

Grace Notes

November 2021



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



Look up — and look around

by **Pastor Troy Medlin**

It is easy to feel overwhelmed or anxious, lost in our own thoughts — at least it is for me. Between the perpetually changing and yet ever-present pandemic and our own lives, our days are filled with all sorts of things and people for us to manage and deal with. It is all plenty to worry about. It seems like it is so much easier to be worried than thankful these days. Even during the month of November when we start to think about gratitude and

thankfulness, we often find our hearts clouded with worry and anxiety. That makes it harder to find things to be thankful for.

When I am feeling overwhelmed or anxious or lost in my thoughts, I know it helps me to look up and look around. When I look up and find other people are in my life to support me and encourage me, I do not feel so overwhelmed. And when I look around at my life and see that I am not alone, I find resources and

Continued on page 2

Taken out of ourselves, we foster gratitude in one another

Continued from page 1

a different perspective and I feel less anxious. When I look just outside of myself for a moment, it is easier for me to find gratitude. It is like my field of vision opens and my heart opens along with it ever so slightly.

On Thanksgiving we will hear the familiar words from Jesus not to worry about this life but look up and look around at the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. When we look up and look around, we will find that God has already been taking care of us just as God takes care of those birds and lilies. God has already clothed us in Jesus Christ himself. We now already wear those garments of salvation. And we never grow out of them. God feeds us too. We are filled up Sunday after Sunday with Christ's word of mercy and his own body and blood. Our souls and bodies filled up with the only thing that will satisfy our deepest hunger and thirst. There, with the people of God, we are taken out of ourselves, and we find our capacity for gratitude is expanded. We look up and look around and see bread, wine, water, word, and each other. Gratitude and thanksgiving come more easily after

If God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you? Matthew 6:30

that.

We also gather sharing our faith, serving refugees, feeding hungry people, and just connecting with one another in so many ways. All these practices take us out of ourselves and expand our capacity for gratitude. It is easier to be thankful after being with

the body of Christ and not going through this life by ourselves. We foster gratitude in one another. We help each other find a way out of our places of worry and anxiety. We help each other be a little less lost in our thoughts. That is what the church does. So, find a way to be "with" other Grace folks in the next weeks and months.

I bet you will be grateful you did. And I'm thankful for you.



THANKSGIVING WORSHIP **Thursday, November 25, 10 a.m.**

Festival Liturgy composed by Richard Hillert
with organ, brass, and choir.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE

Sunday, November 7, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

Isaiah 25:6-9, Psalm 24, Revelation 21:1-6a, John 11:32-44

Sunday, November 14, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

25TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Daniel 12:1-3, Psalm 16, Hebrews 10:11-25, Mark 13:1-8

Sunday, November 21, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

CHRIST THE KING

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14; Psalm 93, Revelation 1:4b-8, John 18:33-37

Thursday, November 25, 10 a.m.

DAY OF THANKSGIVING

Joel 2:21-27, Psalm 126, 1 Timothy 2:1-7, Matthew 6:25-33

November 28, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Jeremiah 33:14-16, Psalm 25:1-10, 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13, Luke 21:25-36

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. This issue was mailed via U.S. Postal Service Bulk Mail on Friday, October 29, with the hope that it will arrive in your mailbox no later than November 5. Copies are also available at Grace.

Deadlines and submissions. The December issue of Grace Notes will be mailed on November 24. The deadline for copy is Wednesday, November 17; the issue covers events through early January. Send news to ggotsch@gracriverforest.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.

MINISTRY FAIR

Sunday, November 21

Between services in the atrium

Working while we wait

Grace members have continued to love, grow and serve together through 18 months of adapting to changing pandemic conditions and restrictions.

As we look ahead to Advent we are “working while we wait” — waiting for Christmas celebrations more joyful and people-filled than last year’s,

waiting for a time when things are back to “normal,” waiting for the fulfillment of God’s promises as we work together in God’s kingdom to bring good news to our troubled world.

- Come and celebrate all that Grace members are doing to love, grow and serve together, working in God’s kingdom.
- Look for new ways you can participate in the work of the church.

