

**Providence Christian Reformed Church
Christian Education Ministry (CEM) – June 2010**

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Prov. 22:6

What does “train a child in the way he should go” mean? Providence CRC has a long tradition of supporting Christian school education because we believe that Christian schools can be a very important part of that training. To put that belief into action, Council has recently endorsed the establishment of a CEM fund and committee to help parents in “training” their children.

Purpose

The newly established CEM fund and committee’s main goal is to ensure that everyone in our church who desires to have their children receive a Christian school education will be able to do so. We know that the increasing cost of Christian education can be a financial burden or even a barrier to sending children to a Christian school and because of that our hope is to aid and encourage families financially as well as in other ways.

Today there are many choices for education and we respect that not all families will choose Christian education for various reasons. Interestingly enough, **Choices** was the theme of a promotional piece put out by Christian Schools International this past spring. The following is an excerpt:

*“We’re alive because of **Choices**. God chose to create human beings, and chose to give us freedom to make our own **Choices**. At times, **Choices** may be hard, require continued commitment and firm faith. Those of us who are parents have the momentous task of choosing how to train our children to live, what values to impart, and how we nurture their faith. The writer of Proverbs asks us to weigh our **Choices**, to reflect on our decisions: “How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!” (Prov. 16:16) Given the importance of the task, we are counseled to think carefully about the **Choices** we make in connection with our children.”*

Parents are the first and primary influencers and educators of their children. In addition, as a believing community, Providence church promises to help parents nurture and educate their children to grow in faith and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christian schools can be a strong third partner with parents and church in this commitment and help children to learn to see God’s world through the lens of His Word, the Bible. Our Christian Reformed denomination was a primary influence in establishing and maintaining Christian day schools. As recently as 2006, our denomination restated our commitment to Christian schools in a powerful report. This support then becomes the responsibility of all of us at Providence church.

Providence has always supported Christian education with financial assistance. Twenty plus years ago our policy was changed as a reaction to the then large number of students in Christian schools. It is now time to reexamine that policy and consider a change. Our purpose for establishing a separate CEM fund at Providence along with an oversight committee is to:

- Provide financial support (variance) for all families who make the choice of Christian education
- Give a visible presence to our commitment
- Be more deliberate in our partnership for home, church, and school
- Provide additional tuition assistance to families who demonstrate more than an average need
- Implement fundraising efforts to supplement the amount the General Fund already allocated to Christian education variance
- Maintain an oversight committee which would be under the authority of and report to Council. The oversight committee, made up of interested members will oversee fundraising efforts and the distribution of the CEM fund, make decisions in regards to granting tuition assistance, and be responsible for keeping the mission of the CEM visible to the congregation

Plan

The Committee has researched over 15 different churches in the area, talked to numerous members of different Christian education committees, and did number crunching of different plan structures that area churches use. As a result, we have decided to use a plan similar to one that Covenant CRC just adopted after doing a similar study of their Christian education assistance program. This plan is adapted from a model that has been used successfully for some time at Heritage CRC. We believe the positives of this plan are:

- All children are included, whether the family has 1 child or multiple children
- It starts at Kindergarten and is constant through high school, showing we support each level of education equally
- It will be given to all families who enroll in a CSI Christian school, thereby showing the value we place on Christian education to all families
- It is a simple program to understand, implement and maintain
- It based on the principle it is harder to afford Christian education as the number of children in a family increases.

The new formula for our CEM variance program is as follows: the 1st (or eldest) child will receive a 15% variance of their tuition cost from our CEM fund, the 2nd child will receive a 25% variance of their tuition cost, the 3rd child will receive a 65% variance of their tuition cost, the 4th child will receive an 80% variance of their tuition cost and each additional child an 80% variance, with a cap of \$20,000 per family. If more assistance is needed, the parents will meet with members of the CEM committee which will base additional help on income and other family circumstances.

Providence Family

Our desire is to involve all members of Providence in the support of the Christian Education Ministry. Over the next year, we hope to develop various ways for everyone to help, some examples are:

- Contributing faithfully to the General Fund of Providence church – from where a portion of the assistance will come
- Participating in special CEM offerings
- Attending and contributing in different ways to dinners or other fundraisers that support CEM
- Purchasing TRIP (Tuition Reduction Incentive Plan) certificates for the Providence CEM account
- Designating financial gifts for the CEM fund at anytime
- Prayer support for all the families in our church who have young children and school age children as they seek to nurture and raise their children in their homes, in this church, and in the schools they attend.

Thank you so very much for taking the time to read this information. If you have been blessed by a Christian education yourself, or your children were, we trust we have your support and your willingness to help pass that blessing on to others. If you are interested in talking with someone regarding the value and the investment of Christian education, please do not hesitate to contact anyone of us.

Together in service for Christ,

The CEM committee – Randy Heyboer, Steve and Stacy Huizinga, Dan Netz, Crystal Osterink, Ruth Ringnalda (chair), MaryAnn TenHaaf, Eric Timmer, Steve VandenBerg, and Bryan VanSoelen