

Grace Notes



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH • 7300 W DIVISION • RIVER FOREST IL 60305 • 708-366-6900 • WWW.GRACERIVERFOREST.ORG

April 2016

Together in Christ, Our Risen Lord

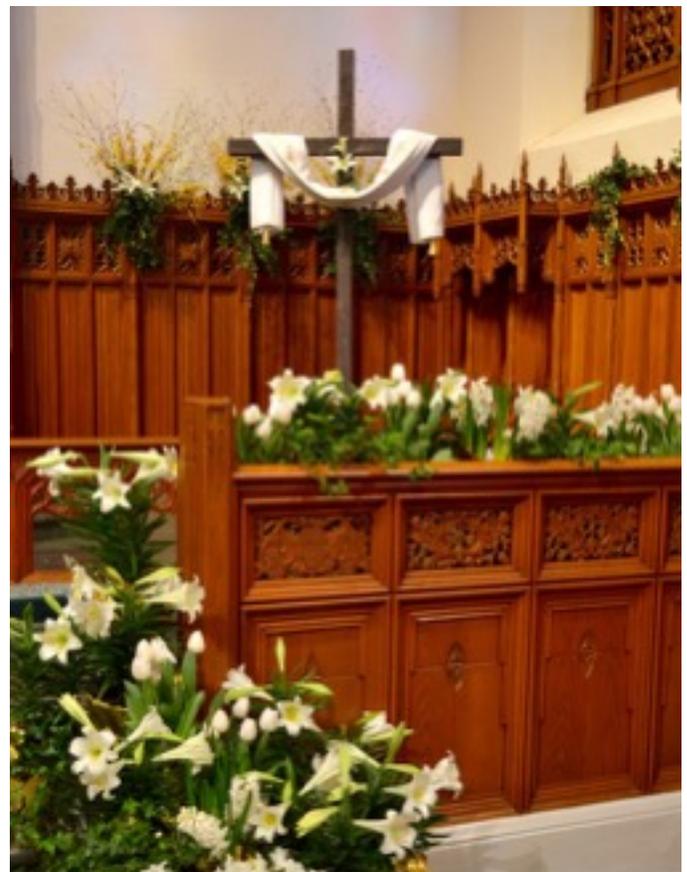
by Pastor David Lyle

Christ is risen! Only a few days ago we gathered in worship to celebrate the central story of our faith and life, that of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the days pass, however, it begins to recede from our memories. The stirring sounds of brass and bells and the joyous voices of the choirs have faded. The fragrance of the flowers has begun to lose its sweetness. The Easter finery has been put back in the closet. So I have to ask: Is Easter done? After forty days of preparation, is it all over so quickly?

In “Surprised by Hope,” Biblical scholar N.T. Wright comments, “If Lent is a time to give things up, Easter ought to be a time to take things up. Champagne for breakfast again—well, of course. Christian holiness was never meant to be merely negative... The forty days of the Easter season, until the Ascension, ought to be a time to balance out Lent by taking something up, some new task or venture, something wholesome and fruitful and outgoing and self-giving... If you really make a start on it, it might give you a sniff of new possibilities, new hopes, new ventures you never dreamed of. It might bring something of Easter into your innermost life. It might help you wake up in a whole new way. And that’s what Easter is all about.”

The church has always set aside a longer season for Easter than for Lent. The season comprises the forty days from Easter to the Ascension of Our Lord, plus ten more days through the festival of Pentecost. More than that, Easter is the season in which we live our lives. We are resurrection people. Christ was killed, yet now he lives and reigns. We were dead in our sin and yet, amazingly and only by the grace of God, we are alive, abundantly and eternally. The old has truly passed away through Christ, the One who makes all things new.

So I suppose the question of Easter is: What are you going to do about it? Christ has triumphed over sin, death, and the devil; this triumph is ours by grace through faith. So, now that you don’t

