
February 2019

Grace Notes



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Listening to understand means clinging to a truth that transcends either person's opinion: God in Christ loves all of God's people.

In between ones and zeros

by Pastor Dave Wegner

It has been many years since computer software programming involved punch cards, but the basic interaction between computer hardware and software has not changed. Single bits are either on or off – it is binary. A string of bits put together form a byte and many thousands or millions of bytes form images, documents, emails, and movies. The internet is just millions of computers around the world connected to each other and sending ones and zeros back and forth. I once saw an online version of the New Testament printed in binary:

01001010 01100101 01110011 01110101 01110011 = Jesus.

In computing, binary is necessary. There is no ambiguity, no nuance, no room for confusion regarding the instruction given to a piece of hardware or software. Sometimes in life there are

times when a binary response is, indeed, reasonable: yes/no, stop/go, left/right, up/down. Drivers who waffle about their decision at a yellow light are quite frustrating to me. Stop or go. Commit. Don't speed up and then suddenly stop. Did you let the dog out? Yes or no. There's no need for ambiguity.

Binary is not perfect, however. Sometimes nuance is called for or even necessary to maintain life in community. That is, after all, what Christianity is: a group of Christ-followers committed to community within the one body of that same Christ. Right? How do we go about living faithfully in the not-so-binary reality of life in community in the modern world, and, perhaps more importantly, how do we handle the oh-so-binary overtures of

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Together in Christ: listening to understand

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politics, public opinion, public policy, and partisanship? What happens when solely binary thinking becomes the new normal?

Polarization.

The logical and perpetual result of continued binary thinking is polarization. We separate ourselves into camps in which our message is truth and the other side's is vilified. It is like huddling with our football team and forgetting or flatly refusing to come back to where the ball lies. Polarization has degraded or destroyed relationships, communities, and countries, and is better left to magnets.

But there is a way back. There is a way to demystify and de-demonize those who hold views opposing our own. That way is listening. Not just acknowledging that sound waves have entered your ear but listening to understand how and why a person feels or thinks the way they do. Listening to understand doesn't mean giving up your own opinion, it doesn't mean switching to the other side of the football, it doesn't even mean you will end the conversation with warm and fuzzy feelings; but you will have heard the other person and they will have heard you. Listening to understand means clinging to a truth that transcends either person's opinion: God in Christ loves all of God's people, no matter which bit they have flipped, which opinion they hold, or which value they hold most dear.

Grace's Faith Perspectives teams has been working with Mike McGillicuddy, a licensed clinical social worker, to develop programming on finding our way out of polarization. On Sunday February 10, during the education hour, I will join Mike to lead a session titled "Untying Knots: Clinging to the Real Truth." Mike specializes in helping communities and individuals untie the knots in their relationships with others. We will explore how our Christian faith calls us to listen, respect nuanced opinions, and work together to better our community through thoughtful and civil discourse.

At the Leadership Retreat on February 23, Mike will lead conversation and small group discussion on how our ministry teams can nurture faithful and respectful dialogue in our communities. Finally, on April 13, Mike will host a Saturday workshop at Grace called "Untying Knots: Polarization in America." Open to all Grace members and the wider

community, the program will include opportunities to learn from case studies, discussion, and working groups. The workshop will use examples from the political sphere but is not a political end in itself. Wherever you stand on whatever you stand on – you will find these opportunities time well spent.

The most important words or ideas of a Hebrew sentence are at the beginning. The reader knows exactly what the author desires to emphasize. The first word of our English mission statement at Grace is "together." It is important and it is more than being in the same room on Sunday mornings. "Together" means our appearances, our values, our opinions, or our various huddles don't separate us from the singular claim on all our lives. We are all brothers and sisters, called to do justice, love kindness, and humbly walk together with our God.

Washed and watered by God we climb the walls of polarization.

In Christ,

Pastor Dave Wegner

Untying knots through listening

Sunday, February 10, 9:45 a.m.

"Untying Knots: Clinging to the Real Truth"

Mike McGillicuddy and Pastor Dave Wegner

Saturday, February 23, 8:30 a.m.

Leadership Retreat for Grace Boards and Committees

Nurturing faithful and respectful dialogue in groups at Grace:

conversation and small group discussion

led by Mike McGillicuddy

Saturday, April 13, 9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

"Untying Knots: Polarization in America"

Workshop led by Mike McGillicuddy

Open to members of Grace and participants from the community

Grace Notes is published monthly by Grace Lutheran Church and School, 7300 Division St., River Forest, Ill. It is mailed to Grace members, parents of students at Grace School, and friends of the congregation. The newsletter is online at www.graceriverforest.org. This issue was mailed via U.S. Postal Service Bulk Mail on Friday, February 1, with the hope that it will arrive in your mailbox no later than February 8. Copies are also available at Grace.

