

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Matthew 6:34

Every day is a gift from God and needs to be used for Him. This issue updates on challenges during this time and organ progress.

### **An Update on the Philippines**

By Pastor Alex and Merlita Agbuya

Greetings!

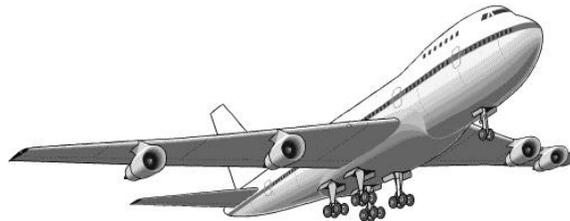
Thank you for your emails. Merlita and I are alright. We returned from the Philippines on April 2 and upon arrival, we self-quarantined at home. Not that we were positive but just to make sure that we did not bring the COVID virus with us. It is well with us. Merlita has been working at Vriendschap Village since May. Most of the time, I stay home as the quarantine directive is for people age 65 and older to stay home.

We were scheduled to fly from the Philippines to the United States on March 24, but Clark International Airport (about 20 minutes' drive from our residence) was ordered closed for all in-coming and outbound flights, on the day of our scheduled flight due to COVID-19.

Our churches in the Philippines are doing well and still growing. As of now, we have 35 churches and more than 3,000 memberships. We could have made it to 40 churches but run out of time and the COVID-19 quarantine that truncated other meetings to officially acknowledge additional congregations. In our last monthly meeting on March 22, 12 pastors received

their individually designated free book of “Willmington’s Guide to the Bible.” The rest did not get their copies yet due to quarantine and travel restrictions. We purchased 28 copies of the above-mentioned books for \$768.00. We hope to get another 12 copies more by July.

We could have added more official congregations, if only we had a chance to stay for another 30 days. However, our flight scheduled on March 24 got in the way. A week before that, a travel order was announced that US citizens need to return immediately as the US border will be closed for foreigners. On our flight on March 24, we found that all airports were ordered closed. So, we booked the available first possible flight on April 2 (outbound flight for US citizens only). We were in Manila International Airport waiting time of four hours ahead of flight time; a 6-hour layover at Incheon, South Korea Airport, another six hours in Detroit, MI Airport, and another six hours bound for Des Moines, IA. Our boarded planes were only half full. From Manila to Incheon Airport, our Boeing 747 had 200+ passengers on board. From Incheon to Detroit, we boarded a Boeing 777 with 300+ passengers. At Detroit Airport to Des Moines, the commuter plane had about 20 passengers on board. All the huge airports at that time were like ghost towns! One had an eerie feeling that the “Rapture” had taken place! (although I don’t believe in the “Rapture” event).



For the first time of more than 10 years and several failed attempts, at last, our group (Philippine Alliance of Confessing

Evangelicals, Incorporated (PACE) succeeded in holding a preliminary meeting on March 11, 2020, with the officers and pastors of both Philippine Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals (PACE) and Manila North Classis of The Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines (CRCP). This meeting was a representative of about 50 local congregations, 35 PACE churches, and about 12 churches of Manila North Classis of CRCP. In that meeting, the CRC leaders verbally admitted their “fear” (or apprehension) to act on our intention and application-letter since 2005 for integration into the CRC Philippines; another was the organizational developments and changes of leadership that transpired through the years in the CRCP. Currently, both groups are working on the assimilation merger. We hope we can come up with something positive by the end of July this year.

We are grateful for meeting us personally with our PACE leaders and the assistance extended, while in the Philippines CRCNA Global Director for Asia and Latin America Rev. Joel Huyser, Resonate Global Mission Director Zachary King and CRCNA missionaries assigned in the Philippines— Rev. Stan Kruis and his wife Bessie, and Superintendent for Asia Mission Joyce Kim, who, by way of representation connected us to the leadership of CRCP. I and all PACE leaders greatly appreciate their efforts.

Most of the time I ‘stay home’ and do a lot of reading and studying and communicating in the Philippines for updates on what is happening in all the churches in our area. I hope that after this “stay home” issue something more interesting may come up.

I hope to be back in the Philippines by December and conduct more training and strengthening church programs and carry on the "Million Lives Project" which was held

in abeyance due to the Covid-19 and travel/quarantine restrictions.

I have to confess that I haven’t had my haircut since we arrived at Otley (and my hair now looks like that of Sylvester ‘Rocky’ Stallone. The ‘grays’ are more prominently noticeable, huh!).

