

## Christmas Program

The three-year-olds through 8th graders will be presenting their Christmas program on Sunday, December 10 at 6:00 PM. Parents of children in grades 1-8, please note the following rehearsals and please try to have your children present at all the rehearsals. (If your child will not be able to participate, please contact Rebecca De Vries as soon as possible.)

Sunday, December 3  
8:45 AM rehearsal in the sanctuary  
(no Sunday school)

Sunday, December 10  
8:45 AM rehearsal in the sanctuary  
3:30-5:00 PM rehearsal

Kate Henreckson will be directing the program this year (Thanks, Kate!) and she may ask for small groups of students to meet additionally to work on specific parts in the program. Keep your eyes out for emails from her! A copy of the script with a list of the parts was put in your mailboxes. Parents, we appreciate so much any help you can give at home! If you have any questions, please talk to Rebecca De Vries or Kate Henreckson.

# Lasagna Dinner & Congregational Meeting

Monday, December 11

Lasagna Dinner—6:00 PM  
Let the youth group (and their parents!) cook **for you! They'll be serving lasagna (chicken, beef, and vegetarian)** to raise money for a summer service trip. (Freewill donation)

Congregational Meeting—7:00 PM  
Plan to attend the annual congregational meeting. Come to hear a financial report and updates from the council. The 2018 budget will also be presented to the congregation and we will vote on it. The youth group will provide childcare during the meeting.



## Holiday Worship Schedule

Sunday, December 24  
10:00 AM

Monday, December 25  
10:00 AM

Sunday December 31  
10:00 AM & 6:00 PM

Courier

December 2017

COVENANT  
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

# What's Happening in the Youth Group...

When I started as a youth group leader, the **question I asked myself was “Where should Covenant’s youth group fit into our high schoolers lives?”** Between Christian schools, Church Education, and involvement in church life, what role does a youth group fill? It is a question that the youth leaders have been trying to answer since then, and we have come to realize that the answer may be something that changes regularly.

So far in 2017 we have focused on a couple of areas. For our discussion nights, we have been **working through the book “Generous Justice”** by Timothy Keller. The book walks through **Keller’s thoughts on what justice looks like** when empowered by and directed by the Bible. Our goal is to work through the book by the end of our year.



*Covenant and Amistad youth playing 9 Square.*

As a youth group, we have also committed to trying to interact with our neighbors more intentionally. The youth leaders met this summer for a planning meeting with Yuritxy Fernandez, the youth leader for Amistad, and committed to having three joint meetings **with Amistad’s youth group this year to foster** some interactions between our groups. We

met together in September and played some outdoor games (9-square) and then had our evening meal together. We will meet together later this winter and again in the spring.

Another important area we are focusing on this year is interacting with Covenant members in different settings. In September, we cleaned windows for several Covenant members. We cleaned windows at three houses in the dark, and were told that there were no **streaks. I’m still not sure if they were just** being nice, or if we really do good work by flashlight.

In November, we invited the Covenant Quilters to teach us a few of their skills and to help start some quilts for our youngest Covenant members. It was a good time of learning what goes into making a quilt (a lot of time, patience, and creativity to name just a few). It also gave a better understanding on the servant spirit and commitment that the Quilters have for the next generation.

*(Continued on page 3)*



*The Youth Group helping (and learning from) the Covenant Quilters.*

## Notes from the Deacons

(Continued from page 2)



*The domestication of the American male.*

Also coming up at the end of November is a meeting where we invited several members of

Covenant to sit as panelists for a group discussion. Earlier, in September, I asked for questions from our students that they have wanted to ask but never had the opportunity to. They came up with a list of some pretty good questions that our panelists will go through with them.

To close, I would ask that Covenant as a body keeps our youth in their daily prayers. I have found our group of high schoolers are a talented and compassionate group who will open up if you ask. So please, ask questions and let our students know that Covenant cares.

-Andy Landman

## Welcome, Rue!

Rue Collins Mellema was born on November 5 to Lee and Jenni Mellema. She was 7 lbs, 9 oz and 21.5 inches long. Big sisters Auden and Alyda and grandpa and grandma Brian and Barb Mellema were excited to meet her!



## Welcome, Mia!

Mia Joy Mercado Castelan was born on November 16 to Alexa Castelan. She weighed 6 lbs, 11 oz and was 20 inches long. Congratulations also to big sister Bryanna and grandparents, Alejandro and Isabel Castelan!