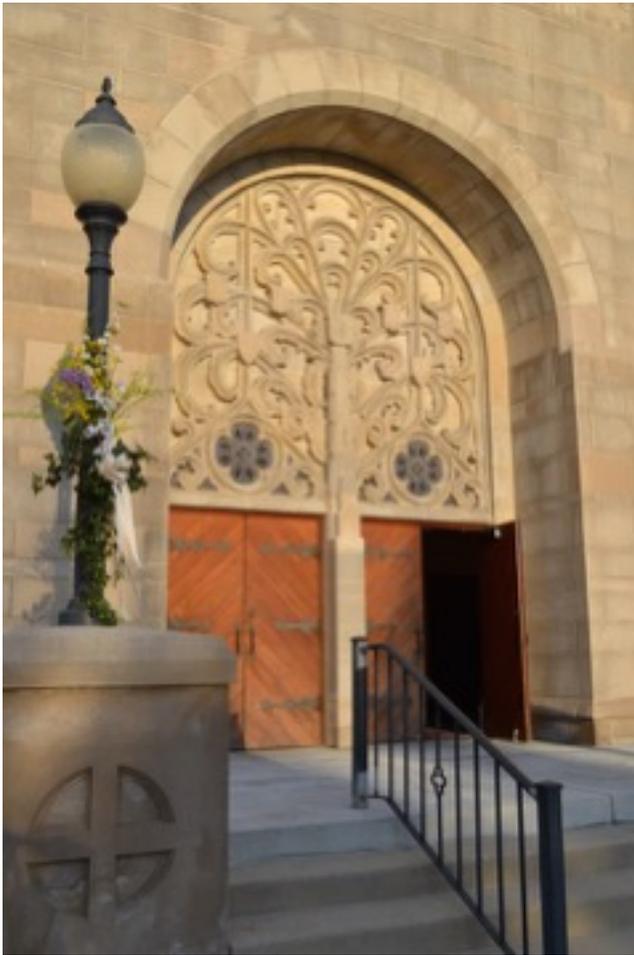


have to do anything, what will you do? Now that you’re not dead anymore, what are you going to do with this newfound life?

Friends, the tomb is empty. Death has no power here. Christ is on the loose, alive in our lives and drawing us and all things together in him. May you be blessed this whole season through. And may we, together, continue to find new hopes and dream new dreams for God’s mission at and through Grace Lutheran Church and School.

Christ is risen, indeed. Alleluia!

*Photo of the chancel on Easter Sunday by Don Heimburger.
“Surprised by Hope” is available in the Grace Church library.*



Annual Faith Promise campaign begins at the end of April

As we bask in the joyful celebration of Easter and serve our risen Savior, it's time to look ahead to our spring Faith Promise campaign.

The Faith Promise campaign seeks annual financial commitments from Grace members for the beginning of a new fiscal year on July 1. Faith Promise commitments support our joyful worship services, our ministry and pastoral care for one another, the day-to-day running of the church and school, and opportunities to serve our community and benefit ministries around the world.

All of these things are made possible by your financial gifts. Look for more information about Faith Promise commitments in a mailing at the end of April. Then prayerfully consider how you can help Grace Church's ministry flourish with your financial gifts — given in response to all that Jesus has done for you.

Report on the Save the Tower Campaign

We celebrated the completion of repairs to our church tower more than a year ago. Here's an update from church treasurer Bill Kopper on the financial side of the campaign:



The total cost of the project came to \$1,434,924, including repairs, electronic carillon, ladders, landscaping, etc. and the cost of the fundraising campaign. A \$100,000 endowment for maintenance of the tower and church building has been established from funds given to the campaign specifically for that purpose. A tithe of the cost of the project (\$143,492) is being shared with three benevolences: the Center for Christian Education in Martin, Slovakia, Lutheran Child and Family Services' Uptown Ministries, and Kidz Express. To date we have paid \$120,000 to these three benevolences.

Gifts and pledges to the Tower fund totaled \$1,642,305, but approximately \$75,000 in pledges to the campaign have yet to be fulfilled. Fulfillment of these pledges would bring us close to the goal of closing out the campaign. We need approximately \$86,000 total to meet all the expenses of the project and fulfill our promises to our benevolences. Further details are available from Bill (bill.kopper@gmail.com).

Please continue to fulfill any outstanding pledges, so that we may bring the fundraising campaign to its conclusion. Thank you to the many members of Grace Church who have supported the campaign to repair the tower.

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, April 1, with the hope that it will arrive in your mailbox no later than April 8. Copies are also available at Grace.

Deadlines and submissions. The May issue of Grace Notes will be mailed on Friday, April 29. The deadline for copy is Wednesday, April 20; the issue covers events through the end of May. Please 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.

Serving God's children in Sunday School

Team-work makes classes welcoming and friendly

What makes kids return to Sunday School week after week? Songs? Treats? Colorful materials? More than anything it's teachers, the friendly volunteers who tell stories about Jesus, talk about believing in God, and offer a loving, faithful example of service to children and to the church.

At Grace a rotating group of Sunday School volunteers works with second through fifth graders each week, while the youngest students, in preschool, kindergarten and first grade, see the same teachers every week, enjoying the security of familiar faces and a predictable environment.

Mary Pontikes and her sister, Evelyn Burdick, teach the kindergarten class, which meets in the second-floor first-grade classroom of Grace School. Mary has taught this age group for the past two years, says Children's Ministry Coordinator, Julie Modrich, and she has 12 years of previous experience as a kindergarten-level Sunday School teacher. Volunteering in VBS brought her back to Sunday School and she obviously enjoys the time she spends with her students—and her sister. Evelyn is relatively new to Sunday mornings with kindergartners, but she and Mary have worked with kids together before as VBS directors.

On a recent Sunday morning, before the Palm Sunday and Easter break in the Sunday School schedule, Ms. Pontikes and Ms. Burdick welcomed their students, three girls and a boy, at the door of the classroom. Students placed a star by their names on the attendance chart, found a seat at a desk, and were soon busy coloring Easter eggs that Mary cut freehand from construction paper. When it was time to start the lesson, they joined her on the rug for a conversation with friendly puppets about amazing animal facts. "Can you *believe* it?" said Mary. "I didn't *believe* it, but now I do." What began as a quiz on what's in a camel's hump (not water, but fat) became a discussion on what it means to believe something, and that, naturally, segued into the Bible story about Jesus rising from the dead.