Soli Dei Gloria,

Alex and Merlita

### **A Conversation about Race**

By Bev De Vries

”You mean you don’t have a black friend of your own you can talk to?” That’s what my friend Pastor Steve Heerema said to me when I asked if he could get Robbie Robinson to speak with us on KCWN about race and prejudice.

“Yes, I do have some, but I want to talk to yours,” I replied.

That’s what started our conversation on Friday, June 5 on KCWN. I welcomed Robbie, a young African American from Mississippi, now living in Newton, Iowa. Robbie is a member at The Way, Pastor Steve’s church, and just this Sunday was ordained as an elder and a commissioned pastor in the RCA. Robbie is now the leader of Discover Hope 517, a recovery program in Newton. Robbie has also spent 5 years in prison. I knew he would be a good person to talk to with all the questions I had about what’s going on in the world since the George Floyd tragedy.

Our on-air conversation lasted 75 minutes, with no breaks. That’s a lot of talk for a mostly music Christian radio station. When it was over, I told Robbie honestly, this was

the most impactful hour I've ever spent on the radio in 25 years.

What did I learn? I learned to listen. Really listen. That how I perceive things may not always be how others see them, and that prejudice doesn't just limit itself to race. I have all kinds of pre-conceived notions about people from a certain church or a different city...or maybe even just a different last name.

What happened when I asked Robbie honest questions, and really listened, I heard this: He feels his skin color every day. If he and I were to go to lunch together, he would be treated differently than I. He would notice, I would not.

Robbie has a white wife, who had a white daughter that is now his as well. When he walks down the street with her, sooner or later, a police car will roll by, slowly. Does this ever happen when a white woman walks down the street with her adopted black son?



When I asked Robbie how he feels when he hears people say "well, they" are all like that. His response was that he can fight it, argue it, be violent against it, but it comes down to this: He needs to let the love of Jesus change his heart and be judged for his character, by the fruit that flows out of his life. Nobody can argue with that! But that takes time, and that takes relationship. But isn't that exactly what Jesus would do?

Robbie said that the anger we see from many blacks is a direct effect of years of poverty. I had a white woman in her 70's call me after the show to say that statement

had changed her life. She was raised very poor and felt the embarrassment and shame of having nothing and being teased about it daily at school. She said when Robbie said that she finally started to understand why she still has such anger in her. All those years of feeling 'less than' leaves its mark. For her, his statement gave her the understanding to start to heal from that. What can we see in other's stories if we really listen for where the hurt is coming from?

I've asked others what they learned from the show, here are a few comments:

"The Power of forgiveness to combat racism"

"Satan wants to divide us. We need to love like Jesus does because we are all made in his image."

"How crucial it is to listen to our brothers and sisters and their hurts that come with their

stories and to love DEEPLY."

I know I was changed by my 75 minutes across the desk from Robbie, as I looked into his eyes and listened to his story, really listened. Not so much different than many of us have experienced in Cary as we took the time to listen to those who looked different from us, who sang different from us, who worked differently than us, but who still loved their families and wanted to share in God's glory, with us.

If nothing else, one conversation can lead to another, and one by one, we can make a difference. We can be the change.

If you'd like to listen to the Bev, Steve and Robbie show, you'll find it on the KCWN Facebook page or on SoundCloud, under KCWN.

### A New "Home" for Our Organ

By Barbara Boertje-DeVries

Some of you have asked for more details on where our organ will be relocated and how it is intended to be used.

*First, a little "history":*

In December of last year, Robert Hobby, Director of Music at Trinity English Lutheran Church (Fort Wayne, Indiana), contacted me regarding the sale of our organ. Robert is a godly man, an outstanding organist, and prolific composer of church music.

He and two other organists from Trinity ELC visited our church one day in January and spent hours playing our organ. They were very impressed, and it didn't take them long to believe that God had answered their prayers as they had been on the search for a similar organ.

*A bit about our organ's future "home":*

Trinity ELC is a congregation with an active music program consisting of nine ensembles, led by two full-time musicians. The acquisition of our Dobson organ is for Krauss Chapel at Trinity. The chapel is their smaller worship space with a seating capacity of around 125, and it is utilized for three of their smaller worship services. Recently, the chapel underwent some physical restoration to the floors, walls, and

ceiling; for about five years they have been aware they needed to address some mechanical issues of their current pipe organ (some of the parts have not been functioning since the mid-1950s). When our organ went up for sale, the option of replacing their instrument with ours (they are similar in size) became a viable alternative. By the way, their chapel organ is one of three pipe organs; they have a 92-rank Aeolian-Skinner organ in the main worship space, and a Wurlitzer theater organ in their parish hall. The photo attached has been photoshopped to represent how our organ would appear in their chapel.



