

What Happens Before Church on Sundays?

It's sometimes hard to remember, but a lot happens before the church service on Sunday mornings. Here's a quick snapshot of the goings-on at Covenant on a typical Sunday morning, starting at about 8:30am:

Our faithful janitors, Dale and June Brands, arrive early to open the doors, turn on the lights, and get the coffee perkin'. Musicians are getting set up at this time, along with those in charge of sound and projection. Pastor Kory is usually at church already, talking to people and making final preparations. There are typically a few small children running around—those who tag along with their parents as needed. Sunday School teachers arrive, ready to welcome the students.

At 9:00, things really start happening. The first Sunday School kids (usually the Eggebeens) arrive, cheeks rosy from their walk or bike ride to church. They begin to assemble in the basement by the piano, where students and teachers will sing songs of welcome and gathering before being dismissed to classrooms for their Sunday School lessons. Covenant Sunday Morning, the Adult Sunday School program, meets in the youth room and begins their discussion.

If you were to walk the halls during the time

that follows, you might hear Deb Hibma's second-grade class singing out the books of the Bible (they've been working on memorizing them all year!). You may hear the drums or the organ from upstairs. Perhaps, Carol Oostra will bring the first-graders into the hallway to do a physical demonstration of the lesson they're learning. Sanneke Kok might lead her group of 3rd-6th graders past as they head outside to do a prayer walk in our church's neighborhood. The leader of Children in Worship will most likely be setting up and preparing for the little ones. You will certainly notice laughter, prayers, gentle encouragement, and Biblical teaching emanating from each room you pass.

As the time for the church service approaches, those who work as greeters, nursery volunteers, elders, deacons, and many others arrive just a bit early in order to be prepared to serve the church well.

All these people, and many more throughout the week, are faithfully working together to serve the congregation of Covenant. What a blessing it is to be part of such a hardworking, dedicated, and thoughtful group of people!

-Dani Wyenberg

Courier

May 2017

COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Notes from the Pastor



Commissioned Disciples

When Jesus appears to the women at the tomb in **Matthew's Gospel**, he asks them to **tell the disciples, "Go to Galilee."** Why Galilee?

Galilee is more than just a place in the Gospels. Galilee is, in many ways, also an identity. Galilee is where Jesus called the disciples to follow him. Galilee is where Jesus spent the majority of his earthly ministry and where the disciples spent the bulk of their time with Jesus. Galilee, in short, is the place where they learned what it means to follow Jesus. Galilee is more than a place; it is also their identity as disciples.

The problem is, the disciples misunderstood what it meant to follow Jesus. They spent three years with Jesus, learning to be his dis-



ciples, listening to his teaching, but they thought that Jesus was going to be a political **revolutionary**. **They didn't believe Jesus** when he told them that he was going to die and be raised to new life.

So now the disciples have to go back to Galilee, back to the beginning, back to the place **where it all started**. In **Matthew's Gospel**, none of the eleven remaining disciples see Jesus until he arrives and gives them the Great Commission. In Galilee, they can now look at their discipleship journey with fresh eyes, understanding what it means to follow Jesus in light of his resurrection on Easter morning. Even as Jesus commissions them to go and make new disciples, they go not as Rabbis, but as disciples. They are disciples who will make new disciples.

Living in the 21st century, one way of going **"back to Galilee"** is to **return to the beginning** of the story and to look again at what it means to be disciples. We do so this year with a series based on the Gospel of Matthew. This May, we will look together at what it means to be disciples who are called to make new disciples. What does it mean to make disciples? How do we share the Good News of Jesus? What does it mean to be a disciple who is leading others to follow Jesus?

To be honest, I get scared off by the term **"evangelism."** It reminds me of the time when I was a teenager and a group of us were dropped off downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan with a handful of cross necklaces and encouraged to share the Good News. The cross necklaces were a gift for anyone who gave their **life to Christ**. I didn't give any cross necklaces away that day. This is a prime example of **"programmatic" evangelism: here's a script,**

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here's a location, now go give people the spiel and sell them on Jesus.

