



The Monthly Newsletter of
Ebenezer Reformed Church
of Morrison, IL

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Ebenezer Reformed Church

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Our Mission: Helping people
find & follow Jesus

Dear Church Family,

At the start of a new year I thought I'd give some Christian insights on New Year's resolutions. What if we shifted the focus from self-improvement to spiritual growth and the glory of God? While the Bible does not explicitly command New Year's resolutions, it encourages regular self-examination, setting godly goals, and relying on the Holy Spirit rather than human willpower for lasting change.

1. Prioritize Spiritual Fitness Over Physical Goals: While physical health is important as the body is a "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), Christians are encouraged to prioritize spiritual disciplines like daily Bible reading and prayer. Physical fitness, the most common new year's resolution, should be secondary to spiritual fitness.

2. Examine Your Motivation: A common Christian critique of resolutions is that they can become self-centered or rooted in vanity. If your resolutions are only focused on you, then go back to the drawing board. Ensure that your goals include loving others.

3. Rely on God's Strength, Not Just Willpower: Many resolutions fail because they depend solely on human effort. Christians are encouraged to "commit their way to the Lord" (Psalm 37:5) and seek His strength for any change. We must understand that being able to do all things through Christ who strengthens us means that we must depend on His strength continuously in order to do all things—including the keeping of all our resolutions.

4. Focus on Daily Grace and Habits: Rather than waiting for a yearly "reset," Christian life is viewed as a daily process of renewal (2 Corinthians 4:16). If you make every day a destination for your spiritual life, then resolutions aren't as necessary (and you won't feel as guilty for not following through—tomorrow is a new day!).

5. Incorporate Community and Accountability: Seeking wisdom from others and finding an accountability partner are biblical strategies for successfully maintaining goals. Without counsel, plans fail, but with many advisers, they succeed. (Prov. 15:22)

A Prayer for the New Year:

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of a new year. Guide our steps, strengthen our faith, and help us to be a light in our community. May we grow closer to You and each other in 2026. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful, peaceful, and hope-filled new year!

A Joy to Serve You,

Sunday Worship - January 2026



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Series: Foundations of the Reformation (Part 1 of 7)**Sermon:** “The Great Reformation”**Scripture:** Romans 1:8-17**Speaker:** Pastor J.T. Bean

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Series: Foundations of the Reformation (Part 2 of 7)**Sermon:** “What Is Reformed Theology?”**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:3-14**Speaker:** Pastor J.T. Bean

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Series: Foundations of the Reformation (Part 3 of 7)**Sermon:** “Sola Gratia, Grace Alone”**Scripture:** Ephesians 2:1-9**Speaker:** Pastor J.T. Bean

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Series: Foundations of the Reformation (Part 4 of 7)**Sermon:** “Sola Fide, Faith Alone”**Scripture:** Romans 3:21-28**Speaker:** Pastor J.T. Bean

Ask the Pastor: What is “Reformed” Theology?

This is actually the title of one of my Sunday sermons this month. Theology is the study of God and religious beliefs. “Reformed” theology is a way of understanding and living out the Christian faith that is deeply rooted in the teachings of the Bible and the historical traditions of the Protestant Reformation.

Reformed Theology traces its roots to the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, particularly to leaders like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli. These reformers (and others) sought to return the church to the teachings of Scripture and to emphasize key biblical truths about God, salvation, and the Christian life.

Ultimately, Reformed Theology is not just a set of ideas—it’s a way of life. It calls us to trust in God’s promises, rely on His grace, and seek to honor Him in every area of life. It encourages us to study the Bible deeply, worship God sincerely, and serve others generously, all for the glory of God.

If you’re curious about Reformed Theology, I will be speaking in my next sermon series about the history and teachings that came out of the Protestant Reformation. I think you will learn a lot and be strengthened in your Christian faith. After all, the goal of Reformed Theology is to help us know God more fully and to walk with Him faithfully, every day.