Deadlines and submissions. The March issue of Grace Notes will be mailed on Friday, March 1. The deadline for copy is Wednesday, February 20; the issue covers events through early April. Send news to ggotsch@graceriverforest.org. Please limit your submissions to news relating to Grace Lutheran Church and School, its mission, ministries, and the benevolences the congregation supports. Articles should be no longer than 500 words. Submissions may be edited for length, clarity, and relevance.

WORSHIP

Sunday, February 3

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.

Jeremiah 1:4-10, Psalm 71:1-6, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Luke 4:21-30

Sunday, February 10

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.

Isaiah 6:1-13, Psalm 138, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Luke 5:1-11

Sunday, February 17

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.

Jeremiah 17:5-10, Psalm 1, 1 Corinthians 15:12-20, Luke 6:17-26

Sunday, February 24

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.

Genesis 45:3-11, 15; Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50; Luke 6:27-38

Sunday, March 3

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.

Exodus 34:29-35, Psalm 99, 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2, Luke 9:28-43a

March 6

ASH WEDNESDAY

Holy Communion at 8:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 7 p.m.

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17, 2 Corinthians 5:20b--6:10, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Sunday, February 24, 3:45 p.m.

BACH CANTATA VESPERS

Jesus nahm zu sich die Zwölfe, BWV 22

Jesus gathered the twelve to himself

Prelude: Kontras Quartet (Grace string quartet-in-residence)

Homilist: M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas), Wheaton College

Preview Lecture: Mark P. Bangert, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Bach Cantata Vespers on February 24

The Bach Cantata that will be sung in the Vespers service on February 24, *Jesus nahm zu sich die Zwölfe*, BWV 22, was composed for the Sunday before Lent in 1723. The text for “Jesus gathered the twelve to himself” is based on the gospel lesson for the day, Luke 18:31-43, in which Jesus, before leaving for his final journey to Jerusalem, tells the disciples of his coming death and resurrection. The disciples don’t understand and Bach’s opening chorus depicts their confusion with a choral fugue. The arias that follow reflect on the meaning of Christ’s passion. The final chorale is a hopeful prayer for renewed faith, accompanied with buoyant orchestral interludes.

The Grace Senior Choir performs the cantata, with soloists and orchestra, directed by cantor Michael D. Costello.

M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas), of Wheaton College is the homilist for the service; he spoke at two Adult Ed sessions at Grace in February of 2018.

The Kontras Quartet, Grace’s string quartet in residence, plays the instrumental prelude at 3:45.

Free Kontras Quartet concert on Sunday, February 17, 4 p.m.

Longing, passion, disbelief, the interplay of fantasy with reality — “Love Letters,” the Kontras Quartet’s February 17 program at Grace, is about love from different angles. Janacek’s fiery second string quartet, the namesake of the program, is paired with Mendelssohn’s second string quartet, his tribute to a hero’s passing. The program begins with “Entr’acte,” a haunting work by Caroline Shaw.

Come with a curious mind, and an open heart. The music begins at 4 p.m. in Fellowship Hall, with a pre-concert talk at 3 p.m. There is no charge for admission.



ADULT EDUCATION

Adult Education classes meet at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday mornings. Classes are led by Grace members as well as guest speakers. If you have ideas or suggestions for Adult Ed programming, please contact Ted Anton of the Adult Education Committee (tanton@depaul.edu) or Pastor Dave Wegner (dwegner@graceriverforest.org).

February 3

“Life Together” (second of two sessions)

Pastor Dave Lyle

What does it mean to live together in Christ? Surely it is more than simply occupying the same space. Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s reflections in his book “Life Together” point us in the right direction. For Bonhoeffer, life together for Christians is always lived under the Word, fed and fulfilled by the sacraments. *Seminar Room*

February 10

“Untying Knots: Clinging to the Real Truth”

Mike McGillicuddy, LCSW, and Pastor Dave Wegner

We will explore how our Christian faith calls us to listen, respect nuanced opinions, and work together to better our community through thoughtful and civil discourse. *(7th grade/German classroom)*

February 10 and 17

The Book of Job: What Does All This Mean?