But that's not the image of making disciples found in the end of Matthew's Gospel. The disciples are called to make disciples not through a program, but through relationship, the same way they learned what it meant to follow Jesus. This is a form of sharing the Good News that focuses not on talking points, but on friendship, not on guerilla tactics, but on relationship. As we dig deeper into our own journey of discipleship, my prayer is that we, too, would feel the prompting of the Holy Spirit to allow ourselves to disciple others even as we learn to be disciples of Jesus.

-Pastor Kory



Grandma Alert! Grandpa Alert!

Jeffery Thomas Wetselaar was born March 25, 2017. He weighed 7 lbs and was 20 inches long. His parents, Dorinda and Sam, are overjoyed with this new precious little bundle and so are first time grandparents, Deb and Daryl Hibma.



Ten Ways for Families to Engage Kids in Worship

“Children learn through observation, but they learn best through participation. We take them to church so that being part of a church family and gathering regularly to worship God in community with others becomes part of the **fabric of their lives**” (Karen Deboer, *Home Grown Handbook for Christian Parenting*, Faith Alive, p.187). As you look for ways to make worship as meaningful as possible for your child, here are 10 things to keep in mind.

1. Be Positive

Instead of saying, “We have to go to church” say “we get to go to worship.” Teach your kids that worship isn't just a place we go, it's something we are able to do. You might also set a positive tone by adding words like the ones *Parenting in the Pew* author Robbie Castleman used with her kids: “Jesus must be so

excited! It's his special day!”

2. Make Sunday Special

Create patterns that help your whole family experience Sabbath rest and anticipation. Set out clothes the night before and set the alarm a little earlier so that you can arrive at worship in a peaceful state of mind. As you get **ready, play your family's favorite worship music and sing together.**

3. Take Along Worship Tools

It can be difficult to sit quietly for a long period of time—**especially when you're little!** Take along tools that will engage your children in worship rather than simply keep them **busy. Some ideas: a children's storybook Bible, a small clipboard with a finger labyrinth**

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May Birthdays & Anniversaries

3	Luanne G	15	Will B	23	Kurt V
4	Ale C	17	Meghan V	25	Mark & Lisa C
6	Luke VT	18	Yazzie Bierma John-Patrick MC Ethan & Donna B	26	Lewis C
8	Eldon & Marcia W	19	Elliot P Mark & Barb T	28	Charlie F David H Erik & Barb H
9	Lisa C Len R	20	Zoey E	29	Steve & Pat C
11	John & Becky S	21	Phyllis L Ben & Laura L	30	Emily E Dan & Jeananne Kuiper
12	Rob & Megan H	22	Everett F Rowan H Bernie & Kathy DW	31	Mark H Joan MC
14	Carol O Daniel T Tom T				



Offering Schedule

May 7	
AM	General/Building Fund, Compassion Fund
PM	World Renew: World Hunger
May 14	
AM	Christian Education Fund,
PM	Christian Reformed World Missions
May 21	
AM	Missions Fund
PM	Friendship Bible Program
May 28	
AM	Tuition Assistance Fund
PM	Crossroads Prison Ministries (formerly Crossroad Bible Institute)

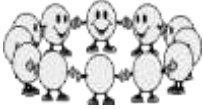


Evening Worship Schedule

May 7	Teaching Service
May 14	Teaching Service
May 21	Communion Service
May 28	Small Group Prayer Service

May Assignments

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



Nursery

Parents of the month: Jason & Dani W

May 7

AM INF Sarah & Luke H, Nick B
TODDLER Dave & Emily K, Jenni B
PM Tom & Ruth C, Pat K

May 14

AM INF Jo F, Donna B
TODDLER Davey & Kate H, Ethan B
PM Lee & Jenni M, Mark & Lisa C

May 21

AM INF Mark & Merrill MC, Rin G
TODDLER Mark & Sara H, Chris G
PM Kurt & Sharon V, Dave & Jan V

