

church of the servant

InFOCUS

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COS Food Pantries Feed 100's

— Not quite as miraculous as the loaves and fishes, but close —



COS regularly provides food to our neighbors through the Mobile Food Pantry (which brings food directly to the Camelot Woods community) and the Emergency Food Pantry (operated out of our building).

In addition to food items provided to the Emergency Pantry by members of the congregation, most of the food for these pantries comes from Second Harvest Gleaner's Food Bank of West Michigan. Second Harvest collects food from grocery stores that would otherwise be discarded for one reason or another.

COS has two accounts at Second Harvest, and the cost of the food we get from there is paid for by your direct contributions to these accounts. Contributions of up to \$200 for individuals or \$400 for married couples are eligible for a 50% State of Michigan Tax credit.

The mobile food pantry is held on

the second and fourth Saturdays of each month in the parking lot of the Camelot Woods community building on Rowland Ave just a few blocks south of Burton. A converted beverage trailer with 7500 pounds of food from Second Harvest Gleaners usually arrives about 9:30 am. From then until about 10:00 volunteers from COS and the community unload the trailer and repack bulk items.

Beginning at 10:00 am, our customers, who have been patiently waiting in line most of the morning, circulate around the trailer and select the food items they want. Volunteers are assigned a specific item and amount to give each family. The food costs 3 cents a pound plus a \$100 delivery charge. The result is that for \$650/month, more than 60 low income families receive 50 lbs each of fresh food at no cost to them. Available food usually includes such staples as milk

What's Inside

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- Parish Nursing at COS (page 2) Find out how health care professionals at COS are working to heal the spirit as well as the body.
- Pastor's Corner (page 3). Pastor Jack Roeda offers a perspective on the theology of resource allocation.
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In Brief...

- Advent 2005 Did you know that our pastor, Jack Roeda, wrote the devotions for December in the current edition of *TODAY: The Family Altar* (a daily devotional guide published by the Back to God Hour). Copies are in your church mailbox and extras will be available at the back of the sanctuary throughout Advent. You are strongly encouraged to make them part of your Advent preparations.
- Beyond Our Walls Stay tuned in January for this perennial favorite!
- Vision 2006 On November 14 over 150 people came to talk, pray, create, play, and to explore our building's new addition. We were reminded not only to be thankful for the new opportunities that it will afford our ministries, but also to be mindful of the greater depth of commitment expected of us who have been given so much.
- Giving to date In the General and Mortgage Funds (as of November 13th): Budget: \$1,036,975; Receipts: \$891,744; Giving Compared to Budget: (\$145,231)

The NEW Website

— *Keeping up with the times* —

Over the past year several IT-able-members of our congregation have worked diligently at preparing a new website to go along with our new building expansion. As of November it has been up and running.

Some churches do everything they can to keep up with the times, striving to be at the cusp of new developments. At Church of the Servant we try to do this in moderation.

The fact is, from our first days we have sought to hearken back to the ways of the early church, we have enunciated our appreciation for the ancient traditions, and as much as we have tried to be a church of the young of heart and passionate of faith we have also tried to be a Church of the Acts (the original name of COS in the 1970s). That said, we have not wanted to be left behind when it comes to our church website.

In addition to a complete overhaul of the website's look, our volunteers have tried to make it more accessible, searchable, and increased its ability to convey who we are and what our ministries include. In order to meet these goals though, it would be most helpful if every member of the congregation took a few minutes to 'test-drive' the new site, and email us with your feedback.

The website address hasn't changed, it is:

www.churchoftheservantcrc.org

One of the great advantages of the new website is its simplicity to keep up to date, allowing COS staff and members (rather than an expensive IT company or an outside person) to fix minor mistakes or add new announcements and other relevant church information in a timely manner.

For those of you who have already had a look, we encourage you to continue to visit the site regularly, as we are still working on making it more useful.

