

# Faith Formation Ministries: News and Notes

— Annette Ediger, Minister of Faith Formation

The Minister of Faith Formation at COS is essentially the CFFFO: the Chief Facilitator of Faith Formation Opportunities. I oversee all the educational offerings from nursery through adult education. My goal is to ensure that all of these opportunities provide an intentional approach that will allow God’s Word to grow in the hearts of people at all ages and stages of faith.

### Changes

I will be introducing a few new things this year:

- *Singing and Bible memory during church school* — All Sunday-school age youth will begin each week by gathering in Room 4 for a time of singing and Bible memory before they dismiss to their classes at 10:15 a.m. These are great ways to pass on the stories of our faith.
- *“Candy question” for 3rd and 4th graders* — To encourage good listening, I am placing a candy question in the green Worship Helps bags located by the main entrance. Kids who turn in answers will find a reward in their mailboxes the following week.
- *Church school curriculum* — For grades K–8 we will be using a new curriculum by Faith Alive called *Dwell*. Church members Len Vander Zee, Greg Scheer and Jolanda Howe all had a hand in producing this wonderful material!

### Tips for Families

If you are just joining our church or have children joining or exiting our programs, here are some tips:

- If you have a child joining Little Lambs (ages 2½–5) or Children in Worship (K–2) for the first time, sit with them at least once so you’ll know how they spend their time.
- If your child is joining you in the “big service” and has attended Children’s Worship, remember that the kids have been training for this. Encourage them to bring their Bibles so they can mark the passages, and encourage them to use the Worship Helps bags by the main door.
- On the way home from church, talk with your children about what they saw and heard to reinforce the expectation that they should be watching and listening.
- Have your child(ren) attend church school! This is a great way for them to get to know other children in the church and to hear the stories of our faith.

### Adult Education

In connection with our sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount, the adult education team has arranged for members of our congregation to share their insights on each week’s sermon passage from 10–10:45 a.m. on Sundays in Room 5.

Wednesday night discussions will be offered on a variety of topics — from environmental concerns to “Les Mis” — at 6:30 p.m. following our Wednesday dinners. Bookmarks with each week’s topics are located in the café.

■ **Check the website for the adult education speaker schedule.**

# Youth and Young Adult Programs

— Trent Elders, Youth and Young Adult Director

I am very excited to get this year under way. With middle school students, we will be learning about the Heidelberg Catechism with Jack Roeda, as well as participating in fun activities and service opportunities throughout the year.

With high school students, we will start out tracking with the Sermon on the Mount sermon series. During the year we will have a retreat at Camp Henry, a team-building time at Camp Roger, a paintball outing in Michigan City, a backpacking trip to the Manistee River trail and a domestic mission trip (next summer).

In the college ministry, we will participate in Calvin College’s student body Bible study between the services. We may also go on a silent retreat to The Hermitage in Three Rivers.

I look forward to getting to know all of you. Thank you for welcoming my wife, Kelly, and me into your church family.

## COUNCIL 2012–2013

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# Ministry Staff Report

SEPTEMBER 2012



# People of the Kingdom

— Jack Roeda, Pastor

In Colossians we’re told that God “has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (1:13-14). The manner of life in this kingdom is sketched out for us in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount.

We will listen to this sermon throughout the coming year, letting its call to radical discipleship shape our life together. We will hear what is required of us “if we are to be followers rather than admirers of Jesus” (Stanley Hauerwas).

Moreover, during the months of October and February, we will continue our Sunday evening conversations concerning Faith & Science.

■ **Check the website for the weekly sermon themes and passages.**

# COS Is in a Good Place

— Lori Wiersma, Minister of Administration

I am thrilled to report that COS is fully and competently staffed to carry out her mission of “being and making disciples.” All of our new staff members have hit the ground running and are working closely with their respective ministry teams and leaders. God has abundantly blessed COS with a passionate, gifted staff and so many lay leaders who give countless hours in joyful service.

The COS council, led by Tracey Gebbia, will continue to focus on its leadership roles of discernment, strategy and oversight. Recently, the chairs of elders, deacons and council and I attended a Ruth Haley Barton leadership and discernment summit in Chicago called “Pursuing God’s Will Together.” The skills and practices learned will benefit the congregation and its ministries as we prepare for some significant transitions in the future.

Have you noticed the crisper version of the COS logo, updated by Paul Stoub? You will be seeing this new logo, along with colorful bars, on our printed materials, website and signage. The council also updated and shortened the COS mission statement that was adopted 20 years ago (see below).

This fall COS will gain the ability to send important mass emails to the congregation, and parish team leaders will be able to send news updates to their parishes. Thanks to Dave Brondsema for his volunteer programming work to give us this much-needed capability.

Finally, our Safe Church Policy handbook of 2006 has been updated with clear protocols and lines of reporting. Upon Council approval, the handbook will be available this fall in the Members & Friends section of the COS website. Thank you to Amy Heeringa and Amy Wolterstorff, our Safe Church Coordinators, for their thorough work, and to Hope Bradley for pulling the recommended changes together in this new handbook.

