

Our Journey 2020 Survey

A note from our denomination:

As a Christian Reformed Church, we are on a **journey of God's work together**. As with any journey, it is essential that as we travel we listen to each other and map our progress. With this in mind, the denomination has conducted a survey of CRC congregants every five years since 1987. Now we are increasing our efforts to listen and act upon input from each other. Instead of once every five years, we are moving to an every year survey model. In order to keep your survey burden light, however, we are randomly assigning every CRC church to one of five cohorts and asking each cohort to actively recruit survey responses once every five years. In this way, everyone at every church will have the opportunity to be heard every year, but everyone at every church will only be urged to respond once every five years. Covenant is part of this **year's survey cohort**. **Please participate!** Your journey is important to our journey.

To participate online, please visit www.crcna.org/survey and use the link to identify your home church. Answer the survey questions to the best of your ability. Your responses will remain anonymous and no personal information is attached or requested. Here are some frequently asked questions:

WWW@Cov

(Warm Winter Wednesdays)

February is almost here, which means it is time to warm up with a few Warm Winter Wednesdays! All are welcome to these events and this is a great way to get to know others in our church family!

Here is the plan for this month:

Wednesday, February 1, 5:30 PM

Tacos & Game Night

Come for tacos and stay for games! Bring a game you or your kids love to play!

Wednesday, February 15, 5:15 PM

Pizza and Pinewood Derby

Dust off your old pinewood derby cars! We will enjoy pizza together and invite you all to participate in our own Covenant Pinewood Derby (starting at about 5:45) before the Cadet Pinewood Derby which will follow at 7:00 PM.

(There will be a freewill donation box for each of the dinners.)

Frequently Asked Questions

Who should respond?

Everyone! Members, regular attenders, adults, youth, and senior citizens.

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Courier

February 2017

COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Notes from the Pastor



Spiritual Leadership in the Church

As we come to February, Covenant's council begins its process of discerning who God is calling to serve as elders and deacons at Covenant. Each year, after seeking the input of the congregation, the elders and deacons spend a considerable amount of time considering the gifts of folks in our congregation and who God might be calling to lead this congregation. At a full council meeting, we confer once more, seeking discernment of people's gifts to serve. After we finalize our list, we send out letters to those individuals, asking you to consider allowing your name to stand. And then, almost inevitably, we get **more people who say "no" than who say "yes."**

The two most common reasons people say no to serving on council seem to be either a) **I'm too busy**, b) **I'm not qualified**, or c) **I've already served the church enough** over the years. I would like to ask you to reconsider these excuses.

We are a busy, involved, and committed congregation. We serve on countless committees at work and at church already. We have family in far-flung parts of the country and the world, and we want to be able to spend that time with our grandchildren. **We're all busy. At the same time, one of the things that I value at Covenant is the level of congregational ownership in our church.** Our congregation depends on the decision-

making of committees. It depends on volunteered time. This is an amazing gift to our congregation. I realize that serving on council can be one more thing on your plate piled too high already. The simple reality is this: **if you're waiting for someone with less to do to step up and accept the position, it most likely isn't going to happen.**

Some of us feel unqualified to serve on council. Perhaps we believe that we have not been at Covenant long enough. Perhaps we believe that we need some experience serving as a deacon before we serve as an elder. Perhaps we always believed that our gender excluded us from serving and are not sure we wish to risk the ire of our family **members. Perhaps we feel like we just don't** have anything worthwhile to offer to the council. I invite you, however, to consider instead that we as a council take this process very seriously. We pray diligently over the list of nominees. We consider with thought and care who has the gifts to serve this congregation. In the request of the council, I invite you to be affirmed in the gifts that God has given you. We are not asking because we simply need a warm body to serve on council. We ask because we believe that God has equipped you and that God is calling you to serve.