January 2026



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				 1 New Year's Day	2	3
4 Worship 9:30am Youth/Ed Cmt 10:45am	5 Church Life Cmt 10:30am	6 Bldg. & Property Cmt. 6:30pm	 7 Women's Bible Study 1pm AfterShock 5:30-7pm	8 Worship Team Mtg 5:15pm Exec Team 6:30pm	9	 10 Men's Bible Study 7:30am
11 Worship 9:30am	12 Elders 6pm Consistory 6:30pm	13 O.M.E. Task Force 3:30pm	14 AfterShock 5:30-7pm	15 All Church Prayer Meeting 6-7pm	16	 17 Men's Bible Study 7:30am
18 Worship 9:30am Taco & Trivia Night 5pm 	19 MLK Jr. Day 	20	21 AfterShock 5:30-7pm	22 Delightful Diners 5pm	23	 24 Men's Bible Study 7:30am
25 Worship 9:30am	26	27	28 AfterShock 5:30-7pm	29	30	 31 Men's Bible Study 7:30am

JANUARY Birthdays

1/5 Beau Brackemyer	1/10 David Ottens	1/15 Dave Schipper	1/20 Seiko Lovestrand
1/6 John Taylor	1/10 Michael Blean	1/16 Erik Renkes	1/22 Akaria Lovestrand
1/6 Noah Stout	1/12 Jenny Gray	1/17 Lo Bean	1/22 Cruz Remrey
1/8 Chana Kullerstrand	1/13 Roger Scheenstra	1/19 Ken Renkes	1/23 William Patton
1/8 Delores Stuart	1/14 Janelle Lopez	1/19 Megan Szabo	1/28 Ella Brooks
1/8 Kevin Bruckner	1/14 John Vegter	1/19 Sandi Gorzney	1/28 Landon Remrey
	1/14 Warren Tichler		1/31 Jon Kophamer

➔ Please contact the church office to make sure your birthday is on our list.

♥ Also: If you are married, tell us your wedding anniversary.

Ladies Aid

Will not meet in January or February.
Join us/see you in March!

Women's Bible Study

Please join us for a Bible Study the first Wednesday of the month at 1:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Our leader is Doris Bielema. In January we will meet on the 7th.

Men's Bible Study

The Men's Bible Study is open to young and old. We meet every Saturday morning at 7:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Bring your Bible. Coffee and donuts will be served. We are currently studying the O.T. book of Judges.

Mid-High Bible Study

The Mid-High class will meet in the Upper Room on January 11th, 18th and 25th. We will finish up our "Not A Fan" video series.

Heaven's Express

"Children's Church" for grade school kids on Sunday morning will resume on January 11 with Jan, Ann and Jennie leading.

AfterShock

This Wednesday Night ministry for pre-school through Middle School includes a meal and Bible lesson each Wednesday from 5:30-7:00 pm. After 3 weeks off for the holidays we will resume on January 7th.

Consistory Mtg.

The Consistory meeting for this month will be on Monday, January 12th starting at 6:00 p.m. The elders and deacons will meet separately for the first half hour. They will come together for the first meeting of the year starting at 6:30 p.m.

Prayer Concerns

● Pray for those who need restored health, healing, and encouragement: Wally & Joanne Peterson, Sandi Gorzney, Marguerite Clark, Ruth Rosenow, Ron Wiersema, Keith Morine, Neva Baar, Fred Hadley, Barb Geerts, Elmer Huizenga, Diane Boelkins, Jeg Weets, and Joyce Wilkins. Pray also for those with special needs or unspoken prayer requests, as well as our shut-ins and nursing/assisted-living residents.

● Pray also for our military men serving in the U.S. Armed Forces:

Elijah Bean (Air Force)

Gregory Bush (Air Force)

Tyler Haan (Air Force)

Brevin Pruiss (Navy)



● Pray for our missionaries:

Andrew & Sophia Pitcher with Wycliffe Bible Translators, Roger & Sue Scheenstra in Africa, Ben & Kelita Johnson in Honduras, and Jeff & Chelsea Lampen in Germany, Angel Lopez in Mexico, and Joel & Seiko Lovestrand in Japan.

● Prayer is available after each Sunday worship service. There is always an elder there to meet in the prayer room to pray about whatever concerns are on your heart.

● Contact the pastor or church office to put a prayer request on the email "prayer line". Prayer requests will be sent out as soon as the pastor is able to do so.

● Join us for our monthly prayer meeting on Thursday, January 15th from 6-7 p.m. We will meet in the fellowship hall to pray for our church, our community, our country, and our world.

January Meetings At-a-Glance

Sun. 1/4 - Youth/Ed Meeting, 10:45 a.m.
 Mon. 1/5 - Church Life Committee, 10:30 a.m.
 Tues. 1/6 - Building & Property Cmt. 6:30 p.m.
 Wed. 1/7 - Women's Bible Study, 1:30 p.m.
 Thu. 1/8 - Worship Team, 5:15 p.m.
 Thurs. 1/8 - Executive Committee, 6:30 p.m.
 Mon. 1/12 - Elders & Deacons, 6:00 p.m.
 Mon. 1/12 - Consistory, 6:30 p.m.
 Tues. 1/13 - O.M.E. Task Force, 3:30 p.m.
 Thurs. 1/15 - Prayer Meeting, 6:00 p.m.