One item which we anticipate adding soon is putting the weekly audio of sermons online. We are also looking at making a password accessible church directory available to members. A final thing which we could use your help with is adding pictures to the existing and upcoming web-pages. While we have a few already at our disposal, we'd encourage you to send in your own favorites from past, present and future COS events, so that we can illustrate the joy of the community we have together! ■

Parish Nursing at COS

— *Healthy bodies, healthy spirits* —



Early in 2003, a group of COS members began talking about their mutual interest in the concept of Parish Nursing and how it might serve Church of the Servant. These individuals found each other and formed a committee under the approval of council to investigate the feasibility of Parish Nurse Ministry at COS. By June of 2003 the ministry proposal had been approved by Council and, in the fall, Molly Oostendorp and Barbara Schultze completed the training and became coordinators of the ministry and unpaid ministerial staff. Since that time, Molly's employment has taken her out of town and she has had to resign her role. This November, we commissioned a new Parish Nurse, Penny Mauger, to take her place. They work within the structure of a Wellness Committee, chaired by John Leegwater, and fall under the oversight of Janice McWhertor, Minister of Congregational Life.

Throughout the history of God's people and the church, faith and health have been closely intertwined. In the Old Testament era, priests served as spiritual leaders, intercessors, and healers. Jesus' earthly ministry involved preaching, teaching and healing. The apostles in their ministries and in the early Christian church continued Christ's emphasis on healing with preaching and

teaching. In the past century, however, the gift of healing has been primarily handed over to professionals, and the integration of faith and health has been diminished. Parish Nurse Ministry is a specialty that seeks to restore that crucial link within communities of faith."

In West Michigan there are now 18 Parish Nurses practicing in congregations or other faith-based settings. Calvin's program alone has trained 40 nurses. Beyond West Michigan, Parish Nurses practice throughout the United States and beyond, from Australia to Swaziland, promoting health and healing in the context of faith.

The central purpose of a Parish Nurse Ministry is to integrate faith and health in the context of a faith community, in this case Church of the Servant and its ministries. This can happen in a variety of ways depending on the size and needs of the church, and the time and resources of the Parish Nurse. Their goals are to determine the needs of the congregation at large and that of individuals and seek ways to address those needs. Thus they've done several surveys to determine needs, developed a list of COS resources as well as community resources, and been available to answer questions and provide information.

see *Nursing*, p. 4 ■

Pastor's Corner

— Money well spent? —

One of the perennial concerns of any congregation, ours included, is that we spend too much money on ourselves and not enough on mission, evangelism and outreach.

Our congregation's budget chart, for example, indicates that a large proportion of our money is spent on staff, building related costs and "in-house" expenses. How can that possibly be right?

Part of the answer is found, I think, in the fact that the church is a community of people and not an abstraction or a gathering of souls. It's because we are human beings that we need classrooms, bathrooms, offices, and a roof over our heads. Most churches, I know, provide much more than protection from the elements, but that only underscores that as people we also require beauty, transcendence and a place to gather that expresses who we are.

More to the point, the question about where the money goes—us versus others—underscores a healthy tension in the life of the congregation. There is a natural tendency to be inward looking. We need constant reminding, as this question does, that church is not about us.

Still, the assumption that underlies the question needs reflection. After all, it's never really just about us. On Sunday morning, every member who gathers for worship and attends Church School is also a servant/missionary, and every home represents a mission station and every neighborhood and workplace a mission field. Each Sunday we are all bidden to go out into the world to love and serve the Lord.

If the money we spend on our staff and our church home equips us to love and serve the Lord, it is no more money spent on ourselves than money spent on tuition for a degree in law or medicine is money spent on ourselves.

Of course, if in our gatherings on Sunday we do not learn, among other things, how to praise God during the rest of the week, to act justly and love mercy, than the money is indeed poorly spent. It would be as though someone had finished medical school or law school and then never practiced the profession or only practiced it on her own immediate family.

