

the earth quaked,  
the heavens poured down rain  
at the presence of God...

Psalm 68:8, NRSV

**Rock Valley  
United Reformed Church  
Newsletter - Late Summer, 2014**



## ***Why So Many Martyrs?***

You can scarcely believe what you see on TV and other electronic media: human body parts lying everywhere, little children lying dead beside their parents. People driven from their communities, their homes, schools and churches burned, their bodies maimed and dismembered. Savage attacks that do not spare women or children, the very young or the very old. People rounded up and shot, whole families and communities buried alive. What is going on? What is their offense, what is their crime? They are Christians! In an Islamic Republic this is what Christians deserve. 'Death to the Infidel' the Islamic fanatics scream and those Muslims who aren't fanatics generally give their silent assent, for they know that all these things must happen in order to establish an Islamic World Wide kingdom. When you see what's happening in Iraq anger and anguish are natural results and the cry rises from every heart still beating, WHY? Why so many martyrs? Why does God allow it? Why so much silence from the media? Why so much apathy in the West? Why so much bitter hatred from the East? Why is there no outcry from the other nations on earth? Why so much hatred against Christians? Every false allegiance is opposed to the Truth of Jesus' Lordship.

---Total Estimated Number of Christian Martyrs from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.....15 Million ---  
---Total Estimated Number of Christian Martyrs in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century alone.....45 Million ---  
---Total Estimated Number of Christian Martyrs since the time of Christ?.....60 Million ---

The killing continues at the rate of approximately 160,000 Martyrs a year in places like Algeria, Nigeria, Sudan, India, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq, China, and Korea, to name just a few. If the recent history of the last few centuries doesn't chill your blood, then reading FOX'S Book of Martyrs will. Human nature is a nasty depraved thing indeed, we are taught to confess in our Catechism that sin makes us inclined to hate God and our neighbor. Merely human hatred explains a lot of the atrocities and tragedies in this world. But is there more going on here? When Christ ascended the Devil was cast out of heaven for the last time, he fell to the earth and is filled with fury against Christ and all His followers, Christians. We do well to look for the demonic denominator in all Christian Martyrdoms. We read in Paul's letter to the church of Ephesus: *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the Devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places"* (Eph. 6:10-12). In other words, the devil is behind the hatred. But God has His Own purpose. Jesus said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him"* (John 12:24-26). Glory comes through sacrifice, and the blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the church. May God give all of us the willingness to lay down our lives in the service of Christ!

***Pastor Joel Vander Kooi***



## ***Lasting Impressions of Synod Visalia 2014***

Not everyone gets the opportunity to attend a Synod meeting, and you may think that a Synod meeting is all about long sessions of discussing weighty matters affecting our churches, and voting on the rules and regulations that our federation abides by. BUT, if that is your only impression of what it's like to be a part of Synod, you are missing out! Elder Gene and Pastor Joel Vander Kooi were our delegates to Synod Visalia in June, and when he was asked what it was like to be there in person, Pastor Vander Kooi answered with the following:

**Warmth of Fellowship!** It is warm in Visalia, California during the month of June. Average Temperature while we were there? 92 in the shade, but it felt good after an unusually cold winter in Iowa. The weather wasn't the only thing that was warm; so was the fellowship. As you see brothers arrive from Coast to Coast USA and others from Canadian Provinces in the far North you can scarcely believe it's true. All these acquaintances, all these people from your past, all these wonderful brothers in the Lord; and some sisters too, as several delegates take their wives along at every Synod.

**Life in the Spirit!** It doesn't rain in Visalia for five months in a row (May – September). No worries - they have mountain run off filling their irrigation canals. God provides in winter all the water they will need all summer. The Christian also lives in a dry and weary land. But the Psalmist reminds us that, *"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God"* (Psalm 46:4). That river is the Holy Spirit. As delegates meet to do the business of Christ's church we are especially aware that we are in the world but not of the world. That is, we didn't come from the world and we are not sustained by the world. The church in the world finds its source sustenance and refreshment out of this world. The church is the product of the Holy Spirit and the church is constantly refreshed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's refreshing is poured out through the reading of God's Word in Synod Devotions, the singing of songs lead by talented organists, the tenor of dialogue and debate on the Synod floor. It is Life in the Spirit, a truly wonderful thing to observe and be a part of.

