

Agenda Materials for the 152nd meeting of
Classis Lake Erie
of the Christian Reformed Church
to be held in Dearborn, Michigan, March 2, 2019, 9:30 a.m.

I. Reports for the Agenda

1. Stated Clerk (Ben Van Arragon, p. 3)
2. Executive Committee (Nathan Gritter, pp. 3-4)

II. Ministry Committees

1. Specialized Ministries
 - a. (Nathan Gritter)
2. New Church Development
 - a. (Mark Van Andel)
3. Leadership Development/Student Fund
 - a. Examination of Candidates Samuel Lee (Pastor; calling congregation: Ann Arbor Hope). Sermons, pp.
 - b. Colloquium Doctum, Rev. Marcia Fairrow (Hospital Chaplain; calling congregation: First CRC Detroit).
 - c. Colloquium Doctum, Rev. Do Hyeong Kim (Pastor, Korean Church of Saginaw; calling congregation: Community CRC, Saginaw).
4. Congregational Life
 - a. (Chris Lanham)

III. Denominational

1. World Renew (Mary Rupke)
2. Synod Report (synod delegates)
3. Selection of delegates, Synod 2019 (June 14-20, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI). See pastors list (p.). *Each Classis will send four delegates: 1 pastor, 1 elder, 1 deacon, and 1 additional officebearer.*

Other significant items will be added!

Covenant for Officebearers

(All first-time delegates to classis will be asked sign this document.)

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, which proclaims the good news of God's creation and redemption through Jesus Christ. Acknowledging the authority of God's Word, we submit to it in all matters of life and faith.

We affirm three creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. In doing so, we confess our faith in unity with followers of Jesus Christ throughout all ages and among all nations.

We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we also recognize the witness of Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context.

We also promise to present or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel. Should we come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is not the teaching of God's Word, we will communicate our views to the church, according to the procedures prescribed by the Church Order and its supplements. If the church asks, we will give a full explanation of our views. Further, we promise to submit to the church's judgment and authority.

We honor this covenant for the well-being of the church to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Stated Clerk's Report

1. Prepared and distributed the minutes of the October and December, 2018, meetings of classis.
2. Tended to various items of routine correspondence.
3. Prepared an agenda and minutes for the Executive Committee.
4. Prepared materials and made arrangements for the March, 2019, meeting of classis—this is a work in progress.

Executive Committee Report

Minutes – January 31, 2019, 12:30 p.m.

I. Attendance (Via Zoom conference call)

Present: Eunice Bossenbrook, Paul Bouman, Joe Creech, Nathan Gritter, Jung Un Park, Mark Van Andel, Ben Van Arragon

Absent: Harry Winters

II. Continuing Business

- A. Treasurer/Budget. Joe shared a financial review of 2018 and fielded questions. There was discussion regarding possible investment of Classis surplus funds. Joe will continue to research growth investment options for approximately half the surplus. Executive discussed options for “ministry” investment of remaining funds, which include: a. possible assistance with building loans for Cleveland Zion and All Nations Community (pending responses from CRC Loan Fund [All Nations] and feedback from Resonate rep [Zion]; b. support for several new urban, cross-cultural mission initiatives in Lake Erie through Resonate. Ben will prepare a brief proposal for Classis' March meeting outlining these options for ministry investment.
- B. Classis President/Vice-President. Nathan will serve as president through March 2019 meeting. Harry will step in as president for October 2019 and March 2020 meetings.
- C. Other CLE roles: Regional Pastors (Michigan; Ohio). Executive discussed the possibility of an expanded Regional Pastor role. Ben will research models from other Classes.
- D. Classis Handbook/policies/ministries. Executive agreed to keep a Classis Handbook update as an ongoing agenda item, even if work does not begin immediately.

- E. Inspire 2019 registrants' reimbursement. Ben will receive invoices from registrants and submit to Joe for reimbursement.
- F. Congregational Updates. Concerns, questions and comments were shared regarding various congregations undergoing leadership transitions or vacancies.

