



Prairie Lane Press

September 2009

New Policies in the Ministry Year

Churches are constantly looking for new ways to make things go more smoothly and for ministry to be more effective. Prairie Lane is no exception. As we begin another ministry year, we are trying some new things here. Have you noticed? Hopefully this newsletter will help get you up to speed on some of our changes.

Prelude Song:

- Generally speaking, people have had positive things to say about having some coffee and fellowship time before the service begins. However, one result of this is that people tend to wait until after the service begins to come in and find a seat. With everyone coming in at once, the chairs in the back fill up quickly, while chairs closer to the front remain open. And, this can make it hard to find a seat.
- One way to help with this is to continue to encourage regular attenders to sit closer to the front and save the back rows for others. And, another solution we are trying is to have a prelude song. About 5 minutes before 10, the praise team will sing their first song. This is a way we can prepare our hearts for worship, but it can also serve as a verbal cue to those in the fellowship hall that the service is about to begin, and that they should come in and find a seat.

Nursery Policies:

- **The most important thing about a church nursery is that it needs to be a safe place.** For those who have been attending Prairie Lane for a long time, we have trust and confidence that it is a safe place because we know each other well. But, we also need to make sure guests or new attenders at Prairie Lane can also use our nursery with confidence. **One way we can help is to have sign-ins and sign-outs for ALL the children dropped off in nursery.** One benefit of this policy is to make sure we get the names of all the children and parents. And of course, especially in this age of custody battles, this policy makes sure that only an approved person picks up the child from nursery. We do not want a nursery helper bringing kids downstairs, and we wouldn't even want an adult friend to pick up a child without the parents knowing about it. In last month's *Banner* there was an article that a child was kidnapped from a nursery in Grand Rapids—so it is wise to be careful. So we are consistent and set a good example, even regular attenders who use the nursery every week should sign their children in and out.
- There are other nursery policies that we will continue to work on, finalize, and they will be posted in the nursery soon.

Church Handbook:

- For the first time in about 15 years, Prairie Lane Church has an up-to-date church handbook. It is a place to gather our church policies and procedures, anything from weather cancellation policies, to electing new deacons and elders, to staff job descriptions. Most people at church won't need to consult the church handbook, but it is good to at least be aware that such a thing exists, and it is available in the library or in the church office for you to see.

Safe Church Policies:

- One thing you will find in the church handbook is our new safe church policy we approved in this last year. This is a very important document that our church probably should have had many years ago. But, better late than never!
- **The safe church policy covers our different children and youth programs** and gives some guidelines concerning discipline, transportation, one-on-one counseling, and more. There are also procedures written down as what is proper to do if a person working with children suspects abuse or neglect. Certainly, that is a policy we never hope to use, but it is important for a church to have just in case.
- *There are probably three parts of this new policy that most directly impact members of the church.*
 1. **Incident report forms:** if there is any kind of accident, injury, or other incident that happens during one of our church programs, we want to have a written report of what took place. There are incident report forms in the nursery, in the ed. building and in Jennifer's office. There are included with carbon paper so that a copy of the report can be given to the child's parent, and one can be kept on file at church.

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Safe Church Policies continued:

2. **Waiver/permission forms:** We want all children involved in Spotlight/JAM, Cadets/Gems, or Sunday School to fill out our new permission form every year. It includes permission to give first aid and treatment at a hospital, permission for an adult to transport the child for special functions, permission to use pictures in church publications, health information, emergency contact information, and a few others things as well. These forms are available on-line, and in the church mailboxes. We also asked ministry leaders to hand them out. Although these are important for anyone, they are especially important to have for those who attend our youth programs but who do not normally attend at Prairie Lane Church.
3. **Volunteer Screening Forms:** Adult volunteers who work with children or youth in the nursery, children's worship, Sunday School, Cadets/Gems the youth groups, or Heart and Hands, need to fill out an application. Since this is a brand new policy, and since the policy was not officially approved and communicated until August when programs were about to start, the returns on this form have been very slow. I will continue to remind volunteers to get them turned in. This is not a form that needs to be filled out every year, but probably just once and then kept on file. Like the other forms, this one includes several different things. One purpose is to help make sure that those who are leading and teaching our children and youth will be godly examples. And, these forms are also about creating a safe environment for children. This policy becomes more important as our church continues to grow and as new attenders ask to get involved. However, it is not right for us to discriminate and only ask certain people to fill out the form, so everyone must do this, even those that have been in children's ministry here for a long time already.