Finally, I realize that some of you may be asked to serve again, even though you have served before—maybe more than once. At the moment, though, Covenant faces a unique demographic challenge. Covenant is growing. We have a lot of young families. We also have a number of retirees. What is largely missing, though, is the middle demographic. Individuals who are roughly 45-65

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The Building Committee would like to keep the congregation informed as we move forward with the kitchen remodel. On Tuesday, January 10 we met and looked over the two bids we received for cabinets, countertop, and flooring. The Neal Chase bid was \$1500 less than the How-to-Store. The committee decided to order the cabinets, etc. from Neal Chase. The bid for the complete kitchen remodel is around \$30,000. We are being very conscious of our finances as we continue with the project. Marv and Jacki Maassen have been working with us. Our goal is to have everything here by March 10.

Volunteers are welcome to help with the complete demo of the old kitchen. If you would be available for a day or two and would like to help out, please contact Ron Oostra. This will probably happen around March 13-15. We are also looking for one or two volunteers who



would be able to help Marv when needed with this project.

We are also using stores are part of the TRIP program. The appliances will come from **Joe's Appliance** and they will send the TRIP money to our Christian Education fund. We will also receive some from Neal Chase Lumber.

Housing is needed for the Plockmeyer family during the remodel. We would like to find a place for them to stay for 3 to 4 weeks and this would include 2 adults, 2 children, and 2 dogs. If you are willing to share your home, basement, or know of a place, please contact Rin Goedhart. We wish to make this as easy as possible on the family during the remodel of the kitchen.

Thank you for your support of this project!

-The Building Committee

Notes from the Pastor

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years old, with teen or college-aged children. **This "missing middle" is where Covenant has historically drawn much of its leadership (that is, those of you who already served when you were in your 40's and 50's). Covenant needs the leadership not just of its younger members but also of those with the seasoned wisdom of experience. If you find yourself thinking, "I've served enough, it's someone else's turn now," please recognize that someone else may not, in fact, be waiting in the wings to serve.**

The council is still at the beginning of its **nomination process and letters probably won't** be sent for over a month yet. I wanted to share this with you early on, though, to get the conversation started. We are seeking nominations for council now—they can be sent to Bob DeSmith, Dennis DeJong, or any of the council members)—and I ask you to consider whether God may be calling you to accept the nomination when the time comes.

-Pastor Kory

February Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Owen F	13	Dale B Mimi K	23	Karl H
2	Deirdre E	14	Ana F Marilyn M	24	Joey H
3	William L	15	Dalton H Sanneke K	28	Will H Lila J
7	Wil A Scott VK	17	Jim S		
9	Jane T	18	Joe E		
10	Kinza B	19	Dennis DJ Casey S		
12	Robbin E Les S				



Offering Schedule

February 5

AM General/Building Fund,
Compassion Fund

PM World Renew: Free a Family

February 12

AM Christian Education Fund

PM Christian Reformed Home Missions

February 19

AM Missions Fund

PM Calvin Seminary

February 26

AM Tuition Assistance Fund

PM ATLAS

Evening Worship Schedule

February 5 Teaching Service

February 12 Teaching Service

February 19 Small Group Prayer Service

February 26 Teaching Service, with
Bel Canto from Unity Christian

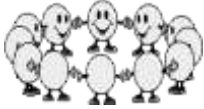
Dear Friends of Covenant CRC,

Thank you for your recent contribution towards the ministry in which we are serving in West Africa. It is a blessing to partner with you as we walk alongside our West African brothers and sisters with the hope of a new and better Africa through Christian education. We are grateful for your support and prayers! Every blessing in the New Year!

