

A M A Z I N G
GRACE

Grace Lutheran School

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“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.”

I Peter 4:10 NRSV

Kendall Grigg shares optimism about the future of Grace

By Matt Dominis

The outgoing principal of Grace Lutheran School, Kendall Grigg, counts as some of her biggest successes at Grace the early childhood program, the Summer Cultural Arts and Music Program (SCAMP), and a broader use of differentiated instruction programs.

Dr. Grigg, who is leaving Grace at the end of 2011, spoke on a range of topics, including her favorite times during her two and a half years as principal. “I never know what my day is going to bring, which is one of the things I love about my job. I’ve never had a boring day, ever. The time with the children and the teachers is always the most rewarding.”

Dr. Grigg knows the often-unpredictable nature of the principal’s job requires a person who can adapt quickly. Her advice to her successor? “Be open to change, because you have to be,” she said. “This is the kind of job where flexibility is essential. Because you have to just pick up and shift gears on a dime.”

With a laugh, Dr. Grigg added: “But that’s part of the excitement of this too.”

Dr. Grigg became principal in July 2009. Before joining Grace, she had served as both an administrator and a reading specialist at the Chicago City Day School. She also taught at Holy Family Lutheran School and John Walsh Elementary School. She is a contributing author to the 2001 book, “Renaissance in the



“One of the things that drew me here as a parent is the attention and care for the students. It’s guidance – in every aspect of that word.”

Classroom: Arts Integration and Meaningful Learning.”

Dr. Grigg is moving with her family to Acton, Mass., at the end of December. Her husband, Jeremy, works for Bridgeline Digital, a web development company, and his job moved him to the company’s Boston headquarters. Lyle Mortensen, long-time member of the Grace faculty, will serve as acting principal during the remainder of the 2011-2012 school year. The Principal Search Committee will interview candidates for the permanent position in the months ahead.

Optimistic future, Continued on page 2

New faces at Grace

Grace School welcomed new teachers this year in the second and third grade classrooms. As December begins both Mary Berendt and Stacy Sorg are feeling at home in their classrooms, supported by the community of Grace staff, students, and parents.

Stacy Sorg, Grace School's second grade teacher, took a roundabout path to a career in education. She majored in

creative writing in college, then worked in medical sales while getting an MBA in marketing from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her education degree is from Northeastern Illinois University. She did her student teaching at Lincoln School in

Oak Park and filled a maternity vacancy there before coming to Grace.

Even though she's relatively new to the classroom, Stacy says she has been drawn to mentoring and teaching all her life. She swam competitively while growing up and now coaches Masters-level adult swimmers. In her business career she regularly found herself mentoring younger colleagues. She also volunteered in Oak Park village government, on the Citizen Involvement Commission, recruiting and encouraging fellow Oak Parkers to serve on committees that provide policy guidance to the Village Board.

Stacy enjoys her second graders. She says they are eager to learn and to put their new reading skills to use. She loves watching them make connections, because they are open to both the obvious ones and the unexpected. She enjoys teaching reading through literature in the new McGraw-Hill Treasures language arts curriculum, and she's looking forward to her first Christmas at Grace, as she and the second graders memorize Luke 2. Stacy lives in Oak Park where she and her family are members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church.



Mary Berendt read Charlotte's Web with her third grade students

this fall. Their dioramas of the story were displayed on tables in the Commons in November. One of Mary's goals for her students this year is to work their way up to writing a five-paragraph essay by the end of the school year. One of their recent writing activities was to keep a journal as one of the people on the Mayflower, an assignment that required them to use their imaginations as well as what they were learning about the Pilgrims in the classroom.

Mary comes to Grace after fifteen years of teaching at St. Francis Xavier Catholic School in Chicago. She holds a master's degree in special education and has been nominated for the Golden Apple Award and the Disney Teacher of the Year. She is finding that teaching in a Lutheran school is very similar to teaching in a Catholic school. Both share a commitment to living out the Christian faith in the day-to-day rhythm of the classroom. Mary spent her childhood in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. She has coached girls' softball, and now spends much of her free time watching her teenage daughter pitch for her high school team.