Representatives of Grace’s many boards, committees, and ministry groups will be in the church atrium between services on Sunday, November 21, to share news about their accomplishments as well as plans and needs for the future.

Also that morning:

- Service project and getting-ready-for-Advent-activities in the gym.
- The nuns from Fraternité Notre Dame will be at Grace selling their delicious baked goods.
- AND there will be coffee and hot chocolate outside the Bonnie Brae doors.

Come to church on November 21 and find out more about how you can re-engage in ministry at Grace.



Church Council allocates additional \$100,000 to benevolence giving in 2021-22

In recent months, Grace Church Council has engaged in discussions about our benevolence ministries. Our annual benevolence giving is budgeted at 10 percent of the previous year’s offerings. A decrease in offerings during the 2020-2021 fiscal year has thus resulted in a decrease in budgeted giving to our selected benevolence partners in 2021-22. However, with the availability of unrestricted funds, council members considered allocating a special amount beyond the budget to restore our support levels to current benevolence ministries and to support additional ministries during this difficult economic period.

During the September Church Council meeting, a resolution for a special benevolence was presented and unanimously approved. This resolution included a special benevolence amount of \$100,000 to be disbursed as determined by the Church Council and the Benevolence Committee during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022. In addition to a portion of these funds being allocated for the discretion of the Benevolence Committee, an additional list of ministries was presented and approved by the council.

We are pleased to share that the following additional ministries will receive benevolence funds:

- Lutheran Disaster Response, Hurricane Relief
- Lutheran World Relief, World of Good
- Leaders Network Credit Union
- Grace Refugee Ministry (future families)
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services
- Pangea
- ELCA, Young Adults in Global Mission
- OPRF Community Foundation, Future Philanthropists.
- Kids in Need of Defense
- Chicago Children’s Choir

This giving aligns with Grace’s values to show the love of Christ by serving those in need in a variety of ways, both close to home and around the world.

Jade Augustine
President of the Congregation



Adult Education programs

Classes meet at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday mornings in the Seminar Room. If you have suggestions for Adult Ed programming, please contact Ted Anton of the Adult Education Committee (tanton@depaul.edu).

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. (Also available via Zoom. You’ll find a link on the Adult Ed page on the Grace website.)

November 14

Stephen Ministry: Who, What, and How?

Come and learn more about Grace Church’s Stephen Ministry and consider whether you might want to participate in the upcoming Stephen Ministry training.

December 5

Best Books of the Year

Elizabeth Palmer, Books Editor, The Christian Century

Feel at home in the cozy church library

And by the way, we’re looking for missing books — and more Library Committee members



Why have a church library?

So many different thoughts come to mind. It’s a great meeting place where we can actually hear each other. It puts a smile on your face when you come in at the Division Street door in the winter and stomp off your boots. Ahhh, the cozy library! It is the anteroom for large events in Fellowship Hall or the Sanctuary – a place for grooms to get settled before a wedding or a grieving family to gather before a memorial service. The Grace Church Library is a blessing in so many ways. Recently we received an email from a former Grace School alum who is now a church library coordinator at her church in Tacoma, Washington. She

wrote for advice because she treasured her memories of the library here and wanted to replicate it.

In addition, the Grace Church Library has books! The number of volumes and variety of subjects would probably surprise most. There is a catalog accessible via the Grace website – just like a “real” library. Fiction or non-fiction books are available. Our library is happiest when books are getting checked out.

However, as we have been spending more time in the library cleaning up and getting re-organized after the long Covid absence, we have noticed that several books are missing. Are they at your house? On your desk? Or sitting beside your bed? Perhaps you just borrowed a book in a rush and forgot. If you have a book at your house that still has the sign-out card in the pocket, please stop by the library, sign your name on the card, and drop it in the box on the check-out table. You may continue to borrow the book – we just need to know who has it.

Whether you come to the church library for a meeting, to check out a book, or just to enjoy a comfortable, quiet rest – it is a special place and you are welcome any time!

Linda Street

Grace Church Library Committee

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 Committee is looking for additional members. Talk with Linda Street or Pastor Troy if you’re interested.

