

Annual Covenant Toy and Treasure Swap

It's that time of year again—the time of year when we remember and celebrate Christ's birth. It's also that time of year when we (probably) go a little overboard with gifts and things. Not only do most of us have cupboards and toy boxes that are overflowing, but we **have so much that we don't need or use.** Our kids outgrow toys, we are given items we **don't want or use, we have too many stuffed animals** (Seriously!). Covenant Toy and Treasure Swap to the rescue!


I know that we have personally been blessed with many gently used toys, pieces of furniture and household items from our church family. (Ploegstras, that toy vacuum you parted with last year is lugged all around our house. I just wish it really worked so that all of William's "vacuuming" was actually cleaning my floors! Also, to whoever brought the huge box of UNUSED crayons to the swap last year, thank you! We're still using them.)

In the spirit of battling consumerism, as well as sharing amongst our church family, Covenant is going to have our annual Toy and Treasure Swap on December 10, from 9:00 AM until 1:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall. If you would like to contribute to the toy swap sup-

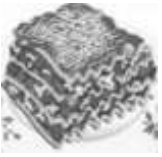
ply, please bring your gently used and gift-worthy household items, good used toys, games, puzzles, books, etc., to the Fellowship Hall or inside the NE lobby on Friday evening, December 9, from 5:00-8:00 PM or the morning of the swap.

As with all Covenant Swap Meets, everything is free and you don't have to bring something in order to take something!

-Laura Lappenga



Monday,
December 12
Lasagna Supper
6:00 PM
Congregational Meeting
7:00 PM



Plan to come before the congregational meeting and let the youth group cook for you! They will be hosting a freewill lasagna supper to raise money for community Christmas meals that they will be assembling and distributing this Christmas season.

Notes from the Pastor



Prepare to Be Prepared

Have you ever thought about the way each Gospel writer begins his book?

Matthew 1:1—**“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”**

Mark 1:1—**“The beginning of the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.”**

John 1:1—**“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”**

And then there is Luke 1:1—**“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us...”**

No Jesus. No claims to royal lineage or divine nature. In fact, it’s not until halfway through the first chapter that the angel finally announces to Mary that she is going to give birth to a son named Jesus. The first story Luke tells is of a faithful elderly couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth, who will give birth to a son who will prepare the way for the Messiah.

Advent at Covenant this year follows the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth as recounted in **Luke’s Gospel**. In many ways, we anticipate or dance around the familiar stories of Advent without ever touching on

them directly. We hear the birth of John the Baptist, but not John’s famous words, **“Prepare the way of the Lord.”** We meet Mary when she goes to the house of Elizabeth—right after the angel has told her the awe-inspiring news and right before she launches into song.

In all of this, Luke is laying the groundwork for the birth of the Messiah, opening the eyes of humble, faithful servants to the wondrous Good News that is about to come, yet in a way that defies expectations. The Good News is fulfillment—**God’s promises are always kept**. Advent invites us to have our eyes open to the wonders of the Messiah at work in the unexpected and the everyday, in the mundane and the extraordinary. In all **things, our eyes are opened to God’s undying, always and forever faithfulness.**

As we work our way through the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth this Advent, I invite you to read the whole of the opening chapters of **Luke’s Gospel**. Read the passages before and between our texts to see how **Luke weaves together the stories of Jesus’ and John’s births.**

Advent 1 (November 27): Luke 1:5-25
Advent 2 (December 4): Luke 1:39-45
Advent 3 (December 11): Luke 1:57-66
Advent 4 (December 18): Luke 1:67-80

-Pastor Kory



Statement on Racism

In light of Pastor Kory's recent sermons on racial reconciliation, here is the statement the CRC put out to the denomination this fall.

Statement on Racism

With deep sadness for recent violent events in the United States and Canada, we join others in grieving the deaths of Terence Crutcher, Colten Boushie, and many others across the world. These events, in light of our love for Christ, compel us to speak.

