminary**. It is a great encouragement to know you share our commitment for training the next generation of men God has called to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to shepherd His people. The largest portion of operating revenues needed to carry out this work comes from the faithful giving of God's people. We are grateful for your vision and willingness to partner with us in this extremely important task. As God uses your gift to prepare laborers for the harvest field, it will impact the lives of many of His people for years to come."

"Thank you for your recent gift in support of the children and families we serve at **Bethany Christian Services**. We envision a world where every child has a loving family. Thanks to partners like you, each day we are one step closer to achieving this vision. We are demonstrating the love and compassion of Jesus Christ around the globe as we work to keep families together and find families for children in need. Thanks for your partnership."



From Leslee Unruh and the Alpha Center: "Thank you! Because of your gift, the Alpha Center is keeping the spirit of **Christmas** all year long. You and I understand that life in its most exquisite form is displayed through every single baby born through Alpha Center's efforts, and yours with us! Each of these little ones is created in His image with a special and vitally important purpose—God's glory. Thank you for your loyalty to our work."



"To our brothers and sisters in Rock Valley, we send you greetings, and express our hearty thanks for the financial blessings that you have given us. It is a great blessing just to know that you support the work here in Sioux Falls. Even more than your financial support, we covet your prayers to our heavenly Father. It is only through His support that any of us hope to bring the gospel into the darkness and be salt to the world." **Sioux Falls URC Fellowship**

From Sioux City Gospel Mission: "Thanks so much for your gift, as it's truly a blessing to all of us at the Mission. We are so grateful for your partnership with us in this ministry. Your heartfelt generosity is a source of real encouragement to us. May the Lord richly bless you."

From Union Gospel Mission of Sioux Falls: "We are deeply grateful for your generous gift at this time of year. Your donation during the Christmas season helps provide food, shelter, clothing and counseling to the less fortunate in our area. Many of those who come to us for a holiday meal, or daily food and shelter, will stay on and allow the healing power of Jesus' love to transform their lives. Thank you for helping us meet the needs of the hurting people that come to our doorstep. With your help we can provide hope and encouragement to many."

Congratulations Austin & Rachel

Rachel Ann and Austin Cole were united in Holy Matrimony on Friday, December 27, 2013 at Calvary Protestant Reformed Church of Hull. Parents of the couple are Loren and Lora (of RVURC) and Dave and Lisa of Boyden.

They chose Song of Solomon 8:6-7 as their wedding text: *"Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD."* During the ceremony they surprised their family by singing a song to each other based on these verses, after absolutely refusing their mothers' requests that they sing at their own wedding!

Following a honeymoon trip to Jamaica, the couple is back at school. Austin is majoring in Engineering, and also works part time in Sioux Center. Rachel is majoring in Music Education and works part time in Rock Valley.

Congratulations, Austin and Rachel, and may the Lord bless you richly as you go down life's pathway together.



Rachel as a bride... at age 21 on the left, and at age 3 below!



The family

The Bridal party: Ashley, Brooke, Rachel, Erin and Emily

"Who gives this woman to this man?"

Sniff...sniff "Her mother" (sniff sniff) "and I." (sniff, sniff)

Ooohhh, my baby! (Sniff, sniff)

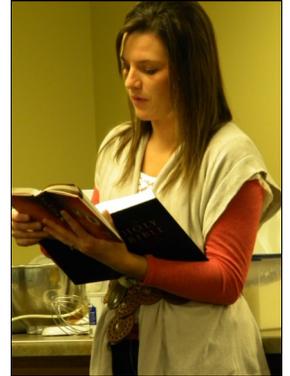




“Best-ies”
“Buddies”
“BFF’s”
(Translation-
“Best
Friends
Forever” in
case you’re
not up on
your lingo) -
Rachel,
Erin, and
Brooke



What’s the “lingo” for friends of our age?



Amber opened with devotions.



Bridal & Baby Shower



Poor Rachel had to bake a cake from scratch with no recipe; just a few ingredients, along with some she shouldn't use. Actually, most of the ladies said they were glad they didn't have to try that.

The finished product...a little more like brownies than cake; but that's OK, it was a good try! We had plenty to eat anyway.

On Friday, January 24, a combined Bridal and Baby Shower was given in honor of new bride, Rachel and soon-to-be-mom Autumn. We played games, gave gifts, shared lunch (that's getting to be a theme in this newsletter!), prayed together and laughed together, while celebrating the goodness of God and the exciting time in these young ladies' lives. Thanks to everyone for coming and showing your support for Rachel and Autumn.