III. New Business

- A. Sabbatical Request: Christian Oh/Han Bit CRC. In January 2019, the Council at Han Bit CRC submitted a request for assistance with Rev. Oh's upcoming sabbatical. The Classis Leadership Development Committee endorsed the request. Motion: that Classis support Rev. Oh's sabbatical, per Classis Lake Erie policy, in the amount of 5,240.00. Motion is *adopted*.
- B. Update from Mark Van Andel re: Resonate and Classis. Mark serves as a Local Mission Leader in Lake Erie, and has joined the Classis Executive Committee.

IV. Preparation for March 2019 meeting of Classis

- A. Visitors/Special presentations: Mary Rupke, World Renew (this will be Mary's last meeting as WR representative. We will need to recruit a new one). Mark Van Andel/Carla Bieber, Resonate Global Mission. Laurie Harkema, Council of Delegates.
- B. Examination/interviews: Article 8 (Marcia Fairrow, Do Hyeong Kim); Article 6 (Samuel Lee).
- C. Report from Synod 2018 (Matt Ackerman, Larry Gruppen, Chris Lanham, Mary Rupke); selection of Synodical Delegates, Synod 2019.

V. Meeting adjournment.

- A. Meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Leadership Development

Sermons, SangMyung Samuel Lee

Catechism Sermon:

Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor (Matthew 18:21-35; Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 12-19)

Intro

Does anybody here own a smartphone? If you don't own a smartphone, you might have come across someone struggling with a smartphone. It's sometimes smarter than we are.

We like things to be user-friendly but this thing is not! I had my iPhone for couple of years, but I still don't know all the functions in my phone. It takes some time to get used to it.

And we often don't like it when we have to make a change from the way that we are used to living.

Switching from an old dumb phone to a smartphone. It's confusing. It's hard...

I think forgiveness is one of those things that's not very user-friendly. It's hard. The life of discipleship, the life of following Jesus Christ is not easy.

It demands sacrifice. It demands a long, pain-staking process. It demands that we die to ourselves. We struggle with forgiveness.

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When we look at the beginning of today's text, Peter seems to have struggled with the same problem. He comes to Jesus and asks, "How many times should I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me?" Peter wanted a guideline, a limit as to how far he must go with this relationship business.

Then he adds, "Up to seven times?" Peter was being pretty generous, you know? 7 times?

That's a pretty big number! He was probably patting himself at the back while he was saying this because even the rabbis of his day suggested 3 as the maximum number of times, one might be expected to forgive.

But he gets no credit for his suggestion. Instead, Jesus goes even further and gives him a disturbing answer, "Not seven times, but seventy-seven times." Some translations have it as "seventy times seven," but it doesn't really matter whether Jesus said 77 or 70x7. Jesus was basically saying that forgiveness is not about keeping a tally. He was saying that there should be no limit to how much you need to forgive; it must be beyond counting.

With only a blank stare looking back at him, Jesus begins to tell a parable:

There was a servant who somehow piled up quite a bit of debt. I mean a lot of debt, like hundreds of millions of dollars, and he was indebted to the king. He sure liked using his credit cards and he has now maxed out his cards.

One day, the king called all his servants to settle accounts with them. And this servant started freaking out because he didn't have the money to pay back his debt. When he was brought before the master, he honestly confessed that he didn't have any money to pay him back, hoping that the master would extend the term of his debt.

But the master was firm. He ordered the servant and his whole family and all he had to be sold to repay the debt.

At that moment, the servant fell on his knees and begged for mercy. "Be patient with me, and I will pay it back."

This plea moved the master's heart. He took pity on him, and the master made a big decision. "I've canceled your debt; I forgive you completely. You are now debt free. You may go." The servant couldn't believe his ears.

The servant kept repeating "thank you, thank you" as he walked out of the palace. He couldn't wait to tell this good news to his wife and his children.

On his way home, however, he came across one of his fellow servants. He had been looking for this fellow because this fellow servant owed him a few hundred dollars.

In an instant, he totally forgot about what happened just few minutes ago. And he grabbed the fellow servant by the throat and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he demanded.

The fellow servant fell on his knees and begged for mercy. "Be patient with me, and I will pay it back." His fellow servant pleaded for mercy using the exact same words that the other servant used before the master...

But unlike the master, this servant refused to forgive and threw his fellow servant in prison.

Other servants who were watching this whole scene from a distance became angry, they were outraged because they knew what the master had done for this servant. So, they decided to go and tell what happened to the master.

