
September 2021 Grace Notes



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



Back together in Christ

by Pastor Dave Lyle

Looking forward to a new ministry season at Grace Church and School

Not so long ago, it looked like we were heading toward the beginning of a new ministry year that would have a pre-pandemic feel to it. Unfortunately, the surge driven by the Delta variant has forced a rethinking of things, and we are still wearing masks in worship, still being cautious about large indoor gatherings.

Nevertheless, God is good. As we lean into our vision to be "Together in Christ: To love, to grow, to serve," we see that God

What better way to show and share our love than to actually be together?

continues to bless us abundantly at Grace.

Though we all have different comfort levels about gathering with others during these days, I invite you to consider the fall season as a time to return to in-person worship if you've been away for a while. Yes, we continue to wear masks, but our love for the Lord and our joy of being together cannot be covered up.

Continued on page 2

September 2021 brings a new season of ministry at Grace

Continued from page 1

Starting in September, worship will look and sound even more like it did before the pandemic. Our Parish Choir will be singing for worship services on Sundays beginning September 5. On September 12, we will resume having a full complement of worship leaders in the chancel, including confirmands as cross and Bible-bearers. There's an intriguing

Adult Ed program scheduled for that morning, and we plan to have the nursery open during both worship services and during the Adult Ed hour starting September 12. We'll also celebrate the new ministry season and the installation of new teachers at Grace School with refreshments outside after worship.

What better way to show and share our love than to actually be together? I hope to see you soon!

And for those who aren't quite ready to return to in-person services, for whatever reasons, live-streaming of our 8:30 service will continue. You can find the link to live-streamed worship on the new Grace website at GraceRiverForest.org. Click on "Worship" at the top of the page to see the pull-down menu, then click on "Live-stream worship."

The Parish Choir (formerly known as the Senior Choir) will also be live and in person at the first Bach Cantata Vespers of the year on September 26 at 3:45 p.m. The cantata for that day, BWV 29, is one of praise and thanksgiving to the God who blesses and cares for us in all things.

Growth is evident all around us at Grace. Grace School opened on August 24 with an enrollment of 191 students, nearly 50 of whom are new to our school! We have also welcomed a number of gifted new teachers to our faculty. Our Adult Education calendar has wonderful offerings for the fall, and we are hoping that these sessions can return to an in-person format in the Seminar Room at Grace.

I continue to give thanks for the ways that God has held us together during these past months and look forward to ... mission and ministry in the days to come.

Meanwhile, in Children and Family Ministry, Confirmation classes are set to begin on September 19; you'll see our seventh and eighth grade confirmands gathering outdoors in the Memorial Garden this fall. Our Children's Ministry is also making plans for the fall, fresh off

a fantastic Vacation Bible School journey along the Rocky Railway in August. We talked about how "Jesus' power pulls us through," as we sang, told Bible stories and had fun.

Pastor Troy is giving special attention to our high school ministries. If you are the parent of a high school student, please encourage your child to get involved in Sunday morning Teen Talk discussions and other activities, as God continues to challenge our young people to grow in faith.

Opportunities to serve are plentiful at Grace. By the time you read this, our new refugee ministry will have welcomed a family of refugees from Burma to Chicago and will be supporting them as they begin a new life here. Thank you to Linda Street, and to all who have given so much time, energy, and financial support to this ministry. And keep an eye out for ways that you can contribute as Social Ministry Committee, Grace Care and other projects continue to serve people in need in our congregation and beyond.

God is up to so much that is good at Grace Lutheran Church and School. Challenges and uncertainties abound during these days, but our faith is unshaken, founded as it is upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I continue to give thanks for the ways that God has held us together during these past months and look forward to the many ways we can reconnect for the sake of mission and ministry in the days to come.

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, September 3, with the hope that it will arrive in your mailbox no later than September 10. Copies are also available at Grace.

Deadlines and submissions. The next issue of Grace Notes will be mailed late in September. The deadline for copy is Wednesday, September 15; the issue covers events through early November. Send news to ggotsch@graceriverforest.org. Please limit 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.