Once relocated to Fort Wayne (after Easter 2021) by its original builder (Dobson Organ Company), the organ that has served us well since 1988 will be used quite frequently. It will be played for their two weekly services, weddings, funerals, and other occasional services that occur in the chapel, and for their noon concert series which takes place in May and September.

Pella II had been praying for God to provide a loving, new "home" where our current organ could thrive and enhance worship, and I thank Him, as I

believe He answered our prayers in that way while also answering the prayers of Trinity English Lutheran Church, for provision of another organ that could replace the one that is in disrepair.

Please join me now in praying for God's provision as we seek an organ that will glorify God and serve our congregation well at the site of *our* future new church "home".

To God be the glory!

**Pastor's Pen—Connecting**

By Pastor Paul Bradford

Dear Pella II Congregation,

A lot is happening at Pella II right now. The foundation of our new building is being poured, and the proposed new name for our congregation has been revealed. Our goal in both of these big steps is to move towards becoming an ever more welcoming congregation that is effectively reaching people for Christ and enfolding them into our congregation where they can grow and thrive. This is a crucial goal, for our Lord Jesus himself commanded us to make disciples – leading people to Jesus and teaching them to obey all he has commanded us (Matthew 28:18-20). But we are well aware that, while a new building and a new name can help us be more effective in accomplishing our mission, neither, in and of themselves, are enough. Buildings don't reach people for Christ. People reach people for Christ.

In the first two Pastor's Pen articles this year, I began discussing four important practices of an outward reaching congregation. In order sequence, they are: *connecting*, *inviting*, *welcoming*, and *enfolded*. We began by talking about being *welcoming*. I paused the series to discuss our response to the COVID-19 shutdown. Today I want to return to this series on reaching out.

A study done awhile back found that only 2% of newcomers came to church because of an advertisement, only 6% came because of an organized evangelism campaign, and only 6% came because a pastor invited them. However, a full 86% of newcomers came to church because they were invited by

a friend or relative. What's more, a more recent study found that 63% of Americans say a personal invitation from a friend or neighbor would be effective in getting them to visit a church.

But you can't invite a person to church unless you know them and are in relationship with them. So, *the first step in reaching people* who don't know Christ, or who have drifted away from the body of Christ, is *connecting* with them. We must be intentional about seeking to develop relationships with those who aren't connected with Christ or his church.



Connecting can be very natural, and it should be both natural and authentic. You start by building a relationship simply to show a person you care. It might begin by walking across the street or next door to chat with a neighbor, or bringing cookies and welcoming a newcomer to your neighborhood. You can go to the same business repeatedly (whether a store, gas station, salon, etc.) to build relationship with those who work there. With time as you get to know your friend better, you can seek to deepen the friendship, perhaps having them over for dinner, going fishing together, going out for coffee, or whatever works for both of you.

What do you say when you strike up a conversation? Use the "Conversation Stack" I shared in the March-April 2020 Newsletter (you can view the Newsletter at [pella2crc.org/newsletter](http://pella2crc.org/newsletter)). In brief, you begin by getting to know the person's name, you ask them about where they live and where they grew up, you ask about their family, you ask about what they enjoy, and you ask about their work. Those things alone could take up several conversations. Your goal is to show care and develop an authentic

friendship. If you step out in obedience to God and love for others, the Holy Spirit will guide you. There are few things as exciting as watching God work through you to touch a life!

In whatever way you get to know people, you need to see that connecting with non-believers and non-churched people is *an essential part of your calling as a Christian*, and you *need to be intentional*.

Begin praying for the Lord to reveal who you might reach out to, pray for an opportunity, and be ready and obedient to pursue that opportunity the moment the door opens. Sometimes the non-churched neighbor might even reach out to you! That has happened to me a couple of times.

It all starts with *connecting*. The Holy Spirit will be your help and guide.

## Welcome

Mason Garrett



Born June 16 to Jacob and Regina Vaverka

## In Memory of

Tim Nelson



June 19, 1952 – May 5, 2020

*Pella II Newsletter invites your contribution. Drop a note in the mailbox of any one of our editors.*

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