Then the master called the servant in, "You wicked servant," he said, "I canceled all your debt because you begged me to. Shouldn't you show mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" The master was so angry that he handed the servant over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay back all he owed...

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After listening to this parable, how do you feel toward the unmerciful servant?

No wonder the other servants who were watching the whole scene were outraged; we are outraged too. This guy who gets forgiven millions of dollars goes out and jails a fellow servant over a small change!

And we ask, how could he do that? He is so selfish! He is ruthless! (Pause)

But what about us? Are we much different from the unforgiving servant? Don't we also struggle with forgiveness? Yes, we struggle. We too struggle to forgive! We often fail to forgive others even in small trivial matters.

Often times, we do not really want to forgive someone, even though we know that we "should." We want revenge. We want to get back at our spouse, children, parents, friends, or co-workers for what they have done. We think to ourselves, "I have the right to be mad; I have the right to stay mad." And we tell each other, "You can't forgive him! You can't let her get away with that!"

We resist forgiving others because we think that the person who hurt us ought to do or say something to repay and amend what they have done. We want to put conditions on forgiveness. With our sense of justice, we justify being unmerciful...

Sometimes, we try to practice forgiveness in our own way. Most of us are willing to get burned once, a lot of us even twice, but the third time, we tend to back off. It is as if we have little calculators in our heads, keeping track of how much we are putting into our relationships versus how much we are getting out of them, and not many of us pursue those relationships with a negative balance. This might be a blunt way to put it, but I think we all know that this is true.

It is easy to point our finger at the unmerciful, unforgiving servant in the parable, but we often find ourselves in the same spot. We struggle and fail to forgive others. Like Peter, we are tempted to ask, "Isn't forgiving 7 times enough? After seven times, I meet my obligations, right? We want to set up a boundary. We want to set a limit on how much we can forgive. But Jesus says that we should forgive 77 times, 7 x 70 times, that we should forgive without counting the numbers..."

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But how do we do that, right? How can we do that?

To find an answer to this question, we should give a closer look at what the master first did to the unforgiving servant because that's what God did for us. The servant owed hundreds of millions of dollars to the king, which would have been impossible for him to pay back. He deserved punishment. He deserved to work all his life to pay back what he owed. But, he was set free from his unpayable debt because the master forgave him. And this, brothers and sisters, is what God did for us. This is what God did for you.

There was a six-year-old boy whose mother asked him to stop running through the house because he might stumble and fall and hurt himself or break something. So, of course, he ran and stumbled and fell and broke a vase. His father saw it all happen, picked him up, dusted him off, and said, "Don't worry about it. It's just a vase." His mother, however, knelt down and gathered up the shattered pieces and said softly, "It wasn't just a vase. It was my favorite vase. My mother gave it to me, her mother gave it to her, and I looked forward to giving it to my children." And she wept, and the little boy wept, and the mother took him in her arms and hugged him and he hugged her back. "Who forgave here, the father or the mother?"

Brothers and sisters, forgiveness does not equal forgetting. Forgiveness is not denying our hurt or what has happened. In fact, when we minimize what has happened and tell ourselves that it was not really that bad, we cannot really forgive.

To forgive is to make a conscious choice to release the person who has wounded us from the sentence of our judgment. To forgive is to absorb evil without passing it on, putting an end to the cycle of violence. Forgiveness means confronting evil, pain and suffering, naming it and dealing with it.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it broke God's heart greatly when we fell into sin. We were dead in our sin. We were enemies of God because of our sin. We didn't just owe God a few silver coins. We owed God 10,000 bags of gold, hundreds of billions, zillions of bags of gold. We owed God an amount that would have been impossible for us to pay back, and we deserved eternal punishment.

Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 12 and 13 states that "according to God's righteous judgment, we deserve punishment both now and in eternity" and it's not something that we can pay back.

BUT, God cancelled our debt. Our King cancelled our unpayable debt! He completely forgave our sin! He didn't forgive because he was some kind of pushover. He was not doing some kind of cheap charity. God knew the enormity of our debt. It cost him his Son. It cost him dying on the cross bearing the weight of our sin...

