

Minister of Congregational Life Report – January 2008

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God (Psalm 146:5)

I gratefully participated in all of the COS worship opportunities during the Christmas season – even when I was directly responsible for a service, I was still able to appreciate the wonder of the gift of God's Son to us. And now, the week after all the flurry of Christmas and the start of a new year, I find it to be a time for reflection and for taking a few deep breaths.

December was filled with meetings and planning. Under my **administrative hat**, I continue to participate on the **Human Resources Committee, the Strategic Planning Committee and the Administrative Committee**. Each of those has separate minutes that are in this Council packet – check them out.

During December, I also found myself organizing **cookies and punch for Lessons and Carols and organizing a Brunch for Dec. 23**. (The brunch was cancelled due to a power outage here at COS but, that did not mean the brunch wasn't ready to go ☺) Thanks again to all of you who had your cakes baked and cut!

Jan DeVos and I had the privilege of working together on two events in December. We developed a hands-on activity for the younger generation with **the Advent Event** on December 2. I have wanted to do something like this since we gained more space with our addition. I am grateful Jan was eager too. We also planned and executed the **Christmas Eve 5pm service**. My goal each year is to tell the Christmas story in a fresh way that will communicate to both the children and the adult relative who has come to visit. We were a good team and had wonderful congregational volunteers to enjoy for that service!

During December, the **recruitment of scripture readers and prayer people** was a much bigger challenge than usual. I was very pleased with the outcome – the services were rich with strong proclamations of the scriptures. I enjoy finding readers and pray-ers. Just to be clear, I may have recruited alone in December but, during the rest of the year, Nancy Mulder and Rick Truer do great amounts of searching and recruiting for these worship needs each week. It is sometimes a formidable challenge.

Antiracism work continues too. Our **COS team** had their monthly meeting. (See the attached minutes.) **CORR** also continues to meet monthly. There are 3 representatives from each of our 3 churches on that committee. For COS, they are Brion Brooks, Holly Boonstra and Steve Staggs. I also attend as a trainer. Also in December as a trainer, I was invited to do some work with **Kentwood Community Church**. They are trying to address racial issues in very intentional ways. I led one focus group and Laura Carpenter led another one evening and we had a follow-up session with church leaders two weeks later. I wish all of you could have been there - I find it so exciting to listen to another church want to operate in a new way, one that is conscious our *racialized* identities.

In some ways, January becomes a start-up time that resembles September:

The **Household Nurturing Committee** (Jana and Mike VanderLaan, Amy Sebestyen and myself) is encouraging the congregation to join a household, switch to another household and/or begin a new household. The committee is also starting to circulate a working paper as to the nature of households at COS. We have asked the elders to respond to it at the January meeting and we plan to meet with Household coordinators starting in February.

The pilot of **The Marriage Course** is now completed and we have started publicizing the start of the course for our congregation which begins on Monday evening, January 28th. We started the sign up on January 6th and will hold an adult education information class on January 20th. Each elder is helping to spread the word in their parishes and the bulletin carries an announcement too.

On the subject of *Companions in Christ* spiritual formation groups that I hoped to start in January, I have decided to make a shift. While my *Companions in Christ* group (led by Lorilyn Wiering) and the GROW *Companions in Christ* group (led by Jessica Bratt) are doing well, I have encountered difficulty in finding leaders and participants to start more groups. The protest seems to be the length of the study, 28 weeks. Therefore, I am tracking on a new idea. The Upper Room publishes some shorter courses and one in particular has caught my eye: a 9 week course called *The Way of Grace*. It is the same style and format as the 28 week course. My rekindled hope is to start a course in each parish in February and March - I am enthused about having our congregation participate in this kind of reflective exercise. I asked the elders to give me their discernment and their suggestions for leaders as I start organizing.

In the middle of November, I began recruiting more people to do various forms of greeting: **the (new Welcome Table), the Welcome and Info Counter, door greeters and “in the crowd” greeters.** At this point, there are many willing new volunteers. I will meet with these folks altogether and we will develop a schedule as well as discuss the importance of their role at COS.

As usual, I spend many hours with visitors, members, writing of notes and cards, making and receiving phone calls as I work with COS volunteers, hiring and supervising childcare for the nursery, staying in touch and working with the staff – **the ongoing weekly details of congregational life.**

One more subject to close: In December we welcomed 19 **new members to COS.** They have all been invited to a COS member's home for a meal. The classes were held on Sunday afternoons in November, a time that has worked well in the past. This time however, there was such a struggle for attendance – people's schedules just did not mesh with my chosen times for class. So after pondering this for some time, I would like to try a new time of the day. I would like to plan the spring classes to be held during the 10am hour on Sundays. In order to do this, and cover what I think is necessary, it will take about 6 Sundays of classes that will need to start on March 2. This date is a little earlier than I have tried in the past but, I plan to give it a whirl.

Please note that **the Parish Nurse** (Penny Mauger) report follows this report. Be sure to keep this ministry in your prayers. This serves COS people very well.

As always, I am grateful for your partnership at Church of the Servant.

In Peace,
Janice