

March 2023

Grace Notes



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



Photo of the "Jesus Heals Bartimaeus" window at Grace.

Encounters with Christ

by Pastor Dave Lyle

Where have you encountered Jesus Christ? At what times in your life has Jesus been particularly present? To be sure, Christ is with us always, even unto the end of the age. So, too, is he dependably present for us as we gather faithfully around Word and sacrament.

His presence can be trusted. Still, I imagine there have been times in your life when Jesus has shown up in powerful ways. Perhaps you've gone through other seasons when his presence has felt less tangible.

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Encounters with Christ

Our theme at Grace for Lent is *Encounters with Christ*. Our readings for worship through the season present us with encounters various people have with Jesus throughout his ministry.

After his encounter with Satan in the wilderness, we'll see Nicodemus come to Jesus at night and an unnamed woman whom he meets during the day. Jesus will meet a man born blind, then he'll meet Mary and Martha in their grief and Lazarus in his grave. Finally, Jesus will encounter the powers of this world head on. Sin, evil, and death will look to win the day. They will fail.

During this season, as we walk once more toward the cross of Christ and the empty tomb of Easter morning, we'll read daily devotions prepared by members of the Grace community. You will read

powerful stories of how these people have been encountered by Christ along life's journey and deep insights into the biblical witness.

My prayer for you, dear people of Grace, is that this season of Lent is one of deep meaning for you. Like Nicodemus and the woman at the well, like the man born blind and Lazarus, we are changed by the encounter. We are born again. We are gifted the water of life. We develop eyes to see all that God is doing. We are called forth from our graves and stripped of our graveclothes; clothed instead with the righteousness of Christ.

As Christ encounters you anew throughout Lent, may you feel his promised presence in your life, preparing us for the great feast of Easter when his presence will be all in all.

On Wednesdays during Lent, from March 1 to March 29, we worship at 8:25 a.m., 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. The 7:00 p.m. services will be livestreamed. Supper will be served in Fellowship Hall at 6:00 p.m.

LENT & HOLY WEEK WORSHIP

Sunday, February 26, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m..

First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7, Psalm 32, Romans 5:12-19, Matthew 4:1-11

Sunday, March 5, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m..

Second Sunday in Lent

Genesis 12:1-4a, Psalm 121, Romans 4:1-5, 13-17, John 3:1-17

Sunday, March 12, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m..

Third Sunday in Lent

Exodus 17:1-7, Psalm 95, Romans 5:1-11, John 4:5-42

Sunday, March 19, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m..

Fourth Sunday in Lent

1 Samuel 16:1-13, Psalm 23, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-41

Sunday, March 26, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m..

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Ezekiel 37:1-14, Psalm 130, Romans 8:6-11, John 11:1-45

Sunday, April 2, 8:30 and 11:00 a.m..

Passion/Palm Sunday

Isaiah 50:4-9a, Psalm 31:9-16, Philippians 2:5-11, Matthew 26:14 — 27:66

Thursday, April 6, 8:30 and 7:00 p.m..

Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4 -10, Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Friday, April 7

Good Friday

Journey to the Cross 9:00 a.m.,

Adoration of the Cross 12:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
Isaiah 52:13—53:12, Psalm 22, Hebrews 10:16-25, John 18:1—19:42

Saturday, April 8, 7:00 p.m.

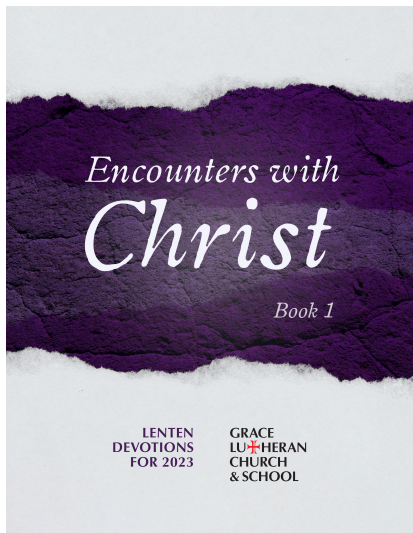
Easter Vigil

Romans 6:3-11, John 20:1-18

Sunday, April 9, Festival Worship at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m..