Yet he chose to remain in relationship with us. Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 18 tells us that through the costly sacrifice of our mediator Jesus Christ on the cross—who was both true God and true human—we are reconciled to God. We have peace with God. This is true forgiveness. At the end of the parable, the unforgiving servant is put in jail to be tortured, and in v. 35, Jesus says, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

This doesn't mean that God will withdraw or cancel his forgiveness if we don't forgive others. If human forgiveness is precondition for God's forgiveness, no one could be forgiven by God because our forgiveness is never perfect. This parable does not teach that forgiving others is a prerequisite for earning God's forgiveness.

But what Jesus is saying is this: if we really know what it is like to be forgiven, how could we deprive anyone else of the same experience? He is saying that we ought to forgive others because we are people who have received God's forgiveness. Since we have been forgiven, his forgiveness, his grace leads us to become a forgiver.

C.S. Lewis describes this beautifully, "to be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you."

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Only the experience of being forgiven makes it possible for us to truly forgive. Yet, this is not easy. Forgiveness is a slow process. It takes a long time, maybe even life-long.

It is hard to forgive someone who has wronged us, not because we don't think it's right but because it is hard to let go of the hurt we have received.

That's why, Lewis Smedes says that "It is a superhuman task to forgive." We need God's help in doing this...

During the Holocaust, a woman named Corrie Ten Boom and her family were sent to a Nazi concentration camp for hiding the Jews in their home.

Years after the war, Corrie Ten Boom had spoken at a church in Germany to share the message of God's love and forgiveness. After the service, a man approached her, and she recognized him right away because he was one of the prison guards at the concentration camp that she was in and was one of the most cruel guards.

And she shares this story:

He came up to me as the church was emptying and said, "How grateful I am for your message to know that, as you say, he has washed my sins away." "I was a guard at a concentration camp. But since that time, I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. His hand was thrust out to shake mine—'will you forgive me?' And though I preached on the need to forgive, I couldn't shake his hand. I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I ever had to do.

"Jesus, help me!" I prayed silently. "I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling."

And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one that was stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. A current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.

"I forgive you, brother!" I cried. "With all my heart!"

For a long moment we grasped each other's hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then...

And I really appreciate what Corrie Ten Boom says after sharing this story.

She says that having learned to forgive in this hardest of situations,

"I wish I could say that I never again had difficulty in forgiving."

"I wish I could say that merciful and charitable thoughts just naturally flowed from me from then on. But they didn't."

"If there's one thing I've learned at 80 years of age, it's that I can't store up good feelings and behavior—but only draw them fresh from God each day..."

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we cannot do true life without forgiveness. We cannot have true relationship without forgiveness. We cannot have friends, family, lasting marriages without forgiveness. But it is difficult, very difficult.

Forgiveness offends our sense of justice. We want to keep score and write people off after forgiving 3 times or maybe even 7 times.

However, when we consider how many times we have been forgiven ourselves, through no merit of our own but simply because someone loves us very, very much. As that reality begins to sink in, deep in our hearts, God helps us to be forgiving people as He forgives us daily.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we forgive because of who we are. "Forgiven" is our identity. Forgiveness is our lifestyle.

Forgiveness and mercy is the air we breathe, the life we live. Amen.

Old Testament Sermon:

#Blessed?

Genesis 12:1-3

For the month of January, we're looking at the 4 core values of Hope Church. So for the past three weeks, we've looked at 1. Being with God, 2. Being Together with One Another 3. Being with All Generations. And today, we are going to talk about the last core value which is 4. Being Sent Out to the World.

Intro

I don't know if this still happens, but a few years ago, there was this movement that went viral at Starbucks and I think even at some fast-food restaurants. I think they call it "paying-it-forward"

Some generous customer would pay for the drink they ordered, and then give Starbucks some extra money and say that they're paying for the next customer's drink.

So if Daniel orders his favorite Green Tea Frappuccino and pulls up to the drive-thru window, the Starbucks barista would tell him that his drink has already been paid for by the person in front of them. And they would ask, would you like to return the favor? Meaning, would you like to pay for the next person?

And apparently at one Starbucks in Florida, this lasted for 10 hours! There was a chain of 378 people who agreed to pay for the next person ordering their drinks. Isn't that pretty cool?

