



The DayHab Program

If you come by the church on a Thursday or Friday, you may notice a group of people eating lunch or participating in some activity or other. You may have even wondered what they are doing. Well, here's the scoop.

As many of you know, I work for Hope Haven in their DayHab program. This is a voluntary program for people being served by Hope Haven where they have opportunities to be involved in their communities and to learn skills that will help them be successful in life. We volunteer at various places in the community, spend time interacting with others in the community, learn a variety of skills through activities in the community, and practice those skills by using them. All the people that come to the program in Sioux Center live in **Sioux Center. It's awesome that we get to do these things in the town where they live because it makes it feel more like home to them and it enables them to build relationships in their home town.**

Covenant has graciously allowed us to use the church building as our home base for this program two days a week. What that means is that we start and end our day here, eat lunch

here, and when the weather doesn't cooperate with our aim to be out and about, we might do some of our other activities here as well. We aim to spend 80 percent of our time out in the community, but sometimes it is just too cold, icy, snowy, etc. for that to be safe for some of the people in our group. We meet at another church in town for the other three days a week, but if you happen to be around on a Thursday or Friday between 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM and see us here, feel free to stop by and say hi. We would love to visit with you!

If you work for a non-profit organization or know someone who needs a hand with something or just would really love someone to talk to, let me know. We are always looking for opportunities to serve/help out in Sioux Center! And if you have any questions about what we do, I would love to answer them.

-Erin Eggebeen

The January Series

It was a delight to enjoy many great lectures throughout the month of January right here at Covenant! If you missed any of the lectures and would still like to watch them, we have recently received the DVDs of those that were recorded. (Some are not available because of contractual restrictions.) Contact the church office if you want to check any of them out!

Courier

March 2017

COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Notes from the Pastor



The Psalms of Lent

One of my colleagues in ministry shared recently of an Ash Wednesday service when the oldest member of the congregation came forward carrying his great-grandson—the youngest member of the congregation. The pastor marked the forehead of young and old alike with the reminder that from dust we are created and to dust we shall return.

Lent is a period in the life of the church where we take a break to turn inward. We reflect on our own lives and the practices of our lives and how they direct us toward or away from the cross of Jesus. Though the old tradition of fasting during Lent may feel like more work, this discipline too is designed to free us from additional distractions **so that we can be reminded of Christ's death and resurrection.**

As the worship planners prepare for the Lenten season, we plan to dive into the Psalms. Many of the words we will hear over the six Sundays of Lent will be familiar and comforting. In that familiarity, we hope to allow ourselves to dig deeper into the Psalms as a congregation. I am developing a series of devotionals that will help our congregation reflect on and memorize the psalm of the week. We hope that the congregation will help us reflect together on the Psalms.

Our goal is that our study of the Psalms will allow us to focus more narrowly on one particular mode of worship. We hope that the familiar words of these psalms will free us to reflect and remember the story of salvation. We trust that the Psalms will point us toward the hope and promise of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

As we come to the end of winter (or, as I write, to the beginning of a second winter?), I know how readily I feel overwhelmed by stress. There is much work to be done. The **second semester is in full swing. Kids' activities** just keep coming one after another. My hope is that this Lent we find rest. We begin with an Ash Wednesday service on March 1 in order to remind us of our mortality, to remind us that our hope is not in what we do now, but in the saving work that Jesus Christ has already done.

-Pastor Kory

Pastoral Group Dinner Schedule

Our spring Pastoral Group Potluck Dinners will be starting soon on Sundays after the morning worship service. Please put these dates on your calendar!



March 19—Tazelaar/Visser
March 26—B.Mellema/Vande Kraats
April 2—Friend/Bajema
April 9—Lappenga/Christians
April 23—Schelhaas/L.Mellema
April 30—Goslinga/Kornelis

Strengthening Your Faith Formation Culture

This past fall, the council of Covenant decided to participate in the "Strengthening Your Faith Formation Culture" cohort through Faith Formation Ministries. This 12-15 month cohort is designed to "grow stronger, grace-shaped faith formation cultures within congregations." What a goal!

We are one of approximately twenty congregations from the U.S. and Canada participating, and Bob DeSmith and I recently had the opportunity to meet with some representatives of these churches at a retreat held at Calvin College during the Calvin Worship Symposium. We spent the day with Syd Hielema, director of Faith Formation Ministries and former Dordt College professor (and Covenant member; we bring greetings from him!), our coach Laura Keeley from Holland, Michigan, and other staff members from Faith Formation Ministries (including Jill Friend). It was a full day of learning and dreaming, stories and struggles, clarification and affirmation. Jill even led the group in karaoke!