Can you identify the baby food only by smelling it?



How hard can this be anyway?



Thanks to everyone for all the nice gifts for the mom-to-be and the new bride! And thanks for coming and spending time with us!



Candid Camera!



Christmas Caroling on December 19. After caroling at 4 Seasons, Whispering Heights, and various homes around town, we even spread the joyful tidings to Radio Shack. (If you don't come with us, Korrie and Sarita, then we come to you!) You never know where we might show up! Next year we're gonna make it to the Laundromat, right Rev.?



Surprise! Dee turned 70, and Gene planned the party!

The Case of the Missing Rolls

The Accusation



You know, in polite society, when eating your Cool Whip directly out of the bowl, its best to use a spoon, that's true...but if you want to get it *all*, let's face it...it just works best to ditch the spoon, pick up the lid and just lick it out of there!



"You dirty bugger...you took my cinnamon rolls, didn't you? Don't deny it, I know you did!"

Yes, we had a bit of trouble at the Christmas luncheon...

"Who, me? Why, I'm sure I know nothing about it Arlin!"



The Confession



"OK, I'll admit I hid them from you, but I put them up there. I don't know where they are now, honestly!"



Found, but mystery not solved!



Man, a guy tries to save some rolls for himself, and they're not even safe at church...

I wonder who would play a dirty trick on innocent little me...?



Wanted for Questioning in the Great Cinnamon Roll Heist of 2013

These unidentified individuals seemed to be avoiding our cameras, and were later seen leaving the scene of the crime. If you have any information on them, and particularly the one on the right, contact Arlin.



Recipe Corner

Cinnamon Apple Snack Cake

Peggy

3 eggs
 1 cup sugar
 1/2 cup margarine or butter, melted
 14 cinnamon graham crackers, finely crushed (about 2 cups crumbs)
 1 medium apple, peeled, cored and chopped small
 3/4 cup chopped walnuts (optional)
 2 tbsp powdered sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Beat eggs lightly in medium bowl with wire whisk. Add sugar and margarine; mix well. Stir in graham cracker crumbs, apple and walnuts until well blended.

Spread evenly into greased 8-inch square baking pan.

Bake 40 to 45 minutes or until firm to the touch. Cool completely. Cut into squares. Sprinkle with powdered sugar just before serving.

Cookie Dough Truffles *Cherie*

1/2 cup butter, softened
 3/4 cup brown sugar
 2 cups flour
 1 can sweetened condensed milk
 1 tsp vanilla
 1/2 cup mini semisweet choc chips
 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
 1 20 oz pkg choc almond bark

In mixing bowl cream the butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Add the flour, milk and vanilla; mix well. Stir in the choc chips and walnuts. Shape into 1" balls; place on waxed paper lined cookie sheets. Loosely cover and refrigerate for 1-2 hrs or until firm.

In a microwave safe bowl or crock pot, melt almond bark, stirring often until smooth. Dip balls in almond bark; place on waxed paper lined cookie sheets. Refrigerate until firm. If desired, re-melt remaining almond bark and drizzle over dipped balls. Store in the refrigerator.

Snickers Fudge

Cherie

First Layer:

1 c. milk chocolate chips
 1/4 c. butterscotch chips
 1/4 c. peanut butter

Second Layer:

4 tbs. butter
 1 c. sugar
 1/4 c. evaporated milk
 1 1/2 c. marshmallow crème
 1/4 c. peanut butter
 1 tsp. vanilla
 1 1/2 c. chopped salted peanuts

Third Layer:

14 oz. pkg. caramel cubes
 1/4 c. heavy cream

Fourth Layer:

1 c. milk chocolate chips
 1/4 c. butterscotch chips
 1/4 c. creamy peanut butter

First Layer prep:

Lightly spray 9 x 13 baking pan with cooking spray. Over medium heat, melt milk chocolate chips, peanut butter, and butterscotch chips in small saucepan. Stir together until completely melted and smooth, then pour into the baking pan. Spread the mixture evenly with a spatula, then refrigerate until set.

Second Layer prep:

Melt butter over medium-high heat in saucepan. Add sugar and evaporated milk and bring to boil. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat and quickly mix in marshmallow crème, peanut butter, and vanilla. Add peanuts to mixture and spread evenly over chocolate layer. Refrigerate until set.

Third Layer prep:

Melt caramels and heavy cream over low heat until smooth. Pour over peanut mixture and refrigerate until set.