Easter Day

Acts 10:34-43, Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24, Colossians 3:1-4, Matthew 28:1-10



Encounters with Christ devotion booklet

The Lenten devotion booklet *Encounters with Christ* contains daily devotions written by Grace members. Book 1, written for the first half of Lent, is available in the atrium. You can also read the devotions online at habitsofgrace.blog. Scroll to the bottom of the page and enter your email address to receive the devotions in your inbox every morning.

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.

Pastors' emergency phone

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

Lenten readings

From the Grace Church Library

As we move into Lent the Church Library committee has many thoughts and reading suggestions. A short devotional/faith journey book from Martin and Micah Marty titled *Places Along the Way* follows the Bible narrative from Creation to Easter. There are photographs from biblical places accompanying each verse, devotion and prayer. Martin's thoughts and Micah's photos are precious glimpses into the Christian fellowship of this father/son team.

Another take on the life of Jesus is provided by James R. Mills in the historical fiction book *Memoirs of Pontius Pilate*. The author, a politician himself, brings his perspective to fictional reflections of Pilate and the impact Jesus had on his life. Remembering the fictional nature of this book, you will still find it an interesting read.

More serious – and definitely not fictional – are the next two titles: *A Violent Grace: Meeting Christ at the Cross* by Michael Card uses Old and New Testament references to walk us through the life and ministry of Jesus. We see familiar stories through a new lens – almost as if we were on the scene. Each chapter ends with a prayer focusing on the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf and our humble response to it.

Hanging by a Thread by Samuel Wells is a tough study. This short book is all about the cross: no sugar coating or easy narration. Wells views the cross as the “heart of God laid bare.” He puts us in our place when we wonder where God is when we hurt. “If you ever look up to the sky and shout ‘Oh God, why?’ you are looking in the wrong place. You need to be looking into the face of the crucified Jesus.”

If you are looking for a thought-provoking lesson as we walk again in to Lent, *Hanging by a Thread* is recommended.



PRAYERS

The weekly **Prayer List** can be found in the worship bulletin on Sunday. Contact Esther Armstrong (708-366-6900 ext 207; earmstrong@gracriverforest.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 death of Tom Kay, who died on February 10.

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 atrium. There are no flowers in the chancel during Lent.

Updates from Grace School

by Ana Garcia

Grace Lutheran School's annual open house was a success! Grace parents and five 8th grade students graciously volunteered their time for the event, and we needed them! We had 24 families attend. Twelve of those families were looking into Early Childhood grades and twelve were interested in the Elementary level. Fifteen of the families who attended had never visited Grace before. Nine out of those 15 families have applied to Grace School.

As of January 31, Grace School's re-enrollment for next year is at 171 (93 % retention from last year) with 52 applications. Shadow dates and parent interviews have been set for many of the applicants in the upcoming months. Lord willing, we will have many more to come. We are so thankful to God for His blessings upon our school. We are continuing to host First Look Friday admission events, with the next three dates being February 10, February 24, and March 24. Prospective families are invited to drop in between the hours of 9 and 11:00 a.m. to tour the school. In addition, to increase visibility of our school in the community, Grace will be a part of the 27th Annual Forest Park St. Patrick's Day parade on March 4. Please join us if you are able!

GRACE LUTHERAN SCHOOL

7300 Division Street in River Forest

708-366-6900



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LUTHERAN
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FAITH



ACADEMICS



CHARACTER

Early Childhood, ages 3 to 5

- Full-day kindergarten
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- Strong academic curriculum
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- Music, art, and sports teams
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First Look Fridays

2nd & 4th
Fridays of
each month.
Call the office
at
708-366-6901



New teacher

In other exciting news, Grace has a new math teacher! A big welcome to Christopher Peoples who is teaching our 7th grade Algebra and 8th grade Geometry classes. Mr. Peoples, who has a BS in Industrial Engineering from UIC and an MAT in Secondary Education from Concordia, joins us after completing student teaching in December.