-Sosthene and Kara Maletougou

February Assignments

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



Nursery

Parents of the month: Ben & Laura L

February 5

AM INF Paul & Ruth C, Barb H
TODDLER Jason & Dani W, Erik H
PM Doug & Marge DB, Duane & Jan B

February 12

AM INF Brenda F, Rachel L
TODDLER Ryan & Angela H, Andy L
PM Mark & Cheri H, Dennis DJ

February 19

AM INF Katy W, Ruth C
TODDLER Rob & Megan H, Tom C
PM John & Linda V, Marty & Kris VP

February 26

AM INF Dave & Emily K, Nick B
TODDLER Joe & Erin E, Jenni B
PM Don & Sherri TN, Ron & Carol O

March 5

AM INF Ethan & Donna B, Sarah H
TODDLER Mark & Sara H, Luke H
PM Lee & Jenni M, Pat K

Thanks for serving!

Are you interested in serving in any of these ministries, but aren't currently on the schedule? Contact Sara in the church office—we'd love to add you in! (covenant@mtcnet.net)



Coffee Servers

Ruth Cla, Ruth Clo, Max H,
Cal J, Kris VP, John Z



Greeters

AM Rob H, Tiffany P, Les S
PM Donna B, Mark C, Len R



Ushers

AM Andy L, Sherri TN, Trena VW
PM Sharon D, David V

Substitutes

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

Luke H, Gidge M, Phil M,
Stan VB, John V, Sharon V

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, February 20 for the March issue.

Notes from the Deacons

End of Year Review

After several attempts to write this article, I have realized that this is a difficult task—I **think mostly because in writing it I've realized** that, though the work of the deacons includes budgets, figures, spreadsheets, and bank account balances, this is not really the cool part of the church. The exciting aspect of the church is watching the Holy Spirit of God move to break into this present darkness and bring a new kingdom, to change lives, to call to repentance, to baptize new ones into the covenant, to bring the gospel to near and far lands, to break bread and lay on hands, and to remind us that our world belongs to God. But **that's not what I get to talk about. I suppose** in a way, when the deacons count offerings, sign checks, and pay bills that this is, in some small way, a part of the work of the church. **However, it's the sort of work the gall bladder does**—you only notice when it goes wrong.

Nevertheless, I will attempt to capture in a brief summary some of the financial aspects of the church in 2016 for anyone who is still reading after that gall bladder analogy.

Thrifty and generous. Those are the two words I would like to use to describe our congregation. **We've done a lot of good work this year.** Many different people chip in, in a host of different ways. People in our church are generous with their time, talent, and treasures. **We're also a thrifty bunch**—a lot of line items came in under budget this year. **That's** a good thing because we ran a \$52,636 budget deficit this year. The majority of the deficit,

\$38,785, was handled by underspending and yet still accomplishing our mission. We still fully supported all our missionaries as pledged. Children were educated. The church was cleaned. The speakers carried the sounds of worship through the sanctuary. The remaining \$13,851 came from paying 85% of the requested ministry shares amount. This is very similar to what was paid in 2015, despite our congregation shrinking this year and other things like insurance costs going up.

In addition to this, we supported our Christian schools and continue to do so this year. We could use ongoing generosity in this area for the 2016-2017 academic year as we are behind in this account. Fair Share is not part of the general budget, but is an additional \$175,000 commitment we made this year that we intend to honor.

Finally, I mentioned at the congregational meeting that we raised about \$40,000 this year through evening offerings and our Thanksgiving offering for other ministries not yet mentioned, both local like Justice For All and broader like World Renew. We sent over **\$17,000 to World Renew this year and I'm** very encouraged by the way we support these other ministries which also work to bring justice and mercy to a world so in need of it.

As we begin a new year, may we be encouraged to be generous. May we all be reminded to worship our Creator in every single moment **of every day of our lives... even the minutes** spent looking at spreadsheets and writing checks.

Grace and Peace,
Tom Clark, Treasurer

GEMS Update

GEMS is continually making a splash while learning about the unconditional love God has for us. We ended our 2016 year with our Christmas party at the All Seasons Center, joining the GEMS girls from 1st CRC and Bethel for a night of moonlight skating.