Grace Refugee Ministry welcomes a family from Afghanistan

Grace's Refugee Ministry is sponsoring another family in addition to the Burmese refugees we began working with during the summer. Members of Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church in Oak Park are working with us. Many people pitched in at short notice to help get an apartment ready for this Afghan family, a recently widowed mother and her eight children who will be settling near family members in Rogers Park.

Linda Street shared this account of the family's arrival on Monday, October 25.

The family pulled into the cell phone lot at O'Hare at about 11 a.m. on this windy, raw Chicago Monday on a big purple charter bus. They came from Fort McCoy in Wisconsin where they have been living since their evacuation.

Scott [Street], Emily Patterson and I were there to greet them. There were also several other cars waiting with us in the parking lot, and we just assumed they were normal O'Hare cell-phone-lot people. When the doors of the bus opened, one of the sons carrying a large reinforced plastic sack came around the corner, and he waved at his uncle standing beside me (a Chicago resident whom I had met). The uncle shouted the boy's name and ran toward him. The car doors around us opened and out poured about a dozen connected family members – more uncles, aunts and lots of cousins – all running toward the bus laughing and crying and shouting names and – oh, my word! – what a

The car doors around us opened and out poured about a dozen connected family members – what a celebration!

celebration. At this point I didn't know who came off the bus and who was the welcoming family! It was beautiful and joyous. We loaded up cars and the RefugeeOne van and trundled everyone off to their apartments (which many of you helped to clean and furnish). By the time we got there all the family and extended family were in the living room area of the third floor apartment. Most of them spoke quite a bit of English. The mother did not and there was a translator for her. We introduced ourselves and shared how wonderful it is that they have such an amazing family – smiles all around – I think they know how sweet it is to welcome distant and heartbroken family into open and loving arms.

At any rate, the whole experience has been such a blessing. — our preparation work with members of Fair Oaks Presbyterian, and Grace working in tandem to set up a welcoming home for this awesome family; seeing their bright eyes and smiles as they begin a long process of settling in and their determination to do good work in their new home; and looking forward to getting to know them all better.

God is good! All the time!

There will still be items to purchase for this family as they settle in and get acclimated to their new home. If you would like to continue to support this effort, please join us by sending a check to Grace with "Refugee Ministry" in the memo line. Or donate online at GraceRiverForest.org.

Holiday Food and Gift Basket program seeks sponsor families

The Community of Congregations Holiday Food & Gift Basket program serves members of our community who need assistance during the holiday season. They receive a Jewel gift card for their Thanksgiving meal and gifts for the December holidays. The program anticipates serving 750-800 families this year.

You can help by becoming a sponsor family. This entails shopping for gifts for participants based on a list provided you, and wrapping the gifts and dropping them off the week of December 5 at United Lutheran Church, 409 Greenfield in Oak Park. You can also make a donation to HFGB or volunteer to deliver gifts.

Please email hfgbholidays@gmail.com or visit the Community of Congregations website at communityofcongregations.org/holiday-food-gift-basket to participate or for additional information.



A GriefShare Surviving the Holidays seminar, held on Saturday, November 20, 9-11 a.m., at Grace will offer practical, actionable strategies for making it through the holiday season. At this two-hour seminar participants will view a video featuring advice from people in grief who've faced the holidays after their loss, hear insights from respected Christian counselors, pastors and psychologists, and receive a Holiday Survival Guide with practical strategies, encouraging words, helpful exercises, and journaling ideas for daily survival through the holiday season. Participants will also meet with other grieving people who share an understanding of the grieving process.

To register call the Grace reception desk at 708-366-6900. If you have questions about the program contact Linda Bernard (lm_bernard@hotmail.com).

Stephen Ministry: Who, What, and How?

*Learn more about Stephen Ministry on Sunday, November 14,
9:45 a.m. in the Seminar Room.*

Grace has been home to a Stephen Ministry for over 30 years. We have walked alongside hundreds of hurting people from this community and continue to do so today. We have an already robust group of trained ministers but are always looking for more.

