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

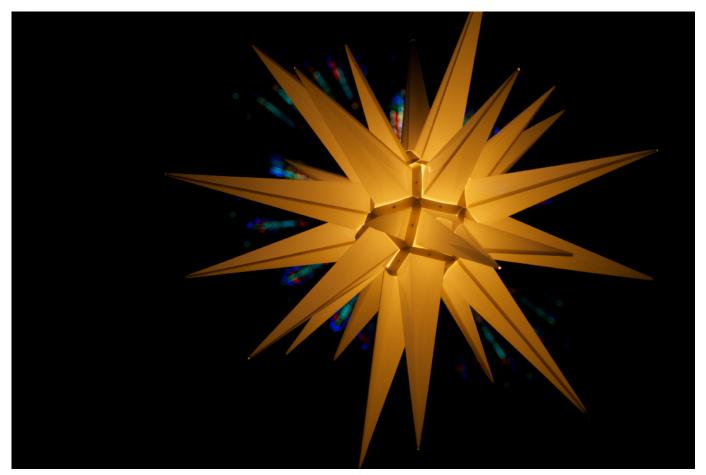


Photo of the Epiphany star in Grace Church by Ernie Tiemann, January 25, 2012.

Light to drive out the darkness

by Pastor Dave Lyle

February finds us in the Time after Epiphany. It is a season of light. The Light of Christ, born at Christmas, cannot be overcome by the darkness. The light of the star that led the Magi to Jesus to pay him homage continues to lead us forward. As if to mirror the liturgical calendar (or perhaps it's the other way around), the days themselves are lengthening. After a season of darkness, light.

During this time of light, I'm mindful of just how pervasive the darkness can feel. At Grace we have experienced sorrow and grief as loved ones have been taken from us in death. We work our way through yet another surge of COVID-19. The pandemic continues to darken our days, and our own individual darkness, in whatever shape it takes, is never far from us. Amid such darkness, we rejoice at the coming of the Light, thanking God that it has not been overcome.

The Light of Christ calls us forward

Continued from page I

Light and darkness tap into universal human hopes and fears. Who hasn't given into fear and worry in the dark of the night? Who hasn't rejoiced with the coming of the dawn? These universal meanings coexist, however, with the pervasive issue of racism. Pastor Angela Khabeb writes, "White and light are often imaged as divine, holy, and beautiful. Black and darkness usually represent evil, danger, and ugliness. In a perfect world, this symbolism would be harmless. However, we also refer to certain groups of people as Black or white, which adds a racial undertone to this symbolism."

What then shall we say? Need the church jettison language of light and darkness? No, I think not. But we should pause as we consider what these terms mean, and to what hope and work they call us, in the midst of an unjust world. A simple affirmation is a good place

As we follow Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, let us recommit to pushing back

ensnare us all in injustice and oppression.

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to start: the theological meanings of light and darkness do not transfer to valuations of people based on the color of their skin.

The racism against which we struggle, and in which we are mired, is part of the darkness in which we live. The imagined superiority of those with lighter skin is a sign of this world's brokenness in the night. As we follow Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, let us recommit to pushing back against the true darkness that would ensnare us all in injustice and oppression. As we do so, let us remember the words of Dr. King: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot

drive out hate; only love can do that."

The night of sin and suffering will not last forever. The Light of Christ gives us hope. The Light of Christ calls us forward.

New member class meets on Sundays in February

A four-week class for people interested in joining Grace Church begins on Sunday, February 6. The class meets during the Sunday Education Hour, at 9:45 a.m., and runs for four weeks, through February 27. Contact Pastor Lyle if you're interested in joining the class (dlyle@graceriverforest.org; 708-366-6900 ext 209).

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, January 28, with the hope that it will arrive in your mailbox no later than February 4. Copies are also available at Grace.

Deadlines and submissions. The March issue of Grace Notes will be mailed on February 25. The deadline for copy is Wednesday, February 16; the issue covers events through early April. 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.