Downstairs in the lower-level preschool classroom, three- and four-year-old Sunday School students are team-taught by the Hoffman family. LaDonna Hoffman, who has had a long career as a Lutheran school teacher, tells the Bible story and leads singing with her guitar. Tara Greig, one of her daughters, plans activities for the class, which includes her four-year-old daughter, Faith. Tara is also in charge of peanut-free snacks. Lauren Fye, another Hoffman daughter plans the craft projects for 6-8

students a week. On Sunday, March 13, this group heard the Easter story and went on an Easter egg hunt around the building. Another team of volunteers teaches first-grade Sunday School classes. Rebecca Dahlstrom, Laura Tzeng, and Deanna Blazenko divide up the planning and teaching. Rebecca leads the singing, Laura tells the story, and Deanna supervises the craft. High school freshman Katarina Robinson is also part of the team. She's in charge of showing the weekly video and leads a discussion about it; she also jumps in and takes responsibility for other areas when needed.



Two more Grace high school students volunteer in Sunday School classes. Kersten Brayton helps in the combined second and third-grade Sunday School class, and Grace Marotz volunteers in the kindergarten classroom.

A regular routine of opening worship and songs provides a predictable structure for Sunday School students in grades two through five, and gives teachers a few minutes to get organized before the kids split up into separate classrooms for lessons.

Julie Modrich coordinates a rotating group of volunteers who work with these students a few Sundays at a time. Her regular emails to Sunday School teachers provide links to the online curriculum which offers many adaptable suggestions for learning activities and discussion. This group of volunteers includes Allison Andrews, Doug Wold, Chrissy Nelson, Bill Kopper, Ruth McElravey, Karen Jackson, Heidi Bohlmann, Karla Koehne, Deb Conley, Kim Hoffman, Clay Schroeder, and Paul Koester, along with Esther and Neal Armstrong who will be the regular shepherds for fourth and fifth graders during communion preparation classes in April and May.

Grace's Sunday School students return to their classrooms on April 10 after a Family Easter Festival Brunch on April 3, and everyone will come together for another Family Sunday on Pentecost, May 15. You don't have to have children in Sunday School or confirmation classes to hang out in Fellowship Hall on a Family Sunday. You might even find that you enjoy spending an hour on Sunday morning sharing your faith with children—and maybe you'll think about volunteering as a part of the Sunday School team next September. Julie Modrich would be happy to talk with you!

WORSHIP

SUNDAY MORNINGS

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

April 3

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 5:27-32, Psalm 118:14-29, Revelation 1:4-8, John 20:19-31

April 10

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 9:1-20, Psalm 30, Revelation 5:11-14, John 21:1-19

April 17

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 9:36-43, Psalm 23, Revelation 7:9-17, John 10:22-30

April 24

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 11:1-18, Psalm 148, Revelation 21:1-6, John 13:31-35

BACH CANTATA VESPERS

April 24, 3:45 p.m.

Wahrlich, wahrlich, ich sage euch

(Truly, truly, I say to you, BWV 86)

David S. Yeago, Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, Penn., homilist

Steven Wentz, Concordia University Chicago, organist

Mark Peters of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights presents a preview of the cantata at 3 p.m. in the Seminar Room

Cantata on April 24 celebrates Easter confidence

“Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.” John 16:23

This is the text for the opening bass aria of Cantata #86, to be sung at the Bach Cantata Vespers service on April 24. It’s Jesus speaking to his disciples, in the gospel of John, before his crucifixion. The entire cantata depicts trust and confidence in God, in arias for bass, alto, soprano and tenor and a closing chorale for the choir. It’s an Easter season cantata, but a relatively quiet one, composed for the fifth Sunday after Easter in 1724.

Dr. David Yeago, Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics at the North American Lutheran Seminary and Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, is the preacher for the service. Dr. Yeago previously taught at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, S.C.

Dr. Steven Wentz of Concordia University Chicago plays the organ prelude at 3:45 p.m.

Learn more about the cantata before you hear it by attending the cantata preview session in the Seminar Room at 3 p.m. Mark Peters of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights is the presenter.

Spring choral concerts at Grace or featuring Grace members

The St. Charles Singers, conducted by founder Jeffrey Hunt, will perform choral works from every century from the 1400s to the 2000s in a “Choral Eclectic” concert at 7:30 p.m., Saturday, April 16, at Grace. “Seven centuries of song in 90 minutes” is how choirmaster Hunt describes the program of secular and sacred gems, which includes works by Tallis, Palestrina, Monteverdi, Bach, Bruckner, Benjamin Britten, and more. Tickets are \$35 adult general admission, \$30 for seniors 65 and older, and \$10 for students. More information is available at www.stcharlessingers.com or by calling 630-513-5272.

