

For God So Loved the World

By Pastor Lyle

We are in the long middle of Lent. The ashes have faded, at least physically, from our foreheads. Yet the joyous cries of Easter surprise remain far off. Here, in the middle, we are reminded with great clarity of what Lent is all about. On the Fourth Sunday in Lent, we are confronted with the verse that is more well known, perhaps, than any other in the Bible. In his nighttime conversation with Nicodemus (so different from the Samaritan woman at the well in the next chapter), Jesus speaks plainly: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." And, for good measure: "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

For God so loved. That little word with which John 3:16 begins is so important. For God so loved the world. Why did God give the Son? Because God had to do so? Because of our sin? Because God was in some way bound to act? No. God gives the only Son because of God's love. God's love, the love which constitutes the triune relationships, is the reason for everything God does. God's love, which is always freely given (how else can love be given?) is why Jesus takes on our lot and our life, why he suffers and dies. The reason, the foundation, lies not in what is wrong with us, but in what is good with God.

Painting: Briton Rivière, The Temptation in the Wilderness, 1898



Because God so loves, God gives. God gives Jesus, and from Jesus we receive the gifts of forgiveness and life, both abundant and eternal. Perhaps during Lent, you have been giving, too. Giving up is something many of us do during this time of year, and rightly so. Lent is a good time to declutter the spiritual messes of our lives and focus on Christ who is our

and tocus on Christ who is our center. But we need not stop there. If we give some things up, we can better give other things: Our time, talent, and treasure, all signs of God's gracious love.

"As we continue our march through this somber time of penitential purple, let us remember our ground and goal, the love of God in Christ."

As Lent moves on, we continue to give. We seek ways to express God's love to those around us.

For the sake of God's love, we support people who arrive in our midst as refugees and migrants. For the sake of God's love, we support the work of Grace School, where children grow in so many ways. For the sake of God's love, we feed those in need, from the homebound of our community to the hungry in North Lawndale. For the sake of God's love, we give ourselves to each other, discovering a community of love that extends to this whole creation. forward this Sunday and hold out your empty hand, you'll hear that word again: The body of Christ, given for you. Being so fed and filled, may you be sustained until we break the fast and erupt in Easter acclamation. By this, and for the sake of God's love, is the whole creation saved.



As we continue our march through this somber time of

the love of God in Christ. We focus on the shadows of

our sin and mortality, but only so that the light of Christ

may shine forth all the brighter. After all, when you come

penitential purple, let us remember our ground and goal,

Refugee Ministry Update: Many Thanks! By Linda Street

Through the generosity of this fellowship at Grace we have been able to support multiple refugee/migrant populations. There are bins in the atrium that have been continuously refilled with items needed for Oak Park migrants as well as those we meet at Harmony Church and food pantry in Chicago. The backpack program at Harmony has provided hundreds of migrant families with clothing, hygiene items, and a sturdy backpack to serve as their mobile "home" – as they are frequently relocated. Additionally, we have given winter coats, hats, gloves, and scarves (donated by you) to anyone who comes through the pantry in need. And finally, we are working with a new (fourth) refugee family through our partnership with RefugeeOne. A mother, father, two young boys, and a little girl who will be treated at Shriners Hospital.We are already falling in love with them.

And a personal reflection: I feel like I am one of the disciples walking around at the Feeding of the 5,000. I have been given a basket with a few fish and some bread. As I look at the huge crowd, I feel like this is an impossible task. But each time I reach into the basket there is enough to go around. Unexpected partnerships with other churches, generous donations from friends of Grace, a check in the mail from a man in Connecticut... plus the continuous support of this faith community. We are watching the Holy Spirit work in "real time," truly!

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 22, with the hope that it will arrive in your mailbox no later than February 29. Copies are also available at Grace.

Deadlines and submissions. The April issue of Grace Notes will be mailed on March 22. The deadline for copy is Wednesday, March 13. 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.