Fourth Layer prep:

Repeat first layer prep. Pour over caramel layer and refrigerate for at least one hour before cutting.

Squash Soup

Janet

one medium onion
 4 Tbsp margarine (I use olive oil)
 6 cups cubed butternut squash (I halve my squash and cook in microwave and remove pulp with a spoon)
 3 cups of water
 4 cubes or 4 tsp of chicken bouillon
 1/2 tsp dried marjoram
 1/4 tsp of ground black pepper
 1/8 tsp ground cayenne pepper
 4 oz+ cream cheese (low-fat works fine)

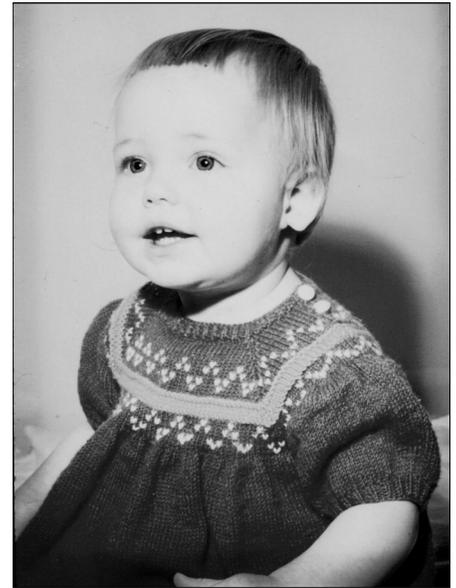
Sauté onion in oil until clear. Add squash and cook for 5 minutes. Add remaining ingredients until soft enough to blend & add cream cheese. (I use a hand held Bamix or Oster, otherwise a blender works.)

Place The Face!



So you think you know everyone in our church pretty well, huh? Well, can you guess who these members are? (The answers are found elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Check your calendars...these two little gals were both born in the month of February. And, it may surprise you to know that one of them is the grandmother of three, and the other will become a grandma for the first time any day now! Who are they?



Did You Know?

- Did you know that **Amber and Nathan** are engaged to be married? In keeping with Valentine's Day and the season of romance, *here's a love story for you!* Amber tells us: "We arrived back from our Black Hills vacation on Saturday (Feb.8) in the afternoon. We all unpacked our luggage and went our separate ways. I decided to stay at the house instead of going all the way home to shower and come back, thinking I had everything I needed to prepare myself for what ever the night's plans were. Nathan said he was taking a quick shower and was going to throw some clothes on. I heard him walking around in his boots so I asked why he had shoes on. His answer was "I don't like walking on this floor without shoes on...." hmmm, likely story. I heard the garage door slam a couple times but didn't really pay attention. I continued to do my usual after shower routine. I strolled through the house brushing my teeth, not noticing anything out of the ordinary. There was a piece of paper on the floor and the bar stool had moved from it's spot but since the house was under construction nothing was in its rightful spot. I finished putting all my things away and headed towards the garage to see what he was doing since he clearly wasn't anywhere to be found. On the way out I stopped to read the note saying

"Amber, meet me outside and put on a pair of boots cause it's cold out, Nathan." By this time I knew what was going on, so I recollected my thoughts, changed clothes, attempted to do my hair which was still dripping wet, threw on a pair of boots, snagged my coat from the car, and headed outside. Outside was a lit up tree with a scooped path and his sister Beth sitting in his pickup in the driveway taking photos. As my hair began to freeze the perfect proposal took place and we ended up spending the rest of the night calling friends, and visiting family to tell them the news we've been anxiously waiting to spill." You have to hand it to Nathan—the boy's got some serious romantic skills! The couple is planning an August 1 wedding. Congratulations Amber and Nathan!



- Did you know that **Rev.** and sons **Joel, Andrew and Benjamin** recently helped **Randy** with loading hogs? While Joel and Andrew were visiting from Canada, it was thought that the best way to experience life in Northwest Iowa was to get to the farm early in the morning and load up hogs, so they did! Randy said they did a good job, but we are not sure what the boys thought of the experience!
- Speaking of getting accustomed to NW Iowa, did you know the **Vander Kooi's** are having quite a time with our wind? Rev. found a large package, supposedly delivered to their house, while walking along the Rock River several blocks from their house. Yes, we learn quickly about wind here in Iowa!
- Victors at Stand & Deliver Games included the team of **Ben and Pastor Vander Kooi** (on the right). The challenge—build the highest structure using only spaghetti noodles and marshmallows. Their structure reached 52 inches tall! Impressive!