**Promise of Plenty!** As you drive through the countryside around Visalia, you cannot help but be impressed by the variety of agricultural products growing the fields, orchards, and vineyards all around: oranges, grapefruits, lemons and limes; almonds, walnuts and olives; peaches, apricots, and grapes; tomatoes, beans, sweet corn and field corn, (yes field corn!) but not nearly as much as Iowa. In fact, the greater Visalia area boasts that it produces no less than 250 agricultural products, many of them dairy based as it is one of the largest milk producing counties in the world. It is truly a land flowing with milk and honey! It reminds us of Ps. 67:5-7: *"Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise you! The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear Him!"* God has also richly blessed the United Reformed Churches, we experience it in our worship, we experience it in our unity with fellow churches and federations, we experience it in outreach.



**Perseverance Rewarded!** A truly unique part of Synod 2014 included a day trip to Sequoia National Park. These Giants of the Forest have reached ages over 3,000 years. They reach heights of nearly 300 feet, that's as tall as a 31 storey building. Standing next to something that tall and that old has a way of putting your life into perspective. *"What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him?"* (Ps. 8:4). But God in Christ does!







# The Flood of 2014

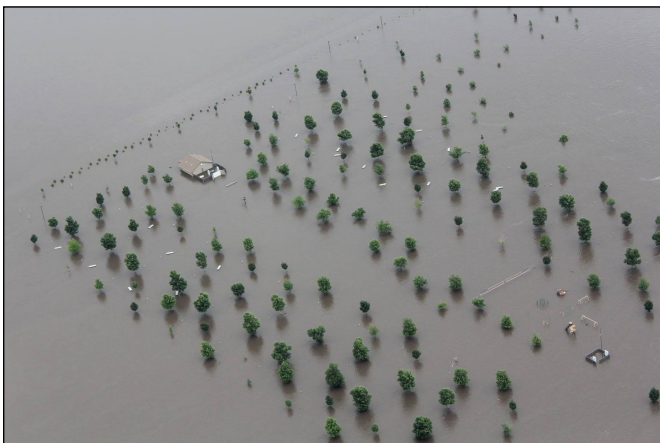
None of us will ever forget June 16, 17 and 18, when the Flood of 2014 struck our area with a vengeance. We were witnesses to the power of God over nature, and how helpless we are to stop it. We are so grateful to the Lord, that He spared everyone's life, and that He spared our church building from destruction. We also realized the blessing of living in a Christian community, as friends and neighbors reached out to help one another in a time of great need, and we were given the opportunity to extend the love and compassion of Christ to those around us. To God be the Glory.



The waters went over the lower parking lot of RVURC and approached the door to the lower level. Sand bags were placed around the door to try to keep water out in the event the water continued to rise.



Ariel view showing the water approaching RVURC. The water level rose after this, covering more of the parking lot.



Rivers Bend Campground, just west of RVURC, went completely under water. Only the tops of the trees peeked out.



Rock Valley Community School - parking lot & playground under water.



Town & Country Implement moving to higher ground. Notice two of the workers walking waste deep in water.



Water approaching Calvin CRC.



RV Christian School playground under water. Later, canoes rowed across it!



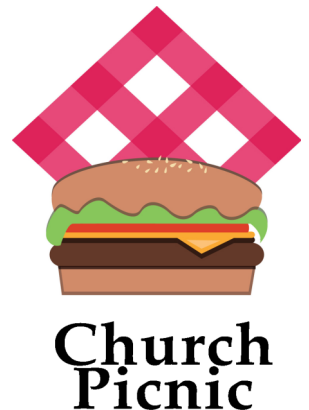
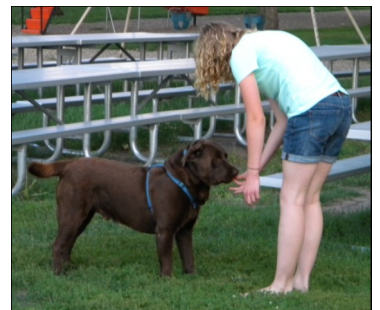




OWEN MATTHEW



Our Church Picnic was held on Tuesday evening, July 8. The weather was pleasant, the food delicious, and the fellowship was sweet. Even our 4 legged friends enjoyed themselves! Whether you are an 80 something great grandpa or a 2 month old baby, there's something for everyone at the Picnic, right Cornie and Macy?







