

CLASSIS MATTERS

A Newsletter of Classis Georgetown of the CRC in North America

March April 2016

Member Churches

- ◆ Alive Ministries
- ◆ Baldwin Street CRC
- ◆ Bauer CRC
- ◆ Cottonwood Church
- ◆ EverGreen Ministries
- ◆ Fairway CRC
- ◆ First Hudsonville CRC
- ◆ First Jenison CRC
- ◆ Forest Grove CRC
- ◆ Friendship Chapel
- ◆ Georgetown CRC
- ◆ Hillcrest CRC
- ◆ Immanuel CRC
- ◆ Jamestown CRC
- ◆ Messiah CRC
- ◆ Ridgewood CRC
- ◆ Searchlight Ministries
- ◆ Trinity CRC
- ◆ Twelfth Avenue CRC
- ◆ Zutphen CRC

Praises & Prayer Requests

~ pray with thanksgiving for all of the Classis Georgetown churches that are taking part in the Church Renewal Lab.

~praise God for the continued faithful financial support to Classis Georgetown through the payment of ministry shares.

~praise God for the 141 years of ministry at First Jenison CRC, and pray for a smooth transition to the next chapter in their church life for the members.

God's Blessings and Faithfulness

First Jenison CRC is moving towards the conclusion of independent ministry after 141 years. We do so in a spirit of praise and thanks to God for his many blessings and great faithfulness.

Two brothers from the Netherlands, Lucius and Luman Jenison, purchased a large area of land between Grand Rapids and Holland. They were interested in the timber to provide wood for the rapidly growing furniture industry and to provide construction materials for the many immigrants coming to West Michigan from the Netherlands. When the trees had been cleared, the two brothers sold the land very cheaply as it was not considered desirable for farming. The area became settled by many of the poorer families making their way across the Atlantic who could not afford the more prosperous areas either in Grand Rapids or in Holland.

These families travelled with horse and buggy to the nearest Christian Reformed Churches on the west side of Grand Rapids. As the community grew, they requested that a new congregation be formed in this area to save them the long trip each Sunday. On July 18, 1875, the Grandville Avenue church supervised and supported the formation of the Jenison Christian Reformed Church.

For much of its early history, this area was not heavily settled and Jenison CRC was the only church in the community. That changed dramatically after World War II. The return of the servicemen from the war coupled with many families choosing to leave the urban areas of Grand Rapids fueled a population boom. New roads and neighborhoods sprung up rapidly. First Jenison CRC made the decision to plant new churches throughout the community for these new families. Almost all the CRC churches in Jenison came out of First CRC either directly, or indirectly through one of our daughter churches. Despite these many new congregations, First Jenison remained a large congregation which played an important role in our community. A cherished memory was the service in 1971, which
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Vision Statement

Classis Georgetown is a community of Christian Reformed Churches in Eastern Ottawa County who live and minister together, in Christ, to transform lives and communities.

Values

Healthy Leaders

We equip leaders to transform lives and communities.

Collaborative Relationships

We call out the strengths of each church and pursue ministry together to create new ways of transforming lives and communities.

Empowering Worship

We celebrate and are sustained by God's presence as he transforms lives and communities.

Daring Hospitality

We welcome the stranger in ways that transform lives and communities.

Risky Compassion

We extend uncommon generosity to the suffering and work to eliminate the causes of that suffering in order to trans-

CHURCH SIGN:

A church
is a gift
from God;
assembly required.

God's Blessings and Faithfulness, (continued)

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began in their old church building in downtown Jenison. In the middle of the service, the members picked up the Bibles and hymnals and got in their cars to complete the worship service in their new facility on Cottonwood Drive.

The last congregation to emerge out of First Jenison CRC was Alive Ministries in 2011. After the emergence of Alive Ministries, First Jenison faced a number of demographic challenges. It was a smaller and older congregation than it had been before. The members decided to form a new council and continue worship and ministry. This close knit group continued to be a blessing to one another and their community in the following years. Pastor Barton joined them in the fall of 2012. They added a few new families and used grants from Classis Georgetown and the CRC Denomination to pursue new ministry opportunities. We continue to be blessed by our close and strong relationships with our neighboring churches in Jenison.

In the Spring of 2015, First Jenison embarked on an intentional process of discernment to listen to God together about our future. We agreed on a shared set of three values for this process. Our goals are *Kingdom, care and community*. We wanted to choose the best option for our future to advance Christ's Kingdom, ensure our members continue to

be spiritually cared for, and be the greatest possible blessing to our community. Through this discernment process, we came to realize that our best opportunities to pursue these values may be in partnership with another congregation.

Following our discernment, we sent out letters last summer to nine congregations exploring possibilities for partnership. Many of your congregations were among these churches. We were richly blessed by the encouragement, affirmation and responses we received. The letter from Baldwin Street CRC encouraged us to use this as an opportunity to look at the broader trajectory of several of the CRC churches in Jenison. We did this is a series of conversations between Baldwin Street, Twelfth Avenue, and First Jenison last fall to explore possibilities for joint ministry.

Coming out of these three-way conversations, we approached the Baldwin Street CRC to explore the possibility of being enfolded into their congregation. These conversations are on-going and both congregations will hold separate votes on Monday, May 9, to decide if this will be God's future for us.

After 141 years, we are moving towards the conclusion of independent ministry at the end of June. We are grateful to Classis Georgetown for connecting us with Rev. Joel Boot to assist us with the details involved

in this process.

Every beginning has an ending. We give glory to God as he leads us into new opportunities for continued worship, ministry and fellowship beyond this ending of independent ministry in the coming months.

We would like to invite you to join us for a special service on the evening of May 15th. On this evening, First Jenison will be hosting the six congregations from Jenison which ordinarily worship together on the third Sunday evening of each month. *We would like to extend an invitation to all the churches of Classis Georgetown to send a delegation to worship with us that evening as well.*

As we conclude, we thank God for all his blessings and great faithfulness to us over 141 years. As our fellow believers in Classis Georgetown, you have been a tangible expression of his grace and we thank you as well. *(Article submitted by Pastor Adam Barton, on behalf of the council of First Jenison CRC.)*

Please join us for worship as we celebrate God's faithfulness!

Date: May 15, 2016

Time: 5:00 PM

Where: First Jenison CRC

Who: Classis Georgetown

Vision Team, Members & Staff

Rev. Mark Bennink
Rev. Larry Doornbos
Rev. Dave Jolman
Rev. Gerry Koning
Rev. Marc Nelesen

Ms. Kathy Jelsema
Classis Asst. Treasurer and Web Keeper
Mr. Mel Vander Bie
Classis Treasurer

Rev. Duane VanderBrug
Chair/Facilitator
Ms. Dee VanHeuvelen
Administrative Ass't., Stated Clerk, &
Newsletter Editor
Ms. Tricia Bosma, Alternate Stated Clerk