Do you have a heart for people and a compassion for those struggling with the many challenges of life? Do you find that folks talk to you when they are troubled? Are you a good listener who wishes they knew what to say? You might consider becoming a Stephen Minister. If you have the heart and desire, we provide the free training as well as supervision and continuing education opportunities during your tenure as a Stephen Minister.

Join us on Sunday, November 14, at 9:45 a.m. in the Seminar Room for an information and Q&A session. If you cannot attend, feel free to contact our Stephen Leaders at stephenministry@gracriverforest.org and one of them will reach out to you.



Turkeys and pies for Fraternité community dinner

Once again, the sisters at Fraternité Notre Dame are making plans for their Annual Thanksgiving dinner for our neighbors in the Austin area. They are in need of at least 100 turkeys and 50 pies in order to serve the hundreds of folks who come for dinner. Feel free to either donate money or the actual turkey (frozen or fresh) or the pumpkin pies. Please contact Sue Foran (susanforan4@gmail.com) to make arrangements for dropping off food. Checks, made out to Sue, so she can purchase turkeys, may be left at the Grace reception desk through November 21.

Faith-Sharing groups forming soon

The Evangelism Committee will soon be inviting you to join a new set of Faith-Sharing groups. These groups meet once a month for an hour to talk about faith and life and to focus on how we are following Jesus. It's an opportunity to take a step back from our day-to-day schedules and recognize the blessings we receive from God's presence in our lives. Watch for more information soon.

Senior Pastor portraits

A portrait of Pastor Bruce Modahl has joined the collection of paintings of previous Senior Pastors at Grace near the elevator and the Lamb door. The group of portraits also includes pictures of Pastor Dean Lueking, pastor at Grace from 1954 to 1998, and Pastor Otto Geiseman, pastor from 1922 to 1962.

Andy Tecson and the Church Jazz Ensemble concert benefits Voice of Care ministry to people with disabilities

Voice of Care invites all to "Jazz It Up" on Friday, November 5, with a benefit concert featuring Andy Tecson and the Church Jazz Ensemble here at Grace. General admission tickets are \$40. A VIP Ticket (\$50) admits one plus allows a Very Important Person with special needs to attend the event. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., the concert begins at 7 p.m., and a reception follows. All proceeds benefit the ministry of Voice of Care, which equips churches to embrace, empower and engage people with disabilities in inclusive Christian discipleship. Tickets are available at VoiceofCare.org. If you'd like to know more about the event or the organization, talk with Grace member Tony Stephens.



November Bach Cantata looks ahead to Advent

November 21, 3:45 p.m.

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, BWV 61
Now come, Savior of the nations

In person and live-streamed on the Bach Cantata Vespers channel on YouTube.