Dr. Michael Graves, Armerding Professor of Biblical Studies, Wheaton College

We will consider together the biblical literary masterpiece the book of Job. From the back-and-forth explorations of Job’s calamity found in the poetic core, to the dramatic divine appearance, to the enigmatic introduction and surprising conclusion, the book of Job challenges us to reflect more deeply on the meaning of every aspect of our lives and our place in the universe. *Seminar Room*

February 24

“Jeremiah House”

Paul Eichwedel

This sessions explores one man’s experience of the American prison system, inside and out, along with his successful reentry into society and efforts and policy suggestions to help others to do the same. *Seminar Room*

March 3

“Connecting People to Nature in the Chicago Region: The Field Museum’s Journey of Discovery”

Mark Bouman, Chicago Region Program Director, Keller Science Action Center, Field Museum

Grace member Mark Bouman leads the Field Museum’s interdisciplinary environmental conservation and cultural heritage work in the Chicago region. He’ll talk about how a collections-based natural history museum, came to take on the future-oriented mission of “seeking solutions for a brighter future rich in nature and culture”? He’ll share examples of this work on-the-ground, both inside the Museum and across the landscape of the Chicago region and reflect on the intersections of the ecological and social scientific work of the Museum and the concerns of people of faith.

Sunday Bible Study

Led by Bob Jandeska, the Bible study group meets on Sunday mornings at 9:45 in the Conference Room on the lower level.

February 7, 2019

CORRECTIONS TO THE ADULT ED SCHEDULE

“The Book of Job” sessions will take place on February 17 and 24.

“Jeremiah House,” with Paul Eichwedel, will be rescheduled for later in the year.

Some adjustments in our weekly giving could improve Grace's financial wellbeing

The beginning of a new year is often a time when many of us make resolutions, adjustments we hope will lead to positive results in our lives. Financial well-being is often one of those areas that we decide needs attention.

As we begin this new calendar year our church's financial well-being needs our attention, too. As of January 29, church contributions are \$281,000 below budget and \$191,000 behind last year. We are currently running a deficit and have had to take out a loan to help pay our week-to-week expenses.

Yes, we've been in this financial situation before, and yes, this one has been going on for a while. But this is a situation we can fix. If each of us makes an adjustment in our giving habits, together we can actually shift the deficit to a surplus.

The majority of Grace Church contributors give on average between \$20 and \$200 per week. If these donors had increased their contributions by an average of \$20 per week in fiscal year 2017-18, Grace would have ended the year with a surplus of \$142,000 above budgeted contributions. (Instead we ended



Give thanks to the Lord

– Psalm 118:1

2017-18 with actual contributions \$101,000 below the budgeted figure.) If each of these donors had increased their contributions by an average of \$10 per week, Grace would have ended up with a surplus of \$20,500.

Looking ahead to the remainder of the 2018-19 fiscal year, which ends in June, an average of \$20 in increased giving from the majority of Grace Church contributors over the next five months would yield more than \$100,000 and make a substantial dent in the potential year-end deficit. That level of increased giving over 12 months would result in a budget surplus of \$63,000.

We ask that you look at your weekly giving and prayerfully consider increasing your contribution by \$10 or \$20 per week. If each of us puts a little more in the offering plate each week, we can begin to effect a positive change in Grace's financial wellbeing.

Our financial gifts are needed to sustain Grace and its ministry here at home and throughout the world as we share the good news of Christ's love with each other and our neighbors.

The Stewardship Committee

Candice Buchbinder, Alice Bruening, Randy Keller,
Scott Schwar, Pastor Dave Lyle

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Grace Lutheran Church General Fund

Church budgeted contributions

July 1, 2018 – January 29, 2019 \$ 1,268,000
(\$40,900 per week)

Church actual contributions

July 1, 2018 – January 29, 2019 \$ 987,000
(Last year at this time: \$1,178,000)

Church giving is \$281,000 below budget
and \$191,000 behind last year.

The deficit as of Jan. 29 was \$87,000.

Online and mobile giving

Many people find that online giving helps them practice intentional, faithful stewardship throughout the year. Some Grace members use their bank's online bill-payment service to set up automatic church donations; others use the Online Giving service available on Grace's website. There's also a smartphone app called Give Plus that can be used to make one-time or recurring gifts to Grace.

How to make a one-time or recurring e-gift

- Go to GraceRiverForest.org and click Giving at the top of your screen. On the next page that you see, click the Online Giving button to go to Grace's online giving page and set up your gift. You can use this link on your smartphone, too.
- OR download the Vanco Give Plus app for iPhone or Android. Choose "Find churches near me" to locate Grace Lutheran Church and School, or search for "Grace Evan Luth." Once you've located Grace, you can go ahead and make your gift.