A sincere thank you to Josh Schubkegel who so ably taught these classes as a substitute for us during the first half of the school year.

Grace School at Wolves game

It is always our desire to get involved in our community and share what Grace has to offer. As is our annual tradition, our 5th to 8th grade choir sang at intermission at the Chicago Wolves game on January 29. They did an amazing job. We encourage you check out our Facebook and Instagram to hear their rendition of "America the Beautiful." Thank you to Mrs. Johanna Johnson for leading our choir and organizing the event again this year.



Group of Grace students rehearsing at the stadium and watching Wolves game. February 2023.

At last — St. Mathew Passion performances at Grace, March 25 and 26

Three years ago, on Tuesday evening, March 10, 2020, singers from the Grace choir and from Chicago Choral Artists gathered in Fellowship Hall for a two-and-a-half hour rehearsal of J. S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion. They had been working on this music for ten weeks, and they were just 17 days away from the scheduled performances.

They were also just days away from everything shutting down because of the pandemic. Grace Church worship services moved online on March 15. Governor Pritzker's stay-at-home order went into effect on March 21. There would be no Passion performances in the spring of 2020. The St. Matthew Passion weekend, March 28 and 29 of 2020, came and went, and for singers especially, left a big hole.

Thankfully, three years later we are once again worshiping in person and again anticipating Holy Week and Easter. And the St. Matthew Passion is back.

Once again, performances are a joint venture between Grace's Bach Cantata Vespers Ministry and Chicago Choral Artists (a group directed by Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello). Again there are two weekend performances: Saturday, March 25 at 6 p.m., and Sunday, March 26 at 4 p.m. And again, Bach's extraordinary music offers an opportunity not just to experience the drama of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, but also to reflect on what it means for you and for all.

A tenor soloist narrates the story, following Matthew's gospel, with other singers taking the parts of Jesus, Pontius Pilate, and Peter and the chorus singing the words of those who demand Jesus' crucifixion. There are solo arias with poetic, personal texts that address Jesus with words of love and devotion and express the heartfelt grief of believers. Bach's exquisitely harmonized settings of Passion chorales also comment on the story. You will recognize this music, especially the tune of "O Sacred Head Now Wounded," which appears five times in the Passion.

In the concert world, critics describe the St. Matthew Passion as an oratorio, a sacred story told in music. But performed in a church, as Bach originally presented it on Good Friday in 1727 and again in 1729, it is a devotional experience, a meditation on God's suffering love for us. The music requires some commitment — after a three-year pandemic hiatus, the choir is again spending endless hours in rehearsal. Performances will last approximately three and a half hours, including a 20-minute intermission.

We've waited a long time. Come and experience the music. It will be time well spent.

Gwen Gotsch

You can learn more about the St. Matthew Passion from performers and scholars in a 2014 podcast from NPR Classical. Search for "A Visitor's Guide to Bach's 'St. Matthew Passion'" to find it online.

ST. MATTHEW PASSION

March 25, 6 p.m. and March 26, 4 p.m.

Bach Cantata Vespers Chorus and Orchestra
in collaboration with Chicago Choral Artists

Michael D. Costello, director

Derek Chester, tenor (Evangelist)

Keven Keys, baritone (Jesus)

Maura Janton Cock, soprano

Sarah Ponder, mezzo-soprano

Ryan Townsend Strand, tenor

Douglas Anderson, baritone

Free admission ■ \$25 Suggested Donation ■ Childcare available

Reception during intermission sponsored by Women@Grace.



FINANCIAL UPDATE

Grace Lutheran Church General Fund

Church budgeted contributions

July 1, 2022 – January 11, 2023 \$ 1,022,000
(28 Sundays, \$36,500 per week)

Church actual contributions

July 1, 2022 – January 11, 2023 \$ 905,000
(Last year at this time: \$929,000)

Church giving is \$117,000 (11%) below budget, and \$24,000 (3%) ahead of last year. The General Fund deficit on January 11 was \$3,000 (\$84,000 last year through January 31). The deficit includes the January 15 payroll.