May 28

AM INF Daryl & Deb H, Pat C
TODDLER Laremy & Rebecca DV, Steve C
PM Dave & Jeri S, Laura L

June 4

PM Jeff & Sara P, Barb T



Coffee Servers

Ed B, Mark C, Howie H,
Sarah H, Andy L, Trena VW,



Greeters

AM Erin E, Shirley T, Ryan Z
PM Jenni B, Rin G, Marv W



Ushers

AM Cal J, Stan VB, Kris VP
PM Len R, John V

Substitutes

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

Jo A, Ruth Clo, Pam DJ,
George F, Rob H, John Z



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, May 22 for the June issue.

Notes from the Deacons

Compassionate Giving and Living

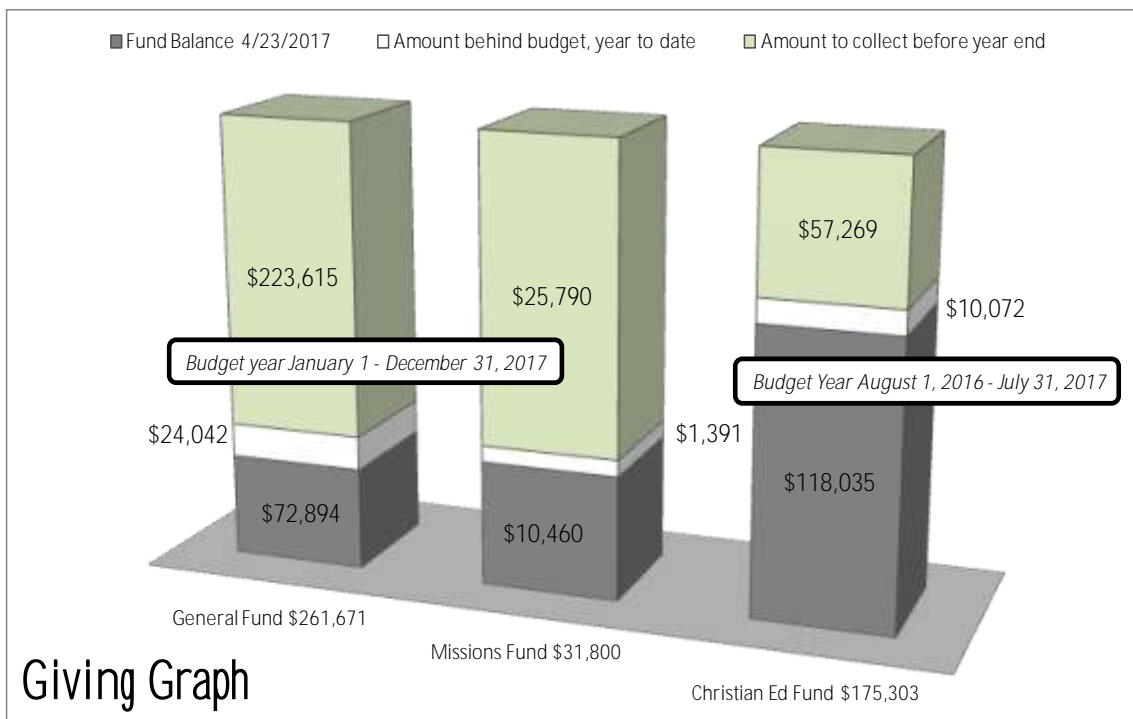
Perhaps it's no surprise that money and finances are the most sensitive issues that Covenant deacons deal with. Each year I receive comments and letters about how the deacons might better exhibit leadership on issues such as compassion, individual giving, or handling of the congregational finances. Each comment or question is shaped by an individual's circumstances growing up during a particular era. Out of these circumstances, an 'up by my bootstraps' or 'he/she doesn't deserve it' or 'they're not working hard or prioritizing giving' attitude can develop. Any of these attitudes may add to others' feelings of financial stress. Asking for help becomes diffi-

cult, either because of a sense of guilt (I should have managed my finances better) or out of a feeling of self-sufficiency (I should be able take care of this myself.) Because of this, families at Covenant are often reluctant to admit to their financial needs or stresses. This reluctance can blow up on a deacon who asks a member or family if they need help.

