

WE Services: Returning in January 2022!

Remember WE services? We held our first intergenerational Worship Event about 10 years ago, but it's been at least two years since our last. We actually had one planned for March 15, 2020, but cancelled it because of, you know, COVID. Well, Lord willing, we hope to bring back the WE service on January 23, and then again on March 20 and May 15. So let's refresh our memories. What is a WE service?

WE: Intergenerational Curriculum was created and published by Faith Alive Ministries. They describe a WE service as an "intergenerational faith nurture experience for your entire church family, designed to begin the process of intergenerational learning within your church." The event includes a shared meal, singing, and learning together through dramas, discussion, and doing. We typically begin the meal immediately after the morning service and the experience continues in the fellowship hall around tables where young and old sit and learn together. Over the years, we used this curriculum to learn about covenants, the tabernacle and the narrative of God's story from creation to new creation.

Taking our inspiration from the Faith Formation Ministry (FFM) of the CRC, this year we will focus our gatherings on faith practices or spiritual habits. On January 23 we'll explore the practice of hospitality.

Faith Practices Project

FFM began a "Faith Practices Project" in 2020 in which they focused on one practice a month for the year. (You may have seen the blurbs in our bulletin each week alerting us to these practices and suggestions relating to them.) Chris Schoon, director of FFM, says this: "Our goal for all of these efforts is that they will help people of all ages find new and creative ways to develop lifelong faith practices as together we become more and more like Jesus. In so doing, we anticipate that we will grow in our love for God and for our neighbors."

So together on the 23rd we will find some creative ways to develop the practice of hospitality in relevant ways for all ages. We hope to provide resources and tips via email and the Courier in the weeks that follow and spend time sharing hospitality stories and experiences at a Sunday evening gathering in February. To learn more ahead of time, check out this link:

<https://www.crcna.org/FaithPracticesProject>

-Rebecca DeVries

Note from the Pastor

On Monday, December 27, Tricia and I will fly to San Diego to visit our three young-adult children. In most years, the five of us can gather together only one week out of the year—the week after Christmas—and we thank God for that experience of love. This year, Tricia will fly home on Monday, January 3. To our surprise, I will stay in California for some additional time, so that I can attend a workshop given by a ministry called “Healing Hearts; Transforming Nations.”

You may have heard me speak regarding this ministry during our worship on December 12. Founded in response to atrocities that took place in Rwanda in 1994, HHTN seeks to administer comprehensive healing from God in a way that equips followers of Jesus to share such healing in a way that carries out Jesus’ Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. (See Matthew 28:16-20)

A fellow CRC minister, Rev. Gerard de Vuyst, who works as a missionary with Resonate Global Missions in Ukraine, testifies passionately that, through HHTN, he experienced personal healing in a way that equipped him for kingdom witness in Ukraine, North America, and among fellow Christians from all kinds of nations. As we here in the United States continue to experience political polarization and church divisions, we can all benefit from the healing mercy of Jesus in a way that equips us as witnesses in word and deed.

The HHTN workshop takes place in Rancho Palos Verdes, California from January 9-13. Other workshops, in partnership with Resonate, will take place at later times in other places in North America. I look forward to the workshop, and I feel grateful for Covenant’s

support for this manner of discipleship.

On January 16, I will begin to share my experience at our 9 AM Covenant Sunday morning gathering. Where the Spirit will lead us after that, I cannot predict. Regarding the Holy Spirit, Jesus says “the wind [Spirit] blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.” (John 3:8) With biblical hope, I look forward to exploring the leading of the Spirit with you. As the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth (John 16:13), our loving God will empower us to participate in His mission to reconcile the world. (2nd Corinthians 5:11-21) As people reconciled to God by gifts such as grace and forgiveness, we can share God’s healing truth. As Paul says, “we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us.” (2nd Corinthians 5:20)

By way of reminder regarding January, I can mention—as Eric Rowe explained in the previous Courier—that my sermon on January 2 will come in the form of a recorded video. To Eric’s eloquent explanation, I can add the following:

On that Sunday, Covenant will listen to the Word of God from Ephesians 1:1-14. In that Lectionary Epistle reading, Paul proclaims that God “has made known to us the mystery of his will.” (Ephesians 1:9) And, strangely enough, I will preach the good news of that mystery made known in an already recorded video.

As Eric mentioned, for many congregations, finding a preacher on January 2 (and on some other Sundays) has proven difficult. For example, I found—to my surprise—that my sister’s congregation in San Jose, California plans to use the video and the other resources Covenant is providing. San Jose CRC just recently

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Note from the Pastor

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received a new minister; he needs some rest early in 2022, and it is not easy for them to find pulpit supply. I feel grateful that Covenant can help them and others as we gather for our worship.