Grace's junior kindergarten and art teacher, Benjamin Chandler, is on leave this year, teaching English at the Lutheran elementary school in Martin, Slovakia. Local artist and teacher **Stephanie Bird** is filling in for him in art classes. She has taught painting and drawing at the Art Institute of Chicago and in many other venues in Chicago, California and Pennsylvania. Passionate about the arts and education, she encourages students to find their own voice in the work they create. Experienced preschool teacher **Julia Nelson** presides over one of the two morning junior kindergarten classrooms. She has a masters in education from National-Louis University and has special expertise in multi-sensory instruction.

Jeff Glock, long-time third-grade teacher at Grace, has moved on to a teaching position at another school. We thank him for his many years of service at Grace.

Optimistic future,

continued from page 1

Strong faculty

The outgoing principal cited the Grace faculty as one of the strongest components of the school and a force that would ease the school's transition to a new principal. Dr. Grigg said that parents sometimes have approached her and expressed concern about how the school would fare during the transition to a new principal. But she isn't worried.

"There are so many faculty leaders here and teachers who lead in so many areas," Dr. Grigg said. "This is a faculty that is deeply committed to this school, and whoever comes in will have a wonderful situation that they will be walking into, and a faculty who is not going to fall apart."

Grace is very good at offering guidance and paying attention to all the needs of the students, Dr. Grigg said. "One of the things that drew me here as a parent is the attention and care (for the students). It's guidance – in every aspect of that word: emotionally, academically and spiritually," she said.

Parents who take a tour of Grace will describe it as a "caring, loving environment" for students. This is a reflection of Grace's values. "Faith is at the base of everything we do here," Dr. Grigg said.

The faculty and staff go out of their way to help children know that they are loved and cared for. "It's not possible for children to fail here," Dr. Grigg said. "We just don't allow it to happen. There are too many adults who step in and intervene."

Successful programs

Dr. Grigg said the administration and the faculty have worked to build the school's early childhood program over the last few years, and Grace has added a preschool level and an additional junior kindergarten classroom. This has allowed the school to better



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“meet the needs of our youngest children,” she said. “We’re very focused on meeting the children where they are, throughout all grade levels, but that starts in those early years.”

This past summer, the school started its first SCAMP program, and Dr. Grigg termed it a success. “Grace is one of those places that values the arts, and not just music, but all of the arts.” A

focus on the arts allows children to explore their talents in many areas, she said.

This value placed on the arts flies in the face of many of the current trends in education. Among public schools, even in more affluent school districts, budget cuts often will first target funding for art programs, Dr. Grigg said. “And I am confident that will never happen here.”

While differentiated instruction (see below) has been going on at Grace for several years, Dr. Grigg said, the methodology has been expanded to all parts of the school, particularly for reading programs for the youngest students, and math curriculum for seventh- and eighth-graders.

Optimistic for success

Looking to the years ahead, Dr. Grigg said the school is “in a good place.” Grace School is continually looking to improve, and fortunately the school has a strong relationship with the congregation.

“We have really good families here now and strong enrollment. So I think there’s great hope for the future there.”

Dr. Grigg said the solid relationship between the community and the church will be a help to her successor. “The church is strengthened by the school and the school by the church,” Dr. Grigg said. “That is essential.”

A new approach: Differentiated instruction

By Matt Dominis

During Kendall Grigg’s tenure as principal at Grace, the school expanded its use of differentiated instruction, a technique for tailoring teaching to meet the needs of individual students. It’s an increasingly common idea among educators as a way to teach a classroom full of students who likely don’t have the same abilities and learning styles.

A teacher using the technique might organize the classroom into groups based on the student’s abilities, and modify the material to teach them accordingly.

“Sometimes we do that with small-group instruction,” Dr. Grigg said. “Sometimes it’s the teacher working one-on-one, or with two or three children.”