Worship in March

Lent

March 3, The Third Sunday in Lent

Service of Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m. Exodus 20:1-7, Psalm 19, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, John 2:13-22

March 10, The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Service of Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m. Numbers 21:4-9, Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22, Ephesians 2:1-10, John 3:14-21

March 17, The Fifth Sunday in Lent

Service of Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m. Jeremiah 31:31-34, Psalm 51:1-12, Hebrews 5:5-10, John 12:20-33

Holy Week & Easter

March 24: Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion

Service of Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m. Isaiah 50:4-9, Psalm 31:9-16, Philemon 2:5-11, Mark 14:1-15:47

March 28: Maundy Thursday

Services of Holy Communion at 8:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Exodus 12:1-14, Psalm 116: 1-2 &12-19, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-17 & 31-35

March 29: Good Friday

Journey to the Cross at 8:30 a.m., Adoration of the Cross at 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

March 30: Easter Vigil - The Resurrection of Our Lord

Service of Holy Communion at 7:00 p.m. Romans 6:3-11, John 20:1-18

March 31: Easter - The Resurrection of Our Lord

Two festival services of Holy Communion at 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Acts 10:34-43 Psalm 118:1-2 & 14-24, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Mark 16:1-8

Please note that we will worship together at two different service times on Easter morning. The 10:00 a.m. schedule will resume the following Sunday.



March 24 Himmelskönig, sei willkommen, BWV 182 King of Heaven, welcome

3:00 p.m. Cantata Preview Lecture Mark Peters, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights

3:45 p.m. Organ Prelude Steven Wente, Concordia University Chicago

4:00 p.m. Bach Cantata Vespers Jerome Burce, Roaming Shores, Ohio, homilist

Randall Thompson: Pueri Hebræorum

Bach Cantata Vespers Chorus and Orchestra Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello, conducting Amanda Koopman, mezzo soprano Ryan Townsend Strand, tenor Douglas Anderson, baritone

Grace Youth at Feed My Starving Children Saturday, April 13

We are teaming up with Good Shepherd and United Lutheran Church to explore the possibility of gathering periodically as an OPRF Lutheran Youth Group – and our first outing is on Saturday, April 13 to Feed My Starving Children. We are also considering the possibility of going to an arcade afterwards.

Contact Pastor Troy to RSVP (tmedlin@graceriverforest.org).

Discipleship: Friendship and Fellowship

and with all God's people is

one of our greatest gifts."

By Julie Hinz



It's been some time since we talked about how we mark ourselves as Disciples of Christ and how we can work toward better discipleship. As we refocus, I want you to think about the people with whom you surround yourself. Family, work

friends, college friends, and church friends, are all important parts of our lives.

Whether you are an introvert or an extrovert, whether you have a large group of friends, a small group, or prefer dogs over people, it can become lonely and draining when you

live without the fellowship of others. This also affects your discipleship. No matter what type of personality you have, when you have no connection to other believers, life can become very lonely, and your faith life can easily falter.

Our life as a congregation thrives because we have these interrelationships. We practice our faith together in this place and in our homes in a variety of ways that bring us closer to God. From willingly and lovingly caring for others through our Stephen Ministry program to grilling at the picnic; from obtaining roofing quotes to teaching VBS here and in Slovakia, you are building Christian friendships that nurture and support your faith.

you to think believed his career demanded a "nose-to-the-grindstone" approach. Now, in his later years, he recognized that not making time for friendship and personal fellowship was a flawed approach to ministry.
"Being in relationship with God

Today I urge you to consider the people in your life with whom you could talk about matters of faith. I then urge you to have a conversation. It gets easier the more you do it, and

both you and that other person will benefit from sharing your faith stories and your questions. Being in relationship with God and with all God's people is one of our greatest gifts. Explore those friendships and take time to build them by opening up the topic of faith as a bond that helps keep your faith alive and thriving. Discipleship requires others.

These faith-filled relationships strengthen us as we walk in discipleship. They also strengthen the other

people with whom we journey. I vividly recall the

many years when my father, who is a pastor,



Voice Classes at Grace

Karen Brunssen, Grace member, co-chair of the Department of Music Performance at Northwestern University, and author of The Evolving Singing Voice: Changes Across the Lifespan (Plural Publishing, 2018), will offer voice masterclasses in the Grace Music Room following worship on Sundays, March 3 and April 7. These masterclasses, about one hour in length, are an extension of Grace's ministry of music and will emphasize keys to vocal health and development. Grace members and choristers are encouraged to attend and participate. Masterclasses are free and open to the public. For more information please contact Grace's Cantor, Michael D. Costello, at mcostello@graceriverforest.org.



Pictured: Karen Brunssen.