# December Birthdays & Anniversaries

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



## Offering Schedule

December 3

AM General/Building Fund  
PM Cadets

December 10

AM Christian Education Fund,  
Compassion Fund  
PM Justice For All

December 17

AM Missions Fund  
PM Dordt College

December 24

AM Tuition Assistance Fund

December 25

AM General Fund: Outreach Commitments

December 31

AM General Fund: Ministry Shares  
PM Compassion Fund



## Evening Worship Schedule

December 3 **Teaching Service, with Unity's**  
Instruments of Praise

December 10 Sunday School Christmas  
Program

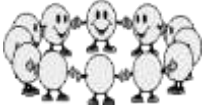
December 17 Service of Lessons & Carols

December 24 No Evening Service

December 31 **New Year's Eve service**  
with Communion

# December Assignments

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



## Nursery

Parents of the month: Mark & Merrill MC

### December 3

AM INF Erik H, Lisa C  
TODDLER Barb H, Mark C  
PM Don & Sherri TN, Lee & Jenni M

### December 10

AM INF Luanne G, Joe E  
TODDLER Dave G, Erin E  
PM John & Linda V, Chris & Rin G

### December 17

AM INF Luke & Sarah H, Ruth C  
TODDLER Mark & Sara H, Tom C  
PM Daryl & Deb H, Duane & Jan B

### December 24

AM INF Kris VP, Josue F  
TODDLER Marty VP, Ana F

### December 25

AM INF Kurt V, Cheri H  
TODDLER Sharon V, Mark H

### December 31

AM INF Mark & Merrill MC, Emily K  
TODDLER Ethan & Donna B, Dave K  
PM Kathy DW, Barb T

### January 7

AM INF Jason & Dani W, Pat C  
TODDLER Davey & Kate H, Steve C  
PM Dave & Jeri S, Jo F



## Coffee Servers

Duane B, Marge DB, Cal J,  
Beth VB, Rog VH, Eldon W



## Greeters

AM Mimi K, Joan MC, Dani W  
PM Rebecca DS, Jake VW, Laurey Z



## Ushers

AM Ruth Clo, Barb H, Dennis VP  
PM Jo F, Adam F

## Substitutes

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

Jenni B, Luke H, Gidge M,  
Len R, 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, December 18 for the January issue. (Note the earlier deadline next month!)

# Notes from the Deacons

Immanuel, God with Us

While in this Christmas season, the words of Matthew 1:23 will be proclaimed with enthusiasm, it's helpful to remember the entire Old Testament account of "God with us" that preceded, "the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel."

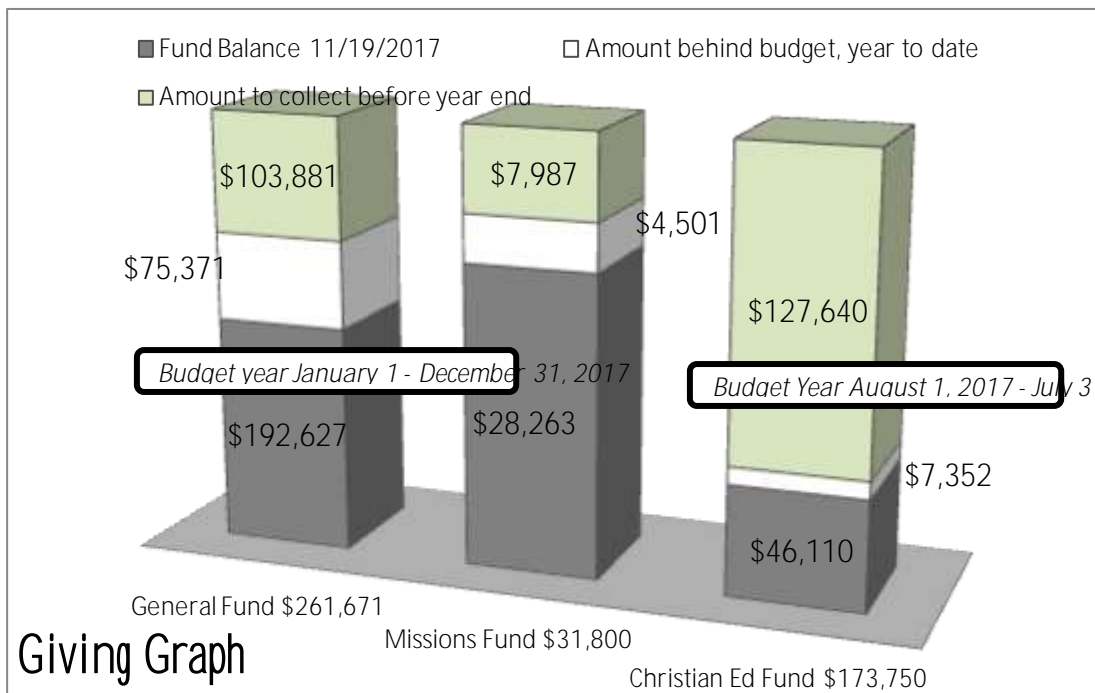
Whether revealed through plagues, pillars of fire, visions, prophecies, astounding victories in battle, or even in times such as the captivity in Babylon, God was there.

The culmination of "God with us" is summarized in Hebrews 2:17, "For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God,

and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people." Not long afterwards Hebrews 4:15 further reveals Christ's humanness, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin."

