

Church Retreat

The Covenant Retreat is Back! We hope you will reserve Friday night, October 1, and Saturday, October 2 for a church retreat at Oak Grove.

Camping enthusiasts will be encouraged to take advantage of the spots available in the Turkey Hill Campground. Not interested in roughing it? Four cabins are available for rent through mycountyparks.com. (Search for Oak Grove and book them soon!)

We've reserved the Oak Grove Lodge across from Turkey Hill Campground for our Friday and Saturday activities. All are welcome! Will there be epic group games on Friday? Yes. A sing-along? Of course. Dancing? Maybe. Late night campfire? Yes. Stargazing? We hope so.

Saturday will begin with breakfast and a time of worship followed by various activities for all ages!

If you have any questions or suggestions or want to be a part of the planning committee, please contact Laura Janssen. Keep your eyes out for more information to come. And now, really, go block out October 1-2 in your calendars! And tell your spouse who forgets to read the Courier to do the same. 😊

And as an added bonus—here are a few pic-

tures from a 2009 Church Retreat at Camp Foster to inspire you...



Courier

August 2021

COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

The Colossian Forum...

Differences need not divide us. Instead, differing with others offers opportunities for us to deepen our discipleship.

The Colossian Forum Ministry takes its name from Colossians 1:17, where we read, “in [Christ] all things hold together.” The Colossian Forum Ministry helps Christians stay together even when we differ passionately regarding politics, human sexuality, the origins of creation, and so on. At Covenant, we plan to offer several opportunities for members and friends to participate in Colossian Forum gatherings.

Please consider participating. To participate you agree to gather for approximately 90 minutes on the same day and time for ten weeks. (If you have to travel or be away for some reason for one or two of the weeks, that need not prevent your participation.) In the Colossian Forum gatherings, we begin with prayer, checking in with one another, and then hearing members pass on a brief narrative of their life journey and their interest in the topic for discussion. Following that initial segment, participants then do some thinking together about how to develop wisdom and practices that enable us to become more like Jesus. For 45 minutes out of the 90 minute session, the group directly discusses topics that can but need not divide us. Members of our initial Colossian Forum group this past spring testified to powerful experiences of understanding and grace.

Further information about the Colossian Forum Ministry will arrive as autumn approaches. If you have questions, you can get in touch with me or others in Covenant’s first Colos-

sian Forum group. I believe our Lord can work through the Colossian Forum to give Covenant additional hope and strength for living out our response to God’s call in God’s mission.

-Pastor Joel

A few of the participating members are also sharing their thoughts about their experiences with the group that met this spring:

People with strong opinions on divisive issues tend to do one of three things: they try to explain to friends or relatives why their own views are correct, they discuss such issues only with those who agree with them, or they completely avoid such discussions.

The goal of the Colossian Forum program is to provide a way to help folks have respectful, meaningful conversations with those with differing views. Although such conversations may result in one having a change of heart, that is not the goal of this program.

The Forum is carefully designed, with a variety of formats (Scripture, videos, questions, prayer) that encourage thoughtful responses. Our leaders were well prepared and used the leaders’ guide to keep the group focused.

Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts—around the circle or at random—but there was no pressure to do so. Since time was limited, folks respectfully kept their responses short, and there were no negative or critical replies to others’ views.

We met for only ten sessions, which was not

(Continued on page 3)

The Colossian Forum

(Continued from page 2)

enough to exhaust the subject. My one regret was that we were not directed to discuss more Scripture passages.

I thoroughly enjoyed interacting with a wonderful group of folks, with most of whom I had previously exchanged only brief greetings. I appreciated having such a lovely inter-generational group who accommodated my hearing loss.

If the opportunity is available, I'd love to participate in a Forum on another subject.

-Shirley Matheis

I had the privilege of helping to co-facilitate the Colossian Forum group this spring. It was, for me, a very powerful experience. I felt that I was able to really get to know the others in the group in ways that I hadn't been able to before. I have been at Covenant for 18 years and have known many of the people in the group that gathered for most of that time, and I still learned things that helped strengthen the bond between us as brothers and sisters in Christ through this experience.

We had some good, honest discussions on difficult topics and were able to do that without a lot of conflict—something that is a big accomplishment in this age of polarization and division amongst people with differing views. But beyond that, we were able to really listen to and hear each other—having to pass a microphone around to talk really helped with that in some unexpected yet beautiful ways.

Perhaps the thing that I appreciated the most about our time together, though, was hearing

the faith stories of everyone in the group. It proved to be a real eye-opening, bonding experience all around.

If you have a chance to join a Colossian Forum group in the future, I strongly encourage you to consider it. It's definitely worthwhile and you won't be disappointed.

-Erin Eggelsen

I would say I learned less about how to disagree well than that I grew in respect for my fellow forumers. Spending time wrestling with big questions really shows a different side of someone. Even if you think you "know everyone" in our church, the Colossian Forum is a great way to deepen relationships and just settle in a bit deeper to the body of Christ.

-Laremy DeVries

Got Any Ideas?

The building committee is looking for good ideas about what to do in the area directly north of the overhang. This is the area that had a big tree on it that was taken down. Should there be plantings with a bench where people can rest? A native prairie plot? A prayer garden? We thought of hiring a company to make a plan, but felt there's plenty of talent in our congregation. So, think about it and put pencil to paper and submit it to a building committee member. The members of the Building Committee are Dane and Daryl Hibma, Marcia Westra, Mark Horstman, Dale and June Brands and Rin Goedhart.

