

Geri Knoebel, Chair
Report for the RE Council
September 2017

The RE Council did not meet in September. This report provide updates to current RE activities.

Stewardship Kickoff – volunteers needed

On October 1st, the Church will have the kickoff event for the 2018 stewardship campaign. RE has been asked to provide games for kids after each service such as outdoor chalk, hopscotch, hula hoops, bubbles, twister, baby basketball, and corn hole bean bags. Carlos is bringing helium balloons. In addition to the kids' activities, there will be ice cream and a drawing for prizes. (Anyone who picks up a pledge packet is entered to win).

Since this is a regular curriculum day, there are no extra RE volunteers. **What we need** are a few volunteers to oversee the activities and to put things away in the RE Foyer afterwards. Are you available or can you suggest others that might be able to help?

Connections Sunday



Thanks to Stirling for staffing the RE table at last Sunday's Connections Sunday. The second Connections Sunday is this Sunday.

According to Stirling, we only had a handful of inquiries, and most of them were in between services. There was one woman who was interested in volunteering in the nursery so I sent her to Mia to get more info.

Playground TF

Wednesday, Mia and I met with Steve Phillips to discuss his participation on the Playground TF. As a member of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, he provided an overview of the capital and maintenance needs of the Church campus, including the Church's parking needs. While we feel that most of the Playground Project will take place in 2018, we found this helpful in having a perspective of the Church's

future needs. We learned that there are two irrigation zones not being used which will be helpful in determining where future garden beds might be placed.

I will be informing Jake Barkdoll, chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, about the formation of the Playground TF so that the Committee is aware of our activities.

Steve will be unable to serve as a member of the Task Force but is willing to serve as an advisor which we welcome.

I also met with Angela Herrera and discussed the Playground TF. Angela was excited about the positive prospects that this type of project could have.

Attached to this report is a New York Times article entitled "A Whisper in an Age of Shouting" by Ariella Rosen (a high school student) which is about Charles Stover who is thought to be the "Founder of Outdoor Playgrounds"

Mia Noren

DRE RE Council September 2017

1. Our Pool Party was a success, although we had 30 people attend this year. There was a Mapalos camping trip scheduled that same weekend. (The two hour event still only cost \$3.33 per person.)
2. Critter Club, Afterschool Tutoring, and ESL will begin this month. Although these aren't RE Programs, because they take place in our building, they will impact us.
3. Coming of Age is scheduled to begin January 21st, and the service will be on April 28th.
4. Kid's Camp Core team will soon meet with the volunteers in charge of fundraising, in order to schedule fundraising events throughout the year. I have asked for other church staff to let me know if they have any events going on that would benefit from being accompanied by a fundraising lunch.
5. Our first YRUU evening is scheduled for September 24th. We aren't quite where we need to be with communication with parents, so I've encouraged Colin to reach out to a parent to be the first to volunteer for this. He is going to contact Lisa Johnson. I'm taking over communicating with the parents, for now.
6. Our youth family service volunteering with Roadrunner didn't start this month because they changed their volunteer scheduling at the last minute. We will start in October, if we can find a staff person or youth adviser to be there- Saturday, October 14 from 11-2.
7. I've been working to add a multimedia project to youth programming, and we've decided that we'll have the youth and advisers spend the December Sundays working on this project. They'll pick topics in November. I hope to rent two ipads for the two youth groups sometime in October.

8. There were a couple of meetings to determine how we could go ahead with moving some garden beds into the playground area. We found that our project may be greatly affected by the current parking emergency and solutions, so we decided to wait to see what happens with that. It's possible that the parking lot may be extended into the south garden area, and moving the garden beds could become a part of that project.

Callie Cone, OWL Lead Report

Mia may have given you a report about OWL already. She is meeting with OWL leaders from our church and the UCC next week to talk about starting a high school OWL class. It will be exciting for that to go through. I have also been contacting various trained facilitators of mid high and elementary to gauge teacher availability for classes in the spring. I think we should be in pretty good shape.

Future Dates

October

- Sunday, October 1- last First Sunday Family Picnic, Stewardship kickoff
- Oct 8 – Teacher Holiday, Pizza Sermon with Dan
- Oct 13-15 Youth Fall Con
- Sunday, October 15 – RE Council meeting
- Friday, October 20 - Halloween Party at the Social Hall
- Saturday, October 21 - RE Council Retreat at Stirling's House from 5 PM to 8 PM
- Sunday, Oct 22 Children's Chapel with Dan
- Sunday, Oct 29, start in Sanctuary with Halloween Costume Parade

November

- Saturday, November 4 – Rev. Angela Herrera installation as Senior Minister
- Sunday, Nov 5- Dia de los Muertos RE Face Painters
- Sunday, November 19th - RE Council Meeting
- Sunday, Nov 26- Teacher Holiday, Children's Chapel with Mia