I began by saying COS is in a good place ... and I conclude by saying that God has placed me in a good place at COS. Thank you for the privilege of leading and serving among you.

### Our Mission

We are a diverse community of Christ’s servants, a home for God’s children, and a prism for God’s light in liturgy and life.

As children of the light, we desire

- to participate in worship that is Reformed and liturgical, historic and modern, local and global
- to prepare people for service by nurturing their gifts and encouraging them to grow in discipleship
- to create a fellowship where the burdened and suffering will find support and comfort, where the alienated will be accepted, and where those seeking God will be shown the way
- to present Christ to others by showing God’s love in Jesus for the world and promoting justice and peace for our neighbors near and far

(Revised 2012)

# Preaching the Gospel: Using Words When Necessary

— Greg Scheer, Minister of Worship

In twenty-some years of music ministry, one of the most interesting and encouraging notes I’ve received from a congregation member is this:

*My musical faith has always been so much stronger than my verbal faith. I have tended to view the verbal faith as the authentic one, but thought in church today: Maybe music could be something I could honor equal to words as an authentic experience of faith.*

This is something of a musical take on a quotation attributed to St. Francis: “Preach the gospel at all times; when necessary, use words.” Yes, I have heard that St. Francis is unlikely to have ever said this, and no, I don’t take this to mean that words or preaching are unimportant. However, the words point out something fundamental: music in worship is never just music. Music, arts and liturgy are all important avenues of spiritual formation.

As we focus on the Beatitudes this fall, we have a number of opportunities to preach the Word through music, dance, art and liturgy. Right away you’ll notice Matt Plescher’s design on the front of the printed liturgy, highlighting the “blessed are” statements of the Beatitudes. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount draws on a rich tradition of wisdom literature that contrasts the life of the blessed with the way of the wicked. We pick up this theme in the liturgy with words from the Psalms: “Blessed are those whose hope is in the Lord their God,” and “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven.”

We will sing a variety of songs based on the Beatitudes. The dancers will embody the gospel message with a dance choreographed by COS’s new music assistant, Julia Start Fletcher. Throughout the year we will highlight the Lord’s Prayer, singing a variety of musical settings that will help us pray those familiar words more deeply.

My prayer is that the rhythms of sermon, song, dance and liturgy will work the gospel message deep into our minds, spirits and bodies throughout the coming year.

# Living into Community

— Janice McWhertor, Minister of Congregational Life

“Christian community is founded solely on Jesus Christ and in fact, it already exists in Christ. It is not an ideal which we must realize, it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.”  
—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says it well. At Church of the Servant we don’t create community. We learn to live into what God has created for us. Those of us involved in congregational life at COS seek to bring these words to life. For example:

- Over the summer, nine worship services at 10 a.m. followed by nine lunches helped us build new community in the name of Jesus.

- Thirty-two ongoing households meet to build friendships, pray together and see the love of God in each other.
- The Thursday morning Bible study (9:30–11 a.m.) on the book of John will offer us 20 weeks to absorb the richness of the One who gives the blessings and empowers the blessed. Childcare is provided.
- Sunday mornings are ready to unfold for the fall season on the Beatitudes. Stop in the café to pick up John Stott’s book on the Beatitudes, subtitled *Developing Spiritual Character*.
- Parish care teams have met over the summer for training and planning and are ready to help us receive and provide care for one another.
- Wednesday night dinners and programs for all ages begin Oct. 1.
- *Understanding Racism* workshops, an opportunity to learn about racism in a new and redemptive way through the eyes of faith and scripture, will be offered Oct. 20–22 and Nov. 1–3.

# A Year of Stretching Out and Reaching In

— Sam Lee, Resident Pastor of Outreach

I envision that the year ahead will be a time of stretching out from our diverse comfort zones for the Outreach Ministry team of COS, and continuing the work that our Lord has already begun through his servants: being the hands and feet of Jesus.

Equally important, however, I desire to see us stretch and extend Christ’s hands to our brothers and sisters within our congregation, from near and far, who are waiting to be touched with the Lord’s presence through our “in-reaching” — enriching the intimacy of our fellowship and relationships for the future vitality of this covenant community.

# An Outreach Update

— Ruth Lemmen, Resident Pastor of Outreach

- ### Looking Back

  - Sixty COS and neighborhood children enjoyed Bible stories, crafts and games at Kids’ Week at COS in July. At least 12 countries were represented.
  - Many people attended the Basic English Service (BES) for the first time this summer and ate together at Sunday lunches.

- ### Looking Ahead

  - BES is joining the Sermon on the Mount series. The *Our Faith* Bible study for English language learners will study the Beatitudes.
  - English as a Second Language (ESL) starts Sept. 11. We still need tutors!
  - Time for Tea starts Sept. 14 for women’s activities and fellowship.
  - Refugee Task Force expects new families.