

The Netzer Co-Op

A Mission of the Southwest Texas Synod, ELCA

3001 Whitis Ave
Austin, Texas 78705

A LETTER FROM THE STAFF

RE: Changes in 2009, Membership & A Year of Commitment

April 15, 2009

Dear friends,

First of all, greetings this Easter Season, this is truly a time of new creation here at The Co-Op. It is precisely this season of new creation that we (The Staff) are writing you all this letter. During this month several significant steps have been taken, important reports will be made, and we will bring three major proposals to the table.

It is our joy to announce to you that we are making significant steps forward towards becoming a "congregation under development." With this excitement also comes new leadership expectations, reporting and benchmarking. On April 20, Brianna and I (Tim) will bring our first quarterly report to the Church Council of First English Lutheran Church, our host site. This will be an important time of shared learning together. On April 22, Brianna will be inviting a Likewise Center "dream team" to create a vision for this ministry of ours. Participating in that will be: Bob Carlton, Alan Graham, CEO & President of Mobile Loaves & Fishes, and Cindy House, board member. Finally on April 29, our own Board of Directors will meet to receive the Annual Report (available if you're interested) and consider three major proposals.

As many of you know, over the past two years we've often lacked a lot of clarity about what it means to "belong" to The Co-Op. In some ways this has been a beautiful part of who we are. In other ways, this has not always been helpful as we try to solidify a decision making process. Starting in May 2009 we will add some much needed clarity in this regard.

In May, we will implement a new, concrete criteria for membership in The Co-Op. Members will:

- (1) make a public profession of faith and commit to Community Commitments & Practices
- (2) participate in a Year of Commitment journeying through our newly written Community Rule - based on the 12 Marks of New Monasticism (www.newmonasticism.org),

(3) actively contribute to the Co-Op through the Member's Forum (to be led by an elected facilitator).

The Community Commitments and Practices are four basic commitments that all members will share together, despite their diversity. Each commitment has corresponding practices that naturally flow out of each one:

A Commitment to God in the Way of Jesus - this is a commitment to the gospel, to Grace-filled living and spiritual practices. Practices include:

- + participation in community worship (at least once a month)
- + developing prayer practices in both ancient and contemporary forms
- + study of scripture within the community
- + a practice of radical love as prescribed by the Gospels and centered around grace
- + answering the question: Being like Jesus means: _____

A Commitment to God's World - this is a missional commitment to be an active citizen of the Kingdom - both locally and globally. Practices include:

- + participation in Likewise experiments (8 per year) - our ministry with the homeless (expanding in 2009...)
- + actively pursue reconciliation and peacemaking along racial, generational, sexual orientation divisions and in other marginalized groups
- + participation in at least one peace or justice related cause/issue (ex: fair trade)
- + speaking positively and generously with "the other" and a commitment to intentionally build friendships with those different than you
- + care for God's creation including sustainable living practices

A Commitment to Christ's Church

- + to seek peace and understanding within Christ's deep, diverse church - especially those we disagree with
- + to seek collaboration ecumenically - especially through Co-Op partnerships and full communion partners
- + to build friendships with Christians across faith traditions
- + to encourage generative dialogue around the wider church that is emerging

A Commitment to One Another

- + to practice love towards one another through generous accountability to these commitments
- + to treat each other with gentleness, grace and generosity - conflict resolution along the lines of Matthew 18
- + regular participation in co-op events, leadership of events and extending the hospitality of our community to our peer groups

- + contributing to the Member's Forum with both voice and vote and to do so with the interest of the whole community in mind
- + to share our resources with one another through tithing of our income

To kick this off, Brianna and I invite you to join us starting in May as we begin our Year of Commitment. Over the next 12 months we'll be thematically going through each mark, one per month with theodrame, preaching, teaching (awesome special guests!) and action days. Those who have made the commitment to membership will be participating in the first Member's Forum in May where they will address the following proposals:

1. A Proposal for an Organizational Name Change (proposed name: "Grace Co-Operative" / "Co-Op")
2. A Proposed Business Plan 2009-2011
3. Confirmation of New Board Members - as nominated and elected by The Board. Nominations: A.J. Costa (Dallas, Texas) - Nominations are open, please see Tim for a form.

Brianna and I fully understand that are we proposing big changes. Not only are we taking bold actions forward, but we are taking commitment to this community to new levels. For some of you, we understand these are welcome changes and that you are ready to join us in May. For others of you, we realize that you may not agree with these decisions and/or that you may not be able to fully commit. That's okay. Membership does not equal belonging - any and everyone is still fully welcomed into the community as a participant.

All of you take up a very special place in our hearts. You have all shaped this community and gotten your hands dirty in molding this piece of clay into life. Please pray diligently for the Co-Op over the next few months as we hear back from Chicago and continue to make these important steps chasing after a God wildy active in this world.

Grace and peace be to you!

Tim & Brianna, *curators*

The Netzer Co-Op
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