WORSHIP

Sunday, January 30, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

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

Sunday, February 6, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

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

Sunday, February 13, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Jeremiah 17:5-10, Psalm 1, 1 Corinthians 15:12-20, Luke 6:17-265

Sunday, February 20, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

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

Sunday, February 27, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

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

Wednesday, March 2, 11:30 a.m. and 7 p.m..

ASH WEDNESDAY

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



"Praying the Psalms" Lenten devotion booklets will be available at Grace on Sunday, February 27. Devotions will be posted daily at www.habitsofgrace.blog. Scroll to the bottom of the blog page and enter your email address if you would like to receive a daily email with a link to the day's devotion. If you subscribed to Grace Church's Lent or Advent 2021 devotions, you're already set up to receive the 2022 devotions.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 2.

Praying the Psalms

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty—you will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my stronghold,

my God in whom I put my trust."

Psalm 91:1-2 for the First Sunday in Lent

For this year's Lent devotions, we'll be praying the psalms. The psalms are God's Word given to us that we might pray the Word back to God. As we pray the psalms, we move through joy, praise, and lament. We pray for mercy, deliverance, and wisdom. The beauty of the psalms is not that our mood at the time necessarily matches the prayer in the psalm. Rather, the psalms join us with the people of God throughout the world as they rejoice, praise, and lament. The psalms shape our prayer life, for they are the words of God's own heart.

Pastor Dave Lyle

Read, reflect and share your faith in a Lenten devotion

We're still in need of a few more people to read and reflect on a Psalm text and then share their thoughts in a brief Lenten devotion. You don't need to be a Bible scholar or an experienced writer to participate in this project. The psalms shape the prayers of the whole people of God, so everyone's voice matters. The editorial team will assign you a specific text to reflect on and write about. We'll also provide some simple guidance to focus your thinking and help you get your ideas on paper. To sign up, please email Julie Hinz at juliehinz414@gmail.com.

Resources for praying the psalms from the Grace Church Library

Some of the many books about the psalms in the Grace Church library.

The Psalms, with commentary by Kathleen Norris. New York: Riverhead Books, 1997. [223.2 PSA]

The Psalms: Meditations for Every Day of the Year, by Joan Chittister. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996. [242.2 CHI]

Spirituality of the Psalms, by Walter Brueggemann. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002. [223.2BRU]

The Promise of Winter: Quickening the Spirit on Ordinary Days and in Fallow Seasons, by Martin Marty and Micah Marty. Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997. [242 MAR]

Reflections on the Psalms, by C. S. Lewis. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1958. [223.2 LEW]

The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. [220.5 BIB]



Adult Education classes meet at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday mornings in the lower-level Seminar Room as well as on Zoom. You'll find the Zoom link at GraceRiverForest.org. Look for Faith Formation > Adult Ed.

Classes are led by Grace members and guest speakers. If you have suggestions for Adult Ed programming, please contact Ted Anton of the Adult Education Committee (tanton@depaul.edu).

January 16 and 23 "We the Fallen People" Tracy McKenzie, Wheaton College

McKenzie discusses the fragile state of American democracy, based on his new book, "We the Fallen People: The Founders and the Future of American Democracy."

January 30

"How Luther's Circle Reached the People: Bugenhagen, Jonas, Cruciger, Spalatin, and Melanchthon" Anna Johnson, Garrett Theological Seminary

Martin Luther did not do it all by himself. This presentation by a cutting edge theology scholar and Grace member explains who helped him and how.

February 6 "Empathy"

Jim Kerns, Emeritus Professor, Rush University Medical Center

We live in a world seemingly without empathy for the poor, the refugee, the ill or the weak. This presentation from a Grace member explains how we got here and what can be done about it.

February 13

"Combatting the Red-Blue Divide with Faith" William Schweiker, University of Chicago Divinity School

What role does religion play in the current slide from persuasion to force, from the common good of knowledge into the quest for power? Schweiker is interested in comparative religious ethics and developing an ethics of responsibility from a Christian perspective.

February 27

"The Lutheran and Jewish Communities: Where Are We Right Now?"

Peter Pettit, Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Davenport

March 6
"From Atheism to Faith"

Jason Hill, Professor of Philosophy, DePaul University

A West Indian immigrant discussing his faith journey and challenging, thoughtful prescriptions from his new book on race in America, "What Do White Americans Owe Black People: Racial Justice in the Age of Post-Oppression."