Chad Fothergill, guest organist

Esther Menn, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago,
homilist

Maura Janton Cock, soprano

Ryan Townsend Strand, tenor

Douglas Anderson, baritone

Bach Cantata Vespers Chorus and Orchestra

Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello, conducting

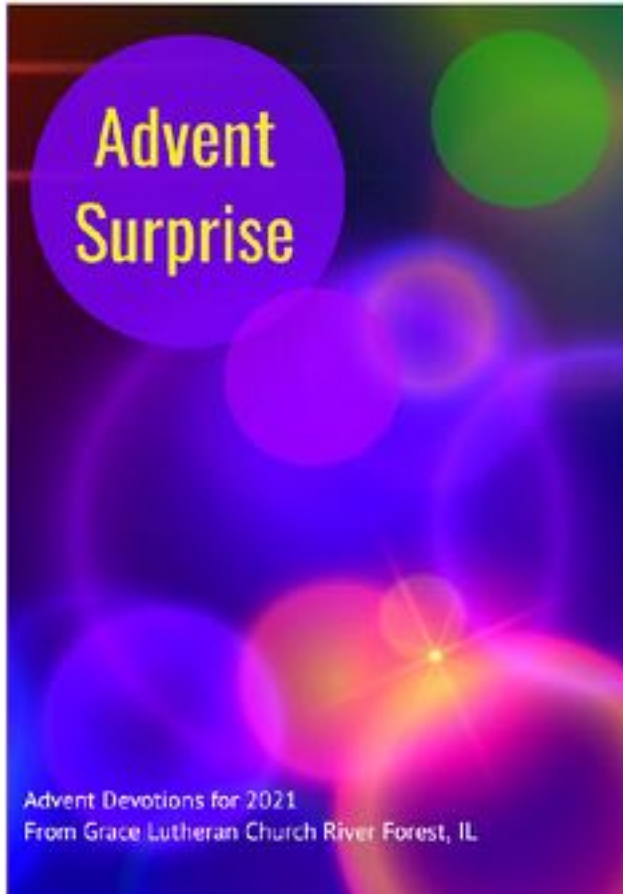
3:00 p.m. Cantata Preview Lecture

Mark Peters, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights



Bach's cantata for the first Sunday in Advent, composed in Weimar in 1714, was performed again in his first Advent season in Leipzig in 1723. The opening movement sets the medieval melody of Luther's traditional Advent chorale against the rhythms of a French overture, a royal welcome for the world's Redeemer. The movements that follow pray that Jesus would come to the church and ultimately, knock at the door of the human heart. The closing chorale exclaims, "Amen! Come, you fair crown of joy!"

Look for an “Advent Surprise” — Advent devotions written by members of Grace Church



The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

*From the Old Testament lesson for the First Sunday in Advent,
Jeremiah 33:14-15*

How do you feel about surprises? That unexpected but very welcome visitor? The excitement of a new opportunity?

As far back as Genesis God has been surprising his people, changing expectations, altering the plans. The wonderful thing about God's surprises is that they bring great things to God's people. Even when we don't immediately recognize it, God's purpose is always for good.

This Advent you are invited to join us in our “Advent Surprise” daily devotions written by talented and insightful folks at Grace.

Printed devotional books will be available for pick-up at the reception desk later this month. The devotions will also be posted daily on a blog. Watch for links on the Grace Church Facebook page, or sign up to receive a daily email with a link to the blog posts.

Advent begins on Sunday, November 28. The devotions continue through Christmas Day on December 25.



New church staff

Grace's new technology manager is **José Meza**, who has more than 30 years of experience in the field of information technology. His job responsibilities include technology used throughout the building, in both church and school. You'll see him at Grace on Sunday mornings managing the sound system during worship services. He's married and has a 22-year-old son who currently attends Northwestern University.

Esther Armstrong is the new church administrative assistant. She has worked part-time at the reception desk for the last year. She and her husband, Neal, are members of Grace, and their children, Rachel and Peter, are graduates of Grace School. At her desk next to the Lamb door, she'll be maintaining church records, preparing worship materials, and assisting the pastors.

Employment at Grace School

There are two part-time positions open at Grace School: a director of enrollment and marketing and a school social worker. Job descriptions are available on the school website at GraceSchoolRF.org.

Social Ministry

Thank you for donating coats! More than 100 coats and jackets were donated by Grace members last month. They are being shared with adults and children in need of warm clothing for the winter ahead. Thank you!

Stockings for The Night Ministry. The Social Ministry Committee is again filling stockings with necessities for clients of The Night Ministry. Bring your donations to the atrium during the month of November. Here's what's needed: small packs of tissues, full-size deodorant, lip balm, lotion, hand and toe warmers, winter hats, stretchy gloves, adult-size thermal socks, mini/travel first aid kit, deck of cards, assorted candy, and hand sanitizer.

The Giving Tree. The Giving Tree in the Grace atrium during November holds tags with wish-list items for clients of local social service agencies. Take a tag from the tree, purchase the gift, and return it to Grace by the date specified on the tag.