Menu for January:



7th Walking tacos and nachos
 14th Spaghetti, salad, garlic bread
 21st Chicken nuggets, mac & cheese, beans
 28th Sub sandwiches, baked beans, chips

Bible Lessons for January:

7th Joshua's Farewell
 14th The First Judges
 21st Deborah Led Israel
 28th Gideon Led Israel



Nursery Schedule

Jan. 4 - Shawn & Kevin Soenksen
 Jan. 11 - Angie T & Allison Weaver
 Jan. 18 - Jackie & Alicen Wiersema
 Jan. 25 - Shawn & Kevin Soenksen



Sunday Greeters

Jan. 4 - Barb Prins & Deb Adolph
 Jan. 11 - Barb Domdey & Doris Bull
 Jan. 18 - Diane Wiebenga & Jane Haan
 Jan. 25 - Bailey Morine & Marilyn Tichler



Welcome Center

Jan. 4 - Verne & Pat Pessman
 Jan. 11 - Sharon R & Ken Jansma
 Jan. 18 - Nick & Melinda Hamstra
 Jan. 25 - Michael & Marcia Blean



Tech Team

Jan. 4 - William & Jenny Patton
 Jan. 11 - Scott M & Phil A
 Jan. 18 - Gregg W & Todd K
 Jan. 25 - Scott M & Jovie P



Fellowship Hour

Jan. 4 - Jack & Susan Bland
 Jan. 11 - Schavers & Wiebengas
 Jan. 18 - Ken & Glenda Jansma
 Jan. 25 - Arlyn & Marilyn Tichler



Bell Ringers

Jan. 4 - Randy Renkes
 Jan. 11 - Jon Kophamer
 Jan. 18 - Jon Brackemyer
 Jan. 25 - John Dickey



** Please call the church office if you'd like to be added as a volunteer on any of the service teams.*



Ryan Karp and his wife Jessica with their three children: Benzi (born in 2013), Yoshi (born in 2016), and Talia (born in 2019)

Missionary Spotlight

Ryan Karp

This month we are introducing a new missionary that we are supporting. Ryan Karp is the Vice President of **Chosen People Ministries**. Formerly from Chicago, Ryan is now based in South Florida with his wife and 3 kids. You may recall Ryan was with us hosting the Seder Meal on Maundy Thursday last year.

Since then, we have kept in touch with Ryan and believe it is important to support him and his ministry to Jewish people around the world. **Chosen People Ministries** is dedicated to praying for, evangelizing, discipling, and serving the Jews who do not yet know Jesus as Messiah (the Savior). We will be supporting Ryan starting out at \$100/month for now.

Ryan was scheduled to speak at our missions conference last September but had to cancel due to some health issues. It has since been determined that he has cancer and he is currently going through chemotherapy treatments. Please pray for a healing miracle, and for him and his family to be comforted and strengthened. Here is a recent personal note from Ryan Karp himself:

The Lord is good! He delivered the Hebrews from bondage. He was ever-present during the trials that Joseph endured. He was faithful to King David even when David didn't deserve it. Jesus healed people with faith and with people who were merely curious. Over and over again, in the Bible and I am sure in your personal life, you can point to times He has been faithful.

Many people have been asking for updates on my stage 4 pancreatic cancer and treatment. Jessica and I have been overwhelmed by the love that you have poured out on us in those requests and in your support in prayers. Unfortunately, there are just too many requests for updates for us to update each person individually.

There are not too many updates at this point. I am in the hospital for four and a half days getting tests and three straight days of very strong chemotherapy. Then I get to be home for nine and a half days. The chemo and ensuing couple days are challenging and tiring.

But amidst these challenges the Lord is good. He has answered prayers about pain in my legs which is now gone and removing pain when I breathe. He has also removed some things which could have caused more stress in this journey/battle. He has given me more energy (though not a normal amount) so I can spend more time with my wife and kids. Lastly, I have been able to have spiritual conversations with doctors and nurses and our church pastor has invited me to collaborate with him as he prepares for weekly sermons to 500 people.

As for specific prayer requests, please pray for divine healing, increased energy (even though the doctors say my fatigue will grow with chemo), and reduction in blood clots. Please pray boldly for Jessica as she is carrying so much for our family right now; that the Lord would bless and embrace her, and that the Lord would protect our three kids' hearts and minds.