Directory picture day

As part of the family of Grace, we want your face in the family portrait! You can schedule a time to get your photo taken by professional photographers from ColorCraft at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/2023directorypicturesignup#/>

Photoshoots will be on June 3, 2023, 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. For questions, email Julie Hinz at jhind@graceriverforest.org



Appalachian Service Project Mission Trip- Summer 2023!

The Grace Youth will be participating in another Appalachian Service Project (ASP) mission trip the week of July 30 to August 5, 2023. As ASP describes it, "These are home repair mission trips that combine direct service with regional education, cultural immersion, and transformational experiences and are designed for high schoolers." The exact location of our trip is to be arranged, but it will be somewhere in the Appalachia region of the United States. Often Grace youth describe the ASP trip as one of the most formative and meaningful experiences during their faith formation. If you know a high schooler who would like to join us this summer or are an adult (anyone over 18) who is interested in going, please reach out to Pastor Troy: tmedlin@graceriverforest.org.

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, February 24, with the hope that it will arrive in your mailbox no later than March 1. Copies are also available at Grace.

Deadlines and submissions. The April issue of Grace Notes will be mailed on Friday, March 24. The deadline for copy is Wednesday, March 15. Send news to bklaus@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.

Grace VBS Mission Team Returns to Slovakia

This summer, a team of twenty-one members from Grace will once again journey to Martin, Slovakia, to teach Vacation Bible School at the Center for Christian Education (CCE).

Trip organizers are Children's Ministry Coordinator Julie Modrich and Dave and Erika Lyle. Julie says, "We're excited to be returning to Martin to teach VBS and share the Gospel with the people of Slovakia." This will be Grace's sixth mission trip to Slovakia since 2016 (trips planned for 2020 and 2021 were cancelled due to the pandemic).

Trip Details

The team will arrive in Vienna on Friday, July 7, and will be met by CCE's bus for the ride to Martin, a city in central Slovakia with a population of 55,000. They will stay in a traditional Slovak boutique hotel just steps from the CCE campus.

The week of VBS will include daily worship, dramas, videos, arts and crafts, games and more. Students enrolled in CCE's extended day care program will also enjoy some afternoon surprises presided over by members of the Grace team.

Evenings and weekends offer free time to explore this eminently walkable city, enjoy hearty Slovak cuisine in one of Martin's eateries, and savor the many flavors of Slovak ice cream. The week will be concluded with a program for VBS families and a CCE-hosted farewell party. Then, the team will return to Vienna for a brief "after-trip" before arriving home on July 18.

Slovak Students Visit Grace

Before the mission trip, Grace will welcome between two and four Slovak teens in June. Staying with Grace host families, the students will gain valuable experience helping to plan and conduct VBS at Grace (June 19-23) while also experiencing Lutheran worship in America, practicing their English, and enjoying some Chicago sights. Armed with this experience, Julie said, "the students will return to Slovakia with the Grace mission team to serve as translators and aides for CCE's VBS program."

Two Decades of Partnership

Grace launched its first Slovak mission trip in 2007, when Pastor Phyllis Kersten led twenty adults to Martin. Some taught a two-week course of English as a Foreign Language to residents, while others completed much needed repairs on one of CCE's landmark buildings.

The Center for Christian Education in Martin, Slovakia, is one of Grace Church's regular benevolences.

"This marks our seventeenth year of partnership with CCE. Year after year, it's exciting to see how God is at work in Martin, Slovakia," said Pastor Dave Lyle.



Photos of the Slovak Mission Trip 2022

Ways to support the Slovakia Mission Trip

- **Consider joining the team!** No experience needed, just a spirit of adventure and a desire to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with Slovak Christians. Space is still available. For details, contact Julie Modrich (jmodrich@graceriverforest.org; 708-366-6900 ext. 229).
- **Attend** the March 1 Lenten supper prepared by the mission team (a freewill offering will be collected).
- **Consider hosting a Slovak student** during June. Plan an outing or get together for a meal.
- **Donate** gently used household items, volunteer your time, and shop at the Grace Rummage Sale June 5-6 (see upcoming issues of Grace Notes for more details). Proceeds, in part, will benefit the Slovakia mission trip.
- **Write a check.** Indicate "Slovakia Mission Trip" in the memo line.