While we feel confident that this is a good process for us to go through as a congregation and secure in the Spirit's leading, we are still uncertain what direction that leading will take us. We are in the very early stages of the process. We hope that you will read the following article written by Rev. Shannon Jammal-Hollemaans published on the CRC Network to give you a clearer picture of the cohort and what we mean by church culture. Please feel free to talk to members of the committee if you have more questions (Kory Plockmeyer, Rebecca De Vries, Bob De Smith, Steve Crull, Laura Janssen, Tom Tazelaar). And please,

hold us up in prayer as we continue to seek the Spirit's leading and discernment.

-Rebecca DeVries

Congregational Culture:
Fertilizing Soil and Pulling Weeds
(Reprinted from *network.crcna.org*)

Congregations always have a culture. You **won't find it written down in mission statements or council minutes.** Church culture just is. Walk into any congregation on a Sunday morning, and you will gradually gain a sense **of who is welcome. You'll sense who is valued** by observing who is at the center of attention **during the coffee hour. You'll see who wields** power when you look up front during worship. **You'll find out what matters, and what doesn't, through things like the communion furniture displayed, the songs that are sung, and the preaching from the pulpit.** And hopefully, you will also notice who is standing in the corners during the coffee hour, whose voices aren't being heard in worship, what furniture is missing, and what songs are not being sung.

We are called to recognize what sort of culture lives in our congregations. But we are also called to shape that culture in ways that reflect the grace and mercy of God.

Our congregations are like gardens, and each of us is like a plant that grows there to bear fruit. Most gardens have healthy and unhealthy conditions for growth—nutrients in the soil, sunshine, water, grubs, weeds, etc. In the gardens that are our congregations, we

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March Birthdays & Anniversaries

2	Jerry P	11	Benjamin P DeI VZ	21	Wil & Jo A
4	Brian M Lee R	14	Mike & Laura J Roger & Linda VH	23	Richard E Victoria E Mike J Beth VB
5	Annika G	16	Aleisa D-S	25	Emma H
6	Mark MC	17	Sean H		
8	Amaliah F Sara P	19	Cheri H		
9	Davey & Kate H	20	Carol A Lauren P Mark T		
10	Jeff P Lila S				



Offering Schedule

March 5

AM General/Building Fund
PM World Renew: Disaster Response Services

March 12

AM Christian Education Fund
PM Cadets

March 19

AM Missions Fund
PM Promise Community Health Center

March 26

AM Tuition Assistance Fund
PM Cornerstone Prison Church

Evening Worship Schedule

March 5 WE Service with Communion

March 12 Teaching Service
Pastor Cory Van Sloten preaching

March 19 Communion Service

March 26 Vespers Service

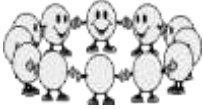
we The New Covenant

Join us on Sunday, March 5,
after our morning service
for lunch and an intergenerational service.

Lunch: Pulled pork sandwiches
Those whose last names begin with A-L,
please bring a salad.
Those whose last names begin with M-Z,
please bring a dessert.

March Assignments

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



Nursery

Parents of the month: Tom & Ruth C

March 5

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

March 12

AM INF Jo F, Sharon V
TODDLER Mark & Merrill MC, Kurt V
PM Chris & Rin G, Mark & Lisa C

March 19

AM INF Dave & Jan V, Pat C
TODDLER Daryl & Deb H, Steve C
PM Eldon & Marcia W, Laremy & Becca DV

March 26

AM INF Mike & Laura J, Kathy DW
TODDLER Jeff & Sara P, Laura L
PM Dave & Luanne G, Dave & Jeri S

April 2

AM INF Robin F, Lydia M
TODDLER Jordan & Aleisa D, Adam F
PM Bob & Rebecca DS, Barb T



Coffee Servers

Jo A, Jill F, Luanne G,
Daryl H, Cheri H, Ron O



Greeters

AM Lee R, Jeff T, Rog VH
PM Pam DJ, Kathy DW, George F



Ushers

AM Rebecca DS, Barb H, Jake VW
PM Joan MC, Laurey Z

Substitutes

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

Ethan B, Marge DB, Robin F,
Megan H, Sarah H, Eldon W

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)

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, March 20 for the April issue.