"New normal" settles in at the Grace Church library

As much as we had hoped to be returning to "normal" pre-Covid library routines in 2022, we find ourselves continuing to adjust to this "new normal." That said, the Grace Church Library has found ways to remain relevant. The church library was used as a space for the school library to host the Scholastic Book Fair. As a locked, secure space, it provided a safe and convenient location open to students and parents wishing to purchase items. The library also continues to be a welcoming space for Cornerstones Bible study. It's easier to hear in the library than in many of the larger meeting areas at Grace. We commend the willingness of Grace Staff to rearrange chairs and tables to facilitate the use of the library space.

The two remaining members of the Library Committee, Olinda Fink and Linda Street, have welcomed two new volunteers, Marilyn Fall and Carolyn Garber. You, too, could step in on these cold winter days for some cozy time as a library volunteer. There are plenty of jobs to do that don't involve carrying loads of books. Grace Lutheran Church remains a member of the Chicagoland Church Librarians, a great resource for church library ministries.

The seasonal collection of books in the atrium display case has evolved to share space with other church committee groups. The shelves recently featured books related to the work of specific committees, for example, Stephen Ministry and the new Refugee Ministry. These books are, of course, available to anyone who wants to check them out. Contact Linda Street if your committee or group would like to share the atrium display case with the library. (kentuckystreets53@gmail.com).

The library is happy to support the efforts of Grace's many fellowship groups and committees by making specific books available to members. There are two copies of every book on the Religion and Literature group's reading list available for checkout in the library. The Evangelism Committee also requested a text "Becoming a Welcoming Church" which is now available for check-out in the library.

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.



January 30, 3:45 p.m.

Liebster Immanuel, Herzog der Frommen, BWV 123 Dearest Immanuel, ruler of the righteous

This intimate cantata, composed for Epiphany in 1725. portrays Jesus remaining with the believer through the hard journey of this life.

Homilist Pastor Troy Medlin

Prelude Kontras Quartet playing music of Bach and Borodin

Preview Lecture at 3 pm Mark P. Bangert

February 27, 3:45 p.m. Du wahrer Gott und Davids Sohn, BWV 23 You true God and David's son

Bach's superb artistry is on display in this cantata that anticipates Lent, with the story of Jesus healing the blind man on his way to Jerusalem and a setting of "O Christ, Thou Lamb of God."

Homilist Peter A Pettit, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Davenport, Iowa

Prelude Bach's Orchestral Suite No, 1 in C Major

Preview Lecture: Mark Peters

Breakfast at church on February 27

The 8th grade confirmands are teaming up with their mentors to plan and serve breakfast for the congregation on Sunday, February 27, 9:30–11 a.m.

As of the end of January, they have created both Plan A, In-Person Dining at Grace, and Plan B, Breakfast to Go. Which plan goes into operation depends on the pandemic. Either way, everyone is invited!

The confirmands have planned this breakfast as a fundraiser. There will be a free will offering to benefit New Moms. The

organization's mission is to strengthen families by partnering with young moms as they progress toward housing stability, economic mobility, and family well-being.

Slovak Benefit Dinner postponed until May

The benefit for the Center for Christian Education in Martin, Slovakia, originally scheduled for January 21, has been rescheduled for Friday, May 20, 6 p.m., at Grace.

Tickets will go on sale after Easter.

Grace seeks new Facilities Manager to replace Rich Brooks

Facility Manager Rich Brooks and his wife, Kathy, are moving to Minnesota at the end of January, where Rich has accepted a new job and where they will be closer to family. Rich has worked at Grace since 2010, starting as the evening building host and eventually taking on the responsibilities of Facility Manager starting in January of 2018.

Rich is well known to Grace School students and parents as coach of the cross country and track teams. His encouragement and positive attitude brought lots of kids into the program as he built up their team spirit and their enthusiasm for running.

Jay DeVries who has served as Rich's assistant is also leaving Grace for full-time employment elsewhere. We wish him well.