-The Building Committee

August Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Marge DeBoer	8	Rin Goedhart Ron Oostra	19	Steve Crull
2	Ruth Clousing Pat Eggebeen	9	Ron & Carol Oostra	20	Barb Mellema Shaun Stiemsma
3	Rob Haan Sos Maletougou Laurey Zwart Dave & Luanne Goslinga	11	Dani Wyenberg Robbin & Sara Eppinga	21	John & Linda Visser
4	Max Hoekstra Ryan & Angela Hannigan	12	Benjamin & Tricia Groenewold-Van Dyk	23	Chris Goedhart John Zwart
5	Caden Zonnefeld	13	Kathleen Van Tol	26	Len & Lee Rhoda
6	Ezra Landman Lee Mellema	15	Deb Hibma Ryan & Amie Smit	28	Elise Stiemsma
7	George Faber Jeff & Sara Ploegstra	16	Blake Stiemsma John & Laurey Zwart	29	Shonna Plasier Dave Schelhaas
		17	Jake & Trena Van Wyk	30	Melissa Bailey
		18	Del & Lois Vander Zee		



Offering Schedule

August 1

AM General Fund

August 8

AM Christian Education Fund

August 15

AM Missions Fund

August 22

AM Ministry Shares

August 29

AM Building Fund

Formation Sunday Evenings

Join us for our 6:00 PM gatherings this month!

August 1: Vespers

August 8: Vespers

August 15: Vespers

August 22: Tree Walk

August 29: Vespers

August Scheduling



Coffee Servers

Jenni B, Ruth C, Rob H, Daryl H



Greeters

Natalie B, Mark C, Ryan Z



Ushers

George F, Dennis VP, Jake VW

Substitutes

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

Jan B, Paul C, Lee R,
Sherri TN, John V, Dani W

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, **August 22** for the September issue.



Nursery

August 1

AM Luke & Sarah H, Ron & Carol O

August 8

AM Marty & Kris VP, Kathy DW

August 15

AM Outdoor Worship (no nursery)

August 22

AM Lee & Jenni M, Jeff & Sara P

August 29

AM Joe & Erin E, Jason & Dani W

September 5

AM Paul & Ruth C, Tom & Ruth C



August Morning Worship

A few things to note about the morning worship schedule in August:

August 1: Justin Bailey preaching

August 15: Outdoor worship at Heritage Village

Notes from the Deacons

In an effort to help the General Fund, the deacons are designating the August 22 offering for Ministry shares.

The General Fund collections are currently running \$16,750 behind budget with expenses running \$13,170 behind budget.

Part of the General Fund expense is the amount that we pay to the denomination and our classis. Typically, at the end of the year if we are short on funds these two expenses do not get paid in full. This year Covenant has a budget amount of \$33,000 for denomination ministry shares and \$22,207 for Classical ministry shares. These ministry shares are used to fund new church plants, Dordt University, Back to God Ministries, Calvin Seminary, Resonate Global Mission, and other causes.

If you have questions about our ministry shares, please feel free to talk to Kurt Vos about them.

-Deacon Kurt Vos

Did You Know...

Did you know that there are bulletin boards in the old fellowship hall (west of the sanctuary) which include many newsletters from ministry organizations we support with occasional offerings such as the Spring and Thanksgiving special offerings. The bulletin boards are a great place to check for posters and notices of upcoming concerts and ministry events in the area. They include information about resources available in the community, volunteer opportunities, support groups, upcoming classes and trainings, etc. And they always have a copy of our missionary partners' latest newsletters. Take a minute to check it out when you're at church!



Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/21-7/18/21) \$154,914	\$135,960	-\$18,954
Missions	(1/1/21-7/18/21) \$13,195	\$12,933	-262
Christian Education	(8/1/20-6/20/21) \$187,117	\$181,407	-\$5,710

**A quick disclaimer—access to the Christian Education Fund numbers was limited due to vacations, so these amounts may not be accurate.*

Serving at Covenant

This is part of an ongoing series about the many ways Covenant members serve in our church, our community, and beyond.

We were so glad to be able to worship with our mission partners this past month. The Ribbens left us some feathers from South Africa and you can find some magnets from the Crulls in your church boxes. We encourage you to let these physical tokens be reminders for you and your family to lift up our partners in prayer, and reach out to these families however you can throughout this next year.

-Eric Rowe

Psalm 150

Hallelujah!

Praise God in his holy house of worship,

praise him under the open skies;

Praise him for his acts of power,

praise him for his magnificent greatness;

Praise with a blast on the trumpet,

praise by strumming soft strings;

Praise him with castanets and dance,

praise him with banjo and flute;

Praise him with cymbals and a big bass drum,

praise him with fiddles and mandolin.

Let every living, breathing creature praise God!

Hallelujah!



Poetry Page

Thanks to a few of our resident poets for sharing their gift of words with us this month!

Return

Morning light leaks
ever so slowly
into the eastern sky
going from gray
to pale blue
to gradually brightening
shades of pink
and then
suddenly the sun
leaps up
like a beach ball that has been held beneath
the water
Kaboom!
We are blinded
by the ball of light.

This is the way our Lord will return.
Suddenly
we will see him
after centuries of looking to the heavens
through fog or dust or dusk
or rose-colored glasses:
Immense, Bright, Undeniable.

-Dave Schelhaas

Wild and Free

I've read
that the degree of wildness
we experience
correlates
with the amount of freedom
we feel.

Even as I sit
on my patio
at dusk,
I position my chair
to the portion of sky
with the thickest layer of trees—
our hackberry and
their maple behind and
the ash beyond that—
creating a thick mesh of
branches and leaves
like a hammock
for my soul.

My breathing slows.
My shoulders fall.
My thoughts clear.

One tree branch
hangs solo
against the darkening sky
with twigs and leaves
forming the rounded shape
of a glorious hydrangea.

I can't stop
admiring it—
circular silhouette
on blue sky,
leaves fluttering
like petals
of a summer bloom.

-Rachel Hilma