“For example, if you’re teaching fractions in a fourth-grade class, the teacher might give the overall instruction to the group, but how each child approaches that might be a little different, or the scaffolding [supports] that they might need would be a little different,” she said.

The students would access the mate-

rial they’re learning at varying levels, she explained. “And instead of every child having the same assignment, we might have four different assignments depending upon the needs of the children.”

There are many advantages, Dr. Grigg said. “Children who are at a level above will be challenged. Children who need scaffolding will get scaffolding.”

For the teacher, it requires a lot of extra work, she said. “It’s difficult and it takes a very serious commitment on the part of the teacher.” But the Grace faculty has embraced the idea. Fortunately, the school’s new reading program, the (Macmillan) McGraw-Hill Treasures language arts program, has saved teachers time and made it easier for them to run small-group reading instruction.

Throughout her career, Dr. Grigg has seen the differentiated instruction model become more widely accepted among educators. “I’ve been fortunate to work in schools where this philosophy has been embraced,” she said.

Much of the thinking behind differentiated instruction comes from recent brain research, which has given useful insights to educators, Dr. Grigg said. “It’s allowed us to understand how the

“Instead of every child having the same assignment, we might have four different assignments depending upon the needs of the children.”

brain reacts at different times and develops at different times.”

Key times for brain development come for younger students just learning to read, and then later for older children tackling more advanced math. “We make sure that we don’t push children into algebra if their brains aren’t ready for it,” Dr. Grigg said. In the same manner, children are brought to learning to read when their brains are ready.

“This is different from how we learned,” Dr. Grigg said, as most parents of current Grace students went to school at a time when an entire class did the same thing at the same time. “It’s a very different way of approaching learning. But this way no child is asked to move on without having the appropriate instruction.”

A common bond leads to successful careers

By Alyssa van Heukelem Kooi '02

Kris Rey-Talley's favorite memories of Grace School include creating short films and movies in junior high literature classes. He had always wanted to make movies. This may have seemed like a far-fetched dream for an elementary school student, but teachers at Grace encouraged him and found ways to integrate his interest in film into his seventh-grade assignments.

Recently Rey-Talley, Brendan Murphy, and Sam Wootton, all members of the class of 2002, were once again found working in the kindergarten room at Grace. They were filming commercials for the launch of the new Muve music service for Cricket Wireless. Rey-Talley says it was "cool to come back to Chicago and produce our first major commercial project." It brought everything full circle.

Wootton and Rey-Talley worked together writing, directing and producing all of the commercials. In pre-production Murphy drew the storyboards and helped with the scripts, worked as head production assistant, built sets and props, and acted in a small role. "Basically I did the same thing I've been doing for Kris's film productions since we were kids," said Murphy.

The three have been working on projects together since junior high. What began as assignments in seventh grade led to the development of Rey-Talley and Wootton's production company, Jackpot in the West Productions. Murphy and Rey-Talley noted that Grace School provided the foundation for their continuing creative relationship. Small classes, teachers who nurtured students as they pursued individual interests, and the emphasis on the fine arts were among the factors they highlighted.

Murphy says, "I will never forget the Christmas Eve services and the preparation for them every year. Growing up in that environment, staring up at that glorious church ceiling year after year, learning the songs, having the daily schedule changed — it really gave a sense of wonder and magic to the Christmas season. There was so much excitement and change that came with it, Grace made it so special. Hearing the melodic words of 'Silent Night' in the dark, beautiful church on Christmas Eve is something I'll never forget. There was a magic and power in that time that as a child I felt but never noticed. I cherish these memories more each year."

The class of 2002 was made up of 31 students, most of whom were together from kindergarten through eighth grade. This fostered a strong learning commu-

"Being with the same small number of kids for all those years, you really learned to value relationships and a level of intimacy, both personal and professional."

nity of teachers and students who cared for one another and trusted each other.