Book reviews from Grace's pastors

Beginning in this issue of Grace Notes Grace's pastors will, from time to time, offer their comments on the books currently open on their desks, many of which, like this one, can also be found in the church library.

"The Undertaking: Life Studies from the Dismal Trade," by Thomas Lynch. Norton, 2010.

By Pastor Dave Wegner

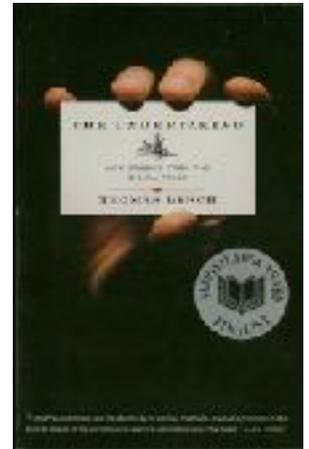
Admittedly I had not heard of Thomas Lynch's work prior to this autobiographical and spiritual reflection showing up on my Amazon "Recommended Reads" list. Given that some of my vocation involves time in funeral homes I was interested in an additional perspective on death and dying. Lynch offers a compelling, raw, humorous-at-the-right-time, and frankly refreshing take on how individuals and the community react and respond to death.

As seems to be common practice in the field, Lynch followed in his father's footsteps, taking over the family's funeral home following his father's retirement. Having grown up around grieving families and riding along in the front of ever more opulent hearses, Lynch reflects on how death has been managed throughout his lifetime: how responses to grief change, how dying was pushed out of the carnal spaces of where the deceased lived and loved and into the sterile environments of hospitals and nursing centers.

Lynch occasionally acknowledges the role of faith and faith communities in his human observations, noting of course how funeral home directors often work in and around churches, but the book is not explicitly religious. It didn't need to be. His

candid and regularly poignant reflections fit easily within my own religious and professional framework.

One still journeying through what might be described as fresh grief may find Lynch's reflections a bit too raw, but his narrative is not without hope, a sense of belonging, a sense of duty to his community, and ultimately a deep joy and satisfaction in even his fleeting assignment to families in deep need.



Featured in the Church Library in February: Bonhoeffer and L'Engle

Featured books this month in the church library and the case in the atrium include works by and about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the author of "Life Together," the book discussed in Pastor Lyle's recent Adult Ed sessions. Also look for titles by Madeline L'Engle, the well-known author of books for adults and children whose writings reflect her Christian faith and her interest in science.

Preparing for Lent

Lasting Hope: Devotions for Lent 2019

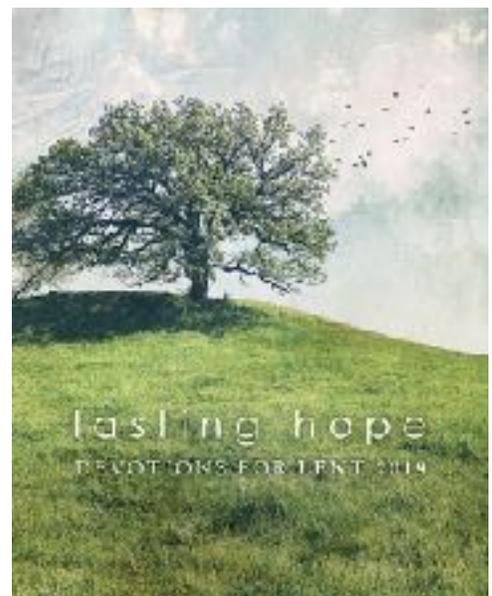
Pick up a copy of this year's Lent devotional booklet, "Lasting Hope," in the atrium beginning Sunday, February 24. The devotions explore the Psalm texts for Lent in year C, the current year of the Revised Common Lectionary (the texts we hear on Sunday mornings). There is a Bible reading for each day, accompanied by a photo, a quote to ponder, a reflection, and a prayer.

Preparing for Lent: Cross+Gen event on Sunday, March 3

Join Grace members and families of all ages for a Cross+Gen Sunday focused on preparing for Lent. March, 3, 9:45 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. Cross+Generational ministry is the very fundamental practice of gathering people of all ages and stages to share with, pray for, and bless one another in Jesus' name. All are welcome!

Ash Wednesday worship

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 6. Worship with the school children at 8:30 a.m., with seniors and others at Cornerstone worship at 11:30 a.m., or in the evening at 7 p.m. All three services include Holy Communion.