Please know that we at Covenant do not plan to make pre-recorded sermons a repeated practice in our worship. This is a one-time event that follows from a one-time request from our denomination. Becca has curated a rich litany that will help us hear our Lord from the Ephesians 1 reading and related resources. On January 2, our Lord will speak to us in all kinds of ways that will inspire us to worship in Spirit and in truth. Our Father seeks our worship and faithfully gives us the grace to respond. (See John 4:23-24)

In Christ,
-Pastor Joel



Safe Church Reminders

As we begin a new year, I want to remind our Covenant family of the safety protocols that take place each Sunday to provide a secure environment for worship.

- All doors will be unlocked before the morning service (except the SE door—it remains locked at all times), taking into account any scheduled 9:00 AM meetings.
- All doors except the main entrance doors will be locked at 10:10 AM and unlocked during the last song by volunteers (except the SE door which is already locked). A volunteer will remain by the main entrance doors throughout the service.
- To make sure that our building is safe during Sunday afternoons, all doors will be locked after the morning worship activities.
- Only the main entrance door will be unlocked for the evening Faith Formation gatherings. All other doors will remain locked. A volunteer will stay by the main entrance doors throughout the service.
- The main entrance door will be locked after the evening service.
- Signs will be posted on each door directing worshippers where to go if they come to a locked door.

Please note that you may want to park near the main entrance Sunday evenings since that will be the only door open.

I want to thank the many volunteers who monitor the doors both for our morning and evening services. Their vigilance allows the rest of us to worship in safety.

-Rebecca DeSmith
Safe Church Coordinator

January Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Jenni Mellema	14	Pastor Joel Kok Michael Vander Plaats	30	Amie Smit Jeff Taylor
2	Dallas Apol				
3	Jo Alberda Paola Gracia	16	Peregrine Groenewold Rog Vanden Hoek	31	Sos & Kara Maletoungou
5	Andy & Rachel Landman	17	Jaren Brue		
9	Lois Vander Zee	20	Jenni Breems Tricia Kok Dave Kramer		
10	Bryanna Castelan	26	Jonathan Breems		
12	Terry Friend	29	Don Ten Napel Trena Van Wyk		



Thank You! Thanks to all the Children & Worship and Sunday School kids, to all the teachers and helpers, and to Jeri Schelhaas for the amazing opportunity to hear the story of Christmas presented so beautifully through musical offerings, bell-ringing, drama, and song. We appreciate all your hard work and preparation!



January Scheduling



Coffee Servers

Pat C, Dennis DJ, Luke H, Dennis VP



Greeters

Wil A, Chris G, John V



Ushers

Jo A, Ron O, Mark T

Substitutes

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

Lisa C, Ruth Clo, George F,
Rin G, Mark H, Tricia K

*****Do you consider yourself a snowbird?*****
Are you planning on taking off for a month or two or for most of the winter? Please notify the office with the dates you'll be gone and I will avoid scheduling you during that time!

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, **January 24** for the February issue.



Nursery

January 2

AM Jeff & Sara P, Jason & Dani W

January 9

AM Tom & Ruth C, Dennis & Pam DJ

January 16

AM Paul & Ruth C, Kurt & Sharon V

January 23

AM Jake & Trena VW, Eric & Barb H

January 30

AM Ryan & Angela H, Lee R

February 6

AM Nick & Jenni B, Chris & Rin G

Formation Sunday Evenings

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

January 2: No evening gathering

January 9: Vespers

January 16: Vespers

January 23: WE service following morning worship, no 6:00 PM gathering

January 30: Cadet Sunday at Faith CRC

Notes from the Deacons

The Deacons would like to say a big ‘Thank you!’ for your monetary giving to Covenant Church. Our proposed budget for 2022 passed

at our congregational meeting. To recap decisions made at our congregational meeting:

- A. Moving forward we encourage congregation members to continue or begin to tithe a percentage (10% is recommended) of their income.
- B. For those who are writing checks, the deacons encourage you to consider the following labels that best reflect your giving preferences:
 1. Covenant CRC, Memo: "General Fund" (will go 100% toward fulfilling our church budget, including missions and building)
 2. Covenant CRC, Memo: "Christian Education" (will go 100% toward fulfilling our Christian Education obligation)
 3. Covenant CRC, Memo: "Use as needed" (The deacons will apply to the Christian Education and General Funds according to need)
- C. Cash gifts will be treated as a "use as needed" monetary gift unless otherwise specified on a giving envelope.
- D. The deacons have decided to set aside the 5th Sunday of the month for compassion offerings. Unlabeled gifts on those days will go toward that fund.

If you have any questions concerning online giving or using bank transfers as a way to tithe, please visit the website, view the announcement sheet, or ask a deacon. Don’t hesitate to ask us if you have any further questions.