New Books in the Church Library

By Linda Street

For those of us of a certain age, with years of liturgical experience under our belts, the season of Lent is the time when we focus on prayer, Bible study and self-reflection in preparation for Easter. But for those new to Lutheran traditions Lent is a totally foreign concept. So, with that in mind, the library recommends a new book, *Lent: The Liturgical Home*, by Ashley Tumlin Wallace. The author introduces the season of Lent, shares ways to observe it in your home, explains the meaning behind some of our Lenten traditions and offers family devotions. She even adds traditional Lenten recipes from around the world. This book is full of meaningful ways to "embrace the grace that is so freely offered to us in Christ," as she puts it.

Explaining the Lenten season to children is also sometimes a challenge. So, two new children's books have been added. Twas the Season of Lent by Glenys Nellist is a 40-day devotion and story book. Written in poetry and prose, this book focuses on events in Jesus' life leading up to His death and resurrection. Prayer prompts encourage children to follow Jesus's example and do what God calls them to. Illustrations by Elena Selivanova bring the stories to life and offer a perfect way for adults to share the powerful meaning of Lent with young ones they love.

Another new children's book shares several life lessons as we view the passion story through the eyes of a young donkey. The Donkey Who Carried a King, by Dr. R. C. Sproul speaks directly to the experiences of young listeners as we learn that the king was actually a suffering servant. The moral of this story is that "Jesus was willing to leave the glories of heaven to suffer and die in this world on our behalf, so we should serve Him with all our hearts."

All of these new books are on display in the Atrium case. If you would like to check them out, please ask at the front desk and someone will open the glass for you.



As always, you can find a complete monthly list of the church library's book recommendations and arrivals on graceriverforest.org>Grace Links.

The Fruit of Your Benevolence By Brendha Adams and Grace Koch Muchahary



During Women's Month, I express gratitude to those who faithfully support programs that empower and uplift women globally, particularly the International Women Leaders (IWL) initiative, which is sustained yearly by communities including Grace Lutheran Church. As an IWL scholar from the class of 2022, I am grateful to share with you a small window into the life of one of my fellow IWL graduates. Grace Koch Muchahary is an Augsburg University graduate with a BA in Sociology. She has used the skills she developed throughout the program to positively influence several children in her homeland.

Hello, I'm Grace Koch Muchahary, and I'm originally from Assam, India. I am a scholar from the 2022 class of the ELCA's IWL program, with a major in Sociology. I used to pray as a child, "One day, I want to study abroad." I became the person I am now because of the IWL program, which allowed me to fully experience life, connect with my inner thoughts, and identify my basic beliefs and core values. IWL has grown to be a significant part of my identity and my life journey as a woman leader in my hometown and beyond. Participatina in the IWL scholarship provided me with numerous opportunities for personal development and dialogue around gender justice and equality in my own community. I want to become a channel of blessing and a good example to our younger generations and IWL helped me a lot to have the opportunity to speak in my community about leadership and equity since I was 18 years old.

Having grown up in a very collectivist environment where values are instilled in us by our parents and communities, many younger generations are discouraged from following their own passions and discovering their true selves.

My current relationship with the church community stems from my volunteer work as International Fundraiser at Zion English Medium School, where I help raise money for improvements and build buildings, facilities and resources for the faculty and students. This allows us to enroll our community's children in a school where they will be taught both secular and biblical life lessons. Finally, I want to say how much I will always be appreciative of the IWL and all of the donors who extended their kindness and compassion to several young women leaders from all over the world.



Grace School

By Ana Garcia



We pray that you have all had a blessed start to the 2024 year. Thank you as always for your continued support for Grace Lutheran School. We are happy to bring you several staff updates we have long anticipated.

Mrs. Michelle Marinello began as our new school counselor right after the Christmas break. She taught middle school students for about 10 years before transitioning to becoming a school counselor. She holds a master's degree in school counseling. She is contracted with us



through the company Student Savvy and comes to the building every Thursday, meeting with students and consulting with teachers.

In God's goodness, God has finally blessed us with a sixth grade teacher! Mr. Will Bales started on Monday, January 29. Mr. Bales is a recent graduate of Concordia University Chicago. While at Concordia, he participated in the chamber orchestra as well as the wind symphony, which toured each spring and fall.



He has always had a heart for serving in the church in some capacity. VBS leader, outdoor summer camp counselor, and Sunday school teacher are some of the roles where he served while in high school and college.

On February 5, Mr. Julian Tyus joined Grace as our new art teacher. Mr. Tyus has a Master of Fine Arts degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and currently serves as a Lecturer in the Painting and Drawing department at SAIC.