And this chain was ended by the 379th customer who just wanted to receive his free coffee, and not pay for the next customer. Some people call him a selfish jerk and some people say, "He just wanted his free coffee."

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And in today's text, everyone in Abram's day was like the 379th customer. Everyone lived for themselves.

In order for us to better understand today's text, we are gonna go all the way back to Genesis 1 and come back later to Genesis 12.

In the beginning, in Genesis 1-2, God creates the world out of love. God creates the world as an outward extension/overflow of his love. God creates human beings to invite them into the love he shares within Himself.

Basically, in Genesis 1, God is building a beautiful home, and he's inviting human beings to live in it with him.

Peace, harmony, a place where everything and everyone can thrive, is what God desires for this world. We call this shalom. Everyone say, "Shalom." Shalom is peace, harmony, wholeness, the state where everything and everyone can thrive.

In Genesis 1:26-28, in Genesis 2:15, we also read that God creates human beings in his image, in his likeness, and God blesses them to rule and take care of the world as God's representatives. To protect and promote shalom.

But in Genesis 3, sin enters into the world. The serpent comes and tempts Eve, "If you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you'll be like God."

Adam and Eve were already like God because they were created in his image. But now they try to become like God on their own. They try to make a name for themselves apart from God. They try to make themselves bigger than God.

One of the primary results of sin is that we see life as a competition. Instead of believing that there is enough love, enough resources for everyone, sin makes us believe that there isn't enough to go around. So you must compete. Steal from others. Even kill others.

We call this anti-shalom, where peace, harmony is broken. We no longer care about the thriving of other people; we just care about ourselves.

And we see what anti-shalom looks like in the next several chapters.

In Genesis 4, Cain murders his brother Abel.

And in Genesis 6, we read about the wickedness of the human race, about the flood

And in Genesis 11, we come to the story of the Tower of Babel where people try to build a city, to build a tower, to make a name for themselves, to be like God.

And at the end of Genesis 11, this guy named Abram is born. And he's born in a time where everyone is like the 379th customer, everyone tried to make a name for themselves, he was born into a world of anti-shalom.

And at the time and place when Abram lived, people lived in tribes and everyone belonged to a tribe. Your tribe was your family, your bloodline, your tribe was your home, your identity.

And being part of a tribe was not like picking a club, like chess club or a book club.

It was a lot more serious. Being part of a tribe was about survival, it was a life or death issue.

The world was extremely dangerous, and without the protection of a tribe, a person would be easily get enslaved or killed by another tribe.

And tribes at that time existed only for their own well-being and preservation. You had to work for the well-being of your tribe, to bless your tribe. You accumulated possessions, fought battles, made alliances, all in the name of tribal preservation. To protect your tribe and to make your tribe stronger. But this always came at the cost of other tribes.

Being in a tribe was not a bad thing in and of itself, but the tribal mentality creates this separation between us and them. And it gave you permission to demonize the other tribes, to see the other tribes as your enemy, which would give you permission to kill and steal from them.

And at that time, each tribe had their own gods and goddesses. And when a tribe would go into war with other tribe, they would see it as your god fighting against their god.

And before they went to war, the tribes would worship and offer sacrifice, and ask their gods to bless them. They would ask their gods to bless them to win the war, to win in the competition. That they would be the ones to steal and kill, instead of being conquered and killed.

And every tribe, everyone lived with this “every person for themselves,” mentality because the world was a scary place. There wasn’t enough to go around. So it was you and your tribe against other tribes. It was your god versus other tribe’s gods. So you had to compete, steal, and kill others. Everyone lived against shalom.

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And I don’t think things have changed all that much. Our world today doesn’t seem all that different from the world back then. Does it?

We also live in a world that promotes this, “every person for themselves” mentality because life is competition.

We live in a world where we are told to work for our own well-being and preservation.

And we love this tribal mentality. Because that’s what gives us security, that’s what gives us our identity.

The only difference is that we don’t use the word “tribe” to describe ourselves.

We live in a country that says, “America First,”

When America is around 6% of the world’s population, and we consume over 40% of its resources.

We live in a country that says, “Make America Great Again.”

When we are the richest and the most powerful country on earth.

We live in a country that says “God Bless America.”

When hundreds of millions of people in the world still die of hunger.