Scholarship recipients integrate faith, education and vocation

Grace's Church Vocations Initiative Scholarship Program is committed to raising up a new generation of leaders for the mission and ministry of the church. Eligible applicants must be pursuing a degree program in areas that are preparatory for Christian vocation within the church or in the secular world. Here are first-semester reports from two of this year's scholarship recipients.

Hannah Bernard is working on a Masters of Social Work at the Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Last month I finished the first semester of my Masters of Social Work program. I participated in many valuable and challenging conversations and experiences, all of which strengthened my love for this field. I have seen God in this work in several different ways this semester, from a reflection of my own beliefs to the understanding of others.

My internship for this academic year is with Heartland Alliance's Refugee and Immigrant Community Services (RICS). At RICS I help recent refugees obtain and maintain employment in order to strengthen their autonomy and self-sufficiency in the United States. Many of our participants are Muslim and my work with them has deepened my understanding of the Muslim faith. I have loved learning about the commonalities between Lutheranism and Islam and the spiritual and cultural aspects of Islam that make it unique. My connection with God has given me insight into how religion might offer support in my clients' lives and how it might affect their choices. My time at Heartland has also made me reflect on how each of us shows our faith, whether through visible markers like a hijab or more subtle methods like empathy and kindness. There is no one path that faith takes or looks like in any of our lives. This understanding is vital to providing thoughtful social service.

My spiritual beliefs have also become visible in the classroom. In my course on social welfare policy, we discussed why people categorize and value welfare and assistance programs differently. These differences primarily come down to what people believe others deserve. Some believe that everyone must earn what

they get and that those who have less aren't trying hard enough. For me things are not that simple. I believe that everyone deserves a dignified, full life, regardless of what they have or have not done. I realized through class discussions that this belief is rooted in my understanding of the Bible and its teachings.

When speaking with my mother about my experience this fall, we talked about the Bible verse Micah 6:8: "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" I see these three commands, to be just, kind and humble, everywhere in social work. How could I work with refugees, who have lived lives very different from mine full of trauma I will never fully understand, without first rooting myself in justice, kindness, and humility?

Kurt Grahne is a first-year medical student at Loyola University's Stritch School of Medicine.

*And God created man in His own image.
Genesis 1:27*

This timeless verse has a lot of meaning packed into it. In the context of my faith journey, it implies that by studying the structure and function of the human body, I am not only studying God's creation, but God himself. Of course, God's creation surpasses all human understanding, but that doesn't mean we should cease our pursuit of understanding it. By trying to understand human beings in sickness and health, I believe I am praising God and his creation. I am focusing intensely on it. I am not taking a single ion for granted in a human being. I marvel at how many miraculous biochemical events have to go right, just so that we

can perform daily activities. Through gaining an appreciation for how synchronized and organized our bodies are, I know that God must really love us.

When things go awry in this system is when many people come to see a physician. When people are sick and in pain, oftentimes this can lead to questions and doubts about God's love. The physician does not lose hope in these circumstances, but considers the ways the body might be able to heal and overcome. The ability to stave off an infection, be relieved of pain, manage diabetes, etc., is just as, if not more, miraculous as the body's capacity to remain healthy in normal circumstances. It is a true blessing to experience people get better following illness, and God's love is certainly worth praising in these instances.

When people don't get better, God does not abandon us either, but is actually most with us in these moments. Through dying, God's love sweeps down from heaven and pulls us up to him, leaving those of us who are still alive in complete awe as we experience the gamut of human emotion. Those complex emotions are there for us. God wants us to feel them.

God's love is persistent through the content of my studies, because the content is a result of his love. This love inspires me to work hard for him and his people and to rejoice frequently. I believe I have developed a unique, yet common connection with God through studying medicine. God has never seemed so omnipresent in my life before. I am filled with love and happy to be on this journey.

Social connections in faith communities support longer, healthier lives

Social life may play a larger role in a person's health than one might think. A recent study from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill made a concrete connection between living a longer, healthier life, and maintaining social connections.

The first of its kind, the study connected relationships with real measures of physical well-being, including high blood pressure, abdominal obesity and inflammation — health issues that can lead to long-term problems like heart disease, stroke and cancer. The research builds upon previous work that found older adults live longer if they have more social connections. Researchers said the conclusions from this study were even more promising — determining that a person's social relationships play a role in decreasing health risk.

Dr. Sudhir Gokhale, a psychiatrist at Advocate Christ Medical Center and Advocate Children's Hospital in Oak Lawn, echoes the importance of social relationships at all stages of life. "The effect of emotional health on physical well-being is being understood more and more clearly as research continues," says Dr. Gokhale. "This particular study points out the importance of quality and supportive relationships in life.

