

June 2023

Grace Notes



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH • 7300 W DIVISION • RIVER FOREST IL 60305 • 708-386-6900 • WWW.GRACERIVERFOREST.ORG

Come on, Holy Spirit!

By Pastor Dave Lyle



The onset of summer brings with it a rush of memories. Summertime is playing catch on a lush green lawn. Summertime is late nights on the back deck, delighting in the late-setting sun. Summertime is ice cream and books and beaches and barbecues. And maybe more than anything, at least for me, summertime is gathering around a campfire.

My memories are filled with campfire sing-a-longs, and the first song that comes to mind when I light a fire for my family is the Bible camp classic, “Pass It On.”

Maybe you know it, or at least its opening line: *It only takes a spark to get a fire going.* I’m pretty sure my fingers still remember the chords to this song by Kurt Kaiser, a Chicago-born songwriter. I find myself humming the tune as I coax flame out of kindling and matches, slowly adding sticks and split firewood until the spark is, well, a fire.

In a way, it’s a Pentecost song. Prior to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Christian community had grown to 120 persons. Not much of a movement, but enough to

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provide kindling when the spark erupted. And erupt it did! “Suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them” (Acts 2:2-3). By the end of the once-timid Peter’s fiery sermon, another 3,000 people had committed their lives to the Way.

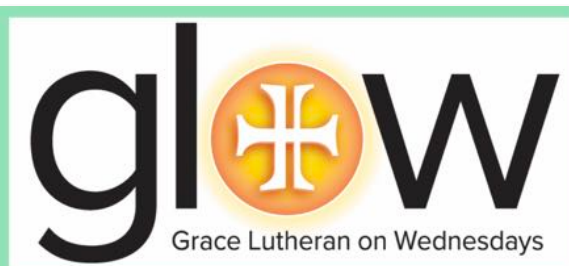
The fire of faith was burning brightly, bearing witness to Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. It has been said that perhaps Luke left the Book of Acts open-ended on purpose. After all, do we not still live in the same era as Peter, Paul, and all the rest? We, too, have received the Holy Spirit. We, too, wait for Christ to return in glory. We have the same calling placed upon our lives through the gift of baptism, to proclaim the praise of God and bear God’s creative and redeeming Word to all the world.

Summertime often has a slower pace to it, which makes it a great time to nurture and share the flames of our faith. I know that the worship life at Grace will be rich as you gather at the single service at 10:00 a.m. GLOW and Vacation Bible School provide great opportunities to deepen our faith. Consider joining one of our many fellowship groups, or just lingering after Sunday worship. As for me, I am looking forward to having my faith renewed this summer during my sabbatical, and I look forward to rejoining you at the end of summer.

As we are apart this summer, my prayer is that the Holy Spirit will use these months to renew and deepen commitment to the ministry entrusted to us by the risen Christ. I know that the Holy Spirit will continue to enlighten and enliven Grace Lutheran Church and School. May God bless us as we continue to live out the story of Acts, “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:31).

Sunday schedule listening session

A second listening session about Grace’s Sunday schedule will be held on Sunday, June 4, at 8:30 a.m. in the Seminar Room. All are welcome to join and provide input on this important decision. Feedback and comments may be submitted to the Elders via email at elders@graceriverforest.org.



Come GLOW with us this summer

By Pastor Troy

GLOW is always one of the highlights of summer at Grace. We gather on the Bonnie Brae front lawn for supper, worship, and conversation. It is a joy to see the spirit of community fostered each week as older folks and kids, families and young adults come together.

Supper is simple, worship is informal, and conversations are nourishing for all as we explore faith with one another.

I personally am always inspired by the ways the youngest among us share their wisdom and insights during our reflection time.

We end our time with Holy Communion. Receiving Christ himself, we are sent back out into the world to shine as lights. All are invited, but we especially welcome families with children. During worship we will have ways for kids to participate. We will even have interactive activities for kids of all ages to work on throughout the evening.

This year we gather on June 14, 21, 28 and July 12, 19, and 26 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. Each Wednesday we will be exploring the theme of Renewal: growing in faith together. I’ll see you on the lawn this summer. Come, bring a friend, and be fed in body and spirit. I look forward to these Wednesdays all year long. See you at GLOW.

