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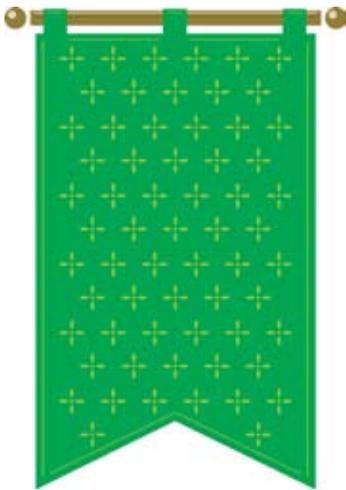
Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church Newsletter

February 2018

The Color Green—Ordinary Time

Pastor John

The question was recently asked by one of our members regarding the different uses of color during the church year. This person specifically asked “Why the color green?”



As one might expect there have been different answers from different church traditions. I went to the website of the Calvin Institute of Christian worship and found this from the pen of Howard Vanderwell who has been writing about and teaching the church about liturgy for many years. Regarding the liturgical use of the color “green” he writes that this color indicates that we are committed to grow our commitment to display the life of Christ through our witness. The season following Epiphany displays the color green. Christ has come and now he begins his ministry. We are called, invited, challenged to live our lives in such a way that we display a constant growth in our relationship with Jesus. After all, living with Jesus, being in a relationship with Jesus, does change us.

Another resource from the United Church of Christ tells us that “The season following Epiphany continues the theme established on Epiphany Day: the spread of the Good News of Christ from its source in the Jewish community to all nations on earth. The Lectionary therefore explores the mission of the church in the world. The theme of this season (along with the sequence of readings from the Gospel) continues in the season after Pentecost, so both seasons together can be called the “Time of the Church.” The traditional liturgical color for both seasons, Green, is the color of growth.”

Notice how both traditions emphasize the theme of growth, our growth as followers of Jesus. So that’s our challenge to hear the Gospel and grow into a life that reflects the teaching and actions of our Lord.

Loving God, Serving People

Building a community loved and changed by Jesus,
loving and changing the world for him.

The Rewards of Serving as a Stephen Minister

The Stephen Ministry Leadership Team



Over the last several months, you have read and heard a lot about Stephen Ministry at the Ann Arbor CRC. You have come to understand the benefits of a confidential Christ-centered ministry for people in crisis or with other needs for care. But did you ever wonder what the benefits are for those who serve as care givers? A few of our Stephen Ministers share their thoughts on how they have personally benefited from the experience:

"I have been blessed as a Stephen Minister in multiple ways. One way is receiving the extensive and thorough training in care giving that has enhanced my active listening skills. Another

is simply being a blessing by showing up and being there for someone who needs an understanding non-critical ear. Caring is truly a holy privilege."

"The world is full of people who are hurting. In most instances people experiencing difficult circumstances can be supported and helped if they can only find a caring person to talk with, someone who is committed to really listening to them, in an atmosphere that is not intended to parcel out blame or point an accusing finger. This description, in short, is exactly what a Stephen Minister is trained and equipped to do. Fortunately for me, the care given by a Stephen Minister is not intended to fix problems. He or she is to be the eyes and ears of Christ, to see Him working through them to touch the lives of people that He loves very deeply. Since becoming a Stephen Minister, I have been exposed to issues that I've only heard or read about but never had the opportunity to experience firsthand. At first this was rather intimidating but over time I've come to understand that God can do his work even through the hands of his most tentative children. That is because it is not me, but Christ within me, who does the work. And I find that the more I care the more I receive back in even greater amounts. What more could a person ask for!"

If you are interested in serving as a Stephen Minister, please contact Louise Gruppen or Marian Ijzerman for more information about the upcoming Stephen Minister Training Class. Applications are due by February 4, 2018.



Theme for Lent

**The God of the Gospel brings light out of death—
this is the core of our faith**

Join us on February 14, Ash Wednesday, as we gather for a meal and begin our Lenten journey together. There will be a simple meal of soup and bread beginning at 5:45 pm, and we'll move to the sanctuary at 6:30 pm.

Challenging Questions Bring Exciting Answers

*Jenelle Newman
for the Missions Team*

Resonate Global Mission's—November 2017 Engaging Mission

<https://www.resonateglobalmission.org/blog/challenging-questions-bring-exciting-answers>

“How can we do missions right here at home? And how can we as a church be more intergenerational?”

The answer to those two questions ended up being one and the same.

Members of Faith CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa, pondered these questions at a table discussion with other members of her congregation. Faith CRC was in a time of transition—they had a new pastor, and they were evaluating their congregation's needs and desires for the future.

As you may know, transitions like this can be scary and intimidating. But thanks to your support for Resonate Global Mission, beautiful new ministries can come out of such times of discernment.

That's why donors like you made it possible for churches to take part in the Healthy Church process, a discernment process designed by Home Missions (now part of Resonate) to help established churches strengthen their ministry.

As members of Faith CRC worked through this process, they brainstormed ideas for new ways they could be the hands and feet of Christ, serving him in mission.

Fast-forward a few months, Faith CRC hosts a lively scene at a meeting for its newest ministry—SOWing (Serving Our World in nurturing girls), a sewing group that makes items such as washable sanitary pads for young women who do not have access to disposable feminine hygiene products.

“On a typical SOWing afternoon, along with the buzz of sewing machines and sergers, women and girls from all generations are cutting pattern pieces, cutting fabric, and trimming and pressing finished items. As they work side by side, we see relationships begin to form,” says Delores Zonnefeld, a member of Faith CRC.

What a beautiful thing that is happening: generations of women coming together for fellowship and achieving a common ministry goal!

The group uses the sewn articles to deepen their relationship with a ministry that Faith CRC was already

involved in—the mission work of Resonate's Michael and Megan Ribbens in South Africa.

“We are now so much more aware of what Michael and Megan are doing in South Africa and how to partner in their ministry,” says Delores.

As generations of women at Faith CRC continue to meet regularly to teach one another new techniques and learn more about each other, they are also able to give extra fabric to a nearby nursing home for the residents to use for quilting. The blessing rolls on and on.

Where there once were confusion and uncertainty about a church's future, now there are friends who enjoy joining together and joining God's mission.

Faith CRC is a stronger church because of your partnership. Thank you for your faithful support that is strengthening churches right here in North America and around the world.



Christmas Story from Kalukembe

*Priscilla Cummings, MD, FACOG
Kalukembe IESA Mission Hospital, ANGOLA*

Dear Friends & Family,

Yesterday Zeke was walking home with his friends when they passed a rough group of young men, one holding a large knife. As they walked by the men said loudly “let's kill the white boy”—Zeke and his friends ran away together and continued their hunting of sweet mangos nearby the house. It was only later that Zeke mentioned what happened. I (almost crying myself) asked if he was worried or had been scared. Then he said, as though to comfort me, “don't worry mom, if they had come after me I would have died for my friends. I would have been killed first.” What?! This comment wasn't reassuring at all! I was silent and confused. I walked away to the kitchen to think, but then walked passed the verses written on the wall, and remembered everything we've been talking about in preparation for Christmas. “Greater love has none than this: that someone lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13). What a friends we have in Jesus, our Savior who did come and did lay down his life! We hope this good news goes everywhere so all can have a really Merry Christmas! Emmanuel! Love from Kalukembe, Daniel, Priscila, Zeke, Eliel, Naomi

(Priscila worshipped at AACRC while attending medical school and volunteered for the Friendship Ministry.)