"Feeling connected with others seems to be showing a strong positive influence on reducing the risk of depressive disorders," he says. "And now we know it also has a strong impact on various physical parameters." Dr. Gokhale stresses that physicians and health care providers should also emphasize the significance of social relationships on health as much as advocating for eating right and exercising.

Faith communities support social relationships

Building community and teaching about positive ways for us to relate to each other is the natural work of faith communities of all religious traditions. In a study conducted by Advocate's Congregational Health Partnerships program, congregations demonstrated 11 ways that they nurture social connection among their members and in their communities.

1. Noticing and inviting—Members notice people who are new, hurting or alone and connect them with others and with opportunities to lead and participate;

2. Practical support—Systems exist to offer food, transportation, child care, etc. in times of crisis or on-going need;

3. Intergenerational relationships—Adults know children and children feel known and appreciated. Children have leadership roles;



4. Faith leader-led community-building—The faith leader models, educates and coaches ways to build relationships among members;

5. Informal socializing—There are opportunities for people to be together informally and for people to gather outside of their usual group;

6. Learning together—Regular times for learning, both spiritually and about issues of concern, and for teaching each other;

7. Sacred intimacy and belongingness—Spaces exist for people to share deeply with each other about their lives, struggles and hopes;

8. Worship life—There are religious practices that help us connect with each other and that actively use music and the arts;

9. Community outreach—Members have relationships with people living in the community. The congregation participates with initiatives that are priorities for the community;

10. Mission and social justice—The congregation uses its influence to improve conditions for people in their community or around the world;

11. Small groups—Members gather in formal and informal small groups and intentional gatherings around common concerns or experiences.

What are the ways that the community of Christians at Grace Church supports social connections? What more can each one of us do? What do we do that is not on this list?

Finding Hope: support for people experiencing chronic illness

“The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you. He will never leave you or forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” Deuteronomy 31:8

You are invited to Finding Hope, an informal monthly gathering at Grace Lutheran Church for those who experience a chronic health concern. The group will provide support, fellowship and education—an opportunity to share and encourage one another. Whether you are experiencing chronic arthritis or Alzheimer’s disease, migraines or multiple sclerosis or any one of many illnesses that affect one’s daily life—all are invited to attend.

This will be a drop-in group; you are welcome to attend every month or as your schedule allows. Please join us and find fellowship with others with similar concerns and share new ways to deal with unique challenges.

The group will meet on the second Friday of each month, beginning February 8, 10–11 a.m., in the Church Library at Grace. All are welcome, both Grace members and individuals from the community.

Not for women only: Enjoy theatre outings with Women@ Grace in March and May

Women@Grace are planning a theatre outing on Sunday, March 3, to see the 3 p.m. performance of “The Mousetrap” at the Metropolis Performing Arts Center in Arlington Heights. All are invited — not just women! Tickets are \$32. Sign up and pay for your ticket at the reception desk. Contact Linda Bernard with questions (lm_bernard_@hotmail.com; 773-259-4720).

Save the date for “West Side Story” at Lyric Opera. Women@Grace are also securing a block of tickets for the Friday, May 17, evening performance of “West Side Story” at Lyric Opera. Curtain time is 7 p.m. Watch for more information and a sign-up sheet at the reception desk in the weeks to come.

Annual Leadership Retreat is February 23, 8:30–11:30 a.m.

Newly elected and longtime members of Grace’s Boards and Committees are invited to the Leadership Retreat on Saturday, February 23, 8:30–11:30 a.m., in Fellowship Hall.

The morning includes devotions, “housekeeping” details for congregational leadership, and a program led by Mike McGillicuddy. He is a licensed clinical social worker who works with groups and individuals on learning to listen and speak fruitfully with one another. There will be a discussion of ways to nurture better listening among groups at Grace, as well as opportunities to practice these skills.

A continental breakfast will be served and the program will end promptly at 11:30. If you serve on any church committee or board — Church Council, Board of Worship, the Library Committee, whatever — please plan to attend!

Social Ministry

Thank you to everyone who donated to Social Ministry’s Christmastime collections. The Committee hung 150 giving tags on the Christmas Giving Tree this year and all were taken! Such generosity is greatly appreciated! New Moms received gifts for children and mothers. Lutheran Children and Family Services received double the number of toys we had promised them for children in foster care. We delivered 25 gift cards to The Night Ministry for homeless teens, along with 70 Christmas stockings filled with toiletries, pens, note pads and candies (*and* three large bags of “extras” that didn’t fit in stockings). Oak Leyden Developmental Services received more than 25 gift cards to be given to residents who would not otherwise have received gifts.