We are excited about all three wonderful additions and look forward to the positive impact they will have on our students. In addition to our new hires, we have two current employee announcements. Megan Galeener received the results of her EDTPA and she passed and officially graduated! We are very excited and grateful for all the hard work she has put in for her students.



Mrs. Galeener's classroom, February 2024. Photo by Ana Garcia.

Ms. Allen (not to be confused with Mrs. Allen at the front desk. Ms. Allen is Mrs. Allen's daughter) has been working in Extended Day Care, but recently was offered and accepted the second grade teacher aide position! She is wonderful with the kids and an amazing addition to the second grade classroom. Ms. Orellana was unable to



return due to her class schedule this Spring, but we are grateful for the time she spent at Grace.

Our Open house on January 21 was a great success. We are thankful for the students and parents who stepped up to volunteer their time on that Sunday. We had 14 families with 20 prospective students come through to learn more about our school. Thank you to everyone who helped spread the word about the event and/or hung up advertisement posters in their communities and places of business. Everything you do for Grace is not lost on us.

Our Grace Parent Organization and parents in general have been working behind the scenes to do amazing things all year, but especially notable are all the new enrichment programs available this school year. They managed to squeeze one more program before the school year end – chess club! This club is open to students from SK to eighth Grade. The first session has begun, and there will be a second one in the spring. We look forward to seeing this club develop and grow!

We invite you to continue to visit the Grace School Blog periodically, as we have been sharing personal stories from families at Grace. Several families have graciously shared why they chose Grace and what keeps them at this amazing school. This is a great opportunity to be reassured of your trust in Grace, to share it with a prospective family, or to simply get to know an amazing family that you haven't met before. Here are a few quotes from two spotlight articles that we would like to share:

What we loved the most about this school year is the academic and spiritual growth of our daughter. At the beginning of her 5th grade year, we noticed a spiritual change of wanting more. Elicia has her own set goals of wanting straight A's, playing volleyball and the violin, and thinking about getting baptized. Seeing her growth and maturity places a huge smile soulfully for us as parents. We love that she continues to build strong friendships.

Dr. Edmond Kelly

Grace stands out as an exceptional school, providing your child with an inclusive and diverse learning environment. They'll benefit from innovative teaching methods, opportunities for parental involvement, and engaging extracurricular activities, enriching their overall educational experience. Grace Lutheran is a school with dedicated teachers that prioritize staying current with educational trends, ensuring that your child is well-prepared to excel in life.

- Ms. Shena Tines

Looking for additional ways to support Grace? Don't forget that our annual gala fundraiser, Graceful Evening, is coming up! Preparations are in full swing, and all the details can be found at graceful2024.givesmart.com.





Save the Date: June 7 & 8

In the Grace gym

Donation Drop-off begins June 1. Stay tuned to learn more.

Questions? Email the Grace rummage sale team: gracerummagesale@graceriverforest.org

GRACEFUL VENING MARCH 9, 2024

GRACE LUTHERAN SCHOOL'S LARGEST FUNDRAISER OF THE YEAR Cocktails, Dinner, Dessert Dash, Silent Auction, Raffles, Wine & Whiskey Pulls Nineteenth Century Club, Oak Park • Evening begins at 5:30 p.m.



Learn more and purchase tickets at graceful2024.givesmart.com



Clean Slate Campaign (www.cleanslateillinois.org)

What is the Clean Slate Campaign in Illinois and why should Lutheran Christians especially be supportive?

Join Grace members and leaders from Live Free Illinois for a teach-in regarding this important work of justice to which we are called in holy baptism. Come to Grace on Saturday, March 9 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. to learn more and find out how you can get involved. An informational brochure is also available on Grace Links.

Contact Pastor Troy at tmedlin@graceriverforest.org or go to http://tinyurl.com/muyccvcf to sign up to attend.



GriefShare Support Group

Help and encouragement after the death of a spouse, child, family member, or friend

Thursdays, January 18 – April 11 9:00 – 11:00 am

Grace Lutheran Church 7300 West Division, River Forest

GriefShare is a special weekly seminar and support group designed to help you rebuild your life after losing a loved one. Our group is led by caring people who have experienced grief and can help you through the difficult days ahead.



