

Ontario Church Prepares at Home for Sunday Worship

Church ministry staff members at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario, help the congregation focus on the Word of God through the whole week.

As each Sunday approaches, pastor Henry Kranenburg prepares a brief introduction to the week's

message. That introduction, along with links to the Bible passages and offering causes, is emailed to members to help them prepare their hearts and minds for worship. Midweek, members receive a second email, "Take 2," that includes a summary of the main point of the sermon and



MONICA DERREGT

Rev. Henry Kranenburg prepares weekly emails to help church members prepare for and reflect on Sunday morning's message.

encouragement to apply the message to daily living.

Kranenburg said, "Preparing for and following up the message is an important spiritual activity because it becomes about engaging and becoming engaged with the Word."

Doreen Van de Ban said, "I like that it helps me to reflect [on the message] throughout the week and to be reminded that Sunday's sermons aren't just for Sunday."

—Monica deRegt

Michigan Church Moves to Former Fitness Club

It doesn't look like your typical church, but a former fitness club is the new home for Encounter Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

The building, about three miles from the church's original location, features locker rooms, a pool, two saunas, a steam room, a juice bar, a weight room, two exercise bike rooms, and several racquetball courts.

Pastor Dirk VanEyck said that the church plans to use the space for outreach events and youth ministry.

"We have one of very few racquetball courts in West Michigan, and we're looking for a way to make that outreach-oriented," said VanEyck. "If people come in the building to play racquetball, that's awesome."

The church is also transforming a juice bar into a youth room, and it plans to offer its locker rooms and showers for groups who are doing retreats or mission trips. It also hopes to transform some extra space into a laser tag area.

Encounter had previously operated under six different roofs, renting different spaces for worship, offices, storage, a youth room, large group gatherings, and band practices. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Ryan Struyk



JACKIE DEVRIES

This fitness room is just one of many areas in Encounter CRC's new building, formerly a fitness club.

Maryland Church Opens Food Pantry

In late August, the social hall at Silver Spring (Md.) Christian Reformed Church looked like a grocery store, with aisles full of products like canned goods, ripe watermelons, boxes of cereal, and baby formula. That's because the church has partnered with Capital Area Food Bank to open up a food pantry in an effort to serve their neighbors.

Previously the church had always kept supplies for those who would call or knock on its doors during the week. But after a growing awareness of the significant hunger in Montgomery County, members of the church's Social Justice and Community Concerns Committee wanted to do more. "This is probably one of the biggest places of poverty in Montgomery County," said Doug Bratt, pastor at Silver Spring.

"This is a significant effort," Bratt said as patrons streamed in the church's doors. The church was able to hand out approximately

1,300 pounds of food that will feed about 40 households. "We certainly think that as word of our pantry grows, the number of people we serve is going to increase," says Christel Milazzo, one of the volunteers for the food pantry.

—Callie Feyen

Some of the products available at the church's food pantry.