The Mitten Tree yielded two bins plus four garbage bags filled with hats, scarves, mittens and gloves. We were able to give Little Leaders of Tomorrow (formerly North Austin Head Start) an estimated 200 items to be shared with the families they serve. Our thanks to all who contributed!

Help prepare lunches for homeless people Feb. 16

The Social Ministry Committee will prepare lunches for Housing Forward (formerly known as PADS) on Saturday, February 16, 9–11 a.m. at Grace. We welcome anyone willing to make sandwiches and fill lunch bags. Children and parents alike are very welcome to join in the fun!



GRACE NEWS

KNITTING/CROCHETING GROUP meets on February 19 at 1 p.m. in the church library. Beginners are welcome.

RETIRED LEADERS AND OTHERS. The group meets on Tuesday, February 12, at 10 a.m., in the Church Library. Thomas A. Baima of Mundelein Seminary presents "A Catholic Theological Appraisal of Luther and the Reformation." Guests are welcome.

GRACE NOTES MAILING CREW will be at work on the March newsletter on Thursday, February 28, at 9:30 a.m. They welcome more helpers.

CORNERSTONES fellowship and Bible study meets on Wednesdays in the church library, with treats and conversation at 10 and Bible study with the pastors at 10:30. There is Morning Prayer at 11:30 on February 20, followed by lunch. On February 27 there is a Hymn Sing.

RELIGION IN LITERATURE. The book group meets next on Friday, February 22, at 8 p.m. James Claud leads the discussion of Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter." Jeff and Claudia Wood (1027 Thatcher in River Forest) are the hosts. All are welcome.

YOGA, taught by Ackli Howell, meets on Thursday evenings, 6:30–7:30 p.m., in Fellowship Hall. Newcomers are welcome! Bring a mat and a towel (preferably a beach towel), and wear comfortable clothing. Call Ackli if you have questions (708-366-4487). There is no yoga on February 7.

MOMS OF LITTLES. The Moms of Littles group meets on February 6 and February 20, 6:30–8 p.m. in the Youth Room. Contact Pastor Lauren for more information (lwegner@graceriverforest.org).

SANDWICH-MAKING AT FRATERNITÉ. Grace members will be making lunches at Fraternité Notre Dame, 502 N. Central, on Monday, February 18, at 7 p.m. Contact Kate Hogenson with questions or to arrange a ride (hogenson@msn.com; 708-445-9687).

Retired Leaders seminar hosts a Catholic theologian discussing the Reformation

"A Catholic Theological Appraisal of Luther and the Reformation" is the subject for the Retired Leaders seminar Tuesday, February 12, 10 am. The presenter is The Very Rev. Thomas A. Baima, Vicar for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of Chicago and Vice Rector for Academic Affairs of the University of St. Mary of the Lake. He is also professor of theology at Mundelein. Father Baima is a recognized expert on Lutheran ecumenism having delivered lectures on Lutheran/Catholic relations with the general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation and a former secretary of the ELCA. He is editor and contributor to seven books as well as a contributor to the documentary series "This Changed Everything: 500 Years of the Reformation," which aired on PBS and is available on DVD. Guests are always welcome at Retired Leaders. Come and hear and interact with this outstanding theologian on a subject of interest to both Lutherans and Catholics.

PRAYERS

PRAYER LIST. The weekly Prayer List can be found in the worship bulletin on Sunday. Contact Karen Christopher (kchristopher@graceriverforest.org; 708-366-6900 ext 207) to be included on the published prayer list.

PRAYER CHAIN. Contact Kathy Lucht (kathy.lucht@gmail.com) or Kathy Garness (708-366-7584; KMGfinearts@comcast.net) with confidential prayer chain requests.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Donate flowers to remember a loved one or commemorate a special birthday or anniversary. Use the sign-up sheet at the reception desk in the atrium. (There are no flowers in the chancel during Lent,

February 24 — in memory of Margo Bonebrake from her family.

March 3 — Mary Margaret Bartley and Stewart Clark on their 30th wedding anniversary

PASTORS' EMERGENCY PHONE

Call 708-689-3032 for emergency pastoral care on weekends, or when the Grace building is closed.

BUILDING CLOSED

Grace will be closed on February 18 for Presidents Day.

NEW MEMBERS CLASS

A new session of Grace's New Members Class begins on March 3 and runs through April 28. The class meets on Sunday mornings between services at 9:45 a.m. It will not meet on Easter Sunday, April 21.