Cornerstones

After a year of meeting on Zoom, weekly Wednesday morning Bible study for seniors returns in person at Grace beginning on Wednesday, September 8. Note the new starting time: treats and fellowship at 9:30 a.m., and Bible study with the pastors at 10 a.m.

Religion in Literature

Religion in Literature will meet via Zoom on September 16 at 7 p.m. Please note the change from in-person meetings and also the change in time. Jeff Wood will lead the discussion of Thomas Merton's "The Seven Storey Mountain." Two copies of the book are available in the Grace library. All are welcome. If you would like to receive the email with the Zoom link, please contact Jill.Baumgaertner@wheaton.edu. The reading list for 2021-22 is posted on the Grace website.

Theology on Tap

Come for community and monthly conversations about faith and life. The next gathering is scheduled for Thursday, September 23, 7 p.m., at Oak Park Brewing Company, 155 S. Oak Park Avenue. Email Pastor Troy for more information (tmedlin@graceriverforest.org).

Moms of Littles

This gathering of mothers with children of any and all ages, infants through teens, meets twice a month, once in person and once virtually. The next gathering is on Thursday, September 2, at 6:30pm in the Youth Room at Grace. If you have a "little" or are expecting one, please join us for community and support. Contact Ali Carris at beauvais.carris@gmail.com to be added to the email list or learn more about the group.

Dads of Grace

Join Pastor Lyle and other dads on Monday, September 27, at 7:30pm for an evening of fellowship. Email Pastor Lyle for the particulars (dlyle@graceriverforest.org).

Men of Grace

The Men of Grace group meets at 9 a.m. on Saturday, August 28, at Grace. Bring a lawn chair. Coffee and donuts will be provided. Email Pastor Troy for more information (tmedlin@graceriverforest.org).

Finding Hope

This support group for people with chronic illness meets on the 2nd Friday of the month. The next meeting is on September 17, 10 a.m., at Grace. Chronic illness may include anything that you deal with on a day to day basis whether physical or psychological. The group meets for about an hour to pray together, share a devotion and check in with each other. Meetings may also occasionally involve a guest speaker or an informative video. Contact Judie McDonnell (judie.mcdonnell@att.net) if you have questions or need to arrange a ride.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Sunday, September 5, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

15TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isaiah 35:4-7, Psalm 146, James 2:1-17, Mark 7:24-37

Sunday, September 12, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

16TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isaiah 50:4-9, Psalm 116:1-9, James 3:1-12, Mark 8:27-38

Sunday, September 19, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

17TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jeremiah 11:18-20, Psalm , James 3:13--4:3, 7-8; Mark 9:30-37

Sunday, September 26, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

18TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29; Psalm 19:7-14, James 5:13-20, Mark 9:38-50



"Let's Talk About Balance"

A program on fall prevention

Sunday, October 3

12:30-1:30 p.m.

with Margaret Wentte

Danilovich, PT, DPT, PhD

Sponsored by Grace's Health Ministry and River Forest Township.

To register go to GraceRiverForest.org and scroll to the bottom of the home page. Or call the reception desk at 708-366-6900. The program will take place on Zoom, and it will also be shown on a large screen in Fellowship Hall at Grace. Call the reception desk to reserve your place.

Building hours, Fall 2021

Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sundays, 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and for scheduled activities in the afternoon and evening.

Open weekday evenings and Saturday mornings for scheduled activities. In these changing times, it's always a good idea to call ahead.

Please wear a mask when you come to Grace on Sundays and during the week.

Pastors' emergency phone

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



ADULT EDUCATION

Adult Education classes meet at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday mornings. The Adult Education Committee is hoping to return to in-person classes this fall. If you have suggestions for Adult Ed programming, please contact Ted Anton of the Adult Education Committee (tanton@depaul.edu).

September 12

“The Realms of Science and Religion: Re-examining NOMA”

Peter Tierney, The Lumen Christi Institute

The dialogue on science and religion at the end of the 20th Century was most strongly colored by the idea of persistent and irreconcilable conflict. Stephen Jay Gould, Harvard paleontologist and popular science communicator, sought to defuse this dialogue of conflict with a conciliatory approach, proposing that science and religion are “non-overlapping magisteria” (NOMA) — distinct and respectable teaching authorities that operate within separate, non-overlapping realms of understanding. This talk aims to lay out Gould’s argument, examine the evolution of its reception in the 24 years since it was first proposed, and present emerging challenges in the dialogue that could benefit from a re-examination of Gould’s NOMA.