January found us back at Covenant jumping right back into our year. Our large group devotions taught us of the immeasurable love God has for us. Counselor Kris showed us that we are unable to measure his love, it is not measurable by measuring cups or tape measures. After large group devotions, the girls broke into their small groups. The 4th graders enjoyed an ice cream party for winning the

highest average sales during our fundraiser, 6th graders worked on the "Names of God" badge, and the 8th grade girls made tie blankets for Safe Families.

Plans are being made for a Leadership Conference this summer at Dordt College. Many of our counselors will be attending this 4-day event in July. Many businesses and individuals have been contacted for needed donations to make this event possible. Churches have also been asked for special offerings to help offset the expenses. Please be in prayer as plans are finalized, donations are collected to bless the attending ladies, and counselors register to attend.

Valerie Van Beek
Club Coordinator for Northstar GEMS

Our Journey 2020 Survey

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What is this survey about?

The survey seeks to measure progress towards **the five "desired futures" of our shared plan** as a community. To learn more about *Our Journey 2020*, including stories of how God is already at work through the Christian Reformed Church, visit crcna.org/OurJourney.

How long will the survey take?

Most people should be able to complete the survey within twenty minutes.

Who will see my responses?

Your answers will be anonymous. A summary of responses from your congregation will be kept confidentially by the survey team, and a summary of the denominations responses will be made public in advance of Synod 2017.

What if I don't have Internet access?

Your participation is especially important! Please ask your family, friends or church leadership for help. You can also find access to **the internet at the library or a friend's home.**

If you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact:

Neil Carlson
Director for Social Research, Calvin College
neil.carlson@calvin.edu or 1-616-526-6420

or

Kristen deRoo VanderBerg
Director of Communications & Marketing,
CRCNA
kvanderberg@crcna.org or 1-800-730-3490

Remembering Hien Lo

Hien Lo died on January 20. Nancy Visser and I, along with other Covenant folks (Paul and Ruth Clousing, John and Linda Visser, to name **a few**), were very involved with her family's settlement and acclimation here in Sioux Center; and we were blessed by our association with this family.

Here is her some of her obituary:

Hien Lo was born on June 16, 1936 to Mr. and Mrs. Sonh Hoang of Sonla, Vietnam. Hien was married to Mr. Thuong Lo in 1952, and together they have 9 children. The Lo family resettled to Sioux Center on July 2, 1980 with their 4 younger children: Dara, Kingsada, Saybansa, and Tounechay. They were sponsored by Covenant Christian Reformed Church, and the whole family received Jesus as their Savior and were baptized in 1982. The Los later moved to Des Moines in 1989 and were good standing members of the Asian Open Bible Church, now Lifesong Open Bible. Mrs. Lo passed away peacefully at their family home where she lived with her husband, children, and grandchildren.

Condolences may be expressed at www.hamiltonsfuneralhome.com

Nancy Visser shared these memories: "I became involved by volunteering to help, teach, assist the family in buying groceries each week. Later the family and I really laughed as I would buy quantities of bread, sugar on sale and they thought I would be offended if there was any left the next week so they would try to eat it all even though they didn't like it. I was always amazed that it was gone and wondered why they made their Tang so sweet! My

Welcome, Kellan!

At 5:08 PM on Sunday, November 20, Fednel and Kara Themistol welcomed a sweet baby boy into the world. He weighed 7 lbs, 5 oz and measured 19 inches. His name is Kellan Gabriel which means "strong." He was also welcomed by his now 2 year old sister Reya who just adores her brother. Proud grandparents are Kevin and Sue Harthoorn, Rosemarie Novembre, and Gesnel Themistol. We praise God for a healthy pregnancy and a safe delivery, as well as the generous support from the congregation, whether it be meals, gifts, or words of encouragement.



weekly visits grew to include ESL and then later Bible lessons taken from "A Light Unto My Path." What a blessing doing that every week for years! That was our first experience with another culture and I know we made lots of mistakes, but God was in control. God works in mysterious ways and I am just glad I **was a little part of their story!**"

-Lee Rhoda