As I consider how God calls us to continue that proclamation of his presence in our lives and in all of creation, I was struck by a recent article, "Why relationships are a key to helping the poor," posted by the Institute for Faith, Work, and Economics. In that article, Dr. Spencer provides four dimensions required for helping the poor. Those include: meeting material needs, seeking justice for the poor, knowing the poor, and the poverty of social capital. "It is never enough to simply create a government program that provides a monthly

*(Continued on page 7)*



## Notes from the Deacons

*(Continued from page 6)*

check to keep the poor alive and away from the nice neighborhood. In order to break cycles of poverty, Christians need to learn to love the poor, meet them, build societies that include them, and help them obtain justice in a world that increasingly depends on a commodity that is harder to come by than money **and food: social capital.**"

While sounding foreign, social capital considers the importance of relationships within a family or community which nurture and foster

wellbeing and success. As I consider the biblical story of God with us, I'm led to believe that each of us would do well to image or copy that pattern. Caring involves presence and understanding.

In this upcoming Advent season, we would do well to consider how our friendships, relationships, and where we gather together help foster the physical and spiritual flourishing of those who would benefit from being around us. May we be willing to empathize with those suffering weaknesses and temptation.

-Chris Goedhart

## Covenant Sunday Morning Conversation

"Should we continue to have two services every Sunday at Covenant?" That's the question we will be discussing on December 3 at Covenant Sunday Morning. If you care about this issue, plan to attend. About ten years ago, a large group of Covenant members gathered on a Covenant Sunday Morning to discuss this question, and we had an engaging and fruitful dialogue. Opinions were stated, sometimes passionately, but always, as I recall, graciously.

The topic has a special pertinence now because where we stand on the topic may influence the expectations we express to a pastor when we extend a call. So, gather with us in the Fellowship Hall at 9:00 AM, December 3.

-Dave Schelhaas

## GEMS Update

The GEMS program is well underway for the year! Our theme is "In His Steps," an invitation to receive His love and to live like Him. Our Savior rescues and forgives. Immanuel walks with us and guides us. And our Teacher invites us to learn from Him. He asks us to walk In His Steps. Our theme verse is 1 John 2:6:

**"Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."** When we choose to follow Jesus and live deeply aware of His presence, we will change from the inside out. Our words, ac-

tions, attitudes, and even where and how we step will be transformed. Thank you for your prayer support for each girl and counselor who are part of our program.



*The GEMS kick-off in Children's Park. They roasted hotdogs and s'mores and made theme shirts.*

# Lament for a Broken Community

*Jill Friend is a blogger for Reformed Worship and recently had this post published.*

Our school will never be the same. I teach in a Christian elementary school in Iowa, in a small, tight-knit community where we don't lock our doors and when the closest thing to a traffic slowdown happens at 9:30 on Sunday mornings. Yet less than two weeks ago we were shocked to learn that a teacher in my school had been arrested due to inappropriate contact with a student. That was just the tip of the iceberg. As time goes on, we are now coming face to face with the realization that situation is larger than we can put our minds around, and with additional charges expected, we know that new information will continue to open wounds again and again.

Last night our community held a service of lament. Lament for innocence lost, for trust that was misplaced in a person who deceived and groomed victims, and for an abusive situation that was allowed to survive undetected for over a decade. Counselors working with our staff have reminded us of the stages of grief; denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Last night I was struck again with the importance of the Psalms, for every stage of grief can find expressions in **this book. The Psalms point us to God's faithfulness**, yet more than that, the Psalms give us space to express our anger without easy answers, share our denial and depression, and **even allow us to bargain using "what if's" and "if only..."**. I know that at some point in the future the Psalms will also give voice to our acceptance and hope. As a community, that day seems a long way off, but the Psalms are here for us as we journey through our grief.

Joyce Borger wrote the following prayer of lament with our school in mind, and we have **posted it in our teacher's lounge**. At some point we have hope that our mourning will turn to dancing, but until that time comes, this prayer of lament has been a way for us as staff members to give words to our anger, our hurt, and our deep sorrow over the brokenness of this world.

*God of love, protector of children, our hearts are broken and turn to you with this charge: these are your children, where were you? Why did you turn your face away from them? Why Lord? Why did this go on for so long? Why didn't anyone notice? Say something? Why did you let this happen? What have these innocent children done to deserve this?*

*God of love, protector of children, we have a charge to bring against you. We bring it to you because somehow we know that we need you. We bring our anger and our anguished cries to you because you are a father and know what it means to see your child suffer, because we know you welcome our honest laments because we know you.*

*Journey with us now through the anger, grief, **shock... Journey with us as some may wrestle with misplaced guilt or blame**, Journey with us as we struggle to find the strength to go on. Journey with us as we journey together as a community. Journey with us through the darkness.*

*And as we journey, hold us tight because right now not all of us have the strength to hold on to you. Amen.*

-Jill Friend