

CLASSIS MATTERS

A Newsletter of Classis Georgetown of the CRC in North America

May June 2016

Member Churches

- ◆ Alive Ministries
- ◆ Baldwin Street CRC
- ◆ Bauer CRC
- ◆ Cottonwood Church
- ◆ EverGreen Ministries
- ◆ Fairway CRC
- ◆ First Hudsonville CRC
- ◆ First Jenison CRC
- ◆ Forest Grove CRC
- ◆ Friendship Chapel
- ◆ Georgetown CRC
- ◆ Hillcrest CRC
- ◆ Immanuel CRC
- ◆ Jamestown CRC
- ◆ Messiah CRC
- ◆ Ridgewood CRC
- ◆ Searchlight Ministries
- ◆ Trinity CRC
- ◆ Twelfth Avenue CRC
- ◆ Zutphen CRC

Praises & Prayer Requests

~praise for all of the Classis Georgetown churches that are taking part in the Church Renewal Lab.

~pray for all of the church programs that are planned specifically for the summer, including mission trips and service projects; pray for safety and changed hearts.

~pray for a pleasant and enjoyable time of retirement for Rev. Jerry Van Groningen, as he retires after 37 years in the ministry of the CRCNA.

Church Renewal Lab

(Editor's Note: Several churches in Classis Georgetown have become involved in the Church Renewal Lab through Calvin Seminary. Two more stories are included in this issue.)

Church Renewal Lab at Bauer CRC

Sometimes when people hear that Bauer CRC has joined the Renewal Lab they've wondered, "Bauer is growing, why do they need renewal?" It's a good question. I would answer, "Nobody this side of heaven has "arrived." We're all "pressing on to take hold of" what Jesus has for us!

For us the Renewal Lab is helping us with two things; first, to (re)discover the Mission of God for His people and the unique mission of God for our congregation. One of the things we struggle with in a well-established church is losing the mission in the activity and enjoyment of being together. This process is helping us ask again, "Why are we here? What is God's intention for putting us together as we are? At this time?" We've had wide-ranging answers to those questions, but needed to get more clear and specific.

Second, the Renewal Lab is helping us focus on the fundamental nature of the gospel. I imagine that if we asked 10 people at our church to define the basic message of Christianity (the gospel), we'd probably get 10 different answers. (In fact, I think I should try that little experiment!) Yet Paul says, "the gospel is the power of God for salvation." Do we really believe that? And are we clear about what that good news is? We want to get back to the basics of understanding and proclaiming the gospel, and letting THAT power do its saving in us and through us.

We're not so concerned with numerical growth for growth's sake. We don't feel the need at all to be "bigger," but we are very interested in growing spiritually. We are captivated by the desire to experience more of God in our lives, to come closer to Jesus Christ. We long for a more vibrant relationship with God in our ordinary lives. And we want that growth to include our lost neighbors, family and friends being found in Christ.

Personally, I hope our leaders get so clear and passionate about God's mission for His church that we will better keep the main thing the main thing, or as one of my mentor's is fond of saying, "Keeping the main thing the plain thing and the plain thing the main thing."

I want to learn how to better disciple the people around me so that they gain assurance of *(Continued on back page)*

Vision Statement

Classis Georgetown is a community of Christian Reformed Churches in Eastern Ottawa County who live and minister together, in Christ, to transform lives and communities.

Values

Healthy Leaders

We equip leaders to transform lives and communities.

Collaborative Relationships

We call out the strengths of each church and pursue ministry together to create new ways of transforming lives and communities.

Empowering Worship

We celebrate and are sustained by God's presence as he transforms lives and communities.

Daring Hospitality

We welcome the stranger in ways that transform lives and communities.

Risky Compassion

We extend uncommon generosity to the suffering and work to eliminate the causes of that suffering in order to trans-

CHURCH SIGN:

Jesus
knows me,
this
I love.

Church Renewal Lab (continued)

salvation, a sense of Christ's nearness to them, and a passion for fulfilling the purpose for which God made and redeemed them. We don't want only to hear stories of God's saving power from distant missionary fields or old Christian books. God is alive and active. Jesus is on the move. We want to participate in whatever He wants to do here.

We're still learning a great deal about this process and trying to listen to what the Spirit is saying to us. And in the process, we are developing new levels of trust in each other to think outside the box.

It's too early to say what our recommendations might be to others, but already, we are seeing God at work—not necessarily because of anything we've planned and done. Maybe we're just more alert to see what God is doing around us. But certainly, we are being more intentional about what we do. (Article contributed by Pastor Tim Holwerda)

Church Renewal Lab at Baldwin St.

Baldwin Street CRC embarked on a church renewal journey in the summer of 2014. We began our journey by listening to God, our neighbors, our members and the Holy Spirit, so that we could understand what new or renewed ministry and life God had in mind for Baldwin Street CRC.

Why renewal? Wasn't everything going as well as could be expected? Our

own needs were being met. The membership numbers were declining, but we knew that was happening in many Jenison churches. As we listened to God and Jesus through His Word we learned that His desire is to make all things new. We have been commissioned to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and to teach them everything He has commanded us. He gives the promise that He is with us to the very end of the age. He also promised us that we would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us, so that we could be His witness to our neighbors and to the ends of the earth. He reminds us to abide in Him, and that apart from Him we can do nothing.

Our Renewal Team realized early on in our journey that we needed to change our focus from inward to outward. We need to keep our eyes focused on Jesus and His will for His people. Through this process, which we will continue for another two years, we have seen that we need to be bold and courageous in seeking new ways to live and express the transforming love of Jesus that we have experienced to those we come in contact with. We see renewal as an on-going process that calls each of us as individuals and as a body of believers to answer the call of Jesus to make disciples, by witnessing to His transforming love, and to become the hands and feet of Jesus to our neighbors.

The journey of renewal is long and there are a lot of bumps along the way,

but God is faithful to His promises, and we rest on His Word. We have a number of community neighbors who utilize Cadets, GEMS, Young Peoples, Parents Night Out, and our Wednesday night Building Bridges dinners, and we are seeking ways to meet various needs in all areas of their lives.

We also have connections with our community through the Kids Hope Ministry at Pinewood Elementary School, and we are involved in the back-pack ministry at Pinewood to help those who have need for food over the weekend.

Do we have all the answers? No, but we continue to listen to God, our fellow church members, our neighbors, and the Holy Spirit, as we seek to answer the call of Jesus to be His witnesses. We continue to pray that He will grant us the grace and power of His presence as we seek to do His will in our community: to redeem every square inch for Him. (Article submitted by Mr. Carl Wiersum, a member of Baldwin Street CRC)

(Copied from the website of Church Renewal Lab)

“The Congregational Renewal Learning Laboratory (The Renewal Lab) is one of Calvin Seminary's most recent commitments to come alongside congregations and their leaders to strengthen them in fulfilling their call to be God's redeeming presence in their local communities.”

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