June 14, 21 and 28

July 12, 19, and 26

from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

Sunday worship



Sunday, June 4 **The Holy Trinity**

A Holy Communion service at 10:00 a.m.
Genesis 1:1 - 2:4, Psalm 8, 2 Corinthians
13:11-13,
Matthew 28:16-20

Sunday, June 11 **Second Sunday after Pentecost**

A Holy Communion service at 10:00 a.m.
Hosea 5:15-6:6, Psalm 50:7-15, Romans 4:13-25,
Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

Sunday, June 18 **Third Sunday after Pentecost**

A Holy Communion service at 10:00 a.m.
Exodus 19:2-8, Psalm 100, Romans 5:1-8,
Matthew 9:35-10:8

Sunday, June 25 **Fourth Sunday after Pentecost**

A Holy Communion service at 10:00 a.m.
Jeremiah 20:7-3, Psalm 69:7-10, 16:18, Romans
6:1-11, Matthew 10:24-39

Sunday, July 2 **Fifth Sunday after Pentecost**

A Holy Communion service at 10:00 a.m.
Jeremiah 28:5-9, Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18, Romans
6:12-23, Matthew 10:40-42

Summer Travel Without Leaving Home

From the Church Library Committee

The church library atrium display case will soon hold a collection of books covering the topic of “travel” – local sites to visit, global excursions, road trips, spiritual journeys, travel with family, solo adventures — you get the idea.

Some of the books recount stories of the travel experiences of others. A new addition to our collection is filled with photographs from Oberammergau. Revisit a trip from your past or plan one in the future.

People who read experience new locations and adventures all the time. Summer vacation reading is particularly well-suited for this escape. Flexible schedules and additional downtime provide an opportunity to reach for that book you have heard people talking about.

If you are looking for suggestions, check out the bibliography provided in the display case and in the library. Or browse the shelves. You will find biographies

of people of faith, contemporary social justice leaders and multiple non-fiction resource books. Learn to knit or plant a garden or cook a new recipe.

Be sure to check out the books you find before you take them home.

The change to one service on summer Sundays allows an extra minute or two on those busy mornings. The library will be open for self-checkout and even a cup of coffee. It's a cozy place to catch your breath.



Benevolence Committee news

by Scott Street

This information is provided by the Benevolence Committee to give you a better understanding of our ministry partners. We support these organizations with dedicated benevolence dollars due to your faithful stewardship. We also pray for them throughout the year.

These are the organizations for whom we will pray during the services in June:

NEW MOMS

New Moms

We serve approximately 350 families annually, strengthening families by partnering with young moms as they progress toward housing stability, economic mobility, and family well-being. We aim to be the last provider families will need—meeting their every need, so they can stabilize and work toward lifelong independence.

newmoms.org



Norwood (Bethesda)

Grace Lutheran's generosity allowed Bethesda to offer traditional pastoral programs including weekly bible study, Sunday worship services, one-on-one personal visits with Bethesda's senior residents and our very popular Hymn Sing program, a very enjoyable highlight for the residents.

www.reshapingaging.org



RefugeeOne

Grace Lutheran's grant is supporting the Refugee Assistance Fund. This fund allows us to provide critical refugee support, whether it's improving their quality of life through job upgrades or ensuring they can pay their rent during times of crisis. In cases of rental assistance, we directly pay landlords 1 month's rent, securing client housing while we help with other emergency needs. This fund allows us to continue walking alongside and supporting these resilient people as they build their lives here in Chicago.

www.refugeeone.org



Pangea

Grace Lutheran's benevolence allowed us to train 34 teachers through our Literacy Instruction Training (LIT) program. Teachers received a combination of one-on-one and group instruction and classroom coaching focused on improving their technique for teaching kids how to read. Over the course of the 8-week program we saw a 47% increase in students' rate of literacy skill development.

www.pangeaeducation.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, May 26, with the hope that it will arrive in your mailbox no later than June 2. Copies are also available at Grace.

Deadlines and submissions. The July/August issue of Grace Notes will be mailed on June 30. The deadline for copy is June 16. 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.

Asylum seekers and me

by Linda Street, Refugee Ministry Team Leader

A few weeks ago, while working at the Harmony Food Pantry in North Lawndale, I came face to face with a Venezuelan family. I had previously only seen such families on the nightly news coming in busloads from Texas. A young husband, his wife and their charming 2-year-old daughter all smiled shyly and wondered if we could help them.

Volunteers at the pantry did all we could for them but frankly, heavy bags of canned goods and food needing a stove to cook were not that helpful. They were living on the street outside the local police station and had only the clothes on their backs. We had to run to the store to buy things they really needed: blankets, pillows, underwear, sweatshirts, and a warm fast food chicken dinner. We were stunned at the level of our unpreparedness.