What can the congregation do?

- First, I want to commend the congregation for its support of and giving to the compassion fund.
- I would like members of the congregation to read Acts 6:1-7. This passage presents a problem of the early church which led to the selection of deacons. In the spirit of this passage, please alert your deacon if you see needs that are not being met.

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Ten Ways for Families to Engage Kids...

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for prayer (flamecreativekids.blogspot.com), a small notebook and colored pencil for drawing/writing questions, impressions, and prayers (visit prayingincolor.com for info).

Tip: Invite your child to decorate a blank journal to use as their worship journal. Read through it together after worship.

4. Let Kids Choose the Seats

Parents with young children often sit toward **the back of the worship space so they won't be embarrassed by their children's behavior** and can exit easily. But often children prefer the front because they can see, hear, and participate better.

5. Follow Along

Help your child look up the Scripture passage and follow along in the Bible when it is read. If your child enjoys looking through a **children's Bible, bring that along for your child to read as well, but wait to bring it out until the message begins so that your child will participate in the other parts of worship.**

6. Become a "Church Whisperer"

Help kids stay engaged during worship by whispering questions or making observations. **During a song, whisper, "My favorite verse of this song is the third one. Which part do you like the best?" As Scripture is read, ask your child how it would feel to be living in that story, or suggest that they squeeze your hand when they hear Jesus' name.**

7. Give Together

Find out a week in advance which cause the offering will support. Pray and learn about that cause together during the week. If your child receives an allowance, build into it

money they can give during worship. Consider providing your child with a special envelope designated for that purpose and inviting them to decorate it with their best drawing as a reminder that we give God our best.

8. Celebrate the Sacraments

As a member of God's family, it's important for your child to be present at the celebrations of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Try to provide your child with an up-close view during baptism, and welcome the newest member together after the service. Use a rainy day to make some "Welcome to God's Family" cards together and send them when a new baby is baptized. Whether or not your child fully participates in the Lord's Supper, he or she is experiencing it. Enfold children who aren't participating by whispering what you are remembering as you eat and drink, and reminding them "Jesus loves you too!" For ideas on preparing your child for the Lord's Supper, visit our Welcoming Children to the Lord's Supper toolkit at crcna.org/faithformation/toolkits.

9. Talk about Worship on the Way Home

Ask kids about what they saw and heard in worship. Affirm their insights and encourage them to learn more. Ask if they wonder about anything that was said. As you talk, use the language of worship to build their vocabulary.

10. Practice, Practice, Practice

Make regular church attendance a family priority. **Worshiping with God's people is the best way to help your children feel that church is a place where they belong.**

-Karen DeBoer

This article is reprinted with permission from http://network.crcna.org/sites/default/files/documents/ten_ways_kids_in_worship.pdf

Parsonage Kitchen Progress

Progress continues on the parsonage kitchen! The new windows, flooring, and cupboards are in and they are currently waiting for countertops to come in.



Notes from the Deacons

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- Please consider how you might participate in a serving ministry of Covenant.

If you are experiencing financial stress and are uncomfortable talking with an elder or deacon, I encourage you to also consult with the staff of CFE (www.cfeministries.org).

What have the deacons been doing?

This winter, the deacons were challenged to consider how the work of compassion might move beyond the needs of our immediate congregation. I met with Jan Henryson of the Center for Financial Education (CFE) to examine the mission of this organization (Transforming lives through Christ-centered financial education), to find the approach used (materials from the Financial Peace University), and to review the measures of success. After reporting to the deacons, we committed \$1200 of our compassion funding in the next year to provide directly to support the needs of individuals who are working with CFE.

-Chris Goedhart
on behalf of the Covenant Deacons