Ultimately, whether or not the money we collect is well spent is not determined by the percentage we send to other agencies or ministries, but whether or not we live holy unto the Lord.

Jack Roeda



InFOCUS in focus

— Communication at COS —

At the 2005 Council Retreat in September, we discussed the rapid growth of Church of the Servant over the past decade, and the need to more conscientiously help all our members to know what the vision of COS is about and how we each play an important part in carrying it out.

In addition to this growing concern about communication at COS our deacons have been struggling for the better part of a year with their calling to be encouragers of faithful stewardship. How can every worshiper at our church be a servant with their time, talents and financial resources?

The dovetailing of these discussions and concerns has led to the emergence of this newsletter—COS InFOCUS. Our goal is to present the congregation with a new issue quarterly, highlighting the ministries that COS supports, and the opportunities we can all be considering for service.

How can you help us? Well, do you have ideas about what we might include in future issues? Is there a ministry you're involved in that you'd like people to know more about? Steve Huyser-Honig and Barb Schultze helped prepare two of the articles in this issue, and it's our hope that other members of the congregation will do so in the future. If this interests you, or you have feedback about our first issue, please contact Pastor Naji Umran or Eric Kort, chair of the deacons.

Food Pantry (cont'd from page 1)

or orange juice, potatoes and onions, and a wide variety of seasonal vegetables and fruit. In addition, deliveries are made directly to a number of elderly members of the Camelot Woods community who would find it physically challenging to come to collect the food themselves.

The pantries are supported by the efforts of about 75 interested COS members and friends. These members support the pantries through prayer, and about 10 volunteers are present on any given Saturday to assist with distribution of the food at the mobile food pantry. This is a very easy program to be involved in, and is a great experience for kids.

There is substantial support from the wider community as well. Linda DeLeon is a community member who has been involved since the program began. Her mother is a resident at Camelot Woods, and she and her extended family of brothers, children, grandchildren, in-laws, nephews and nieces make an invaluable contribution. Other community members pitch in regularly to help us repackage food. There is always an enthusiastic contingent of neighborhood kids who greet the volunteers with big smiles and a chorus of "can we help?" as soon as they arrive.

For more information about the program, including how to participate through prayer, volunteering, or financial support, please contact Steve Huyser Honig of our congregation.

A Season to Serve

— Whatever you do to the least of these, my brothers and sisters, you do unto me —

Chances are, if you're like many people, much of your time is already accounted for in the upcoming holiday season: events to attend, cards to write, and people to shop for. But what we're really looking forward to is a chance to rest and reflect on Thanksgiving, through Advent, and at Christmas, before they're gone again for another year.

At such times it's hard to imagine doing something for those who have fallen off our radar screens or who live on the margins of our society. But here are ten ideas to help all of us live our faith more intentionally, and serve more sacrificially.

- Buy a toy for a child at St. John's home.
- Restock the Emergency Food Pantry.

- Donate a Turkey or other food items for this year's 75 Christmas Food Baskets.
- Financially support Bread for the World and Coit Community Church through the special Thanksgiving offering.
- Invite a friend or a neighbor to one of COS' Christmas services this year.
- Write a card or a letter to one of COS' many foreign missionaries.
- Invite a college student to your family's Thanksgiving or Christmas dinners.
- Teach at ESL or Camelot Kids tutoring.
- Get your household involved with one of the new refugee families we support.
- Help out or make a tax-deductible gift to the Mobile food pantry. Special Holiday distribution times are at 5:30pm November 23 and December 22.

Reaching out, Reaching in

— Reporting on the Ongoing Outreach Activities of COS —

Benevolence Report:

This year we've already been approached with well over 60 requests for financial assistance, some of which we passed along to other churches and agencies. Of the remaining requests, more than 40 were given serious consideration by the deacons, and because of the generosity of members of Church of the Servant we have been able to help 37 of these with an average of more than \$250 in the form of gifts or loans.