Heritage Chorale Spring Concert. Join Heritage Chorale and artistic director James Kallembach as they explore 1791, Mozart’s last year, in a performance of his beloved Requiem (with full orchestra), along with “Ave Verum Corpus” and choruses from his last two operas. The concerts will be held Saturday, April 16, 7:30 p.m., at Grace Episcopal Church, 924 Lake Street, Oak Park, and Sunday, April 17, 4:00 p.m., at Pilgrim Congregational Church, 460 Lake Street, Oak Park. Grace members Sharman Galezewski and Barbara Hofmaier sing in the chorale. Tickets are available at www.heritagechorale.com or at the door.

Oak Park Concert Chorale, conducted by Paul Lindblad, presents its 35th Anniversary Festival Concert at Grace on Sunday, April 17, at 4 p.m. The program includes two world premieres: Reformation 2017 by Philip Gehring, professor emeritus at Valparaiso University, and Te Deum by Concordia alumnus Michael Wolniakowski. Rounding out the program is music for chamber orchestra, organ and choir by Handel and Mozart. Tickets are \$18 in advance and \$20 at the door; seniors and students are \$10 in advance or \$12 at the door. Children 12 and under are free. Call 708-848-2130 or visit OakParkConcertChorale.org.



ADULT EDUCATION

Come to Adult Education sessions at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday mornings for thought-provoking presentations and discussions that build faith and fellowship. The Lecture Series presents experts on biblical and theological topics, as well as on current events, church affairs and other critical issues. In the Growing Points Series Grace staff, volunteers and guests share information about different areas of our ministry here at Grace Church.

Lecture Series Seminar Room

April 3 and 10

Five Images of Diakonia

With Louise Williams, Executive Director Emeritus of the Lutheran Deaconess Association. Washing feet, waiting tables, telling the story, tending the door and bearing the light are images of Christian service (*diakonia*) drawn from the roles of deaconesses and deacons in the early church. Using these ancient images, we will explore new ways of looking at the service Christians do in the world today.

April 17

From South Sudan to the South Side: Helping People Trace the Global and Local Connections in Mission

Rev. Stephen Bouman, Executive Director of the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit of the ELCA, describes one local minister's journey to creating a church in Africa.

April 24

William James and the Psychology of Religion

With Dr. Douglas Anderson, Professor of Neurological Surgery, Stritch School of Medicine, Loyola University. "The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature," written by psychologist and philosopher William James and based on lectures given in 1901 and 1902, has been in print ever since its publication. We will look at some of James's concepts in the context of the evolution of neuroscience and its relationship with religion.

Growing Points Series In the gym

April 3

Romeos and Juliets and Women of Grace

Opportunities to be informed and get involved. *Bill Brown and Doris Christopher.*

April 10

The Art of Caregiving

Caregiving is an inevitable part of living – learn and be prepared. *Michael Turner, Director, Vice-President of Senior Helpers, Lincolnwood, Ill.*

April 24

Stephen Ministry: A Dedication to Serving

Stephen Ministry is offered in churches throughout the country. Learn about the program and training involved. *Judie McDonnell*

Sunday Morning Bible Study

Led by Bob Jandeska in the conference room, the Bible study group meets every Sunday morning at 9:45 a.m. during the Adult Education hour. When the group finishes discussing the book of Malachi, it will move on to a new topic, "Old Testament Heroes."

Invite friends interested in Grace to the New Member Class

A new member class begins on April 3, the first Sunday after Easter, and runs through May 22. Classes meet with the pastoral staff and members of the New Member Committee at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday mornings, during the Adult Education hour. New member classes are an opportunity to meet new people and learn more about the Christian faith, Lutheranism, and Grace Lutheran Church.

It's not too late to join the class. Contact Pastor Lyle if you're interested (708-366-6900; dlyle@graceriverforest.org). Or call or email administrative assistant Karen Christopher (kchristopher@graceriverforest.org).

Books on many topics in the church library

The Grace Church library, just inside the Division Street door, has books for young and old. You'll find titles on theology, biblical studies, and church history, on parenting, grieving, aging and coping, and on social issues. There's also a tall shelf of outstanding fiction and poetry and a long, floor-level line-up of children's picture books and videos.

Visit the library on Sunday mornings between 8:15 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., or stop in during the week. Look for more book suggestions in the case in the atrium next to the reception desk. Ask the person at the desk for help in checking out one of these books. Here are some suggestions:

I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban, by Malala Yousafzai. Little, Brown & Co, 2014. [370.8 YOU, audio book AB 370.8 YOU]

America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America, by Jim Wallis. Brazos Press, 2016. [305.8 WAL]

Walking the Bible: A Pictorial Journey, by Bruce Feiler. William Morrow, 2005. [220.9 FEI]

Gentle Rebel: The Life and Work of Granger Westberg, Pioneer in Whole Person Care, by Jane Westberg. Church Health, 2015. [261.56 WES]

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity, by Nabeel Qureshi. Zondervan, 2014. [248.2 QUR]

A Place Called Hope: A Novel, by Philip Gulley. Center Street, 2014. A Quaker pastor shares his insights into human character as he transitions from one Meeting to another. [FIC GUL]

The Legend of the Easter Robin, by Dandi Daley Mackall, illus. Richard Cowdrey. Zonderkidz, 2010. [E FIC MAC]

40: The Biblical Story, Interpreted Through the Eyes of a Child, by Joel Schoon-Tanis. Centennial Park Press, 2015. To be enjoyed by all ages. [J 220.9 SCH]

News about Every Member Visits from the Board of Elders

We have begun Phase II of our Every Member Visit initiative and are continuing to contact those Grace members who have not yet had the opportunity to participate in these one-on-one conversations about our faith community here at Grace. We do not have many volunteers working on this stage, so if you have not yet been contacted, please be patient. We are attempting to reach every member, but it will take time. Please respond promptly when you receive a phone call message or email. After three attempts have been made to contact an individual, the volunteers will move on. We truly hope to speak to everyone so please get back to us.