"My background at Grace taught me the real value of community in my job choice," says Murphy. "At Grace I really felt like I had a place in my class and a place in the institution. Being with the same small number of kids for all those years, you really learned to value rela-



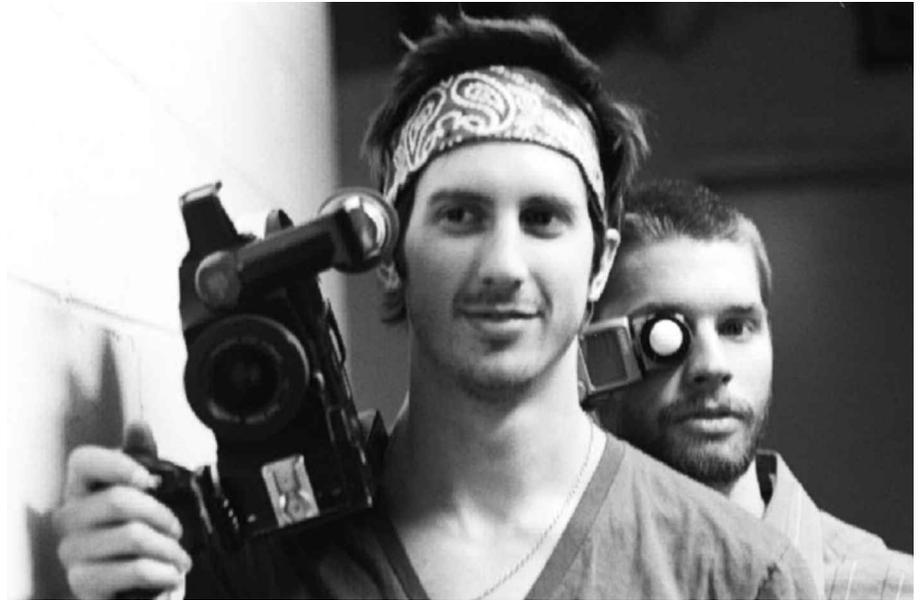
Sam Wootton

tionships and a level of intimacy, both personal and professional. In my job searches in New York, I've come to value a work environment where I can have honest, real relationships with people and where I am understood and valued as part of a team, not just another worker bee."

The years together in school at Grace provided Rey-Talley, Wootton and Murphy many opportunities to work together as friends. These collaborations as students have led to successful careers in the film industry for each of them, and they have often found opportunities to work together on projects.

Murphy listed some notable projects the three alumni have worked on together:

- A series of videos for the band D.R.U.G.S., released on YouTube. "Mostly we just had to produce a lot of interesting and original footage to put their music over. It was an interesting challenge and we had some neat results," said Murphy.
- Videos for launches and events for Loreal's Diesel, Flowerbomb and Maison Martin Margiela fragrances, filmed by Rey-Talley and Wootton. Murphy built props and decorations for some of these events.
- A music video for the ILLZ, a hip-hop rap artist, directed and filmed by Rey-Talley. Murphy added animations and graphics.



Kris Rey-Talley and Brendan Murphy

"Oddly," adds Murphy, "Grace School's 'picture lady' is something that has stuck with me. At the time, it was always a drag. Trying to sit quietly on those folding chairs for what seemed like hours and look at slides of old oil paintings is asking a lot of a ten-year-old boy. But I've never quite forgotten those slides, the calming, low light of the old gym, and daydreaming while I stared at illuminated impressionist works. I'm glad I was given that experience and that knowledge as a child. I hope others still [appreciate it]."

"Our early development at Grace was what helped forge our common bond. Despite hardships, we still have an understanding, we still know where we come from. That shared knowledge and experience helps us work together and also places our relationship with one another on a higher level," said Murphy.

"I'm glad I was given that experience and that knowledge as a child."

"That shared knowledge and experience places our relationship with one another on a higher level."

Grace School's mission is to "bring in, build up, and send out disciples for Jesus Christ." Murphy, Rey-Talley, and Wootton are an example, not just of individuals sent out, but of Grace's model of community reaching into the wider world.