Facilities Manager

Responsible for building and grounds cleanliness, upkeep, and safety; responsible for preparing the facilities for events. Full-time, salaried, full benefits.

Facilities Assistant:

Help Facilities Manager keep the facilities neat, clean, functional and safe; help the Facilities Manager prepare the facilities for events. Part-time, hourly, paid time-off.

Job descriptions for the open positions are posted under Employment on the Grace website at GraceRiverForest.org. Please share the information with anyone who may be interested. Contact Jim McClanahan for more information (jmcclanahan@graceriverforest.org; 708-771-1440)

Better hearing in the Grace sanctuary

A new sound system was installed in the Grace sanctuary late last fall, offering significant improvements both to live sound and to the sound on our livestream broadcasts. Have you noticed a difference? Here's some information about why a new system was needed, how it was designed and how it works.

The acoustics of Grace's sanctuary

Our worship space is large, open and full of hard surfaces. Sound waves from singers, instruments, and preachers bounce from surface to surface, creating a long trail of echoes known as reverberation. This adds warmth and presence to live music, enhancing the sound of the organ, choir, soloists and instrumentalists. But it can make it difficult to understand speech, as all those consonants and vowels bounce around the space and arrive at different locations in the church at varying times. People who speak to the congregation or an audience in the pews may compensate for this by speaking more slowly, more carefully, or more distinctly, but with limited success.

Over the years, various upgrades to the sound system have tried to solve these problems using the equipment and technology available at the time. It has been a patchwork process. Regular worshipers at Grace have continued to experience the frustration of trying to understand a guest preacher, a spokesperson from the congregation, or the 8th grade students who read the lessons at the Christmas Eve service. Even with the help of the church's hearing assistance devices, people with hearing loss have continued to struggle to understand sermons.

The process of live-streaming worship services added a new layer of difficulty. In addition to being amplified in church, speakers' voices have to be transmitted to the live-streaming software. And while music from the organ and choirs does not need to be amplified for those present in church, microphones must be used to capture these

sounds for the livestream broadcast. The church sound system was just not equipped to do all of that in a seamless manner.

Planning for a new system

A grant from the Legacy of Grace Endowment Fund and undesignated memorial gifts were used to pay for the new system. (Legacy of Grace funds mission and ministry projects that are not part of the congregation's regular budget.) Three sound design firms were asked to submit bids; two were interested in the project and submitted proposals based on analyses of how sound travels in our sanctuary. The two bids were of similar cost, but had significantly different approaches. The contract was awarded to Sound Planning of

Wheaton, because they understood our exact needs, proposed a

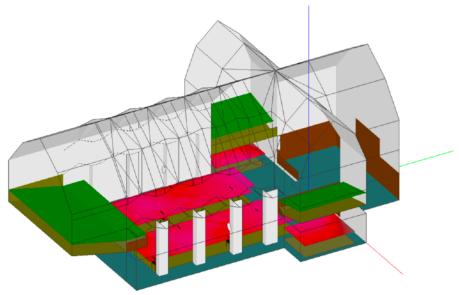
single system with seamless integration, and showed great respect for the architecture of Grace's sanctuary (for example, by reducing the number of speakers).

The new system was installed in November. It includes new speakers in the sanctuary for the congregation and also in the chancel for worship leaders, new microphones for the lectern and pulpit, new lavalier and headset microphones used by the pastors and assisting ministers, and microphone jacks for the balconies and chancel. (Previously we were dropping cables over the balconies!) Additionally, microphones discretely attached to the balcony rails capture the sound of the organ and congregational singing for the livestream, so that soloists and choirs do not dominate the sound. There are separate controls for what is heard in church and what is transmitted with the video feed. The sound can be controlled from an iPad or even a phone. José Meza, Grace's Technology Manager, manages the sound system during worship services.

New hearing assistance devices

The new sound system also includes new hearing devices for people who need assistance. These can be used as standalone devices or in conjunction with many types of personal hearing aids. They feed speakers' voices directly from the sound system to the hearing device, rather than relying on the hearing devices' microphone to amplify the sound in the environment.

If you have questions about using a hearing device at Grace, please contact Jose Meza (jmeza@graceriverforest.org). Comments and questions about the new sound system are also welcome.