Lent and the Psalms

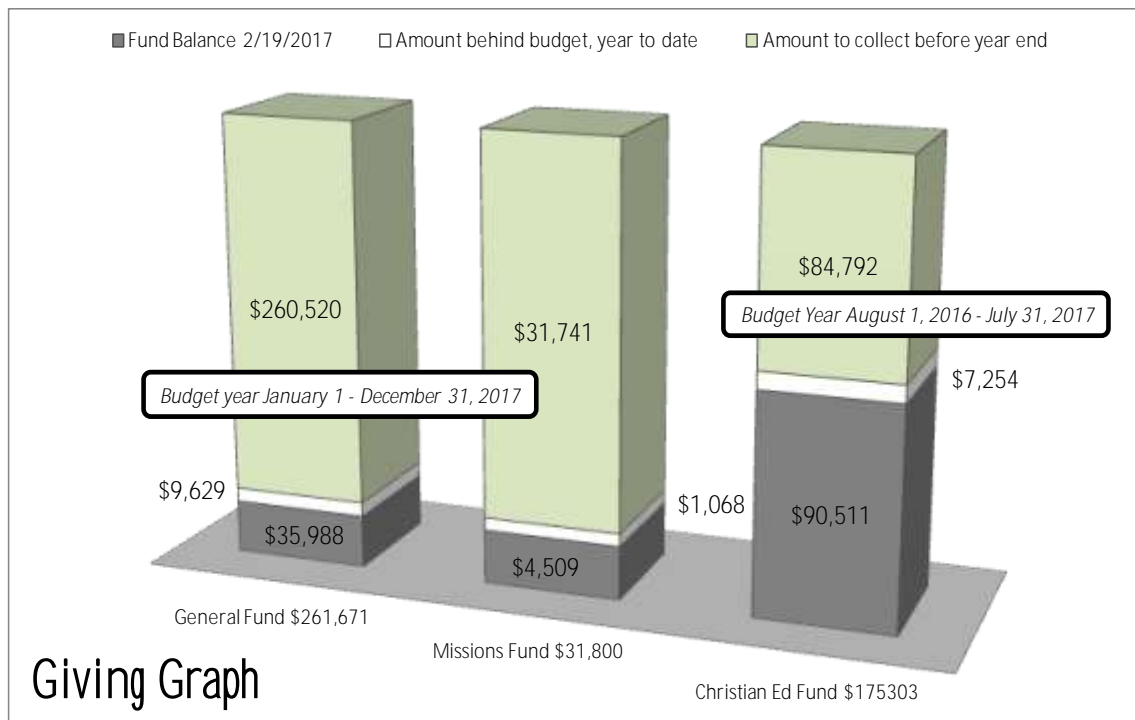
As you've read in Kory's article, we'll be spending time in the Psalms during the season of Lent, looking more closely at the Lectionary Psalm each week. The songs and hymns contained in the book of Psalms are poetic expressions of spiritual conviction. John Calvin says about the book of Psalms, "I have been accustomed to call it 'An Anatomy of All the Parts of the Soul;' for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror."

Taking inspiration from John Calvin, knowing that we find our emotions being mirrored in **the Psalmists', the worship planners would** like to ask for your help. Would you consider

reinterpreting one of the Psalms of Lent in a fresh way and offering it to God during the season of Lent? This could take a variety of forms: a new song, a poem or paraphrase, a short video or slideshow, a dance, a recitation or monologue, a painting or sculpture, etc. The Lectionary Psalms we will focus on during this season are Psalms 32, 121, 95, 23, 130, 118, 116, and 22.

If you are interested or have questions, please contact Rebecca De Vries or talk to one of the Lent Planners (Jill Friend, Luke Hawley, Emily Kramer, Sara Ploegstra, Scott Vande Kraats).

-Rebecca DeVries
and the Lent Planning Team



Strengthening Your Faith Formation Culture

(Continued from page 3)

can find healthy conditions in our children's programs, our fellowship times, and our solid biblical preaching. But we also have grubs and weeds. They might be found in how our programs are made manifest—a church prayer line that becomes a gossip line, a Bible study **that serves as a place to complain about one's** family, or bitter emails to the worship leader about how frequently the organ is used.

