

Going Once... Going Twice... Sold!

The Covenant CRC bi-annual Christian Education Auction is coming! Join us in the Covenant Fellowship Hall on February 23 for a night of fun and community!

And this is where the fun begins—we're looking for your creative contributions to the auction list! You may wonder, what do I have to offer? Easy answer—anything and everything! Whether you're young or old, you have much to share with our church family! Here is a small sampling of things that have been offered over the years...

- **Food:** Pies and trifles, smoked meat and canned meat, honey and salsa, breads and cakes—all sorts of delicious things!
- **Dinners of all sorts:** Italian and Chinese and BBQ, Murder Mystery Dinners and Madrigal Dinners.
- **Acts of Service:** babysitting and graphic design and fix-it work and dogsitting.
- **Something Homemade:** Artwork and woodwork and photography, all things stitched and crocheted and knitted.
- **Events & Trips & Lessons:** Princess birthday parties and swimming parties and Nerf gun wars, movie nights and game nights, antique car rides and bike rides and prairie hikes, opportunities to learn about the juggling and stars and drawing and beer brewing and dancing.

- **Books:** Bring your books and we will sell them on the silent auction

Now is the time to sign up! Add your contribution at the link below or contact Emily Kramer and she'll add it for you!

<http://tinyurl.com/ChristianEdAuction2024>

-The Christian Education Committee

Covenant
Turns...



February Birthday Cake!

Auction Night Bonus: For our 50th Anniversary February event, we will serve cake at the auction! 50 years ago, on February 19, 1974, Classis Sioux Center approved the organization of the "Third" church and then on February 26 the new approved congregation held its organizational meeting to nominate and elect elders and deacons. Covenant folks had already been meeting and worshipping together for a bit, but this made us official!

-The 50th Anniversary Planning Team

Courier

February 2024

COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Raise the Roof Goal Exceeded!

Financing Activities for the Refresh Begin NOW

Thanks be to God that our goal to raise \$175,000 in cash by the end of 2023 has been met! A total of \$177,400 has been raised.

Total project costs for the roof and refresh come to \$450,000 plus interest. The focused efforts of our Covenant membership to pay for the roof in 6 short months means that approximately 40% of total campaign costs have already been raised!

The refresh phase is titled “Raise Our Voices.” We plan upgrades to our sound and video system and improvements to our worship space at a cost of \$275,000. Not wanting to put pressure on the various ministry efforts that Covenant supports, we have decided to raise refresh funds over a more relaxed four-year period.

Our cash flow projection estimates that \$6,200 will be needed per month over four years to pay all upgrade costs, rental at the Christian school and approximately \$25,000 interest on loans.

Please note that any gift to the Building Fund will be directed to “Raise Our Voices.” While regular contributions carry most of the load, generous gifts near the beginning will help us dramatically lower interest costs.

Thanks, in advance, for your participation.

-The Covenant Capital Campaign Committee:

Paul Clousing, Verlyn De Wit, Daryl Hibma
Ron Oostra, Don Ten Napel, John Visser,
& Val Zonnefeld

Senior Needs Committee

According to the Courier, 39% of Covenant’s membership is of retirement age or older. Of course, each of us in that group belongs in other categories as well, but for the sake of being a community that cares for each other, there is wisdom in acknowledging some shared needs in particular groups. So council formed a committee called “Senior Needs.” Dennis Vander Plaats chairs the committee; other members are Duane Bajema, Jan Bajema, Mary Ploegstra, and Jeri Schelhaas, council liaison.

We saw right away that a valet service at SCCS worship gatherings and later at our building would be helpful. We also are arrang-

ing rides to worship for some members, a service formerly arranged by the deacons. Those two services are functioning but, as always, volunteer response is key.

We are looking at future opportunities to be of service. An information meeting about local services for seniors with precise details to make use of those and their pros and cons will be coming this spring. We are looking at matching volunteers to providing respite for care givers and arranging predictable visits to those who, long or short term, can’t get around well. Pastoral group attention and such services as Helping Hands will still be necessary and greatly appreciated.

The future for any of us is unclear but there are some things we can predict and help with.

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Serving at Covenant

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

Dwight and I have now been in Nicaragua for almost 3 weeks. Dwight was able to spend three days working with some of the instructors at the music college “Chispas Musicales Academia” teaching them how to do basic maintenance and repairs on brass and woodwind instruments. One of the missions of the music college, for which they receive support from several organizations in Europe, is to provide free or low-cost music lessons to the poorer children of the city. To do this they need to collect, repair, and maintain what



instruments they can. Currently, the closest repair shop is in Costa Rica, which is both far away and costly. The goal is to eventually open a repair service at the college to take care of their own instruments and also be able to make an income by repairing instruments for the community at large.

I (Kathleen) have spent most of this time working with the staff of Tesoros de Dios. This is the time between school years, so the past two weeks were the perfect time to hold a multi-day workshop for professional development on a variety of behavior and learning strategies. We also spent time exploring ways to better support the parents of the children who attend Tesoros de Dios. At the conclusion of the training, I handed out certificates to all the participants who had successfully completed the 40 hours of training. I really enjoyed this time of working with the staff and we all had a lot of fun celebrating their hard work over these past two weeks during the awarding of the “diplomas.”