Have you earned an advanced degree? Gotten a new job? Reached a goal? Achieved a significant milestone?

Tell us! Please take a moment to update us! Send email to alumni@graceriverforest.org or write to 7300 Division Street, River Forest, IL 60305.

What we do at Grace

by Ramona Koetke

On any school day, a walk through the halls of Grace Lutheran School would show scenes typical of many elementary schools. Children are actively learning and moving about the building. Teachers are directing, sharing information, checking for comprehension. Parents can be seen volunteering time to help out. Other staff members are working hard to make things run smoothly. It's a good place to be.

But take a deeper look. Spend a little time watching and you will see it: the foundation upon which Grace School was founded over 105 years ago.

Throughout its history and right up to the present day, Grace's primary purpose, as reflected in its mission statement, is to make disciples for Jesus Christ. Of course, school is school, and reading, math, science, social studies, gym, German, and music (especially music) are all on the docket. Grace strives for excellence in all these areas. The difference is that Grace works toward these goals through the cross. Religion is a subject that is taught each day, including Bible stories and memory work. But it's the way faith is lived out here that makes Grace Lutheran School the amazing gift that it is.

Every day, faculty and staff members here model Christ to each other and to the students who enter through the "Lamb Door." They reflect Christ's servant leadership in their seemingly tireless service, going beyond the five-day work week directing a school choir in Sunday's worship services, working with confirmands on Sunday evenings, guiding students in leading a Wednesday morning chapel service, working with Grace alumni to make recordings of worship services which



will be shared with our home-bound members, keeping the building in top form, teaching and leading the bell choirs.

I have had the privilege of seeing Grace School from many angles, as a worshipping member of the congregation, spouse of a former student, mother of children in the school, and now as an aide in the second grade. I have seen the way Grace demonstrates our common faith in the grace of God in the way we bring in, build up and send out our children.

Religion isn't just a subject to be learned, like math, reading, science and social studies. Rather, children live their religion at Grace. They learn to share, care, show compassion and concern. They learn not only that being a bully is a bad thing, they also learn to understand that bullying other children is not how God wants us to act towards others. They learn not only that some people need more help than others, whether that is academic help, financial support or physical care, but they also learn that Jesus wants us to treat others as he would treat them, with respect and appreciation for their gifts. They learn not just that we should care for and love each other, but that the Holy Spirit acts by shaping our actions and

how we share our love with others.

Religion at Grace is a way of life. We pray together when the outside world is frightening. We grieve together when a teacher, a parent or a classroom pet dies. We work together in the classroom to achieve an atmosphere of positive encouragement and a structure for learning.

For the children, it's the love of Jesus and the many ways it is shown to them that allows them to grow and bloom here. "Love one another as I have loved you." This is what they learn intuitively, because it's what they experience each day with adults who lead them.

"She tells us she loves us."

"She doesn't like to embarrass students when they do something wrong, so she talks to them in another room."

"She believes in us."

"He helps us to do our best."

These are just some of the comments this year's Grace students have made to describe their teachers. They feel safe. They can believe in their worth, take risks in learning new skills, observe and practice loving and serving others. They learn to look to the cross as the source of grace that sustains us all, look to the Word for instruction and guidance, pray for others and for self.

And they become disciples.

Grace Church and School CALENDAR

December 11, 2011, Advent/Christmas
Concert, 4:00 p.m.

December 24, 2011, Children's Service of
Lessons and Carols, 4:15 & 6:00 p.m.
Candlelight Service of Holy
Communion, 10:45 p.m.

December 25, 2011, Festival Worship,
10:00 a.m. Bach's Cantata #62,
"Christians, engrave this day" will be
performed during the service.

January 29, 2012, Bach Cantata, 3:45 p.m.
"My Jesus I will not leave" (BWV 124)

February 26, 2012, Bach Cantata, 3:45
p.m. "False world, I do not trust you!"
(BWV 52)

March 6, 2012, School Choral Festival,
7:00 p.m.