# Fun & Games



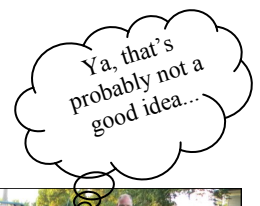
You should have heard Doug, Bob and Lamar belting out Beach Boys songs as they went cruising in the Firebird...  
 "Round, round, get around, I get around!! Oooo, yeah...."



Tobey, Adam, Anna and Chantelle on the slides.



Bob didn't get too many takers on his offer to give rides in his classic Firebird convertible....hmmm....



*"My buddies and me are gettin' real well known;  
 Yeah, the bad guys know us and they leave us alone.  
 I get around!  
 Get around, round, round, I get around!"*

*(I Get Around, by Brian Wilson & Mike Love, The Beach Boys, 1964)*







**Stand and Deliver** was held on Saturday, June 28. It's always a good time when we get together with the other area URC Youth Groups so we can get to know other teenagers in our area who share the same faith, and to listen to talented speakers who challenge us to live out our faith in our daily lives.



## Youth Group News

Trying volleyball in a slightly different way at Stand & Deliver. This takes some teamwork with your partner!



Josh, Jessica, Carla, Marijke, Arlin and Ben.



Reported by Jessica

RYS Convention this year was at Newberg, Oregon. Those attending from Rock Valley URC were Josh, Jessica, Ben, Marijke, and Arlin and Carla. The theme was "Got Wisdom?". Rev Murphy and Rev Rip Pratt spoke at the main sessions on that theme - they were very good speakers.



We started our day at about 7ish each morning. We had SON-rise groups each morning with about 7 or 8 different girls from other churches, and night at about 10 o'clock we would have SON-set groups. We usually joined with the Sanborn youth group.

On Wednesday and Thursday we had workshops on different topics (the workshops are like little Bible classes).

During the day we had a lot of free time to meet new people and play some games. Ben, Marijke and I played in the soccer tournaments on a team with the Sanborn guys, but unfortunately the California boys' team made us look like we didn't know how to play!

Our day away was on Tuesday, and we could either go white water rafting or to the aquarium. Josh went to the aquarium since he was still trying to let his broken arm heal, but the rest of us went white water rafting. White water rafting was a lot of fun!

According to Ben the food was really bad, but no one else minded it. It also seemed like Arlin was always lost somewhere.

We all had a great time and can not wait to go to Kentucky next year. We want to thank the congregation for your support and making it possible for us to attend Convention each year.



The adventurous group—ready for the rapids.







# Summer Weddings

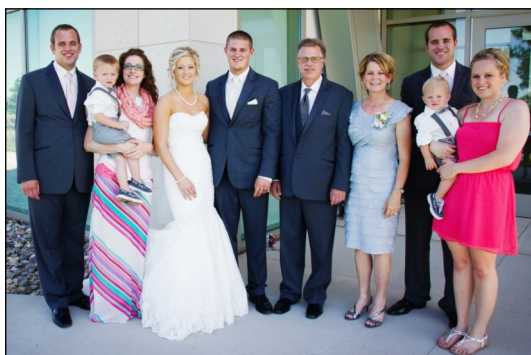
Levi and Mandy were married on Saturday, June 21, 2014 on the back lawn of the Terrace View Event Center in Sioux Center, Iowa. It was a beautiful summer afternoon for an outdoor wedding, with just a gentle breeze in the air. The reception was held indoors at the Event Center.

Parents of the couple are Dave and Audrey of Sioux Center and Hank and Gail of Doon (and RVURC).

Following a honeymoon trip to the Bahamas the couple is at home in Doon. Levi is employed in Doon and Mandy is employed at in Rock Valley. Their new address is:

Congratulations, Levi and Mandy, and may the Lord grant you many years to serve Him together.

## Levi & Mandy



The Family, left to right:  
Dexter, Roman, Hannah, Mandy, Levi,  
Hank, Gail, Brett, Jakson and Megan.