PERPETUA, FELICITY AND THEIR COMPANIONS, MARTYRS AT CARTHAGE

By Pastor Hans Dumpys

On March 7, the Church remembers Perpetua, Felicity and their companions, martyrs at Carthage, North Africa, now modern Tunisia. In 202 the emperor Septimus Severus forbade conversions to Christianity and harsh persecutions followed. Vibia Perpetua, an educated married noblewoman with an infant son, Felicity, a pregnant slave, and catechumens Revocatus, Saturninus, Secundulus and their catechist Saturus were all arrested. Philip Pfatteicher writes about them: "No saints are more uniformly honored in the early calendars and martyrologies than these African martyrs."

"The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity" is an important document for understanding early Christian martyrdom and providing insight into the young and vigorous African church.

Part of the "Passion" is said to have been written by Perpetua herself, part by her catechist, with an introduction and a conclusion by an eyewitness. It is a uniquely personal document filled with painfully intimate details of Perpetua's imprisonment as she is subject to hunger, fears, and as a nursing mother separated from her child, the pain of swollen breasts. We sense the struggle of a woman to claim her identity and vocation amid the competing claims of society, including the pleadings of her non-Christian father and the proconsul. There is no suggestion that Perpetua scorns motherhood or the bonds of family, but one senses that in Christ she has found the power and freedom to name herself and the courage to accept the consequences.

Perpetua does not relish the prospect of death. But in a series of prophetic visions she finds the conviction that her fate is ordained and that her brief suffering will lead to eternal reward. She is undeterred when at the trial she and her companions

receive the most terrifying sentence: to fight with wild beasts in the amphitheater. In another dream she perceives that she will be fighting "not with beasts, but against the devil: and I knew that mine was the victory."

From the eyewitnesses who completed Perpetua's narrative, we learn something about her companion and servant Felicity. Eight months pregnant at her imprisonment, Felicity was fearful that because of her condition she would be separated from her companions. After a night of ardent prayer, she went into labor and gave birth to a daughter, whom she was able to entrust to Christian friends. On the last day of life the prisoners celebrated a "love feast" attended by many local Christians. The next morning the prisoners went from the darkness of their prison into the glaring amphitheater, "as it were to heaven, cheerful and bright of countenance."

In a final poignant image the two young women, formerly mistress and servant, now sisters in Christ, turned to one another before the jeering crowd and exchanged a kiss, symbolic of peace and fulfillment. A fitting epitaph for Perpetua, Felicity, and their companions is the saying of the early church fathers: the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

In Carthage a basilica was erected over the tomb of the martyrs, the Basilica Maiorum, where an ancient inscription bearing the names of Perpetua and Felicitas has been found.

Pastor Hans Dumpys

Sources: Robert Ellsberg, "All Saints," Crossroad, 1997; Philip H. Pfatteicher, "New Book of Festivals and Commemorations," Fortress, 2008; Wikipedia, "Perpetua and Felicity."

Advanced care planning

By Parish Nurse Joanna Schubkegel

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.’ ” John 11: 25-26a.

I recently had the privilege of leading an adult education class on the topic of advanced care planning. The two-part class focused on planning related to both end-of-life health care and finances. It was a blessing to begin the End-of-life planning conversation at Grace and I hope to continue the conversation with many individuals and families during my ministry. It is a gift to your family and yourself to share your wishes, long before it is necessary.

The purpose of advanced care planning is to share, while still healthy, one's values, wishes and goals related to end of life care and death. Through conversations and discussions about your desires, your family and loved ones will feel better prepared to make medical decisions for you when you are no longer able to do so.