Thank you from the Stewardship Committee

We wish to express our deep gratitude for your faithful giving in support of God's work at Grace Lutheran Church and School. Your gifts at the end of 2021 helped to greatly reduce our offering shortfall. Thank you! Such gifts will allow Grace to continue the vital ministries that serve our neighbors in need. Together in faithful partnership, we share the love of Christ throughout our community and world.

The Stewardship Committee

Planning your 2022 giving

Make a gift from your IRA. If you are required to take an RMD (Required Minimum Distribution) from an IRA this year, there may be a tax benefit for you if you make your charitable contributions from your IRA. This is called a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD); the donation must go directly from the IRA to a designated charity. QCDs are excluded from your taxable income. Read more in "Win-Win Giving" on the Grace website.

Thrivent Choice Dollars. Thrivent Choice gives eligible Thrivent members the opportunity to influence how Thrivent distributes some of its charitable funding. Grace Lutheran Church and Grace Lutheran School are both eligible recipients of Thrivent Choice Dollars. More information about how to do this online or by phone is here.

Convenient new ways to give to Grace

On Venmo. You can now make donations to Grace using your Venmo app. Search for Grace Lutheran Church/School or @graceriverforest.

By text. Text a dollar amount to 833-471-1346, Grace's text-to-give number. If you're a first-time text donor, you'll receive a link with instructions about how to complete your donation. After you register you'll receive a verification text as well as a receipt by email. For future giving, simply send a text with the amount you wish to give, and it will process automatically.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Grace Lutheran Church General Fund

Church budgeted contributions

July 1, 2021 – January 25, 2022 \$ 1,131,000 (30 Sundays, \$37,700 per week)

Church actual contributions

July 1, 2021 – January 25, 2022 \$ 1,008,000 (Last year at this time: \$919,000)

Church giving is \$123,000 (11%) below budget and \$89,000 (10%) ahead of last year.

Thank you for bringing in food for seniors



Thank you to everyone who donated food items and other necessities to fill gift bags for homebound seniors served by the Harmony Community Food Pantry. Your response was overwhelming! On Sunday morning, January 23, our seventh grade confirmands and high school youth sorted the donations and packed the bags. They were delivered to recipients in North Lawndale a few days later.

The winter months can be especially difficult for people who struggle with insecurity, especially those who find it hard to leave their homes. The Harmony Food Pantry has worked with neighborhood groups to deliver food to about 40 seniors each week. Partnering with local organizations allows the pantry to more easily identify the seniors who need food and check in to see what other support they might want.



Heart health leads to longer, healthier lives

by Pat Gulik, RN, Parish Nurse

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. February has been designated as American Heart Month every year since it was first declared by Lyndon Johnson in 1964. Each year, the month is widely observed as a time to educate Americans about the importance of heart health in order to help people to live longer and healthier lives.

American Heart Month focuses on prevention and reducing risk factors. Some risk factors, such as age and family history, cannot be controlled, but we can control many other risk factors by adopting a healthy lifestyle. Let's talk about some of these risk factors.

High blood pressure or

hypertension. Uncontrolled high blood pressure damages your heart and other organs. Routine monitoring of blood pressure is important since high blood pressure usually does not have any symptoms. You can check your blood pressure at your doctor's office, with the blood pressure monitor near the pharmacy in your local pharmacy, or with a home blood pressure monitor. Most home blood pressure monitors are reliable when used correctly. Wrist machines tend to be less reliable because it is easy to use them incorrectly. Ask your doctor how often you should check your blood pressure, and keep a log of the readings that you can take to appointments.

The table below summarizes the guidelines from the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology for understanding blood pressure readings.

Smoking. If you don't smoke, don't start. If you smoke- stop! There are resources available if you want to quit and are having trouble: free coaching by phone (1-800-QUIT-NOW) or text (SmokefreeTXT); a mobile app like quitSTART; or other resources listed on CDC.gov/quit or smokefree.gov.

Healthy
eating. Being
overweight or
obese is a risk
factor for heart
disease. Talk to
your doctor

Normal Elevated Hypertension - Stage I Hypertension - Stage 2

category

Blood pressure

about a healthy weight for you and work toward achieving or maintaining that.