Through the Refugee Committee, the three families we currently co-sponsor through RefugeeOne are all making their way. We stay in touch, occasionally visit and purchase things they need.

Our budget line is healthy enough to take on another challenge.

While still staying ready to support a new RefugeeOne family, we will be embarking on a side-trip to assist Chicago's desperate asylum-seekers.

Working with a team of volunteers from various churches who serve at the Harmony pantry, we will set up a process to provide backpacks of necessities. Using a list provided by other asylum-seekers, we will supply items they say they need.

The best way for you to help in this effort is to make a contribution to the Refugee Ministry at Grace. All donations coming in for the next few months will be earmarked for asylum-seeker support. When a new RefugeeOne family comes our way, we will create another visiting team and apartment set-up crew.

Thank you for your generous and continued support.

Youth Ministry

Rummage Sale



SALE DATES

Friday, June 9 8am–5pm &
Saturday, June 10 9am–1pm

DONATION DROP-OFF DATES

Please bring your donations to the gym by Wednesday, June 7.

Friday, June 2, 9am–7pm
Saturday, June 3, 9am–3pm
Sunday, June 4, 8am–10am
Monday–Wednesday, June 5–7 9am–7pm

GraceLinks

The Grace Church website now keeps all church-related links and signups on the same list: GraceLinks. The section is located at the top menu on the home page (the black banner.) It is designed to simplify Grace communications. You will find links for items in this newsletter, announcements and other media. Feel free to suggest updates or changes as needed — we appreciate your help keeping the list up-to-date. Send suggestions to bklaus@graceriverforest.org.

Grace School updates

By Ana Garcia and Principal Koehne

Meet the Armstrong family

This month, we have another new family to highlight for you. The Armstrong family had their seventh grader transfer into Grace mid-year and have loved their experience at Grace so far. We even asked them a few questions:

Why did you choose Grace Lutheran School for your child?

Grace Lutheran was recommended to us by a friend and a neighbor. We were looking for a community for Maxwell to thrive academically and socially. Grace has not disappointed us! Grace has embraced Maxwell into the school community, and he is doing well.

What did you love the most about this school year?

The basketball season was super fun and engaging to watch. The coach was excellent with the team. It was great to watch the team grow together and support each other throughout the season.

What would you tell another parent who may be considering enrolling their child at Grace?

Absolutely! We would recommend Grace Lutheran to any family in need of a small, close-knit community with outstanding academic support.



The Armstrong family, photo from personal collection.

GRACE LUTHERAN SCHOOL

7300 Division Street in River Forest
708-366-6900



GRACE
LUTHERAN
CHURCH
& SCHOOL

FAITH



ACADEMICS



CHARACTER

Early Childhood, ages 3 to 5

- Full-day kindergarten
- Half-day and full-day options for ages 3 to 4

Elementary & Junior High, Grades 1 to 8

- Strong academic curriculum
- Individualized attention
- Music, art, and sports teams
- Before and after-school care available

Fine Arts Festival

Grace Lutheran School hosted the Fine Arts Festival for the first time on Friday, April 28. It was a big and exciting undertaking. Approximately two-hundred students from eleven Lutheran Schools around the area participated.

Throughout the day, students performed as soloists and in small ensembles in front of a judge. They were given a score and received a blue, red, or white ribbon according to their score. Four choirs sang, and three handbell choirs from different schools played. Each received feedback from a judge and received ribbons according to their score. Mass ensembles (Handbells, Band, Choir, and Orchestra) rehearsed together and prepared for a concert in the evening at Concordia University.

There were four soloists chosen to play at the evening concert. In addition, there were thirty-five art entries that were judged. Three of our eighth grade students, Lu, Greta, and Vera, received first, second, and third place ribbons for their art pieces, respectively.



Respectively, Grace's Handbell choir and orchestra performing at the Fine Arts Festival, April 28, 2023.



Students with Keary Bramwell at the Reading Olympics, May 2023.



Reading Olympics, May 2023.

Reading Olympics

Students in grade 5 Aryelis, Mae, and Andreea, represented Grace School at the local Reading Olympics Competition. There were 12 schools from Oak Park and River Forest competing. Each school sends one team of three fifth-grade students who have already won their school's competition.

The teams each read 9 books and had to answer questions about the books. They got one point for identifying the correct book and another point for naming the author. There were 2 rounds of competition with the top half of the teams advancing to the second round.