MEMORY VERSE OF THE MONTH

FORGET THE FORMER THINGS
DO NOT DWELL ON THE PAST
SEE, I AM DOING A NEW THING!
NOW IT SPRINGS UP;
DO YOU NOT PERCEIVE IT?
I AM MAKING A WAY IN THE
WILDERNESS AND STREAMS IN
THE WASTELAND

isaiah 43:18-19

**1-YEAR BIBLE READING PLANS**

are available in the church lobby.

There is also a 3-year reading plan you can download off the church website (or available

upon request, ask Sue in the church office and she will print one out for you).



COMING SOON...



Sunday, January 18th, 5:00 p.m.

Invite people to join you in forming an unbeatable trivia team for a night of food and fun in the fellowship hall. Pastor J.T. will M.C. with 10 rounds of Q's on a variety of interesting topics.

PRAYER MEETING

Prayer is the lifeblood of the church. Join us for our monthly meeting on Thursday, January 15th from 6-7 p.m. We will meet in the fellowship hall to pray for our church, our city, our country, and our world.

Giving & Attendance

Here's an update on our numbers
for the month of December

Date	Attendance	Offering
December 7	105	\$3,306
December 14	100	\$4,972
December 21	156	\$8,612
December 28	100	\$8,174
	Avg. 115	Total: \$25,064

DEC. Breakdown:

General Fund: \$25,064
 Aftershock: \$236
 Thanksgiving (Morrison
 Food Pantry): \$300
 Christmas (Resthabe): \$2,130
 Special Event: \$1,000
 Tithe.ly (online giving): \$2,340.⁴⁴



Total: \$27,640.⁴⁴

Join the E-mail List

Stay informed of everything that's going on at Ebenezer: J.T. sends out a weekly **"Note From the Pastor"** as well as regular prayer chain emails as they come in to him. To get on the list, simply email Pastor J.T. and request to be added: pastorjt@ercmorrison.com





Note & Disclaimer

All *Ebenezer Happenings* article submissions need to be received by the 21st day of each month to guarantee inclusion in the next edition. We apologize for any missing or inaccurate information within this newsletter. If there are additions or corrections to be made, please call the church office at (815) 772-2472 or e-mail Sue Bond at office@ercmorrison.com



Find us on
Facebook



-  Keep up with current happenings, watch videos, and browse through photos and new posts.
-  Be sure to **"Like"** the Ebenezer Reformed Church Facebook page.
-  **"Share"** our posts to help spread the word about what's happening here.
-  Watch the Sunday morning Live-stream and post a comment to let us know who's watching and where you're watching from!

This newsletter is a publication of:

Ebenezer Reformed Church

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♦ **Rev. J.T. Bean, Lead Pastor**
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♦ **Sue Bond, Office Manager**
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 Office hours: M-F 9:00 a.m.-1p.m.

Sunday Morning Worship:

Worship Celebration - 9:30 a.m.

Fellowship Hour - 10:45 a.m.

Youth Bible Study Hour - 10:45 a.m.

***Helping people
find and follow Jesus***

2026 Consistory

Elders: J. T. Bean, Phil Ardapple, Barney Habben, Jon Kophamer, Keith Hamstra, Melinda Hamstra, Sandi Wilkins

Deacons: Jenny Patton, Randy Renkes, Darlene Schipper, Brian Tichler, Dave Weber, Gregg Wiersema

2026 Executive Team

J.T. Bean (Pastor)
Sandi Wilkens (Vice President)
Dave Weber (Deacon Chair)
Gregg Wiersema (Treasurer)
Melinda Hamstra (Clerk)

Consistory Notes:

The Consistory did not have a regularly scheduled meeting in December.

However, we did meet for a Staff Appreciation & Consistory Christmas dinner on Monday, December 8th. New members to Consistory were recognized while outgoing Consistory were thanked and affirmed for their terms of service. Staff present were also given words of thanks and affirmation.

An informal meeting of incoming Consistory did meet briefly after worship on Sunday, December 14th to nominate and place each Consistory member in proper committee assignments. The assignments were approved as follows:

Executive Committee: J.T. Bean (Pastor/President)

Sandi Wilkens (Vice President)

Dave Weber (Chairman of Deacons)

Gregg Wiersema (Chairman of Finance)

Melinda Hamstra (Clerk)

Youth & Education Committee: Sandi Wilkens, Melinda Hamstra

Church Life Committee: Phil Ardapple

Building & Property Committee: Randy Renkes, Brian Tichler, Jon Kophamer

Music & Worship Committee: Keith Hamstra, Jon Kophamer, Jenny Patton

Outreach, Missions & Evangelism: Darlene Schipper

Finance & Insurance: Dave Weber, Gregg Wiersema

Assistance & Memorial: Dave Weber

Sacraments: Barney Habben