The DASH eating plan is a recommended way to do this: Eat more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Include fat-free or low-fat dairy products, fish, poultry, beans, nuts, and vegetable oils. Limit foods that are high in saturated fat, such as fatty meats, full-fat dairy products, and tropical oils such as coconut, palm kernel, and palm oils. Limit sugar-sweetened beverages and sweets.

There is a strong link between heart disease and uncontrolled diabetes, so if you are diabetic, it is important to control your blood sugar by following your diet and taking any medication as prescribed.

Limit alcohol consumption to no more than two drinks per day for men or one drink per day for women. Limiting salt, or sodium, can help lower your blood pressure.

Regular physical activity. A

sedentary lifestyle is another risk factor. If you are inactive, you are twice as likely to develop heart disease than if you are active. And if you are diabetic, exercise will help to keep your blood sugar under control. Take the stairs instead of the elevator, ride your bike, dance, park your car further away from your destination and walk. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute recommends 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity aerobic exercise such as brisk walking, or 75 minutes per week of high intensity activity such as basketball, running or jumping rope. You can decide how you want to accomplish this; 30 minutes of brisk walking 5 times a week will get you to your 150 minutes. Or go to the gym. Or

Systolic blood pressure

<120 mmHg 120-129 mmHg 130-139 mmHg ≥140 mmHg Diastolic blood pressure

<80 mmHg <80 mmHg 80-89 mmHg ≥90 mmHg

work out in smaller time increments. Just get moving. Of course, if you have not exercised in a long time, begin slowly and increase as tolerated, and talk to your doctor before you begin any type of strenuous exercise program.

and

and

Manage your stress. Stress causes your heart rate to increase and your blood vessels to narrow—both things that, over time, can increase your risk of heart disease and heart attack. (It also affects our hormones, lungs, and gut). We tend to accept stress as a normal part of everyday life, but it's important to take some time to address this risk factor. Your body has a relaxation response that you can trigger to reduce your heart rate, lower blood pressure and slow your breathing. Some ways to trigger this response are guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, prayer, yoga, and deep breathing. Find what works for you and make time for it.

Adequate sleep. Lack of sleep can be hard on your heart. Most people need 7-9 hours of sleep each night. It's not helpful if you sleep less during the week and attempt to make it up on the weekends. This practice can increase stress and weaken your heart. To sleep better: maintain a consistent schedule of going to sleep and waking up, sleep in a cool room with a supportive pillow and mattress and avoid the blue light of electronics for at least an hour before bedtime. Adequate exercise and managing stress also help you sleep well. All of this is just an overview of how to maintain a healthy heart and avoid disease. If you are interested in knowing more, please contact me and I will be happy to provide the information.

FELLOWSHIP

Grace Notes mailing crew

This newsletter crew will be at work again on Thursday, February 24, 9:30 a.m. in the church library. Contact Marlene Hallman (708-562-5476), or just come!

Cornerstones

Bible study for seniors on Wednesdays. Treats and fellowship at 9:30 a.m. and Bible study with the pastors at 10 a.m.

Theology on Tap

Come for community and monthly conversations about faith and life. The next gathering is on February 24. Email Pastor Troy (tmedlin@graceriverforest.org) for more information.

Moms of Littles

Mothers with children of any and all ages, infants through teens, meet at 6:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of the month in person at Grace, and on the third Thursday on Zoom. Please join us for community and support. Contact Sabrina Maggio (sabrina.maggio713@gmail.com) for updates and Zoom links.

Dads of Grace

Join Pastor Lyle and other dads on February 28 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 on the last Saturday, of the month, 9 a.m. Email Pastor Troy for more information (tmedlin@graceriverforest.org) about whether the group is meeting in person or on Zoom.

Yoga

Yoga classes with Ackli Howell are on hiatus until March 3. Classes meet on Thursdays, 6:30–7:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Religion in Literature

Religion in Literature will meet February 18 to discuss J. R. R. Tolkien's "The Fellowship of the Ring," led by Pastor Dave Lyle. Please contact jill.baumgaertner@wheaton.edu to be added to the email list for this group.