If you are interested in joining the class or know someone who might appreciate a personal invitation, please contact Karen Christopher, Church Administrative Assistant (708-366-6900 ext. 207; kchristopher@graceriverforest.org). Or speak with one of the pastors.

Miss Margaret Kruse will receive the Distinguished Alumni award at Graceful Evening on March 16



"A teacher affects eternity; [she] can never tell where [her] influence stops."

--Henry Brooks Adams

Margaret Kruse taught 5th grade at Grace Lutheran School for 40 years, from 1963 through 2003. She's also a graduate of the school. On March 16 she will receive the Distinguished Alumni Award at Graceful Evening, the annual dinner-auction fundraiser for Grace School.

Miss Kruse may not have achieved widespread fame or amassed a large fortune in the usual ways of the world, but she is legendary and influential among former students. They worked diligently to live up to her high expectations for them. She exercised their minds with animal classification (from kingdoms all the way down to species) and challenged them to learn and report all there was to know about their chosen state in the yearlong state notebook project. She also made sure they understood what it means to be "saved by grace" with her Reformation history unit each fall. She continues to be someone who delights in learning, and she is still sharing that love of learning with Grace Lutheran School students at special times during the school year.

Are you a Grace graduate, parent of a graduate, or even a current student with special memories of Miss Kruse? The Award Committee is seeking stories, greetings and memories to share—on paper, via email, or in audio or video clips. Contact Becky Morgan (rebecca.morgan04@gmail.com) or send a message through the Grace Lutheran School Facebook page (facebook.com/GraceSchoolRiverForest).



Graceful Evening, the annual dinner-auction benefit for Grace Lutheran School, is on Saturday, March 16, 5:30 p.m., at the Oak Park Country Club.

Purchase tickets at 19graceful.givesmart.com. Or click on the link at GraceRiverForest.org.

Sponsorships. Each year generous sponsors help underwrite Graceful Evening. Sponsorship donations get the fundraising for Grace Lutheran School off to a great start!

Program book ads. Advertise your business in the Graceful Evening program book. Full-page ads are \$200, half-page ads are \$125, and quarter-page ads, \$75.

Auction donations. We're looking for gift certificates to local businesses, unique experiences and tours, private parties, memberships, sports and concert tickets, classes, and other creative auction items.

We'd love to hear from you! The Graceful Evening Committee would love to talk with you about how you can support Grace Lutheran School at Graceful Evening. Email event chair Ryan Balock (agracefulevening@gmail.com) or contact Brian Schultz at Grace (bschultz@graceriverforest.org, 708-366-6900 ext 231).

Full-day kindergarten for five-year-olds in the fall

Beginning in the fall of 2019, senior kindergarten (SK) will be a full-day program at Grace Lutheran School, with class from 8:15 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. Children must be 5 years old by September 1 to enroll in Senior Kindergarten.

Junior kindergarten (JK), for 4-year-olds, is in session Monday through Friday, 8:15 a.m.–11:30 a.m. Preschool (PK), for 3-year-olds, offers options for Tuesday-Thursday, Monday-Wednesday-Friday, or Monday-through-Friday enrollment. An optional afternoon program is available for students in PK and JK until 3 p.m. The age 3–4 afternoon program is flexible; children may attend for 1-5 days per week.

Enrollment for 2019-20. Enrollment for the next academic year at Grace Lutheran School is underway. Families with children currently enrolled in the school are completing the re-enrollment process and applications are being accepted from new students.

Grace Lutheran School offers students a challenging curriculum in a faith-filled environment. We seek to educate the whole student—mind, body and spirit, and to help our students develop a relationship with God that leads to a life of integrity and service.

Fun facts about GLS. Seventy percent of our 5th-8th graders participate in at least one sport. Check out the new banners and the record board in the gym which recognize the achievements of our athletes.

**First Look Fridays
at Grace Lutheran School
Drop by for a tour!**

**February 15, March 8
April 12
8:30–10:30am**

Sign up at
GraceRiverForest.org



A purple poster for a Mardi Gras celebration. At the top, the word "Mardi Gras" is written in a large, white, stylized font. Below it, the word "CELEBRATION" is written in a smaller, yellow, sans-serif font. The poster features a decorative border of green and yellow dots. In the center, there is a yellow box with black text that reads: "Come to the Mardi Gras celebration for Grace Church and School for all ages! Enjoy an authentic New Orleans style meal, create a mask, fun and fellowship! Friday, March 1st 6:00pm - 8:30pm • Fellowship Hall".



7300 Division St.
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