In His service, your deacons:

*Kurt Vos, Kris Vander Plaats, Mike Janssen, Ross Feikema,
Ruth Clark, Les Syberma, Dane Hilma, Eric Rowe*

Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/21-12/19/21) \$272,434	\$251,497	-\$20,937
Missions	(1/1/21-12/19/21) \$23,205	\$19,913	-\$3,292
Christian Education	(8/1/21-12/19/21) \$65,231	\$62,244	\$2,987

Serving at Covenant

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

Sioux County Habitat for Humanity

Maybe you did not realize that we have an active Habitat for Humanity group in Sioux County. We are the Sioux County Committee under the umbrella of the Sioux City based affiliate of Siouxland Habitat for Humanity. They are the mother organization and are responsible for the heavy lifting of HFH in northwest Iowa. They take care of the loans and paperwork that goes with the organization. So we have the benefit of just building houses in Sioux County communities.

We are not a welfare organization. Families who are selected to receive a home through HFH must meet certain criteria to receive a home. They need to be employed, have good credit, and live presently in inadequate housing. They are unable to acquire a loan at a lending institution. They are in the low to below average income category.

How do we do this? We are able to build homes with donated professional services like contractors donating materials and/or labor for, let's say, putting in a basement, doing the electrical or plumbing work. We also use many volunteers. All of these things keep the cost of home construction low. The affiliate is the lending institution. There is a minimal down payment, and the huge benefit is that

there is no interest on the borrowed money. This keeps the monthly payments at a workable amount. The families also have to invest anywhere from 200 to 400 hours of sweat equity into their home or someone else's home, depending on their circumstances or family situation. This gives a feeling of ownership to the family.

We have a board representing many communities in Sioux County, plus a director, Kurt Franje, who resides in Rock Valley with his family. He manages the construction from beginning to end and does an incredible job. We have very generous contractors, businesses, and individuals here in Sioux County, which makes constructing homes a joy. Sioux City is often envious and amazed at how giving people are in Sioux County. We are a testimony to them in that way. We have built homes in Hull, Rock Valley, Orange City, Alton, and Sioux Center. Our present construction is in a new community, Hawarden. Next we will be in Hospers, followed by Alton.

If you are interested in being involved with HFH just talk to Willis Alberda, Len Rhoda, or me. Many members of Covenant have already volunteered with HFH. In fact, just last week the Covenant Young People and leaders cleaned the HFH home in Hull before the home dedication. A big "thank you" to them for a job well done! Others have contributed goods to the ReStore, which sells furniture, used windows, etc. to help finance affiliate costs.

Thank you for your support! A home in Sioux Center may come sometime in the future. Perhaps Covenant could be the host church for a home built in Sioux Center! Just a thought!



-Steve Crull



We are once again a remote site for Calvin University's January Series! As stated on their website, "The January Series is a free 15-day lecture series that takes place each year at Calvin University and aims to cultivate deep thought and conversations about important issues of the day in order to inspire cultural renewal and make us better global citizens in God's world." We are excited to be part of this again as a place to watch and listen, a place to discuss and wrestle with the important issues of our day. We invite you to attend each weekday from January 10-28 from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM. Here is the schedule this year:

Monday, January 10

Angela Williams Gorrell: *The Gravity of Joy*

Tuesday, January 11

L. Gregory Jones: *Trusting Institutions: Rediscovering the Power of Christianity's Surprise*

Wednesday, January 12

Sarah Stewart Holland & Beth Silvers: *Keeping it Nuanced: How to Have Grace-Filled Political Conversations*

Thursday, January 13

Reuben Miller: *Halfway Home: Race, Punishment, and the Afterlife of Mass Incarceration*

Friday, January 14

Rick Steves: *Why Travel Makes Us Better Global Citizens*

Monday, January 17

LaTasha Morrison: *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation*

Tuesday, January 18

Max Stossel: *We've Been Sneaking into Your Brain: The True Impact of Social Media*

Wednesday, January 19

Admiral James Stavridis: *Geopolitical Security Concerns in a Technologically Transforming World*

Thursday, January 20

Colum McCann: *Making Peace with Stories*

Friday, January 21

N.T. (Tom) Wright: *Galatians in Three Dimensions*

Monday, January 24

G. Sujin Pak: *Wrestling with the Word: Biblical Interpretation Through Church History*

Tuesday, January 25

Simply Three: *Simply Three in Concert & Conversation*

Wednesday, January 26

Col. Nicole Malachowski: *Harnessing Headwinds of Change*

Thursday, January 27

Brad Montague: *Becoming Better Grownups*

Friday, January 28

Gary Schmidt: *In the Tangles of our Minds: Why Stories Move Us*

We are excited about the line-up for this year and hope you will find time as you are able to attend! You can find more information about the lecture series and the speakers at calvin.edu/january-series/.