## Nathan & Amber

Nathan and I were married on Friday, August 1, 2014 in the pasture in front of his house (now *our* house). Rev. Vander Kooi performed the ceremony and delivered the message "A Threefold Cord is Not Quickly Broken" based on our wedding text from Ecclesiastes 4:6-12.

We were so blessed—the weather was *perfect* for an outdoor wedding! It was a very formal, "woodland" looking wedding in a very natural setting. The colors were gray, white flick of apricot, and the bridesmaids (my three sisters) wore wasabi green dresses.

Along with the beautiful weather, everything else went smoothly, too, except for the guys pulling the aisle runner down the aisle...which was hysterical chaos! We took a hay rack from the wedding site to the reception, which was held at Calvary PRC in Hull. We had prime rib sandwiches, strawberry fluff salad and baby red potatoes for our meal.

We rented a houseboat on Lake Vermillion in Northern Minnesota for our honeymoon. We did lots of hiking, fishing, swimming and going off the slide on our boat. The lake was huge so we spent our daytime hours admiring all the large houses along the lake and looking for beaches to sit on. We stopped in Minneapolis on the way home to eat at "Bubba Gump Shrimp" in the Mall of America, and we went to IKEA (of course) and then headed home right away the next morning.

As most of you know, Nathan is a farmer, and his parents are Marv and Melinda of Doon; and I am a Wedding Coordinator and a Landscape Designer at Creative Nature in Rock Valley, and I am the daughter of Randy and Pam of Rock Valley (and RVURC).

We live right across the river from our wedding location, just east of the Icon Ag (John Deere Shop) of Doon. Our new address is:

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

The ladies:  
Jessica, Lindsay,  
Pam, Amber and  
Brooke.  
Randy was unavailable for photos as he was crying in the bathroom...





**The Fall Education Season** is ready to begin, and there are several opportunities for us to be “In the Word” and to learn more about our Lord and Savior and about the precious doctrines of our Reformed Faith.

**Sunday School and Catechism classes** begin on September 7. Elder Craig will teach the Sunday School class, Elder Korrie will teach the Jr. High Catechism Class, and Rev. Joel Vander Kooi will teach the High School Catechism Class.

**The Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study** will also begin on September 7, being held at the same time as the Sunday School and Catechism classes. They will be studying from the book “Courage to Stand; Jeremiah’s Message for Post-Christian Times”. Loren will lead the group. Everyone is encouraged to join us, and especially those who have children attending classes at the same time. Below is the schedule for this year:

**Catechism, Sunday School, and Adult Bible Study Schedule for 2014-2015**

Month	Sundays
September	7, 14, 21, 28
October	5, 12, 19, 26
November	2, 9, 16, 23
Thanksgiving / Christmas / New Year’s Break	
January	4, 11, 18, 25
February	1, 8, 15, 22
March	1, 8, 15, 22
April	5

Easter Sunday is our last lesson for the 2014 – 2015 season.

**Youth Group** will begin their meetings on Wednesday, September 10 at 7:00PM. Here is their schedule for the first semester:

Month	Wednesdays
September	10, 24
October	8, 22
November	5, 19
December	3, 19

**Saints of All Ages Bible Study** will begin meeting on Thursday, September 18 at 7:00PM. They will be using another Ray Vander Laan DVD Series entitled “The Holy Land: Promise & Prophecy”. As their name indicates, this study is for **all ages**, so everyone from high school age to great grandparents are welcome and encouraged to join us for great discussion and learning together. Their schedule for the first semester is as follows:

Month	Thursdays
September	18
October	2, 16, 30
November	13
December	4, 18



**Learn  
&  
Grow**



Marijke with her pastor and papa, Rev. Joel Vander Kooi, on the day of her Profession of Faith on Sunday, August 24, 2014.

We had the privilege of hearing and witnessing the Public Profession of Faith of **Marijke Suzanne** on Sunday morning, August 24, 2014. Some of Marijke’s siblings from Canada were also able to be here and share the joy of the day.

Marijke was presented with a Reformation Study Bible, and inside were the words from 1 John 4:9ff. Verses 13—16 say “By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.”