September 19

Pastor David Lyle “My Theology Models”

Discussion of some of the key thinkers shaping Pastor Lyle’s faith.

September 26

Marvin Wickware Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago “Race and Emotion”

The important and sometimes overlooked role that emotions play in the work of racial reconciliation.

Grace Church library is open on Sundays

Grace Church’s library, on the first floor, just inside the Division Street door, is open for self-service on Sundays and during the week when the building is open.

The library has a wide variety of books available for checkout, including the books on each year’s reading list for gatherings of the Religion in Literature group. September’s selection, which will be discussed in a meeting on Zoom at 7 p.m. on September 17, is *The Seven Storey Mountain* by Thomas Merton. Two copies are currently available for checkout.

Are you looking for a specific book? You can search the church library online. Go to GraceRiverForest.org, click on Faith Formation, then Church Library. You’ll see a button that will take you to the search site.

October 10

Lori Wilbert, Deaconess/Prison Chaplain Stateville Prison in Joliet

Readings from men learning to incorporate Reformatory Justice (RJ) into their rehabilitation, a process in which the offender makes amends to the victim, owning his crime and moving forward.

November 7

“How Luther’s Circle Reached the People” Anna Johnson, Associate Professor of Reformation Church History, Garrett Theological Seminary

The Wittenberg circle was critical to the Reformation, from advising cities and princes about instituting reform to writing broadsides for the public. While Luther gets the credit, this talk will show that the Reformation was a group effort.

November 21

Linda Street “Refugee Ministry at Grace”

December 5

Best Books of the Year Elizabeth Palmer Books Editor, The Christian Century

From the archives

Happy Birthday, Pastor Geiseman!

On August 8, Otto Geiseman would have been 128 years old! As many of you know, Otto was Grace’s pastor for 40 years (1922-1962). He was born in 1893 in Sioux City, Iowa, and passed away in 1962 from cancer in Oak Park at age 69. Before coming to Grace he served parishes in Wenona and Pekin, Illinois. Otto’s first wife, Johanna Geisler, died at age 27 in 1918. His second wife, Marie Lohnes passed away in 1997 at age 96. Otto’s portrait hangs in Grace’s atrium adjacent to the Lamb Door.

From the obituary for Dr. Geiseman in the New York Times, Friday, November 9, 1962:

“Dr. Geiseman was the author of a dozen books and many magazine articles. He was also a lecturer ... speaking on the relevance of the bible to contemporary life.... Tall and soft-spoken, Dr. Geiseman insisted on the right of every Christian to express his understanding based on scripture.”

Caring for people who live with mental illness

by Pastor Troy Medlin

Throughout the pandemic pastors and lay leaders at Grace have been thinking and praying about ways that we might better support and come alongside people in our congregation who live with mental illness. As members of the body of Christ and members of one another, we know that to be “Together in Christ” means to bear each other's burdens, support those who are struggling, and strive to make Grace a welcoming place for all of God's children.

Throughout the past year Grace has provided information and support on a number of mental health topics. The Adult Ed committee hosted representatives from Lutheran Social Services of Illinois with a presentation on mental health challenges during the pandemic and another program in March with a speaker from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) on about ways that congregations can help people with mental health difficulties. We also gathered on Zoom with parents from Grace School to hear about how to support middle school and high school students who experience mental illness and other mental health challenges. Our Stephen Ministry leaders are trained to walk alongside those with mental illness and to offer resources. And, we have been offered continued encouragement and resources in newsletter articles from our parish nurse, Pat Gulik.

In an effort to hear from you we asked you to participate in a survey so we could gauge what some next steps might be. We had a sizable number of respondents. Thank you for participating! After reviewing the survey though, we felt there was not a clear desire for a new mental health ministry here at Grace at this time. And that is helpful feedback for us.