Finding Hope

This support group for people with chronic illness meets on the second Friday of the month at 10 a.m. The next meeting is on February 11. Contact Judie McDonnell (judie.mcdonnell@att.net) for more information.

Retired Leaders

This group of retired Christian men and women in former leadership positions in church or community meets February 8 at 10 a.m. in the church library. The speaker is Fred Reklau on "Quest: Faith and Science."

Building hours

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.

Closed for the Presidents Day holiday, Monday, February 21. Please wear a mask when you come to Grace.

Pastors' emergency phone

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

PRAYERS

The weekly **Prayer List** can be found in the worship bulletin on Sunday. Contact Esther Armstrong (708-366-6900 ext 207; earmstrong@graceriverforest.org) to be included on the published prayer list. Contact Kathy Lucht (kathy.lucht@gmail.com) or Kathy Garness (KMGfinearts@comcast.net) with confidential prayer chain requests.

WE PRAY for those who mourn the deaths of Jerry Koenig, Donald Offermann, Barbara Rinnan, Evie Tiemann, and John Johnson.

WE CELEBRATE the birth of Jacob Scott Owens, grandson of Linda and Scott Street; and the birth of Oliver Randall Wood, son of Josh and Julia Wood.

WE CELEBRATE with those recently baptized:

December 26 — Avery Tan, son of Alex and Allison Tan.

January 16 — Colin James Melville-Gray, son of Ryan and Maggie Melville-Gray.

ALTAR FLOWERS Donate flowers to remember a loved one or commemorate a special birthday or anniversary. Use the sign-up sheet at the reception desk in the atrim.

December 19 — in memory of Evelyn and Pete Haase and Carol and Russ Lewis by the Nolan family.

January 2 — in memory of Arthur Omes by his wife, Betty Omes.

January 23 — in memory of Wesley Wilkie by the Wilkie family.

January 30 — in memory of Jerry Koenig by the Koenig family.

February 6 — in honor of Marilyn Gotsch's 90th birthday, by her family.

Enroll now for the 2022-23 school year at Grace School

Grace School is now accepting applications for the 2022-23 school year. Members of Grace Church and siblings of students already in the school have enrollment priority through the end of January.

If you are interested in enrolling a child in early childhood or elementary programs at Grace, now is the time to schedule a visit and talk with Principal Bill Koehne and Tina Baird, who is currently working with families interested in enrolling students at Grace. Call the school office (708-366-6901) to arrange a visit.

Share the good news about Grace School

Word of mouth is the best kind of advertising for Grace Lutheran School. If you know families with young children who may be looking for a preschool or a Christian elementary school, tell them about Grace!

More information about the school is available at GraceSchoolRF.org.

₩ Forward IN FAITH

The Forward in Faith School Endowment Campaign has received over \$1.25 million in pledges since it was launched in early fall. This includes a matching grant of \$100,000. Thank you to all who have pledged to the campaign or attended cottage meetings to learn more about it.

The Forward in Faith Endowment will create a stable and sustainable base of financial resources for Grace School. It will also ensure that financial assistance is available to families who may not be able to afford full tuition.

To learn more the campaign, contact Bill Koehne, Grace School principal, or committee chairs Lori Martin (708-243-5768; lmartin7@me.com) or Dick Martens (708-715-4400; richardmartens10@gmail.com).

Grace Lutheran School Faith • Academics • Character



Early Childhood age 3 to 5

- All-day kindergarten
- Half-day and full-day programs for 3- and 4-year olds
- We learn about God's love!

Elementary grades 1-8

- Caring, experienced teachers
- Challenging curriculum
- Support for individual learning needs
- Music, art, and sports teams
- Before and after-school care available

Learn more at GraceSchoolRF.org

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GRACE
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CHURCH
& SCHOOL

Schedule a visit Call 708-366-6901

Or email Tina Baird (tbaird@graceriverforest.org)

Communion Retreat Friday, March 4, 5:30-9pm (includes pizza supper)

Fourth graders from Grace Church and Grace School are invited to participate in the Communion Retreat to learn about the sacrament of Holy Communion. Children attend with a parent. Those who already receive communion are encouraged to attend the retreat along with their peers. At the retreat students create a clay chalice to commemorate this important milestone in their faith life. Students also decorate a white garment with symbols of their life and faith. Contact Julie Modrich to register (jmodrich@graceriverforest.org).