To register: call 708.366.6900 or email gracechurch@graceriverforest.org

GriefShare Seminar Series

The current GriefShare seminar series began on January 18. You can join the course at any point, and all are welcome. Sessions are held on Thursdays through April 11, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. in the church library except as noted below.

Your bereavement experience may be recent or not so recent. Whether you are grieving the loss of a spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandchild, other family member, or a friend, and no matter what the cause of your loved one's death, you will find encouragement, comfort, and help by being with others who understand what you are feeling. The course includes video sessions, online materials, and a workbook.

- February 29: Regrets
- March 7: Grief & Your Household (conference room)
- March 14: Grief & Your Friendships
- March 21: Questions for God (conference room)
- March 28: Stuck in Grief
- April 4: Hope & Resilience
- April 11: What Do I Live For Now?

For further information, contact facilitator Linda Bernard at 773-259-4720.

PRAYERS

This month, we pray for those who mourn the death of **Jonathan Mindrum**, who died on January 24, and **Robert Sroga**, who died on February 1.

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.

Confidential prayer chain: please contact Kathy Lucht (kathy.lucht@gmail.com) to be added to the confidential prayer chain if you have private concerns.



FELLOWSHIP

Yoga at Grace

Yoga classes with Ackli are held from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall every Thursday. Everyone is welcome. You do not need prior yoga experience. Classes are gentle and focused on alignment for strength and flexibility. Bring a yoga mat and a beach towel or blanket. Please dress comfortably. If you have questions about class or yoga in general, please call Ackli at 708-516-2701.

Grace Notes mailing crew

This newsletter crew will be at work again on Thursday, March 21, 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. On March 6, 13 and 20, join us for fellowship at 10:00, Bible Study at 10:30, and Morning Prayer at 11:30 a.m. On March 13, lunch will be served in Fellowship Hall at 12:00 p.m. Cornerstones will not meet on March 27. 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. Contact Pastor Troy for more information or to be added to the email list. (tmedlin@graceriverforest.org)

Men of Grace

The Men of Grace group meets on the fourth Saturday of the month at 9:00 a.m., in the youth center. The next meeting is Saturday, March 2. Email Pastor Troy for more information (tmedlin@graceriverforest.org).

BUILDING HOURS

Building Hours:

- Monday through Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Sunday: 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Weekends and evenings: open for scheduled activities.

PASTOR'S EMERGENCY PHONE

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

Dads of Grace

The Dads of Grace gather offsite for evenings of fellowship on the fourth Monday of every month. The next meeting is March 25. Email Pastor Lyle (dlyle@graceriverforest.org) for updates.

Retired Leaders

The Retired Leaders group meets monthly to discuss a wide breadth of topics. The next meeting is March 12, at 10:00 a.m. in the church library. Retired physics professor John Albright will present "Bringing Science and Faith Face-to-Face: My Life in Higher Education." All are welcome!

Email johnlhalvorson@yahoo.com to be added to the mailing list and to learn more.

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 March 8, in the church library. Contact Judie McDonnell for more information (judie.mcdonnell@att.net).

Moms of Teens and Young Adults

The Moms of High School Teens and Young Adults group fosters community among women whose children are growing up into adulthood. Contact Beth Reynolds (708-751-2196) to be added to the group's email list.

Knitting Group

This month, the knitting (and crocheting) group meets on March 19, 1:00–2:30 p.m in the church library. Beginners are welcome! Contact Karen Eckstein (ecksteinkaren2@gmail.com) with questions.

Religion in Literature

The Religion in Literature group will meet on Friday, March 8, at 7:30 p.m. in the home of Martin and Jill Baumgaertner, 841 W. Monroe St., #5PH, Chicago. We will discuss Cantos 18-34 of Dante's *Inferno*. Roger Ferlo will lead the discussion. For parking information, please contact Jill Baumgaertner at jill.baumgaertner@wheaton.edu. All are welcome!

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Grace Lutheran Church General Fund July 1, 2023 through February 9, 2024 (32 Sundays)

Church budgeted contributions \$1197,000 (\$37,400 per week)

Church actual contributions \$1027,000 (\$1109,000 last year at this time)

Church giving as of February 9, 2024: \$170,000 (14% behind budget, and \$82,000 (7%) behind last year. The current deficit is \$27,000 (\$36,000 deficit last year through February 28.)



7300 Division St. River Forest, IL 60305





Register your children for VBS!

June 17 - 21 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Registration is available on Grace Links.

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