We do want you to know that we will continue to do our part to make Grace a more welcoming place for those with mental illness and their loved ones. We will continue to listen to you and walk beside you. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Pat Gulik, Pastor Lyle, or myself if you have any feedback, ideas, or ways that we can better support you or someone you love in this area. We also encourage you to take advantage of these local resources:

NAMI (namiillinois.org; National helpline at 800-950-NAMI)

Cornerstone Counseling Center of Chicago
(chicagocounseling.org; 312-573-8860)

Thrive Counseling Center, Oak Park. Services at Thrive include a 24/7 Crisis Team. Contact Thrive at 708-383-7500.

Stephen Ministers: The “After People”



People often ask, “What exactly is a Stephen Minister?” One way to put it is that Stephen Ministers are the “After People.”

Stephen Ministers are there:

... after the phone call you hoped you'd never get.

... after the funeral, when everyone has

left and the emotions you've held at bay come crashing in on you

... after the relationship falls apart and the bottom falls out of your life.

... after the doctor says, “I'm sorry, but there's nothing more we can do.”

... after the nursing home director shakes your hand and says, “Welcome to your new home.”

... after the last child honks the horn, waves, and drives away—and the house suddenly seems empty.

... after the gavel comes down, the handcuffs go on, and your loved one is led away.

... after the baby arrives, demanding more of you than you ever dreamed possible.

... after you find a pink slip with your final paycheck.

... after your family and friends have heard your story one too many times, but you still need to talk it out.

Stephen Ministers are the After People. They are ready to come alongside you to provide comfort and support for as long after as needed.

Grace is blessed with a thriving and active group of Stephen Ministers ready to walk with you and hear your story. All you need to do is let one of our pastors know you would like one.

If you think you might have the skills to be an After Person, you might consider becoming a Stephen Minister. We will begin a new training series in mid-January. Talk to one of the pastors or email a Stephen Leader at our confidential email: stephenministry@graceriverforest.org.

Thank you for your support of Grace Church

With great joy and deep appreciation, we thank you for your unwavering generosity and support of Grace Lutheran Church and School. Your faithful gifts helped us to reduce the deficit at the end of the 2020-21 fiscal year, and for that we are incredibly grateful.

Because of you, our faith community remained steadfast in our commitment to love, to grow, and to serve those around us — and to share the Good News that God’s love is for everyone — even during such an extraordinary year.

Stewardship is about much more than financial gifts. Stewardship gives each of us the choice to place our faith and trust in the work we are called to do as one body in Christ and to give thanks for all that God has given us. And at Grace, we have so many things for which to be thankful:

- Five baptisms this past spring and summer give us reasons to be joyful as we welcome our new siblings in the body of Christ.
- We resumed our in-person Vacation Bible School program in August, bringing together Grace’s youngest members to grow in their faith and their love for Jesus.
- We have welcomed 23 new members to our congregation in 2021 and almost 50 new students to Grace School.
- Our refugee ministry is helping to settle a family of refugees from Burma, supported by the gifts and energy of many Grace Church volunteers.
- In the last year we also invested in our building, with heating, air conditioning, and ventilation improvements and new windows that open in offices and classrooms around the Memorial Garden. There’s also a new energy management system for heating and air conditioning and all lighting in the building has been converted to LED bulbs.



We look forward to many more opportunities to celebrate, to give thanks, and to share the Good News of God’s unending love. Thank you again for all the ways you contribute to this mission and to the vibrant, fruitful life of Grace Lutheran Church and School.

The Stewardship Committee



FINANCIAL UPDATE

Grace Lutheran Church General Fund

Church budgeted contributions

July 1, 2021 – August 30, 2021 \$ 339,000
(9 Sundays, \$37,700 per week)

Church actual contributions

July 1, 2021 – August 30, 2021 \$ 216,000
(Last year at this time: \$206,000)

Church giving is \$123,000 (37%) below budget, but \$10,000 ahead of last year. The General Fund deficit is \$161,000 (\$107,000 last year through August 31). The deficit includes the August 31 payroll and most August expenses.

2020-21 FISCAL YEAR

Grace Church’s fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.

In the 2020-21 fiscal year we came up \$405,000 short of the budgeted figure for church and school revenue, but we underspent church and school expenses by \$296,000, resulting in a \$109,000 operating deficit. (Compare this to an operating surplus of \$5,000 in for 2019-20.)