Advanced care planning comes in a variety of forms and documents. Advanced directives are written documents that communicate what a person wants or does not want should they become unable to communicate their wishes. A durable power of attorney is an advanced directive that appoints someone (an agent) to make decisions for a person if in the future he/she cannot make their own medical decisions.

A living will is an advanced directive that tells what medical treatment a person does or does not want if they are unable to make their wishes known. While documenting your wishes is important, it is equally important to explore what your goals and values are and what you want your end of life to look like.

These can be difficult and overwhelming conversations. But they can also be a blessing to all involved. Don't rush these conversations. Be patient and let the discussion unfold over time.

The pastoral care team has prepared a folder of resources that can help to facilitate both advanced care planning document completion and advanced care planning conversations. The folder also includes information related to funeral planning at Grace and includes a funeral information sheet. Please share your copy of completed funeral plans to be securely stored in my office. Alternatively, if you would like to continue the conversation with me or the pastors before making any decisions, keep in mind that pastoral care is always available

I find solace in the words our pastors share when they announce a death before a Sunday morning service:

“As always, we gather, not as those without hope, but as those who know the hope and promise of resurrection through our Lord, Jesus Christ.” Amen.

FELLOWSHIP

Yoga at Grace

Join Yoga with Ackli on Thursday evenings, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., in Fellowship Hall. Bring a yoga mat, a towel, and a yoga block, if you have one. Everyone is welcome!

Religion in Literature

The next Religion in Literature meeting will be March 17, 7:30 pm in the home of Bill and Karen Clapp, 5845 W. Ohio St., Chicago. Steve Peterson will lead a discussion of Lucas Hnath's *The Christians*, a play about a pastor who decides there is no such thing as hell.

Theology on Tap

Come for community and monthly conversations about faith and life. The next meeting is Friday, March 24. Email Pastor Troy (tmedlin@graceriverforest.org) for details.

Cornerstones

This group for seniors meets Wednesday mornings for fellowship at 9:30 a.m. and Bible study with the pastors at 10:00 a.m. in the Church Library. Contact earmstrong@graceriverforest.org for more information.

Finding Hope

The support group for people with chronic illness meets on the second Friday of the month at 10 a.m. The next meeting is March 10. Contact Judie McDonnell (judie.mcdonnell@att.net) for more information or if you need to arrange a ride.

Moms of Littles

Mothers of children age infants through teens meet in person on the first and third Thursdays of the month, 6:30 p.m. Contact Sabrina Maggio to be added to the email list or learn more about the group's updated meeting schedule. (sabrina.maggio713@gmail.com)

Moms of High School Teens+

This fellowship group fosters community among women whose children are growing up into adulthood. Contact Jessica Bullock to be added to the group email list. (jesbullock23@gmail.com)

Knitting Group

The knitting group meets on the third Tuesday of every month in the Church Library. The next meeting is on February 21, 1:00–2:30 p.m. Beginners are welcome! Contact Karen Eckstein (ecksteinkaren2@gmail.com) with questions.

Dads of Grace

Pastor Lyle and other dads gather for evenings of fellowship once a month. The next gathering is Monday, March 27. Email Pastor Lyle for more information (dlyle@graceriverforest.org).

Men of Grace

The Men of Grace group meets on the fourth Saturday of the month at 9 a.m., in the Youth Center. The next meeting is Saturday, March 25. Email Pastor Troy for more information (tmedlin@graceriverforest.org).

Volunteering at Grace

By Julie Hinz

At Grace, we are blessed with many opportunities for using our gifts, impacting God's mission here in this place and out into the world. Committees of volunteers work toward social justice, provide material needs to those outside our walls, organize our education opportunities, and teach our children about God. We have teams of people who work behind the scenes to get mailings out, make meals, write devotions, and make worship happen. There is no shortage of ways to reimagine our own skills and talents and how they might be used for service and worship. We encourage you to do just that; like the disciples, look at what you are already good at, what you love, where your strengths lie, and see how God might be calling you to serve here at Grace or in our larger community.

One of the easiest ways to be involved in Grace is to take part in the one thing we consistently do together: worship. Every Sunday morning God's beloved children gather at Grace around Word and Sacrament. You are here, surrounded by your church family who knows and loves you. What better time and place to serve!