If you can help us finish this initiative by volunteering to contact families, please talk with Susie Calhoun.



Social Ministry sponsors medical equipment collection

The Social Ministry Committee is sponsoring a medical equipment collection at the Oak Park Township office on Saturday, April 9, from 10 a.m. to noon. Your donations of equipment you no longer use will help to assist elderly folks in neighboring communities. Items needed include canes, walkers, wheel chairs, toilet and bath seats, and similar equipment (no crutches).

Grace Care needs YOU!

Grace Care, the meal ministry of our church, is looking for a few new additions to our teams! We provide a meal, and an even more welcome visit, to members of our congregation recovering from illness or a hospital stay. It is a manageable ministry, for those of us who are busy with our families, work, and other commitments: each of us only serves one meal, once every nine weeks.

"But I can't cook!" You don't have to be a fancy cook to participate. Roast an extra chicken when you do one for your family, toss an extra salad. It really is easy, and a blessing to the meal-makers, as well. Please consider joining us.

For more information, talk to or email one of Grace Care's co-chairs: Sandy Lentz or Deborah Braxton.

Parish nurse position

Grace is seeking applications for a part-time parish nurse (approximately 20 hours/week) to promote wholistic health, with an emphasis on spiritual care, to the extended church community. Major accountabilities include integration of faith and health, personal health counseling, health education, referral assistance, health care advocacy, and collaboration with support groups and volunteer services. The position includes regular office hours, some evening and weekend work, as well as presence in Sunday worship twice monthly. We seek a Registered Nurse with at least five years' recent clinical nursing experience and current CPR/AED certification. A Bachelor's degree in nursing is strongly preferred, and a Master's degree in nursing or a related field is desirable. Completion of a Parish Nurse Basic Preparation Course within the first year of employment is required. The successful candidate must have a demonstrated commitment to parish nursing and ministry designed to provide for the integration of body, mind and spirit. Interested individuals should submit a letter of interest and resume to Parish Nurse Search Committee, Grace Lutheran Church, 7300 Division St., River Forest, IL 60305 or email to PNSearchCommittee@gracriverforest.org by April 15, 2016.

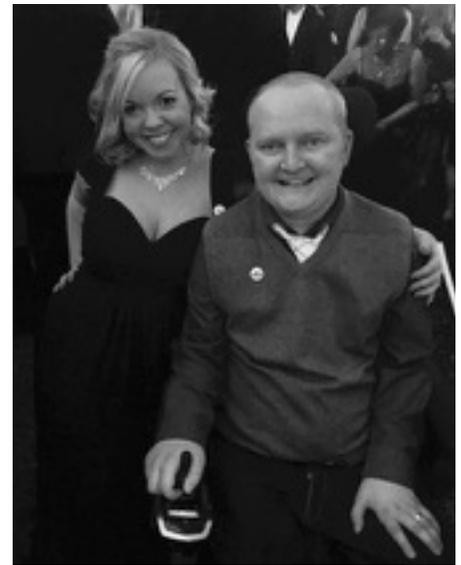
A celebration of courage by Kurt Grahnke

Several Grace members donned black ties and cocktail dresses for the inaugural Iron Horse Ball at the Chicago Cultural Center on March 10. They were among hundreds who came together to celebrate the lives of people living with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) in the greater Chicago area. The building's ornate architectural style set the tone for a grand celebration, though behind the smiles there was a tangible reservation and melancholia, because in reality, ALS is not something to be happy about. However, even in the face of the disease's wickedness, some of humanity's most core values are illuminated. One such value is courage. And it was my brother, Kris Grahnke, who received the Courage Award that night.

Kris was diagnosed with ALS about two years ago and since then his life has changed completely. ALS is a progressive disease that gets worse with time and is ultimately fatal. While promising research is being conducted, many currently living with the disease might not make it to the day that the research can be implemented into viable, life-prolonging treatment plans. Despite this, Kris does not squander time and wallow. He does all that he can with the abilities he still has to preserve his identity in the face of the degenerating neurons in his brain and spine which are trying to take it away from him. He has been an outspoken advocate for ALS research and has raised significant awareness and funding for people with the disease. He has also captured the blunt realities of everyday life for a person with ALS through his vivid and gripping blog entries. On top of this he continues to do what he is passionate about – teach special education. With all that Kris has been able to achieve in the face of unthinkable fear, there is no one I know who embodies courage to the extent that Kris does. Here is part of the speech he gave as he accepted the award:

ALS robs you of your strength, your hobbies, independence, the list goes on. It's hard to face the diagnosis and keep fighting when it feels like everything is being stripped away

from you. I've found courage in this fight against ALS in my beautiful wife, Michelle. Don't let her small stature fool you, her faith in God, perseverance, and advocacy for me and others with this disease are tremendous. My Gronk's Grace army gathers its forces at a moment's notice for anything I need... Their courage, love and dedication are infectious. The prayers that have showered me from thousands of people, some I know well, others I don't know at all, have lifted me to keep fighting, knowing that my pain has a purpose. A purpose I don't fully understand but can fight for.... The courage this underdog has is not self-created. Michelle's pure love for me, the overwhelming advocacy from my friends and family, and the support from God have given me the courage to use this disease to make a difference. ALS can't win, because I've already won.



*Kris and Michelle Grahnke
Read Kris's blog at gronksgrace.blogspot.com*



Thank you for supporting Grace School at A Graceful Evening!

The final totals are not in yet, but we do know that A Graceful Evening raised substantial funds to support the operating budget at Grace School and to purchase additional resources for science, technology and math education. Everyone enjoyed the new location for the event, the Oak Park Country Club, and our two Distinguished Alumni award recipients gave us memorable stories and food for thought in their speeches.

Thank-you to everyone who supported the event with donations, auction bids, and your presence.

Jennifer Brayton
Becky Morgan
Randy Keller
Chairs, A Graceful Evening

Confirmands discover where faith and life connect, as they write their witness statements

Here at Grace, the capstone project of three years of confirmation classes is the writing of a “witness statement,” an essay about how the confirmand sees God at work in his or her life. It’s a very personal project, but there’s a whole community of support that keeps these eighth-grade students on track as they prepare for the Witness Service, scheduled this year for Friday evening, April 29, at 7 p.m., and the renewal of their baptismal vows in the rite of confirmation on Sunday, May 1.

As the supervisor of the confirmation

program, Children’s Ministry Coordinator Julie Modrich met with confirmands and parents shortly after Christmas to talk about deadlines and expectations. With 18 students writing statements, the work must begin early to allow time for multiple drafts, for students to practice reading their statements in the sanctuary, and for the written statements to be compiled in a booklet available to Grace congregation members. Students are asked to choose a Bible verse, construct an outline, and prepare a first draft well before Easter.

This careful preparation process does not come naturally to many young teenagers, and parents sometimes struggle to enforce deadlines or help kids formulate ideas. Sometimes the adult mentors assigned to eighth-grade confirmands provide a sounding board for ideas. Each student also has a conference with one of the pastors.

“It was really a nice chance for me to have some one-on-one time with eighth graders,” says Pastor Lyle. “I’ve enjoyed getting to know them.” He says, the hope is that writing a witness statement “helps students think about their life and about their faith and about the multitude

of connection points between them....

The idea is to get each one to take that mantle of the baptismal promises upon themselves... and to learn how to process life through the lens of faith and faith through the lens of life.”

“They were delightful,” says Pastor Kersten, of the students she met with.

Some kids came to their conference with

her with only a rough idea of what they wanted to say. Others brought an outline, or even a rough draft.

One young

man impressed her by having prepared notes on his phone.

Students are met wherever they’re at, whether they have one idea, no idea, or too many ideas. Students wonder what to write about. Do they have faith-challenging drama in their lives? Or will they describe finding God in the everyday, whatever the everyday is for them?

Confirmation happens at a time in kids’ lives when they are developing critical thinking skills and questioning things. “When you talk to youth about God, sometimes they get frozen because they think you’re probing for a right answer,” says Pastor Lyle. “So I prefer to start with talking about them. [That conversation] can bring a theme or verse to life, or it could open up similarities with the life of Jesus or a disciple.” When you point this out, he says, “you’ll see a sense of surprise on their face, that faith is not just something dry and dusty in a book.”

Confirmation is a three-year program at Grace beginning in sixth grade. Sunday

morning classes, retreats, summer intensive sessions, service projects and social activities are all part of a process designed to help children find their own place in the church community as they move into adolescence and greater independence.

Sunday morning teachers are an important influence on students, according to Julie. This year’s teachers include James Claud, Andy Massmann, and Drew Niermann teaching the sixth grade class; Pastor Kersten, Deb Maxwell, Chuck Shea, and Mary Streufert-Wold in seventh grade, and Pastor Kersten, Pastor Lyle, Stan Reddel, and Heidi Hamernik in eighth grade. Julie Christopher and Lauren Wilkie lead the monthly Sunday morning sessions with confirmands and mentors.

Next year the confirmation curriculum will reach down to fifth-grade students as well. An orientation and registration meeting for parents and students is scheduled for Sunday, May 15, at 12:15 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Confirmation Witness Service

Friday, April 29, 7 p.m.
In the sanctuary.

Come and hear Grace Church’s eighth-grade confirmation students tell about God at work in their lives.