Congratulations, Marijke, and may the Lord grant you His daily grace and mercy, strengthening you to continue in the profession you have made. We rejoice with you and your family!



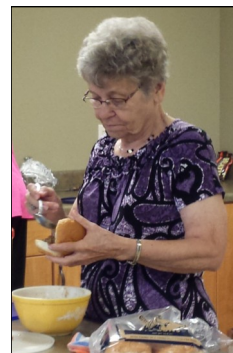


# Dinner!

August 24 was a great day. We celebrated Marijke's Profession of Faith and had the opportunity to visit with the Sinke family as they were visiting from Ontario. Of course, we celebrated with great food!



Always plenty of food and laughter.



Here we have a couple of the best looking tables in the room!



Thanks Autumn! Finally, someone who actually **wants to be** in one of our pictures!!



Aaron proves he's not little anymore, but is now a real tough guy.



Wasn't it good to see Sarah actually eating?!



We can't let perfectly good cake scrapings go to waste now can we, Rev. Vander Kooi? Need some Cool Whip with that?

Here's a reminder that you are **in Iowa** - notice the tall, beautiful corn growing just outside the windows.

Funny how we don't even notice it - until it gets pointed out to us in a picture.



So good to see the Sinke family again.



### **Peaches and Cream Cheesecake Bars** **Cherie**

1 cup finely chopped almonds  
1 cup graham cracker crumbs  
1/3 cup butter, softened  
2 8 oz pkg cream cheese, softened  
1 can sweetened condensed milk (14 oz)  
2 lg eggs  
1/4 cup lemon juice  
1/2 tsp almond extract  
2 1/2 tbsp flour  
1 can drained sliced peaches (8.75 oz)  
pinch of salt

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray 9x13 pan. In mixing bowl combine almonds, graham cracker crumbs, and butter with fork until combined. Press into bottom of pan. Using mixer, beat cream cheese until smooth. While mixing, add sweetened condensed milk, eggs, lemon juice, almond extract and flour. Mix until fully combined. Pour over crust. Puree peaches in blender. Stir in salt. Using a tbsp, drop spoonfuls of peach puree over top of cream cheese mixture. Using knife, gently swirl peaches through filling to create marbled look. Bake for 30 minutes or until center is set. Remove from oven and cool to room temp before transferring to refrigerator to chill throughout. Cut and serve chilled.

*If you have a favorite recipe you would like to share, or if you would like to request a recipe from someone, submit your recipe or request to Lora or Cherie, and we'll include it in the next newsletter.*

*Thanks to all those cooks who are willing to share!*



## **Recipe Corner**

### **Apple Salad**      **Sarita**

2-3 cups apple  
1 cup chopped celery  
1 cup dried cranberries or grapes, halved  
1/3 cup or more of sunflower seeds

#### **Dressing:**

1/3 cup mayonnaise or plain yogurt  
1 tsp lemon juice  
2 tbsp sugar  
1/4 - 1/2 tsp cinnamon

Mix together and refrigerate for 1/2 hour or more. I usually sprinkle a little lemon juice on the apples while chopping to prevent them from becoming brown.

### **Double Cheese Delight**      **Sarita**

4 oz uncooked medium noodles  
1 lb hamburger  
1/3 cup chopped onion  
1 tbsp chopped celery  
1 8 oz can tomato sauce  
1 tsp salt  
1/2 cup creamed cottage cheese  
3 oz pkg cream cheese, softened  
1/4 cup sour cream  
1 medium tomato

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Cook noodles as directed; drain. In large skillet, cook and stir meat, onion and celery until meat is brown and onion is tender. Drain off fat. Stir in tomato sauce and salt. Heat to boiling; reduce heat and simmer 1 minute. Remove from heat. Stir in cottage cheese, cream cheese, sour cream and noodles. Pour into ungreased 1 1/2 qt casserole. Slice tomato; arrange on top. Cover, bake 30 minutes. 4 servings.