We recognize that we have remained silent about racial injustice and unjust actions in our nations all too frequently. Our silence on issues of race has been heard more clearly than our calls for reconciliation with God. With this in mind, we encourage Christian Reformed pastors to preach from their pulpits—clearly and prophetically—**about God's call to be ministers of reconciliation**, with hearts wide open, willing to sacrifice our pride for the sake of the gospel (2 Corinthians 5:11-6:10).

We confess that, like so many other denominations in North America, the Christian Reformed Church has a history of often finding our unity in our shared ethnicity rather than in Christ. We lament this sin, and encourage congregations to join us in committing to continue our learning about racism and its effects in our lives and societal structures.

We grieve the deaths of so many as the result of violence. We urge Christian Reformed congregations to pray for our police officers—for their safety and for them to be trained and equipped for responding in non-violent ways. We are grateful for these men and women who risk their safety and their lives, and we

owe them our support as they seek to protect and serve.

Our Lord Jesus Christ understands being falsely accused, persecuted unjustly, beaten and killed. He is the one that we can go to for comfort when we—especially our family members of color—suffer from similar experiences. Jesus is also one who radically spoke up for those being mistreated, who turned over the tables of those seeking to profit in the temple instead of helping others, who welcomed the marginalized and told his followers to do the same.

Racism strikes at the heart of our discipleship. We invite Christian Reformed pastors to join **us in answering God's call to be ministers of reconciliation and peace**, removing all barriers to the gospel message, including racism. In this way, we can better reflect the light of the love we have in Christ in a world that so desperately needs it.

We want this to be a conversation. We would love to hear from you about how God is at work in your congregation. We invite you to send us a prayer, a sermon, a litany, or something that happened in worship that struck you as profound related to this issue. It is our hope that we will continue to have these conversations as we seek justice and peace—together.

Gary J. Bekker, Director, CRWM
Carol Bremer-Bennett, Director, World Renew U.S.
Moses Chung, Director, CRHM
Michael LeRoy, President, Calvin College
Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, Director, World Renew Canada
Jul Medenblik, President, Calvin Theological Seminary
Darren Roorda, Canadian Ministries Director, CRCNA
Kurt Selles, Director, Back to God Ministries International
Steve Timmermans, Executive Director, CRCNA
Colin P. Watson, Director of Ministries and Administration, CRCNA

December Birthdays & Anniversaries

2	Logan H	16	Kathy DW Matt & Becky D	24	Pastor Kory P
3	Shiloh P	17	Nico DV Lily W	25	Betty VP
4	Bernie DW	18	Kelly & April Crull	26	Dennis VP
6	Nico Ribbens	19	John K Joe & Tina D	27	George & Jo F Dave & Jeri S
7	Elia E	21	Ruth Cla Gianni & Georgina G	28	Pat K
8	Jason W	22	Amelia L Shirley M	29	Emily K Reya T Jeff & Shirley T
11	Kara T	23	Jenna A Ben L	30	Natalee D Kurt & Kayt F
12	Mike VB Hendric VK	23	Katie VS Ryan & Val Z	31	Jenna R



Offering Schedule

December 4

AM General/Building Fund,
Compassion Fund
PM Safe Church Ministry

December 11

AM Christian Education Fund
PM IAPCHE

December 18

AM Tuition Assistance Fund
PM General Fund: Ministry Shares

December 24 (Christmas Eve)

PM World Renew: Haiti Response

December 25 (Christmas Day)
AM Mission Fund

December 31 (New Year's Eve)

PM Building Fund

Evening Worship Schedule

December 4 Teaching Service

December 11 Sunday School Christmas
Program

December 18 Service of Lessons and Carols

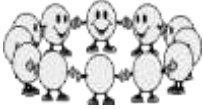
December 24 Christmas Eve Service

December 25 No evening service

December 31 **New Year's Eve Service**

December Assignments

Here are the assignments for members to “practice hospitality” this month...
Remember to wear your name badges!