Energy savings at Grace

Over the past year, Grace has made a significant effort to reduce our building's energy use. Jim McClanahan, Director of Administration and Finance, reports:

- We are using 19 percent less electricity than we used last year. This is mainly due to changing almost all of our light bulbs to LED bulbs and adding an energy management system (i.e., very smart thermostats) to our heating and air conditioning equipment.
- Solar energy from our rooftop panels is providing almost 14 percent of our electricity.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Grace Lutheran Church General Fund

Church budgeted contributions

July 1, 2021 – October 25, 2021	\$ 641,000
(17 Sundays, \$37,700 per week)	

Church actual contributions

July 1, 2021 – October 25, 2021	\$ 423,000
(Last year at this time: \$406,000)	

Church giving is \$218,000 (34%) below budget, but \$17,000 (4%) ahead of last year. The General Fund deficit on September 26 was \$174,000 (\$184,000 last year through October 31). The deficit does not include the October 31 payroll and month-end expenses.

GriefShare

A GriefShare group meets at Grace on Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m. in the church library. The current group runs through January 11. GriefShare support groups are open to all. For more information contact Linda Bernard (lm_bernard_@hotmail.com).

Cornerstones

Bible study for seniors with treats and fellowship at 9:30 a.m. and Bible study with the pastors at 10 a.m. On November 17 there is Morning Prayer at 11 a.m., followed by lunch in Fellowship Hall.

Religion in Literature

The group will meet on Zoom on November 19 to discuss "An Interrupted Life" by Ety Hillesum. Pam Todd leads the discussion. Email jill.baumgaertner@wheaton.edu to be added to the group's email list. A copy of the book is available in the church library.

Theology on Tap

Come for community and monthly conversations about faith and life. Email tmedlin@graceriverforest.org for more information.

Moms of Littles

Mothers with children of any and all ages, infants through teens, meet twice a month, once in person and once virtually. The next gathering is on Thursday, November 4, 6:30–8 p.m. in the Youth Room at Grace. They'll meet online on November 18 at 6:30 p.m. 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, November 22, at 7:30 p.m. 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, November 27, at Grace. 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 November 12, 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.

Retired Leaders

This group of retired Christian men and women in former leadership positions in church or community meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 10 a.m. in the church library. Meetings are also available on Zoom. Each meeting features a guest speaker. Pastor Lyle is the presenter on November 9. Contact John Halvorson (johnhalvorson@yahoo.com) for more information.

Building hours, Fall 2021

Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Open weekday evenings and Saturday mornings for scheduled activities.

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

The building will be closed on November 25 and 26 for the Thanksgiving holiday.

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.



Grace Notes mailing crew invites you to join them for work and fellowship

This newsletter comes to you every month thanks to faithful volunteers who fold, tab, and label it for mailing. Their work makes it possible for the church to distribute a printed newsletter economically and on time.

More hands would make the work go faster. They welcome more helpers. There's friendly conversation and (often) homemade cookies. Most months they meet on a Thursday morning, but in November, because of Thanksgiving, they'll be at work on Tuesday, November 23, 9:30 a.m. in the church library. If you have questions, contact Marlene Hallman or just come!

Remembering the Saints on All Saints Sunday

by Pastor Hans Dumpys

Of all the saints that have impacted my life, this year on All Saints I choose to remember my paternal grandmother, Ilze. She did not need to be canonized, like Mother Teresa, but to me she is a saint. Some saw her as a crotchety woman, I remember her differently: how she took care of me while my parents were working in the fields, how she would take me for walks in the fields and by the river Minija, how she would engage me in play, how she would tell me stories, both of the Bible and the Brothers Grimm, how she would sing songs and folk hymns, and how she would answer my endless questions about the lithographs in her well worn Bible, and much more. I remember her as a saint because she was attentive to me, shared her faith and love with me, and gave of herself and her time. After a lifetime, these early memories of my growing-up years, of her gifts of attentiveness, of faith, of love remain etched in my memory because they formed me.

In my devotional life, besides liturgy, hymns, scripture, art, music, and prayers, I have long cherished the memory of saints in the sanctoral calendar of the Church. On the day of their commemoration I read, listen or study their work, ponder over it, and give thanks to God for their witness as it speaks to me. To illustrate, over the years I have been blessed to learn how Augustine struggled to order his passions, how Luther prayed through his spiritual assaults, how the strains of the Credo of Bach's B-minor Mass exalted me, how a recent viewing of George Rouault's original *Miserere* etchings moved me to a deeper contemplation of Jesus' passion, how Bonhoeffer, an ordained pastor, agonized with ethical discernment to publicly resist Nazism. My faith has been edified by the witness of these and many others; it's like being surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses of the Christian centuries.