Confirmation

Sunday, May 1
during the 11 a.m. worship service

Caring for family caregivers by Ruth Reko

As a volunteer with the Alzheimer's Help Line I take calls from family caregivers who tell about being stressed almost to the breaking point as the sole source of care for a loved one. Callers say they feel so alone and wonder how they might find just a brief respite from the 24/7 demands of their situation.

Lists for referrals to appropriate types of services are available, but I am reminded that a few willing neighbors or friends might answer some of the pressing needs of this primary family caregiver. I've even asked occasionally if the caller has considered contacting their church to see if some members might be available. Sometimes the answer is "Oh, we're not members of any church." For others it has seemed that asking for help from people they know is a most difficult step to take.

How can a faith community become instrumental in the web of care needed by those who are caught up in a long-term journey with someone who has a physically or mentally disabling condition? Perhaps the caregiver is like many in our society who value independence so highly that they resist telling about their need for help. Perhaps a good friend from church could ease the uncomfortable admission of need by simply asking "How can I help?" The question must be an honest search for an answer and not just a nice thing to say. Taking the initiative by asking "How?" and backing it up with a concrete offer of time, presence, and reliability could open the door.

According to the Illinois Respite Coalition over one million people in our state provide unpaid help to family members who have special needs. Respite care offers temporary relief for

caregivers, providing a gift of time and practical assistance. Staying with the person in care could allow the caregiver to go to church. Even one or two hours once a week could allow the caregiver to read the paper, take a nap, go for a walk. Practical and regular help can make a real difference in the spiritual, mental and physical health of the caregiver who is in it for the long haul.

A congregation is a community that is fed in worship and then goes out to serve, balancing the needs of all members for spiritual and physical well-being. Grace Care, Stephen Ministry, Finding Hope (the chronic illness support group), and pastoral home visits are all valuable well-established expressions of our congregation's care for home-bound members and family caregivers. If you become aware that someone you used to see most Sundays hasn't been around for a while, it may be a cue to extend an offer of help, especially if you learn that caregiving for a loved one is keeping the person at home. When you make the contact ask what you can do and be prepared to offer to do what you are capable of, with a commitment to regular involvement.

Resources about caregiving:

www.lotsahelpinghands.com provides tools to create a community of volunteers organized to sustain family caregivers. www.caregiving.com with articles and tips about myriad ways for supporting caregivers and those whom they care for.

Helping Yourself Help Others, by Rosalyn Carter. Three Rivers Publishing, 1994.

Children, Youth and Family Ministry activities in April

Family Fun Friday on April 8, 6–8 p.m. Church and school families *spring* into *New Creation* this Easter season! Don't miss the fun at the final Family Fun Friday of the school year, April 8, 6–8 p.m. Play games in open gym, create a new art project, mingle with other parents, and enjoy pizza and lemonade. Reservations are preferred. Please email Julie Modrich (jmodrich@graceriverforest.org) to sign up—even at the last minute—so she knows how much pizza to order. Free will offering for the meal. Although the event is geared for children in grades K–5, older or younger siblings are welcome.

First Communion instruction. First communion classes begin on Sunday, April 10, during the education hour at 9:45 a.m. This year's class is for both fourth and fifth grade students. Contact Julie Modrich with questions (708-366-6900; jmodrich@graceriverforest.org).

Pack meals with Feed My Starving Children. Grace families will be participating in the Feed My Starving Children Community Food Packing event at Concordia University on Saturday, April 16, in the South Gym. Shifts are available at 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. and 2–4 p.m. Email Logan Kruck (lkruck@graceriverforest.org) to sign up. Read more about Feed My Starving Children at www.fmsc.org.

Dates for your May and June calendar

Confirmation meeting and registration, Sunday, May 15, 12:15 p.m.

Confirmation Intensive for current 6th and 7th graders, June 20-23, 5:30–8 p.m.

Vacation Bible School, June 20–23, 5:30–8 p.m., for 3-year-olds through current 4th graders. Send your kids on an over-the-top underground adventure! Grace Church and School, along with Village Church of Oak Park, will host Cave Quest VBS, where kids explore the rock-solid foundation of Jesus' love. Registration will open in April. Email Julie Modrich with questions.

Youth and Family Ministry Rummage Sale

Friday, June 10, 9 a.m.–6 p.m.
Saturday, June 11, 8 a.m.–1 p.m.

Donation collection begins May 29

GRACE NEWS

CORNERSTONES BIBLE STUDY. Seniors gather every Wednesday in the church library for food and fellowship at 10 a.m. and Bible study led by the pastors at 10:30. There is Morning Prayer at 11:30 on April 20, followed by a luncheon. There's a hymn sing on April 27.

FINDING HOPE, the chronic illness support group, meets at Grace at 7:15 p.m. on Tuesday, April 12.

GRACE NOTES MAILING CREW. A lively crew of volunteers led by Marlene Hallman gathers monthly in the church library to prepare the Grace Notes newsletter for mailing. They will be at work on Thursday, April 28, at 9:30 a.m. There's always a need for more helpers!

LECTIO DIVINA group gathers on Monday, April 25, from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. in the church library. For more information contact MaryBeth Buschmann (312-802-5493; marybeth1942@sbcglobal.net).