Nursery

Parents of the month: Ryan & Angela H

December 4

AM INF Rob & Megan H, Rachel L
TODDLER Mariellen H, Andy L
PM Mark & Cheri H, John & Linda V

December 11

AM INF Katy W, Kris VP
TODDLER Dave & Emily K, Marty VP
PM Pam & Dennis DJ, Don & Sherri TN

December 18

AM INF Nick & Jenni B, Donna B
TODDLER Ron & Carol O, Ethan B
PM Mark & Sara H, Jo F

December 24 (Christmas Eve)

PM Luke & Sarah H, Pat K

December 25

AM INF Lee & Jenni M, Merrill MC
TODDLER Chris & Rin G, Mark MC

January 1

AM INF Dave & Jan V, Sharon V
TODDLER Daryl & Deb H, Kurt V

Thanks for serving!

Do you consider yourself a snowbird?
Are you planning on taking off for a month or two
or for most of the winter? Please notify the office
with the dates you'll be gone and I will avoid
scheduling you during that time!



Coffee Servers

Tina D, Rachel L, Joan MC,
Marilyn M, Carol O, Rog VH



Greeters

AM Jill F, Tim K, Jason W
PM Jo A, Daryl H, Ron O



Ushers

AM Pat C, Howie H, Eldon W
PM Marge DB, Bernie DW

Substitutes

*If you are unable to serve on your assigned
date for coffee, usher, or greeter, contact*

Rebecca DS, Jo F, Luanne G,
Barb H, Verne M, Len R

Courier Copy—It's up to you!

The *Courier* is issued monthly at Covenant church. If you have copy that you wish to be included, send it to the church office. Each issue is distributed on the last Sunday of the month. Copy deadline is Monday, December 19 for the January issue.

Notes from the Deacons

Money, Money, Money!

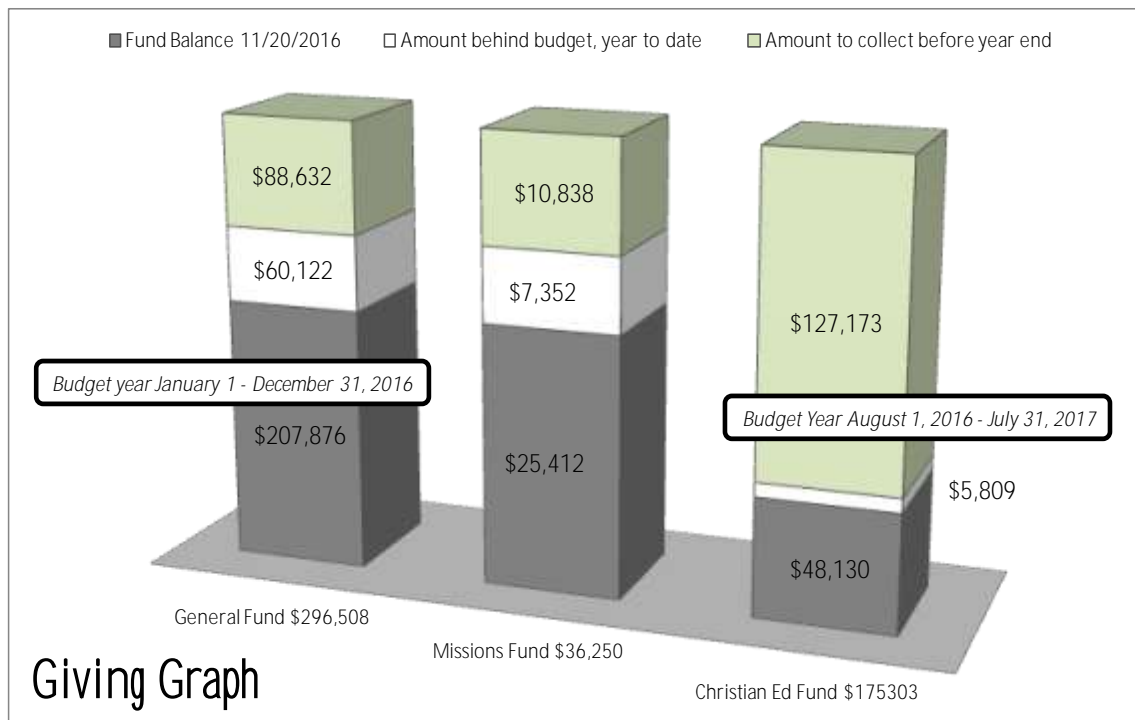
Were you ever told growing up that you weren't supposed to talk about money, or about how much you or anyone else earned, or about how you spent 'your' money? I was. I also believe many others were similarly trained. As a result, I and many other deacons, as well as members of this congregation, find it difficult to initiate conversations about money.