Prayer Team:

- After more than a year, this Sunday (September 20) will be the last week of our "prayer star", at least for awhile. We have gone through all the children and youth we received pictures for. We hope this program, and the prayer cards we handed out last year, were good reminders for you throughout this last year to keep our children and youth in your prayers. Now, the prayer team will begin another prayer focus for this year.
- At our congregational meeting in June, **we heard from many different people who are involved in ministry outside of the church.** We have members involved at Open Door Mission, Hope Center, Mission for All Nations, the Center for Pregnancy Counseling, and more. Plus, there are several missionaries and church plants we support. As a church, we want to have that kind of kingdom mentality that recognizes God's work is much, much bigger than what we are doing here at Prairie Lane.
- **We have a new bulletin board in the prayer room** that highlights different ministries we are involved with. There is also a prayer notebook with more information about all of these places. So, our prayer focus this year will be on these ministries we partner with. We hope to provide the church with news, updates, and their specific requests so that we can remember to keep them in our prayers. Remember, that the primary function of the prayer team is to equip and encourage the whole congregation to pray. There is a group that helps organize and promote specific prayer ideas, **but it is up to all of us to be involved.**

Prayer Focus Upcoming Weeks:

- September 27 – **AAA Center for Pregnancy Counseling** (we will be collecting for them on September 27, and Michelle Sullivan, the director, will be with us in church that Sunday)
- October 4 – **Michelle Maly** (World Communion Sunday)
- October 11 – **Northern Lighthouse Church** (our substitute preacher will be from Northern Lighthouse that morning)
- October 18 – **Friendship CRC in Sergeant Bluff** (we hope to send a volunteer crew in October to help them with their building project)



Council News

SEPTEMBER COUNCIL MEETING

Bill Beshlian lead us in devotions and we had a time of group prayer

Deacon Report:

- The deacons will change the way they report the offering totals in the bulletin to give the congregation more information.
- Because ministry shares and health insurance function on the calendar year, and because of giving patterns that drop in the summer, but pick up in December, the deacons decided that it is better for the church to have a calendar year budget. **We will have a congregational meeting in December to approve a new 2010 12-month budget.**
- The deacons agreed with Pastor Dan that we should order more pew Bibles, plus they suggested ordering some large print Bibles.
- The youth will start assisting the deacons taking the offering soon
- Brian Kramer hopes to organize a service trip to Friendship Church in Sergeant Bluffs

Elder Report:

- Pastor Dan has been assigned by classis to preach on September 27 at Calvin CRC in LeMars, which is currently vacant. Dr. Wayne Kobes, professor of theology at Dordt College will preach for us that morning. Pastor Dan also has a vacation week on October 11, and a preacher from the Northern Lighthouse will be subbing.
- Based on our current membership numbers, it looks like our ministry shares will remain the same for next year.

Classis Meeting:

- The next classis meeting is in LeMars, IA on Saturday September 26. Pastor Dan, Wayne, and Bill will attend as delegates.
- Patrick Durkee will be examined by classis to be ordained as a ministry associate, which will allow him to continue his ministry as an Air Force Reserves Chaplain. Prairie Lane becomes the "calling church" and has a supervisory role, but mostly this is taken care of by the Air Force.

Building Use Request:

- Council briefly considered two building requests. One is a request from a member of the AA group that meets here, to start a Sexaholics Anonymous group that meets at Prairie Lane. Council decided to table this matter and gather more information. The other request is from a woman who is looking for a place to teach ballroom dancing lessons to kids. She works with the public schools, but says that some students want to continue on after the class is done. We need to develop a new building policy for this request because she is a for-profit business.

News/updates from the ministry team

- Council took a few minutes to review the Family Fun Fest and Kick-off Sunday at church, and thought of ways to improve it for next time.
- The Prayer Team is almost finished with the prayer stars and will begin a new focus on ministries we support (for more information, see article in this newsletter)
- Abuse Prevention: we still need to collect lots of screening forms from adults who work with children and youth. Council made some suggestions on how we can help this process (also more information in this newsletter)