PILLOWCASE SEWING MINISTRY. The Grace group sewing pillowcases for hospitalized children meets Saturday, April 9, 9:30–11:30 a.m. at Grace. You don't need sewing skills to help out.

REEL TALK, the film discussion group, meets on Friday, April 8, to watch "Man on Wire," a 2008 British-American biographical documentary film directed by James Marsh. The film chronicles Philippe Petit's 1974 high-wire walk between the Twin Towers of New York's World Trade Center. In February 2009, the film won the BAFTA for Outstanding British Film and the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. The movie starts at 6:30 p.m. in the church library.

The **RETIRED LEADERS GROUP** meets at 10 a.m. on April 12 for a presentation from David Roth on "Inner-City Ministry." Guests are welcome.

RELIGION IN LITERATURE. Grace's book group meets on Friday, April 15, at 8 p.m. Steve Kaufman leads a discussion of "The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks," by Rebecca Skloot. A copy is available in the church library. Call Grace for location.

ROMEOS AND JULIETS meet in the church library at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, April 19, for a conversation with Pastor Phyllis Kersten, "Reflections on Life and Ministry." Donuts and coffee and Trivial Pursuit too!

SANDWICH-MAKING AT FRATERNITÉ. Grace members will be packing lunches at Fraternité Notre Dame, 502 N. Central, on Monday, April 18, at 7 p.m. The sisters distribute these lunches to people in need in the Austin community. Children and teens are welcome to participate with their parents. Contact Kate Hogenson to arrange a ride.

YOGA. The Thursday evening yoga class meets in Fellowship Hall. Grace Member and certified yoga instructor Ackli Howell leads a basic yoga class focused on stretching, flexibility and balance. There is no cost to attend but a free will offering is encouraged. Contact Ackli if you have questions.

PRAYERS

WE PRAY for Dennis Forgue and all who mourn the death of Marcia Forgue.

PRAYER LIST. The weekly Prayer List can be found in the worship bulletin on Sunday. Contact Karen Christopher (kchristopher@gracriverforest.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.

CELEBRATION

WE CELEBRATE with Lingchen Meng, baptized at the Easter Vigil service on March 26.

WE CELEBRATE with these children being baptized in April:

April 3. Annabel Leona Reddel, daughter of Scott and Abigail Reddel, granddaughter of Stan and Paulette Reddel.

April 10. Alexandra Quinn Muller and Charlotte Anne Muller, daughters of Elizabeth Sievert Muller and Mark Muller, granddaughters of Peter and Dorothy Sievert.

April 24. Ella Rose Mathesius, daughter of Daniel and Lori Mathesius.

ALTAR FLOWERS

THANK YOU to those donating flowers:

April 24 — John and Marge Sanger, in celebration of their 55th wedding anniversary.

Sponsor flowers during the Easter season. Look for the sign-up sheet at the reception desk to donate flowers to remember a loved one or commemorate a special birthday or anniversary.

Jewelry-making and fellowship with the Women of Grace

Women of Grace are getting together on Monday, May 2, 7–9 p.m. in Fellowship Hall for an evening of jewelry-making. Register by April 15 by contacting Teresa McFadden. The cost is \$10 per piece of jewelry.

Grace members help to “Raise the Roof” at Harmony



Grace Church members volunteer on Wednesdays at the Harmony Food Pantry. On March 2, Grace volunteers included Dick Calhoun and JoEllyn Dorsey (top left), Diane Carioscio (top right), and Ellie Schnack and Eunice Eifert (bottom left). Grace School grad Christian Ho (bottom right) stopped by for a visit.

Ten years ago, Pastor James Brooks, Sr., saw a man going through the Harmony Church garbage cans looking for food. He knew then that his church needed to do something about the hunger problem in the North Lawndale community. He worked with the Greater Chicago Food Depository to start a food pantry that currently serves 350 families every week.

Harmony Community Church can't run the food pantry alone. It takes a large number of church members and volunteers to distribute the food each week. Volunteers from Grace are among the many people who work at the Food Pantry. Grace member Diane Carioscio is co-coordinator. "People ask me why I do what I do. I serve at the pantry because I want to live out the Lord's Prayer and help bring a little of God's kingdom — here on earth, as it is in heaven."

Unfortunately the Food Pantry ministry is in jeopardy because the Harmony Church building is crumbling. The leaking roof is causing health and safety issues. When it rains, water pours into the sanctuary, the office and the basement space that houses the Food Pantry.

Grace members have teamed up with Harmony Church members and with Pastor James Brooks, Jr., to start a crowd-funding campaign at Wheat Ridge Ministries' We Raise website, to raise money for roof repairs. In the first ten days of the campaign, pledges from Grace and Harmony members and their friends have raised \$26,000, more than half the goal of \$50,600.

The campaign ends May 4. To donate go to WeRaise.wheatridge.org and look for the Harmony project. Or click on the link at gracriverforest.org.

Raise the Roof!



Turn to page 11 to read more about the fundraising campaign to fix the roof at Harmony Community Church in North Lawndale.



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