Graceful Evening returns to the traditional in-person dinner-auction format this year, on March 12, 5:30 p.m. at Oak Park's Nineteenth Century Club, 178 Forest Avenue.

The annual event supports Grace Lutheran School. Proceeds from this year's Graceful Evening will support the school's operating budget as well as classroom improvements.

You can look forward to cocktails and an elegant dinner, along with the usual array of tempting silent auction items, wine and whisky pulls, and raffles.

Tickets (\$100/person; \$960/table of ten) are on sale through February 28 at graceful2022.givesmart.com. You can also purchase tickets in the atrium between services on Sunday, January 30, and again on February 13.

The Graceful Evening chairs would also be happy to talk with you about sponsorships, program book ads, and auction donations. For more information contact gracefulevening@graceriverforest.org. Or pick up a copy of the donation form from the rack by the school office.

Graceful Evening is an important source of support for Grace School. Last year's Ten Pandemically Proportioned Events brought in over \$72,000. It's also a fun evening of fellowship for Grace Church members and Grace School parents and supporters. All are welcome — join us!

In compliance with local ordinances, guests must provide proof of vaccination and photo I.D. at the event. For exemptions or if you are unable to be vaccinated, guests must provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test along with a photo ID. PCR test taken within 72 hours of the event, or a rapid test taken within 6 hours of the event will be accepted. No home tests will be accepted.

News from Grace School

Thriving in 2022

Despite all the challenges presented to elementary schools by the COVID-19 pandemic, Grace School continues to welcome students to daily in-person learning. The current enrollment is 192 in preschool through 8th grade, level with last year. Since the beginning of the 2021-22 school year only two classes have had to move to remote learning for a period of time because of COVID exposures.

At a time when the national conversation has focused on academic losses because of the pandemic, Grace School students have continued to meet and exceed learning goals. Students' fall 2021 MAP test scores showed higher-than-expected growth over the last year, even when compared to pre-pandemic testing norms.

A recent survey showed that parents of Grace students are very satisfied with the school. Over 90 percent report that their children feel safe and welcomed at school, that teachers have built strong relationships with their students, and that their children's academic needs are being met and that children are appropriately challenged by the school's curriculum. On a five-star scale, the average rating for the school was 4.7 stars, and parents are very likely to recommend the school to other families.

At the congregation meeting on January 23, principal Bill Koehne thanked congregation members for their support. Grace School makes a significant impact on the lives of its students, forming them for lives of discipleship, now and in the future.

New staff members

Grace School has a new art teacher. Her name is Natalie Johnson. She majored in art with a focus in painting at Western Michigan University, while minoring in child psychology. She has been teaching a variety of art classes in the area over the last six years and for the last year has taught afternoon and evening art classes to children at Maywood Fine Arts. Melissa Hammer, who taught art classes at Grace since 2015, left the position to move into a new career field.

Susan Hickey is the school's new part-time social worker. Several years ago she retired from a social work career in the Chicago Public Schools. She is delighted to be working with students and teachers two days a week at Grace School.

Choir sings for the Chicago Wolves game

Grace School's 5-8 choir will be singing the national anthem at the Chicago Wolves games on Friday, November 28.

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



7300 Division St. River Forest, IL 60305

Another 13-week cycle of GriefShare begins on Wednesday, January 26, 7–8:30pm. (It's okay to join late.) The weekly sessions will meet online. To register, go to GriefShare.org and follow the prompts for "find a group near you." Or contact follow the prompts for "find a group near you." Or contact contact (Im_Bernard Dy phone (773-259 -4720)

Each GriefShare session includes a video featuring top experts on grief and recovery topics, followed by a focused support group discussion. Participants also receive a workbook for personal study.

All are welcome at GriefShare. Please pass this information along to anyone you know who may be

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