Camelot Kids Tutoring:

What initially seemed like a slow start has turned into the beginning of another successful season of tutoring. Although we started late and with relatively few of last year's students returning, we already need more tutors to keep up with the number of kids. Our goal is to have one tutor per child and currently we have 17 children signed up with more on their way. Another need that we see arising is for people willing to drive the kids to and

from church each week. Please contact Mary Loeks if you'd like to get involved.

Emergency Food Pantry:

Winter is a busy season for the in-house COS pantry, requiring regular trips to Gleaners to pick up hundreds of pounds of frozen, packaged, and canned food. We also depend on food-donations from the congregation (take a look at the lists on the church's main doors to see our immediate restocking needs). Please keep this ministry in mind as we're anticipating even greater needs when we distribute 75 Christmas baskets to local families.

The Refugee Task Force (RTF):

In addition to continuing to assist about a dozen long-term families, over the past 6 months we've taken on responsibility for many new refugees, including the ladies from Liberia, and the Turkish group we



just received. We are always looking for households willing to partner with us and befriend new incoming refugee families. If this is a ministry you're interested in finding out more about, please contact RTF.

English as a Second Language:

After a short time at East Paris CRC due to our building's renovation, ESL is now running successfully Back at COS. The fact that we provide babysitting seems to be drawing increased numbers. At our last count we had over 40 students and under 10 tutors. As you can tell, we could always use a new tutor or two, just come!

Nursing (cont'd from page 2)

Traditionally there are seven roles of a Parish Nurse, and over the two years of this ministry our Parish Nurses have, in one way or another, acted within these roles. Here are some examples.

1) While visiting a COS member in the hospital where she attended to issues of pain and nausea, one of our Parish Nurses was also able to attend to spiritual needs and led in prayer at the end of her visit. As she was walking out, the roommate beckoned her over and said, "thank you for your prayers. No one came to see me tonight. Would you pray with me?"

2) Health educator: A number of Adult Education sessions and Youth Group sessions on various aspects of health - notably, mental health—have been organized. This year the Parish Nurses plan to take three of the topics that scored high in their latest survey and incorporate them into adult education.

3) Personal health counselor: This is one of the largest areas of ministry at this time. Although most in our congregation are blessed to have access to excellent medical care, sometimes it is helpful to

have a health professional to bounce thoughts off that you don't want to "bother" the doctor with, or to find out if the concern is something that should be taken to the doctor. When someone who loves you as a "sister or brother in Christ" explains why you should pay attention to a health problem and can put it in the context of caring for all aspects of health - body, mind and spirit - it may provide the support and courage needed to face a frightening health issue. The Parish Nurse is never meant to replace the health services available, but to enhance and support them with love.

4) Referral agent and liaison with community and congregational resources. A Parish Nurse helps the members of the congregation to tie into those resources. Our Parish Nurses have been able to make referrals to home care, hospice, community mental health, physicians, disability advocates, social work, transportation assistance, jobs, shelters, underinsured health services, housing and other ministries and members of Church of the Servant.

5) Facilitator of volunteers: One of COS's newest ministry groups facilitated

by the Parish Nurse Ministry is the Visiting Team. Cele Mereness heads up this group of volunteers who visit the sick and homebound, the hospitalized and the overwhelmed.

6) Developer of support groups: One thing that is being looked into now is forming a group that supports health by participating together in a fitness group.

7) Health Advocate: At times, one of our Parish Nurses will accompany a member to a physician appointment or test to ensure that their questions are answered and that they receive the attention they need to address their health concern.

In addition to Barbara Schultze and Penny Mauger, the Blood Pressure Screening is coordinated by Carolyn McCarthy and many nurses and other professionals participate in that. The Visiting team includes Cele Mereness as coordinator, Carol Harris, Carol Petter, Paul Stoub, Don Schuurman, and Beth Gordon. If you are interested in being a part of any of these groups, please contact John Leegwater, Cele Mereness, Carolyn McCarthy or Barbara Schultze. ■