Saints are not born, they are made. By baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ they are united into the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. They witnessed with their talents as their baptismal faith became active in love in the communion of the church and of society. In this sense all believers in Christ are saints.

So why are some remembered and not others? Over time the faithful chose to remember saints because their witness to the grace of God was so powerfully palpable in their lives. The earliest saints remembered by the apostolic church were their martyrs, as the church fathers said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. That is a high standard, indeed, for being remembered a saint. There are a myriad other ways in which grace has come to expression in faithful lives and deemed worthy to be remembered by the communion

of saints. Normally saints are commemorated on the day of their death, the completion of their baptismal pilgrimage.

Saints expand our vision of the church beyond Grace congregation. Remembering the saints we come to appreciate our family tree of faith, our foremothers and forefathers through the ages who witnessed to the grace of God. Theologian Robert Wilken suggests that when we confess in the Apostles Creed that we believe in "the communion of saints" it literally means we believe in "the communion with the saints." The church is a community that enjoys fellowship with the saints by telling their stories and imitating their holy lives.

Saints enlarge our worship. Remembering the saints, we may not only notice a vignette of their life or hear a petition of thanksgiving for their work and witness, we also are united with them in the worship of the triune God, as all the saints, confessors, martyrs, and the whole heavenly host sing "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts."

Our society lifts up people of great achievement for our attention, imitation, and admiration. They stand out because of their fame, success or wealth. But their achievements are temporary, they don't last, and, like all created things of this world, they will vanish. As people in but not of the world, we shape our identity by different models. That's why I much prefer to remember and be constantly surrounded by the saints of the ages whose witness to the grace of God lasts, remains, instructs, and inspires me today. Even the witness of my grandmother Ilze.

Reprinted from the worship bulletin for All Saints Sunday, November 6, 2016.



Sunday morning cottage meetings support the Forward in Faith Endowment Campaign

November 7 and November 14

9:45 a.m. in Fellowship Hall

Come to a Sunday morning cottage meeting hosted by the Forward in Faith Committee for an hour of fellowship and inspiration as we share stories and memories of Grace Lutheran School. We'll also talk about the launch of the Forward in Faith Endowment Campaign. Members of the Endowment Committee will provide updates about Grace School. Materials will be provided for you to take home to consider how you can participate in this opportunity to support the future of Grace Lutheran School.

The Forward in Faith Endowment Fund will generate income that will help school finances and make it possible to offer financial assistance to students whose families are unable to afford full tuition. The endowment will also support competitive salaries for teachers and provide resources to support individualized learning throughout the school.

To pledge to the campaign or make a one-time donation, please visit the Forward in Faith page at GraceRiverForest.org. Or contact Jim McClanahan in the Business Office at Grace.



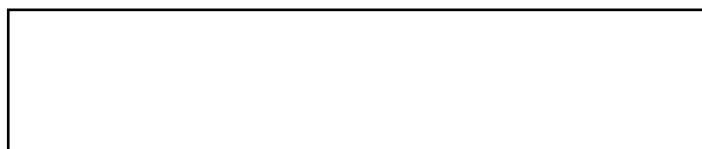

Forward
IN FAITH



Walk With Grace, the annual walkathon fundraiser at Grace School, was blessed with beautiful fall weather on October 1. Students raised \$33,000 for the school's operating budget and collected 6,000 pounds of food from River Forest neighbors for Beyond Hunger. When the walking was done, they celebrated with games at Priory Park — and the afternoon off!

November 2021 at Grace Lutheran Church

November 1	All Saints Sunday
November 7 & 14	Forward in Faith Sunday morning Cottage Meetings, 9:45am
November 21	Ministry Fair, 9:45 a.m. Bach Cantata Vespers, 3:45 p.m.
November 25	Thanksgiving Festival Worship, 10 a.m.
November 28	First Sunday of Advent



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