But on Monday evening November 19, the deacons engaged the congregation in a discussion about the church's money. Because the church is not an individual, it seems easier to talk about. But Covenant church, your church,

and its budget reflects the collective vision of our loves and our aspirations for what a healthy church can and should be doing. Those aspirations might be to support not only ministries, but individuals locally, nationally, and internationally. Those aspirations might be to provide the best possible programs for youth training, education, and outreach. Those aspirations might be to equip each member for daily ministry at home and at work.

So as the deacons have worked to prepare a budget for next year, we have proposed reducing the budget by \$50,000. Those cuts would include Covenant programs, reducing line items that were never spent, but also significantly reducing our commitment to the denomination. Currently the denomination

(Continued on page 7)



GEMS Update

The Northstar GEMS girls, grades 4th-7th and their counselors, participated in the REFIT night in Orange City on October 26. This night was a fundraiser for the Local Conference Committee as plans are being made for the annual Counselor's Conference at Dordt next summer. 127 girls, GEMS girls, counselors, aunts, moms, and ladies all came together to work out to uplifting music. The night was led by REFIT instructors from Sioux Falls. Thank you to the many moms and girls who came that are not involved in GEMS, and be watching for dates in the Spring as two more REFIT nights are being planned!

The 8th graders along with their counselors had their annual Mid-Sioux Scavenger Hunt during the October 26 meeting. The girls are spilt into two groups and go around collecting different supplies that are worth points. When the hour is up, the two teams return to church to count their points. Tracy Kollis' group was crowned the winners! You are encouraged to ask Tracy how many years **running she has held this title... and if the hunt is rigged in her favor!**



We had one meeting during the month of November. Grades 5-7 went out shopping during

our meeting for their service projects. Multiple shoeboxes were packed for Operation Christmas Child! The 7th graders enjoyed doing a craft while snacking on delicious brownies. The 4th grade girls finished decorating their GEMS bags they use throughout their GEMS years to carry their Bible and badge book.

Our fundraising goodies of cookies, cinnamon rolls, pretzels, and snacks arrived for the girls to deliver. Thank you to the many who purchased goodies to help support our club!

Notes from the Deacons

(Continued from page 6)

asks for \$427 per professing member aged 18 or above. On November 19 we asked the congregation for suggestions on how to proceed in the budgeting process. On November 29, the council will meet to approve a revised budget which will be given to you on December 4th. You will be asked to vote on the budget at a congregational meeting on December 12.

As the new year begins, the deacons are committed to engaging all members in discussions of the message of our communal and individual budgets. Is our giving or our budgeting limiting what Covenant can accomplish? In a culture which worships money, which delights in displays of wealth, and which is filled with fortune-seekers, we are awash in **our culture's lessons on how to earn money**, save it, spend it, and give it away. As a counterpoint we should, together, consider how the Bible informs our earning, saving, spending, and giving.

-Chris Goedhart

Children's Christmas Program

Three-3-year-olds through 8th graders will be presenting their Christmas program on Sunday, December 11 at 6:00 PM. Parents of children in grades 1-8, please note the following rehearsal times. Please try have your children present at all the rehearsals. If your child will not be able to participate, please contact Rebecca De Vries.

Sunday, December 4
8:45 AM rehearsal in the sanctuary
(no Sunday school)

Sunday, December 11
8:45 AM rehearsal in the sanctuary
(no Sunday school)
3:30-5:00 PM rehearsal

Children in Worship children will not need to be at these rehearsal but will prepare during their regular worship time.

Thank you to the children for working hard to prepare to share the Christmas story with us. And thanks also to all who are helping to plan and lead and organize.

-Rebecca DeVries