It was a very close competition with the top 4 teams all being within 2 points of each other. Grace tied for second place and was only 1 point behind the winning team. Our team only got 5 questions wrong in the entire competition! Way to go, girls!

Eighth Grade Rollercoasters

It's that time of year again. Roller coaster time! Every year in science, eighth grade students get to design their own rollercoasters. Once the design is complete, they have the challenge to build it.

The proud students brought their designs to school where the other grade levels took turns visiting their roller coaster displays and trying them out while the eighth grade students stood by their coasters to answer any questions that were asked.



Students displaying their rollercoaster creations. May, 2023.

Teacher Appreciation Week

Teacher Appreciation Week at Grace Lutheran School was May 8 to 12. Each day, our wonderful Grace Parent Organization planned something special to remind our teachers how much we need and love them. Starting on Monday, we proudly displayed our "We love our teachers" sign on the front lawn. Tuesday, each teacher received a beautiful bouquet of flowers. Wednesday and Thursday there were treats made by Grace's parents available for teachers to snack on. On Friday it all culminated in a wonderful breakfast and teacher gifts delivered to their classrooms. Thank you to the GPO for all your loving work and thank you to all our teachers for all the energy, love, care, and hard work that you put into each Grace student.



Teacher Appreciation Week flowers.

Grace Lutheran School wishes all students, parents and teachers a wonderful summer!

Updates and opportunities

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Grace Lutheran Church General Fund

Church budgeted contributions

July 1, 2022 – May 23, 2023 \$1,716,000
(47 Sundays, \$36,500 per week)

Church actual contributions

July 1, 2022 – May 23, 2023 \$1,415,000
(Last year at this time: \$1,496,000 through May 23)

Church giving is \$301,000 (18%) below budget, and \$81,000 (5%) behind last year. The General Fund deficit on May 23 was \$96,000 (\$121,000 last year through May 31). The deficit includes the May 31 payroll.

Summer Bible Study

Join us for Sunday morning Bible study beginning Sunday, June 11, at 9:00 a.m. in the conference room. We will spend June through August exploring the text titled "The Righteous Reign of God." We will examine the world of our faith forebearers and their testimony to the wonder and power of God. In examining the biblical stories, we can begin to see the nuanced and faith-inspiring ways of God's work in our lives.



There is a limited number of participant books available at the front desk. If you would like to join us, please feel free to take one. The study will be led by Scott and Linda Street; and Julie Hinz.

Interested in joining a choir?

There is a variety of opportunities for you to praise God, use your gifts, and lead the Church's song.

Want to know more?

Talk to a Choir Member,
Rev. Michael Costello, or Ms. Johanna Johnson
(mcostello@graceriverforest.org or jojohnson@graceriverforest.org)

WELCOME TO A TASTE OF GRACE



During the summer months, coffee and treats after service are a staple of Grace — and you can help keep it going. All are welcome to host a Taste of Grace coffee hour. Find the signup link at [Graceriverforest.org>GraceLinks](https://graceriverforest.org/GraceLinks).

Volunteer Spotlight

By Julie Hinz



The Swansons

It was 1974 and a young man found himself drawn to Grace Lutheran by the music, the liturgical worship, and the people he encountered. It was a church for families. He joined Grace. About four years later a young mother moved from the city and, looking for a Lutheran School for her preschool daughter and a church home, she joined Grace.

Al & Irmgard met and were married at Grace; Irmgard's daughter graduated from Grace School, and their daughters were confirmed at Grace. The couple has served Grace for more than 40 years. What makes this this month's volunteer spotlight is their differences and yet their dedication to the same goal.

Al comes from a background in broadcast news with some skills in TV directing and production. His second career in law provided the additional research and analytical skills he uses in serving Grace. It is not surprising to find him working to bring our Sunday morning livestreams to life, making sure those outside our walls experience our worship as clearly and beautifully as we do from the pew. Al still serves as a lector, a Deacon and gift bearer on Sundays.

“As diverse as their interests and skills are, and as different as they are as people, their commitment to living into their faith is what connects them so deeply.”

He has served on several committees and boards over the years, including chair of the Elders, Trustees, and Endowment Fund. He has served on a call committee, budget, and finance committees, and twice on governance-related matters.

First teaching in various Lutheran schools in Chicago and New Jersey and later teaching in public schools in the Chicago suburbs, Irmgard was drawn to Grace by its school. But it is her love of the people of Grace -- specifically, the music -- that drew her in. She has sung in the Grace choir for many years in church and on tours to Europe. She is the choir librarian, serves as an assisting minister, and helps with Grace Care meals. She has chaired the worship committee and is always willing to do what she is able to further Grace's mission in service to the Gospel.

