

Jana Vander Laan, Pastoral Resident – Jan 2008

A funny thing happened to me on the way to church. The morning after I was ordained, I was scraping the ice on my windshield. Ginny Wieringa was out for her morning walk, noticed me, and yelled out “Reverend Vander Laan” a couple times. I did not hear her. Finally, Ginny said, “Jana.” I turned around with a blank look on my face. Yes, I was ordained at COS during the evening service on November 11. Yes, I am still learning to live into my pastoral identity. Thank you for the space and resources to do so through this residency. Here are a few ways that I am being pastor...

My husband and I hope to be co-pastors when he is finished with seminary and when I am finished with this residency. Yet we have found several ways to work together already. --In November, we attended the Seniors’ Thanksgiving Brunch as John Calvin and Katie Luther. We prepared and performed a dialogue between these historical figures. The highlight of the morning was answering a question about Katie’s brewing skills. --Both Mike and I are serving on the Household Nurturing Committee (HNC). The committee sensed a need for a fresh theological statement regarding households. Mike wrote and I edited a document. We are planning to use this document to be a conversation starter amongst coordinators in the coming months. The hope is that these conversations will help the HNC identify strengths and weaknesses within the household structure. The HNC has set-up a welcome table in the café area. Mike and I are regular greeters at this table. The HNC is also planning a time for entry and exit into households during the last two weeks in January. In response to a need for more households, Mike and I plan to form a new household.

I have done well with my goal to make two pastoral visits per week. I have found that it is easier to enter into deeper conversations when meeting one-on-one than on Sunday morning. Some of the people that I have met with are not connected well at COS. I am wondering how to better connect these people, especially since I am not a permanent face in this community.

For this Advent season, I prepared devotional liturgies that were placed in every members’ mailbox. I welcome any feedback. I also led two adult education sessions titled “Advent Reflections”. These sessions were not times of instruction but rather of sharing. I facilitated discussions on habits that help us enter into the Advent season more deeply. I was reminded how good it is when we share with one another along the Christian journey. We give and receive hope in our waiting for Christ’s return.

I attended a Spirituality of Addictions Conference at Calvin College on November 14. I received packets of resources, heard testimonies of recovering addicts, and also gained a theological foundation for addiction. I am still thinking of ways to share my experience and resources with the congregation. I also attended a mentor training at Calvin Seminary.

I tried a new style of preaching at the evening service on December 9. My message was broken up into three meditations that brought the worshipers to a posture of prayer. I have appreciated the space and encouragement to try new things for evening worship. Brion, Jessica, and I continue to work together in our planning for evening worship. We are presently thinking about a series for Lent.

7-7 Seven Days Prayer was a joint effort between the resident pastors and Naji Umran. We enjoyed transforming the ESL room into a prayer room and also received positive feedback on its arrangement. We welcome any other feedback for when a prayer week is done again.

In conclusion, I am nearly finished writing an article on music at the Lord's Supper for *Reformed Worship*. It has been a joy for me to blend my love of congregational song and theology into an article. It has also been affirming to who I am as a pastor. I am more than a pastor who loves church music. My passions – both music and theology – can be used for the building up of the church.

In Christ,
Jana Vander Laan