If we peek behind the "worship curtain," we see all the volunteers who work to make our amazing worship happen. Each Sunday, greeters welcome people into our building and ushers tend the sanctuary doors where they distribute bulletins, gather our offerings, managing the flow of people to the altar during communion, and assisting during any issues that may arise. Members of the altar guild prepare the altar and the elements for our communion meal, and our Livestream Team assures that our services are effectively heard and seen across the country.

When worship begins you encounter a Deacon, an assisting minister, and two lectors. Gift Bearers, carrying the elements forward to be consecrated and to assist with communion. In total, an ideal complement on a Sunday morning is 15 people per service and, once Sunday morning is done, those volunteers will have put in a combined total of 40 hours of time. Each of them bringing their gifts to bear on our worship.

There is always room for you to explore your gifts with us, especially on Sunday mornings when we share our time together in worship. As your Discipleship and Fellowship Coordinator, it is my joy to explore your gifts with you and help you find new ways to use them here at Grace. You might find that assisting with worship impacts the people you serve and your own life in ways you may never have anticipated.

Volunteer spotlight: Ellie Schnack

Over the years, Grace has been gifted with incredible people who spend their time and talent in ministry and service both at Grace and in the larger community. Why do these people do what they do? What drew them into their roles and why do they continue? Our Volunteer Spotlight will introduce us to some of these amazing volunteers and possibly give us a glimpse into the benefits they find in service and ministry.

The face of Ellie Schnack is very familiar to many at Grace. She and her husband Randy have been members since 1978. In fact, they worshipped here even before joining the Grace family.

Ellie's was raised in a home where responding to the needs of others was a priority. Coming to Grace she looked for those same opportunities.

Most of Ellie's volunteering has centered around kids and teaching. For over 25 years she served as the secretary or treasurer of Norther Illinois District – Department of Early Childhood and for several years on the planning committee for Concordia's National Early Childhood Conference. She has also served on the board at Oak- Leyden Developmental Services

She began serving at Grace in the nursery, as a lector, where she presented the children's message on Sunday mornings. She has led confirmation and been a confirmation mentor. Her role as a confirmation mentor is one she treasures and is thrilled to continue to play. Ellie has taught VBS both here and in Martin Slovakia and helps with the hours of organizing and packing of the materials taken to Martin when our teams travel each summer.

Ellie has also served on committees, on the Altar Guild, and with Hope for Grieving Children but she does have some favorites roles. Some of her favorites are being a Stephen Minister, working the Rummage Sale, and especially doing Social Ministry work and working at Harmony Community Church in Lawndale. Both reflect a message she believes in deeply; "Love and serve like Christ."

The benefits Ellie has discovered through her volunteer work are great and sometimes indescribable. Meeting like-minded people who want to serve is energizing.

"I leave an activity feeling privileged to have worked alongside great people who share a desire/want/need to help share gifts/time/resource. So many of these meetings have led to very dear friendships", said Ellie.

"My greatest reward in life has been the honor and privilege of being entrusted to care for the Grace school's little ones for 31 years. I cherish every minute I was able to teach the young ones. In volunteering capacities, I worked with many of my school parents. All this has assured me that Grace is *my* church. I feel protected, safe and secure within my family of Grace."

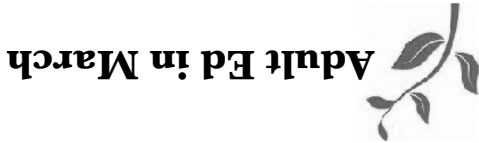
Thank you, Ellie, for your years of service to Grace and to God's Kingdom here on earth.



Ellie Schnack volunteering with Grace children

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March 5 and 12: spring break

March 19: David Pope, President of
the Oak Park Residence Corporation
speaks about racial justice in
affordable housing in Oak Park
(tentative)

March 26: Brie Loskota, Director at
Martin Marty Center at the
University of Chicago, leads the
session called "Religious pluralism."