The revenue side of the balance sheet for 2020-21 also includes \$514,000 of revenue from the forgiveness of the PPP loan. The expenses side includes an additional figure for depreciation of our various assets. When the PPP loan and depreciation are included, we ended 2020-21 with a total surplus of \$232,000.

Forward in FAITH: SETTING *the* COURSE of GRACE LUTHERAN SCHOOL



The Forward in Faith Endowment Campaign for Grace Lutheran School is centered around the words from Joel 1:3. “Tell the children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation.”

On August 24th Grace School welcomed 191 students to the 126th academic year. Each of these students will experience the gift of Grace School – an environment that educates the whole student: the mind, the body and the spirit. Nurtured by dedicated pastors, teachers and staff, our students receive an individual educational experience, rooted in faith and the good news of the gospel.

True to Grace’s mission, our school brings in, builds up and sends out disciples for Jesus Christ. A Grace School education provides a strong Christian foundation for our students and sends them out to make a difference and create a better world.

We want to tell more families about Grace School and make our school affordable to more people who want to enroll their children at Grace but are unable to meet the tuition costs. The Forward in Faith Campaign will establish an endowment for our school that will ensure that this quality Christian education remains available to new generations of students.

The Grace School Endowment Campaign Committee prepares to raise \$5 million to support the future of Grace Lutheran School.

The goal is to raise \$5 million through a combination of cash and planned gifts. In the coming weeks the campaign committee will be sharing more information about how you can contribute to this exciting opportunity to make the gift of Grace School accessible to more families.

You’ll hear more about Forward in Faith in a mission moment during worship services on Sunday, September 12. We will also celebrate Grace School that day with the installation of our teachers and the opportunity to welcome them at an outdoor reception between services.

- ***Read more about the Forward in Faith campaign at GraceRiverForest.org. Look for “Forward in Faith” in white letters on the black bar at the top of the home page.***
- ***Find us on Facebook by searching “Forward in Faith.”***
- ***Talk with a member of the Forward in Faith Committee, by contacting one of the chairs: Lori Martin (lmartin7@me.com) or Dick Martens (richardmartens10@gmail.com).***



2021-2022

BACH

Cantata Vespers

The first Bach Cantata Vespers of the 51st season is on September 26. The organ prelude, played by Thomas Schmidt, begins at 3:45 p.m. The cantata for the service is *Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir* (We thank you, God, we thank you), BWV 29. It begins with a magnificent sinfonia for organ and orchestra, followed by a glorious opening chorus thanking God for the blessings of the past and expressing trust in God's protection in the future.

The preview lecture by Mark Peters, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, begins at 3:00 p.m. Rebekah Weant Costello of Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Schaumburg is the homilist.

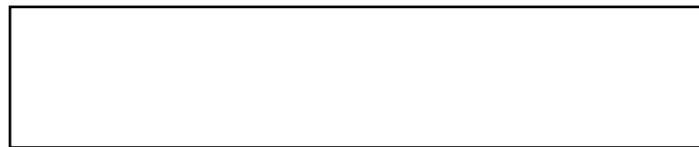
The Parish Choir will be back in the chancel to sing the choruses.

New art glass installation in the Grace atrium

The Higgins Glass Studio in Riverside, Illinois, was founded in 1948 by Michael and Frances Higgins, who were pioneers in the refinement of the ancient art of glass fusing. Louise and Jonathan Wimmer, who worked with the Higgins, carry on their work at the studio.

Grace member and Concordia College's longtime art professor Walter Martin had the idea that Grace's Art Committee should pursue a commission with Higgins for a glass installation at Grace. The colorful cascading discs, called Rondelays, which festoon the tall windows that face Bonnie Brae, are the fruition of Walt's vision. (Walt died in October of 2020.)

The Rondelays were installed on Wednesday, August 18. In the center of each cascade is a special pane, designed by Jonathan's sister, Celeste, that captures a traditional liturgical symbol. Look closely at the symbols represented and you will recognize some familiar Grace objects.



7300 Division St.
River Forest, IL 60305

GRACE
LUTHERAN
CHURCH
& SCHOOL

Non-profit org.
U. S. Postage
PAID
Oak Park, IL
Permit No 28