We live in a culture that tells us to get better grades, to get into better schools, to get better jobs, to make more money, to live in better neighborhoods, to buy nicer houses, to get nicer phones, to drive nicer cars, to buy nicer clothes, to go on nicer vacations. All for me and my family.

That’s the world that we live in.

We live in a culture that has put our personal comfort, achievement, fulfillment higher than anything.

And like the tribes back then, we worship and offer sacrifice, and ask God to bless us. We ask God to bless us to win in the war, to win in the competition. To get into better schools, to get into better jobs. We long for the blessing of God for ourselves.

I was talking with Ptr. Daryl this week about my sermon, and what he shared stuck with me. He said, when we get blessed, when God gives us something, we assume that it’s for us. That whatever comes your way is for you. That’s not being blessed, that’s just being greedy.

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And at the end of Genesis 11, we read that Abram is born in Ur, a first world country of his day. He was born in a tribe that was strong and wealthy, which also meant that he was a part of a tribe that was good at stealing and killing.

But in today's passage, in Genesis 12:1, God who had been silent for a while, speaks to Abram. God says, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you."

God tells Abram to leave his tribe! God is telling Abram to leave his identity, his security, his privilege. God's basically telling Abram to leave everything behind. God's inviting him to die to his old self, to die to his "everyone for themselves" mentality.

And God gives to Abram a promise.

And God first says, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you."

And Abram's nodding his head, "Yeah, come on."

And then God says, "I will make your name great. He even says, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse."

And Abram's like, "Oh, I like that."

And then, at the end, God says something that's surprising, He says "and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

This was a brand-new idea. This was a counter-cultural idea.

But this was never been a new idea for God.

In a world where tribes existed for their own well-being and preservation,
in a world where you had to compete, steal, and kill,
in a world where everybody lived against shalom,
God wants to build a new tribe, a new nation through Abram where it is no longer about just me, my family, my tribe, our nation, our religion, but about everyone.

In Genesis 3-11, we read about Adam and Eve falling into sin, and people trying to make a name for themselves. To become like God.

But in Genesis 12:1-3, we see a reversal of the curse, we see God's promise, God's mission to bring all of his creation back to himself. To bring peace, harmony, to bring shalom back to the world.

Can I ask someone to find Matthew 1 and read verse 1 for us?

"This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham"

Jesus is born from the tribe of Abram. God himself enters into the world through the tribe of Abram. And what does Jesus do?

Jesus gave up the glories of heaven, and came down to earth and even went up to the cross.
He came not to be served but to serve.
Jesus came not to be blessed but to be a blessing.
And on the cross, Jesus' body is broken and poured out for you, for me, and for the healing of the world.
To bring peace, harmony, to bring shalom.

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Brothers and sisters in Christ, those who have faith in Jesus are called the children of Abraham.

And God's call to Abram still applies to us today.
Just like God called Abram to leave his tribe, God calls us to die to our old self, to our self-seeking, tribal-centered life.

God calls us out of the world that pushes us to work for my own blessing, for my own success.
And God calls us to a new way of life. God says, "I will bless you so that all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Brothers and sisters in Christ, God has blessed us to be a blessing, with the gospel, with our wealth, with our education, with our talents.
And we can't be a blessing to other people unless we are willing to lose things.
Following God's calling, following Jesus, comes at a cost. No wonder Jesus said that the way is narrow.

But why follow Jesus if He offers the same vision for life that the world offers? If it's all about me, my family, my church, Korean people, why follow Jesus?

But God gives us a vision for life that's worth giving our lives to, a vision for life that's worth dying for. "I will bless you, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Prayer

At this time, I want to invite us to pray. And at this time, I want to invite you to use your imagination.

I wonder what the world will look like if we really lived our lives with this vision. What if we live, study, what if we build our careers in such a way that all peoples on earth will be blessed through us? What if we spent our lives wondering, "How can I spend myself? How can I give myself away for the sake of the gospel?"

God, in this world where we are forced to compete, to win, to fight for myself and my tribe's blessing, we thank you for inviting us to a different vision of life. Instead of us trying to bless ourselves, making a name for ourselves, God you promised Abram, and you promise us that You will be the one to bless us, so that we may be a blessing to others.