In addition to supporting and praying for our work here in Nicaragua, one of the ways the Covenant community specifically supported these workshops was in paying for lunch for the staff. In the past, lunch was provided as a

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Senior Needs Committee

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We are not trying to do everything, just responding to obvious needs and making wise predictions.

Covenant does a good job of using its seniors in significant ways and that will continue to be a Senior Need. It is important to remember that we are not all the same. Among us there is a lot of interesting, varied experience. We

have not stopped reading about or thinking about world events, worldview questions, solutions to practical problems and tricky interpersonal relations. We have studied the Bible a lot. Talk to us, be interested in us, discover our gifts, challenge us, and help us face and meet our needs.

Jeri Schelhaas

for the Senior Needs Committee

February Birthdays & Anniversaries

| | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----|---------------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 1 | Phil Postma | 14 | Marilyn Mouw | 26 | Dan Altena Sandi Altena |
| 3 | Micah Moss | 15 | Sanneke Kok | 27 | Marcy Holwerda |
| 7 | Wil Alberda | 17 | Jim Schaap Josh Van Schouwen | 28 | Lila Janssen |
| 9 | Jane Taylor | 18 | Ryan Smit | 29 | Sarah Moss |
| 12 | Robbin Eppinga Les Sybesma | 19 | Dennis DeJong | | |
| 13 | Dale Brands Mimi Kamp | 24 | June DeWit | | |



Serving at Covenant

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communal meal to all the staff members during the regular school day. We hired the mothers of some of our students to cook for us and the board covered the cost of the food. Since the main staple of any meal is rice and beans, this was not a huge cost to the board and we viewed it as one of the benefits of the job for the staff, especially in light of the fact that (like most Christian schools) the salary we are able to pay our staff is less than they could make working elsewhere.

Unfortunately, the board of Tesoros de Dios had to eliminate this benefit two years ago due to budget constraints. No longer eating lunch together, however, seemed to also affect our sense of community. Because the staff now had to walk off site to purchase food from a fritanga or prepare their own in the small kitchen, this time of sharing, caring, and brainstorming had been lost. During the two weeks of workshops, we again hired a parent of a Tesoros student to cook us lunch using money that had been donated by Cove-

nant to cover the cost. It seems like such a small thing, but it was huge for our staff as they could spend that time discussing with each other what they were learning and how it would improve their classrooms. They expressed their appreciation over and over for your provision of lunch. I also feel like this time of community each day contributed to the success of the training. So, thank you again to the Covenant community for supporting us and ultimately supporting the people we serve here in Nicaragua!

-Kathleen (and Dwight) Van Tol



February Scheduling



Greeters

Terry F, Megan H, Dennis VP



Nursery

Nursery Monitor: Jenni M



Ushers

Daryl H, Sally J, Kris VP

Substitutes

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

Bob DS, Rachel L, Carol O
Linda V, Laurey Z

February 4

AM Luke & Sarah H, Ryan & Val Z

February 11

AM Marty & Kris VP, Barb T

February 18

AM Jason & Dani W, Ron & Carol O

February 25

AM Chris & Rin G, Jeff & Sara P

March 3

AM Tom & Ruth C, Bob & Rebecca DS



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, **February 19** for the March issue.

Formation Sunday Evenings

During our sanctuary refresh project, we plan to hold our Sunday evening Vespers services in the fellowship hall. So join us for our 6:00 PM Sunday evening gatherings this month:

February 4: Vespers

February 11: Vespers

February 18: Vespers

February 25: Communion Vespers

Notes from the Deacons

2023 Summary:

Thanks to the Holy Spirit’s prompting, generous giving in 2023 allowed us to effectively balance our General Fund budget while also replacing our old asbestos shingles with a wonderfully durable new roof and gutters, pay for the organ damage caused by both the snow melt and the ten-inch rain on the “repaired” flat roof, replace the old flat roof with a new sloped roof, and repair flooding damage to and upgrade the elevator. This puts us in a good position to start the year!

Because the Roof Campaign brought in 40% of the total Roof/Refresh Project’s needed funding in the final six months of 2023, the CCCC decided we do not need additional presentations or solicitations of large one-time gifts to complete the Refresh. This will also allow us to maintain healthy giving levels for the many other important causes that we support.

Ways to give:

Giving is becoming both simpler (a few clicks) and more complicated for deacons because of the many options (online options, Bill Pay, ACH transfers, IRA QCD’s, checks, cash) with their differing fees and ability to be integrated into church record-keeping software. The deacons continue to evaluate our current mix (and consider new options, like Venmo, or

giving directly using our cloud-based record-keeping software—Servant Keeper) with a look toward stewardship (with respect to both fees and deacons’ time).

Communication Change:

We want to also note that, to save paper, deacons’ time, and mailbox space, the deacons plan to begin emailing donation receipts from our new email address:

CovenantDeacons@mtcnet.net

The receipts will be in the same format as the receipts previously placed in mailboxes and will be signed and distributed on or about the date of receipt to meet IRS requirements. So, if you have a preference for paper receipts, please contact your pastoral group deacon or email the deacons at their new address.