March 9, 2011, 6:30 p.m.
"A Graceful Evening" dinner and live
auction benefiting Grace School at Elm
Crest Banquets, 7370 West Grand
Avenue, Elmwood Park.

March 25, 2012, Bach Cantata, 3:45 p.m.
Mass in b minor (BWV 232)
Concert Choir, Wheaton College,
Paul Wiens, director

April 8, 2012, Easter Sunday Services,
8:30 & 11:00 a.m.

April 22, 2012, Bach Cantata, 3:45 p.m.
"Come, hasten and run" (Easter
Oratorio—BWV 249).

May 4, 2012, Confirmation Witness
Service, 7:30 p.m.

May 6, 2012, Confirmation Service,
11:00 a.m.

May 11, 2012, Junior High Musical,
"Fiddler on the Roof, Jr." 7:00 p.m.

May 20, 2012, Bach Cantata, 3:45 p.m.
"On Christ's ascension into heaven alone"
(BWV 128).

May 30, 2012, Eighth-Grade Graduation
service, 8:00 p.m.

THANK YOU!

We gratefully acknowledge and thank
alumni who have given gifts to Grace
(March 2011 through November 2011):

Calvin W. Borchardt, DDS, class of 1948

Robert G. Olson, class of 1953

Georgene Phillips, class of 1958

Helene Zarcone, class of 1958

Linda (Schneider) Tjaden, class of 1961

Robert Meyer, class of 1962

Dale Hermann, class of 1967

Eleanor Diesing, in memory of her husband,
Paul Diesing, class of 1935

Betty Elmen, in memory of her son, Allen
Elmen, class of 1956

George Reinhardt, father of
Greg Reinhardt, class of 1980, and
David Reinhardt, class of 1982

CLASSNOTES

1961 Janus Hudson lives in Flagstaff,
Arizona, and is still doing deep tissue body-
work after 33 years. She has a passel of dogs
and cats and returns to River Forest every
year to spend time with her dad, Burt
Hudson, who turned 95 in June.

Top ten donor opportunities

- 1 iPads for classroom use, \$400
- 2 Boys' volleyball uniforms, \$500
- 3 Classroom reading sets, \$250
- 4 Sponsor a student at Grace,
\$6,300
- 5 Document camera for classroom
use, \$500
- 6 Music stands, \$35 each
- 7 Table covers for the junior high
bell choir, \$500
- 8 Science resource kits, \$500
- 9 Classroom set of ActivWands for
interactive whiteboards, \$1,600
- 10 Sponsor an issue of *Amazing
Grace*, \$2,000

College choices

Grace's Class of 2007 graduated from
high school last spring. Their college
choices include:

Baylor University, Indianapolis, Ind.
Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Penn.
Columbia College Chicago
Concordia University Chicago
Denison University, Granville, Ohio
DePaul University
Eastern Michigan University
Elmhurst College
Grand Valley State University,
Muskegon, Mich.
Judson University, Elgin, Ill.
Lawrence University, Appleton, Wis.
Loyola University Chicago
Scripps College, Claremont, Calif.
St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn. (2)
Taylor University, Upland, Ind.
Texas Christian University, Ft. Worth,
Texas
Triton College (2)
University of Illinois at Chicago (2)
University of Miami
University of Michigan
University of Rhode Island
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

A M A Z I N G GRACE

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Seventh grade and senior kindergarten chapel partners bring their offerings of food to the chancel steps during the Thanksgiving worship service. The food was donated to a local food pantry, serving others in need.

Grace Lutheran Church and School's Spring Gala, "A Graceful Evening" benefits Grace School. Plan to attend!

Spring Gala!

AT ELM CREST BANQUETS, ELMWOOD PARK

FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2012, 6:30 PM

ANNUAL BENEFIT FOR GRACE SCHOOL

A Graceful Evening

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