### **S'mores Bars**      **Cindy**

1 1/2 cups sugar  
2 eggs  
1 cup butter, softened  
2 tsp vanilla  
3 cups flour  
2 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp salt  
2 (5 3/4 oz) package chocolate stars or kisses  
13 oz jar marshmallow crème

In a large bowl, combine sugar, eggs, butter and vanilla. Blend in flour, baking powder and salt. Stir until thoroughly combined. Spread half of mixture in greased 9x13 inch pan. Press chocolate kisses or stars, point down, into dough. Spread with marshmallow creme. Crumble remaining cookie dough over filling, smoothing slightly. Bake at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes or until bars are golden brown. Cool and cut into squares.



# Place The Face!

You may think you know everyone  
in our congregation pretty well,  
but do you recognize  
these familiar faces?  
Answers are hidden somewhere  
in the Newsletter!



## Did You Know?



- At the Council meeting on August 11, 2014, the Council voted to accept an anonymous donation to be used for a **steeple** for our church building. During the discussion it was noted that many churches are identified as "churches" because of the presence of a steeple on the roof. The Building and Grounds Committee has been assigned the task of investigating costs and designs and to bring a proposal to the Council for consideration. We will keep the congregation informed as we move through this process.

- Did you know that several of our **members are expecting**...more grand babies, that is? **Rev. Joel and Janet Vander Kooi** are anxiously awaiting the arrival of their 4th grandchild as their son Joel and his wife Mel are expecting a new baby in October, and they are *really* hoping the baby comes while they are visiting there in October! **Hank and Gail** are looking forward to welcoming another little one as their son Dexter and his wife Hannah are expecting another child at the beginning of December. Gail is secretly hoping to *finally* get a baby girl into the family, but we suspect Hank is quietly hoping to put together a Blankespoor Little League team some day. And **Arlin and Carla** are getting a "Two-for" deal, as their daughter Brittany and her husband Dalton are expecting twins at the end of January or beginning of February. And not only that, but Arlin and Carla may be getting a "Three-for" deal, as their son Blake and his wife Stephanie are expecting another child just one week later than Brittany's! Congratulations to you all!

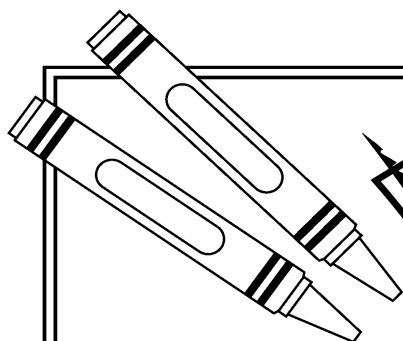


- Do you know the **Cornie & Wilma's** story of blessing? Cornie has 4 brothers and 1 sister. Cornie is the oldest at age 86 and Tony is the youngest at age 74. All of Cornie's siblings and their spouses are still living, and they've all been married for over 50 years! They all got together for the 9th year on July 1-2 in Grand Island, NE. Pictured here: standing Harriett (Mrs. Albert) and Geneva (Mrs. Vern); seated left to right are Cornie, Tony & wife Donna, Mary (Mrs. John), twins Albertha & Albert, Vern, Dick (he's married to Albertha), Wilma, and John. Wow! What a blessing!



- Did you know **Bob and Cherie** got up close and personal with a tornado while on vacation this summer at Lake Cochrane with their kids? It was a rainy week, so they were playing cards in the camper on Saturday afternoon when they heard the severe weather sirens going off, alerting them that a tornado that was out on the lake churning up water. They all ran to the bathroom/tornado shelter. They found out later that the tornado was only 500 ft from where they were camping. The only damage was to some boat lifts/docks, a roof on one home, and a pontoon boat and its lift that were overturned in the water. This was real close to where they were gathered in the shelter. They are very thankful for God's care for them and all those in the campground.









# PUZZLE



## A promise to the earth



After the flood in Genesis, God promised to “never again ... destroy all living creatures” (Genesis 8:21, NIV).


**Directions:** Using the picture clues below, write each small word in the blanks to complete God's promise in Genesis 8:22, NIV.


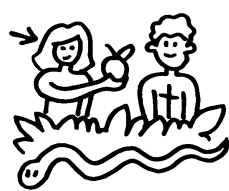
“As long as the  \_ \_ \_ th

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GENESIS 8:22, NIV

Answers to Place the Face—Justin and Craig

Answer: As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.” Genesis 8:22, NIV