December

- Sunday, Dec 10- Sanctuary start & church-wide holiday craft fair
- Sunday, December 17th - RE Council Meeting
- Sunday, Dec 24- no RE (except child care?), no Children's chapel, family service at 5:00.
- Sunday, Dec 31 Teacher Holiday

January

- 2018 OWL will begin

- Sunday, January 7- Spring Teacher training
- Jan 13-15- Youth MLK con in Denver
- Sunday, Jan 21- 2018 COA to begin
- Sunday, Jan 28- Children's chapel with Angela

A Whisper in an Age of Shouting

By **ARIELLA ROSEN**

AUG. 26, 2017



With all the shouting going on about monuments, I want to say a word about my favorite: the Whisper Bench in Central Park's Shakespeare Garden. I'd been visiting this quiet spot for years before I even noticed that it was dedicated to Charles Stover. Under his name a simple inscription proclaims him "Founder of Outdoor Playgrounds." When I read that for the first time, I laughed. How could one person be the founder of playgrounds? And shouldn't he get more than a bench?

Even more absurd was what I found when I looked him up. His [Wikipedia page](#) was barely two paragraphs long and made no mention of playgrounds at all. The article mainly concerned the day in 1913 that Stover, after three years as New York City's parks commissioner, went out to lunch ... and didn't come back. For 39 days.

Naturally, this made me more than a little curious about the man. I've been looking for him ever since.

The first thing I discovered was that almost nobody — not my parents, not my high-school teachers — knew who Stover was. This seemed strange to me because he was an enormously important figure. In 1886 he was a co-founder of the [University Settlement House](#) — the first settlement house in the United States — from which he spearheaded the growing reform movement in New York City. Stover was also involved in efforts to preserve Central Park and develop more parks and playgrounds in poor neighborhoods. In 1898 he founded, together with Lillian Wald, the Outdoor Recreation League, which sponsored the construction of playgrounds as a substitute for unsupervised street play. As parks commissioner, Stover created the Bureau of Recreation, which built dozens of playgrounds in its first three years, including DeWitt Clinton Park, Seward Park and Jacob Riis Park.

Many of Stover's friends and colleagues — people like Jane Addams, Samuel Gompers and Jacob Riis — remain well known today, even as Stover isn't. That's a shame, because his work touched the lives of countless individuals, rich and poor. An 18-year-old Eleanor Roosevelt, for example, volunteered as a dance instructor at the University Settlement House, and it was there that she opened her boyfriend

Franklin's eyes to the conditions of the poor. "Franklin looked around in surprise and horror," she [recalled](#) years later in her memoir. " 'My God,' he whispered, 'I didn't know people lived like that!' " That, too, is Stover's legacy.

So why has Stover been forgotten? Although a prominent and influential figure, he did not seek fame or fortune. In a letter to a friend in 1927, he wrote, "My real preference is to be writ in water — just such complete obliteration as the poet Keats feared would be his fate." He never married and kept no house of his own, preferring instead to live at University Settlement. He was a very private person, prone to bouts of depression, and was known to vanish occasionally with no explanation.

After he disappeared in 1913, a nationwide search paradoxically made him a celebrity; his image was shown in [10,000 movie theaters](#). When he came back after three months, he said only that he'd been visiting parks in the South, and then threw himself into work at University Settlement.

When Stover died in 1929, he left only a few books and papers, but his legacy went far beyond his possessions. He spent his time and money providing playgrounds, gardens, housing and other services for poor immigrant children and their families, all the while battling his depression.

One man who admired Stover and tried to keep his name alive was, in many ways, his polar opposite. Robert Moses was a brilliant, sharp-elbowed political operator who covered New York in grand public works that sometimes bore his name and made him incredibly famous in the process. But Moses had also been a reformer, and he had great respect for Stover. So in 1936, when Moses was parks commissioner, he dedicated the 20-foot curved granite bench that is situated on a rocky outcrop in Central Park's Shakespeare Garden, a garden that Mr. Stover himself commissioned, to his friend.

It is the only monument to bear Stover's name.

The bench is elegant but modest, just like Stover himself. But what makes it even more appropriate is a quirk of its design that allows a person to whisper into one rounded corner of the bench and be heard with perfect clarity by someone at the other end. I learned about this feature from an 8-year-old boy — just the sort of person Stover cared about — who was visiting the bench with his grandmother.

Stover believed — and his life proves — that it is possible to make a difference in the world without yelling. It is easy to get caught up in the shouting of politicians, or to want simply to walk away from it all. That is why it is more important than ever to listen to the stories of those around us.

I plan to go on looking for Stover, but his bench has already taught me an important lesson: Sometimes the most powerful words are the ones that are whispered.

Ariella Rosen is a rising senior at the High School of American Studies at Lehman

College.