The Swansons continue to serve in that sacred space that first connected them, reading scripture from the lectern. As diverse as their interests and skills are, and as different as they are as people, their commitment to living into their

faith is what connects them so deeply. Al appreciates how his many roles allow him to experience worship and the life of the church differently and opens him up to interpret the experience from different perspectives. Irmgard enjoys being with people,

and finds joy singing, serving, and using her gifts to serve in various areas of ministry. She continues to find ways to contribute to the life and worship of Grace.

Both Al and Irmgard expressed that serving at church brings purpose to their lives and is a most gratifying way to spend their energies. They have made many friends and created family in this community through their work here.

The Swansons have found something beautiful at Grace: a shared life of service that allows both to flourish in their own ways while furthering the same goal - being the people of God in the world. They are just one example of many Grace couples that have found their relationships and their faith lives strengthened through serving God's people through the work we do at Grace.

FELLOWSHIP

Grace Notes mailing crew

This newsletter crew will be at work again on Thursday, June 29, at 9:30 a.m. in the church library. Contact Marlene Hallman (708-562-5476) or just come!

Cornerstones

Bible study for seniors on Wednesdays. Join us in the church library for fellowship at 9:30 a.m. and Bible study at 10:00 a.m. The annual Cornerstones picnic is on June 7. Contact Esther Armstrong at earmstrong@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. at Grace on the first and third Thursdays of the month for community and support. Contact Sabrina Maggio (sabrina.maggio713@gmail.com) for updates.

Theology on Tap

Community and monthly conversations about faith and life. This group will gather again in September, after summer break. Contact Pastor Troy for more information or to be added to the email list. (tmedlin@graceriverforest.org)

Religion in Literature

The Religion in Literature group is on Summer break. The next meeting is on September 15. We will discuss "Crime and Punishment," by Dostoevsky. Location and details are pending. For more information and to be added to the email list, please contact jill.baumgaertner@wheaton.edu.

Dads of Grace

This group of Grace dads meets monthly for fellowship and conversation. Email Justin Hartung (jhartung@gmail.com) for updates.

Knitting Group

The knitting (and crocheting) group meets on the third Tuesday of each month in the church library. The next meeting is June 20, 1:00 - 2:20 p.m. Beginners are welcome! Contact Karen Eckstein (ecksteinkaren2@gmail.com) with questions.

Retired Leaders

This group of retired Christian men and women in former leadership positions in the church or community meets Tuesday, June 13, 10:00 a.m. in the church library and on Zoom. For more information, contact Gwen Gotsch at (gwengotsch@gmail.com).

Finding Hope

This group for people with chronic illness meets on the second Friday of each month at 10:00 a.m. The next meeting is on June 9. Contact Judie McDonnell for more information (judie.mcdonnell@att.net)

Moms of Teens and Young Adults

The new fellowship group Moms of High School Teens and Young Adults fosters community among women whose children are growing up into adulthood. Contact Jessica Bullock (jsbullock23@gmail.com) to be added to the group's email list.

Men of Grace

This group of men meets at Grace on Saturday, June 24, at 9:00 a.m. Email Pastor Troy for more information (tmedlin@graceriverforest.org).

BUILDING HOURS

In general, summer building hours are 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Open evenings for scheduled meetings and activities. Sundays, 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and for scheduled activities in the afternoon and evening.

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.

PASTOR'S EMERGENCY PHONE

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

PRAYERS

We celebrate with **Arlo Nicholas Monahan**, son of Michelle and Michael Monahan, who got baptized on May 7; **Joe Oliver Marshall**, son of Lisa and Brian Mitchell, baptized on May 7; and **Jack Charles Gnilka**, son of John and Erica Gnilka, grandson of Leanne and Jeff Cribbs, baptized on May 21.

We welcome **David, Benz, Grant** and **Collin Kuipers**, as well as **Deb Stonich** as new Grace members.

We pray for those who mourn the deaths of **Carole Walther**, who passed on April 21, **Audrey Moriarty**, who passed on May 10, and **Carol Albright**, who passed on May 20.

Prayer list: the weekly prayer list can be found in the worship bulletin on Sundays. Contact Esther Armstrong (earmstrong@graceriverforest.org) to be included on the published prayer list.

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LUTHERAN CHURCH
& SCHOOL
7300 Division St.
River Forest, IL 60305



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U. S. Postage
PAID
Oak Park, IL
Permit No 28