As followers of Jesus Christ, our calling is to be congregations that embody the grace of our Lord in all that we are and all that we do. Just as a gardener seeks to maximize the healthy conditions and minimize the unhealthy conditions, so we are called to tend the cultures of our congregations.

So how do we do that? We try something new.

"Something new" may mean bringing back an old practice. It may mean trying a current practice in a new way. It may mean simplifying a practice that has become so complicated **over the years that we don't know why we do** it that way any more.

Many ministry leaders throughout the Christian Reformed Church are voicing the need to be more intentional concerning the discipleship and faith formation practices of their congregations. As we in Faith Formation Ministries listen to these voices, we recognize how challenging this desire is, and this challenge **has led us to develop a "Strengthening Your Faith Formation Culture" cohort.**

We are seeking twenty Christian Reformed congregations to participate in a 12-15 month cohort designed to grow stronger, grace-

shaped faith formation cultures within their congregations. Participating congregations will:

- Identify and Assess the health of their cultures and identify the practices that are shaping this health.
- Discern which practices are best suited for strengthening their culture.
- Experiment with two or three steps to strengthen their trajectory.

Last year, we offered a cohort to look at the building blocks of faith. The cohort gave congregations the opportunity to take small steps to grow their faith formation practices. One church leader described their experience by **saying, "Through participating in the cohort, we felt empowered to look at the faith formation process as a congregation." In Faith Formation Ministries, we know that you know your context best, which is why we aren't coming to congregations with prescriptions for new programs. Instead, we are seeking to walk with you as you discern the Spirit's guiding in how best to serve and reflect Christ in your context.**

Will participating in a cohort solve all of your **congregation's issues? Definitely not. But what** it will do is give your congregation the encouragement and accountability it needs to take small steps in the direction of intentional faith formation. It is our hope that by working with a coach and learning from other congregations, congregational leaders will find the inspiration and courage to try something new. After all, we find our hope in the God who promises to make "all things new!" (Revelation 21:5). And that includes our congregations. Thank you for your support of this project!

-Rev. Shannon Jammal-Holleman

Retreat Repeat

On a warm and windy February Saturday (the **4th**), **Covenant's Council met at The North Place** for its annual retreat. We took the morning to reflect on our life together as Covenant congregation. We looked back, noting that we remain a congregation which experiences a more-than-average amount of transience as people move both in and out; and we looked forward, asking what stories we would like to tell about Covenant when we celebrate our 50th in 2023. As Council President for 2 years, let me comment that Covenant is blessed with dedicated, compassionate, and thoughtful leaders. They are a delight to work with. And they hold Covenant very dear. I trust you, too, are thankful for their leadership.

Our retreats are very much brainstorming sessions and creative observations, so a good deal of our time is spent simply checking on, developing, and observing our shared perceptions of Covenant. Our first concrete observation has to do with our children: there are something like 104 members of Covenant younger than 19—**children, if you'll allow the term to extend to high schoolers! That's half of us.** This is great news which points us in a clear direction in the foreseeable future. The faith nurture of our children will be (joyfully) **everyone's calling at Covenant. As Council,** we will need to offer leadership and direction for our programs, and for our life as a congregation. Our request to you is that you take up the call— to serve in the nursery, to teach in Young Children and Worship, Sunday School, or Catechism, to contribute to Gems and Cadets, to support our (soonest to grow) Young

People. More than that, we all need to get to know the children in our church deeply. Get **to know their names, but don't stop there!**

Our second, related, observation is the need to continue building unity within our body. We **celebrate Covenant's creativity and diversity,** and we believe that as we get to know each other better, God will bind us together. A good reminder to me came from one of our group, who suggested that the essential thing we share as a church is our worship. This is not just a call to show up, but to perceive our worship—which is thoughtfully planned, integrated, creative, and joyful—as a communal experience that draws us nearer to God and to each other. We hope that you can experience this.

If you notice your Council members inviting folks to dinner or to a shared event—or our **pastor inviting us to ask each other's names**—you are witnessing our Council acting out what we feel God is calling us to do. We hope **you'll join us in this endeavor.**

-Bob DeSmith

CovenAnts Needed!



Covenant is in need of a few good worker CovenAnts to help with the demolition on the parsonage kitchen to prepare it for the remodel! There are jobs to do for people of all skill levels. Are you available to help for a morning, an afternoon, an evening, or a whole day? Help is needed on March 15-18. Contact Ron Oostra (712-441-7747) if you are able to help!