Changing Needs:

Our goal is to fully pay for the Refresh Project in the next four years, including interest on debt. This requires average monthly Building Fund contributions of approximately \$6,200. Please consider how your household can contribute, remembering that widespread participation is a blessing to all of us, and that early gifts reduce interest costs and will permit us to pay off the debt in less than four years.

Financial Designations:

In the same way people prefer different giving methods, some congregants prefer directing the use of their gifts. So we would like to

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Giving Graph

| Fund | Budgeted | Received | Difference |
|---------------------|------------------------------|----------|------------|
| General | (1/1/24-1/21/24) \$19,654 | \$34,468 | +\$14,814 |
| Christian Education | (8/1/23-1/21/24) \$46,096 | \$53,774 | +\$7,678 |

Notes from the Deacons

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add clarity on this subject at a time when a new need is being introduced (the Refresh work) and other needs are changing (Christian Education Fund support). A complementary goal is improving the deacons' chances of covering the actual bills that need to be paid. For example, the Covenant Capital Campaign Committee (CCCC) would like to see contributions directed to the Building Fund to raise the visibility of the Refresh Campaign and make it easier for them to track the level of support and progress toward the goal. To accommodate these multiple interests, the deacons encourage "as needed" gifts that provide desired flexibility, but also Covenant will continue to allow people to fully direct the application of their gifts.

Recommendations regarding "As Needed" and "Designated" Gifts:

If you are already an "as needed" giver, please continue to give to Covenant at a level that reflects our General Fund, Christian Education Fund, and Refresh needs. No need for an extra large gift (like in 2023) unless you feel led to see us pay off our debt in fewer than four years. Thanks for your continued giving and you can disregard the following information.

If you prefer to designate your gifts, these are the deacons' 2024 recommendations:

- We desire that all families consider giving regularly to the Building Fund, in addition to supporting the General Fund and the Christian Education Fund. However, if support for the Building Fund can only happen by reducing other contributions to Covenant, we suggest you adjust your support for Christian Education, not the General Fund, because of a reduced need

for church support of our Christian schools in the new ESA era.

- For those who prefer to continue designating gifts for the General Fund and Christian Education support, rather than earmarking a set amount for the Building Fund each month, we recommend that you adjust your percentages to 80% General Fund and 20% Christian Education. This will allow the deacons to use some of your General Fund "as needed" contributions for Refresh expenses while still meeting the budget for our worship, program and operational expenses, ministry shares, missions, and other outreach commitments.

Thanks again for your generous giving in 2023 that allowed us to meet our budget and make such great progress on our Roof/Refresh plans. May God bless us as we continue to partner in the year ahead.

John Visser

On behalf of the Covenant Deacons:
Ruth Clark, Pam DeJong, Dane Hibma,
Kristi Hummel, Lee Mellema,
Josh Van Schouwen, Dwight VanTol



Warm Winter Weekend Pizza & Game Night Saturday, February 10

Pizza: 5:30-6:30 + Games: 6:30-9:00
Join us for pizza and board games, card games, and indoor yard games for all ages!
Bring a snack to share.



As we prepare to celebrate our 50th anniversary, let's see what you know about Covenant's history! Here are some new questions for this month:

1. When did almost all areas of the Covenant building become handicapped accessible?
2. What area of Covenant's building that is presently not handicapped accessible will have access after our remodel is finished?
3. Approximately how many of Covenant members have hearing aids to help them hear as they worship?
4. Approximately how many Covenant members' access to worship involves the use of a cane, walker, or wheelchair?
5. What percentage of worshipers who attend Covenant are handicapped, disabled, or in need of assistance as they attend our worship services?

Answers to this month's questions will be in the *March Courier*!

And here are the answers to the questions that were printed in last month's *Courier*:

- Q:** How many current members/families have been members at Covenant for all 50 years?
- A:** 12 families (20 individuals) have been members for 50 years.

- Q:** How many current members/families have been members for 10 years or less?
- A:** 37 current members/families have been members for 10 years or less. This is about 34% of the congregation. About 43% of the listed members/families ten years ago are no longer members.
- Q:** How many Covenant members are over 80?
- A:** 22 members are 80 years old or older.
- Q:** How many couples at Covenant have been married 50 years or more?
- A:** 12 couples
- Q:** How many families had/have three or more children in 1974? How about in 1999? And in 2023?
- A:** In 1974 about 30% (20 families) included 3 children or more. Twenty five years ago in 1999 it was 17% (20 families). And in 2023 it was 32% (20 families).

Back to Sunday School!

Sunday, February 4 will be our first Sunday School time at SCCS. The rooms we are using are right inside the main entrance (the kindergarten rooms). We will not have a time of music before Sunday School, so we ask that students go straight to their assigned rooms at 9:00 AM. Sunday School will dismiss between 9:45-9:50. Parents, please make sure you are at school by then so that your children can find you and are not tempted to run around before the service.

I will send out a reminder email the week before February 4 with specific details on which rooms your child will need to go to. If you have any questions, please let me know.

-Megan Haan (Sunday School Coordinator)