

Voice of Grace

We are called to proclaim the Word and celebrate the sacraments.

We gather in Christian community for nurture and support. We are sent out in service to others.

What is Christianity

by Pastor Coe Hutchison

I once attended a Bible study where someone asked, “What is Christianity? Is it something to make you feel better about yourself and your life? Or is it something to make the world a better place?” I remember the entire room going eerily quiet for about 15 seconds until someone said, “How about those Seahawks?” It appeared to be a question to which no one had a ready answer.

I thought about that question. Even if I can’t answer the question for anyone else, I certainly should be able to answer it for myself. So, what is Christianity to me?

What Christianity is Not.

I start with a few things Christianity is not. It is not the Church. Capital “C” Church is the Body of Christ, the mystical communion of all believers in the world. It is the work of God, not of humans, and we see it when people draw together and find community, peace, and wholeness for themselves and for others. This Church is a movement of the Holy Spirit. The Church is part of Christianity. It is a gift of God. But it does not define Christianity.

The church, lower case “c,” is a human institution and fraught with all the foibles and sin of humans. Not to say that the church cannot do great things, just as broken humans can do great things, but the church can also do harm and inflict pain. Let us not equate the church with Christianity.

Finally, Christianity is not the way Christians, including myself, behave. It is greater and far more honorable and more profound than any single one of us or our thoughts or our behavior or our experiences.

So if Christianity is not the Church, or the church, or the way people who call themselves Christians behave, then what is Christianity?

Christianity is A Relationship.

Before anything else, Christianity is a relationship; a relationship with the divine, God, Creator and Redeemer. It is a relationship with God who describes himself as love. It is a relationship with Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us.

One might ask, “Isn’t Christianity believing in God?” Well, I would say a belief in God is a prerequisite for this relationship, but that certainly doesn’t define the relationship. I believe in my wife, but that belief is certainly not the sum total of our relationship. A relationship implies two-way interaction, two-way communication. Christianity is a relationship, desired by both parties, honored, fed, and nurtured by both parties.

A Relationship We Are Invited Into.

Very importantly, this is a relationship we are invited into by God himself. We do not initiate the relationship, God does. God is always the initiator. In fact, God has been inviting us into this relationship since, and even before, the beginning of our existence (Eph. 1:4). We were created for this relationship. God invites us into this relationship in many ways. These invitations come



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Worship 10:30 a.m.



June/ July 2019

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through nature and creation itself. They come through the love of others. We are invited when we hear God's love, the Good News, spoken to us and we actually take the risk of trusting in that love. God invites us into relationship.

So Christianity is a relationship and it is therefore a movement of the heart first, and not the mind. Understanding everything, having all the answers, is not necessary for this relationship. "I do not understand in order to believe, but believe that I may understand" (St. Anselm).

A Relationship of Love

A relationship with God is first of all a relationship of love. It is not first a relationship of mutual obligations or commitments. It is first a relationship of love—which then leads to commitment, as love always does. The core teaching of Scripture about God is that God is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" (Ex. 34:6 and more). Since God is a God abounding in steadfast love, and it is God who initiates this relationship, it is therefore a relationship initiated by, and based upon, love.

The primary and foremost action of God's love is the gift of his Son Jesus Christ for the world. God took on human life, living a full and complete life, even dying a horrible death on the cross. In doing so, Jesus erased all that was separating us from God, reconciling us with God, and inviting us again into relationship and doing everything to make the relationship possible. Jesus, the Son of God, in summarizing God's desires for humans talked primarily about love. The greatest commandments, Jesus said, are first to love God and secondly to love our neighbor (Matt 22:37-39). Our relationship with God is a relationship of love, enabled by Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is our example of living in relationship with God and our neighbor.

A Relationship That Changes Everything Else.

This profound relationship of love with God changes everything else in our lives.

My Understanding of Who God Is – This relationship changes my understanding of who God is. God is not a God of fear. God is not a God who is displeased and waiting for us to screw up so God can pound us. Rather, God is a God who rejoices over us in gladness, renews us in his love, and exults over us with loud singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

My Understanding of Who I Am – As part of creation, we are good and God is pleased with us. But we are also broken and have an inherent tendency to always be selfish and think of ourselves. But God's grace means that God knows me—and loves me. God knows me inside out. God knows all my dark secrets, the dust and dirt in the dark corners of my life, all my sin. God knows it all. And even so, God loves me. And the same is true for you! God knows you, every part of you—and loves you! And this amazing love, this amazing grace, sets us free. We are set free because we no longer have to earn God's love. WE ALREADY HAVE IT! Therefore, our energy can be turned to responding to this love, to living out this love for God and others.

My Purpose in Life – Following the lead of Jesus Christ, my purpose is to love and serve others, to share God's love in all kinds of ways, spiritually and practically. We are called to turn our eyes outward rather than inward. Somehow, in a way that is hard to explain, the whole world becomes our family. Many years ago, one Christmas Eve we were just about to start the service. A beautiful prelude had been sung, the atmosphere was vibrant with the Christmas spirit. At that moment, the door opened and in came a homeless person that regularly attended church and was often a challenge. The assisting minister whispered what I believe were God's words into my ear, "We can start now, your whole family is here." Tears streamed down my face. As a follower of Jesus, in some strange way, the whole world becomes our family.

My View of the World – The world, like each of us, is good, but broken. God doesn't hate the world, God loves the world (John 3:16). The world will not end in a ball of fire with God's condemnation, but in a new creation, a new redeemed heaven, and earth (Rev. 21). Therefore, we care for the world. We participate with God in the redemption of creation to be completed when Jesus returns.

My View of the Bible – The Bible is an inspired book about God. It is a book about me, about us. It is about the relationship with God into which we are invited. It speaks of people's efforts and failures to follow God, to live in relationship with God, and God's utmost love and efforts to always draw us back to himself. It is about a love so great that God gave up his only Son, Jesus, to bring us into relationship with God. It is ever new, revealing God to me, and even revealing me to me.

There Are Some Things This Relationship Doesn't Do.

Unfortunately, this relationship with God does not make me perfect. While not perfect, I am better than I would be without my relationship with God. I think it is C.S. Lewis who once wrote something like, "I may not be a great person, but think how much worse I would be if I were not a Christian." My relationship with God does not solve all of life's problems. It does not make life easy, me healthy or wealthy or wise. But it does mean that I never face life's problems alone.

A Disclaimer.

Finally, a disclaimer. This is the personal reflection of one man, one seeker after God, one feeble and humble follower of Jesus. I do not speak for the ELCA. I am sure some of my seminary professors might give me a "C" grade on this paper. And I confess (and celebrate) that, as in all relationships, I am still learning and growing. But I hope and pray that this might help each of you, my readers, think about this question for yourself. What is Christianity to you? May our gracious God bless you and keep you. To God be the glory.

*God Bless,
Pastor Coe*

Orphan Concert 2019

by Sharon Dembro

Eleven years of this community event — hard to believe. For 11 years Lisa Lanza has brought together the cream of Port Townsend's musical talent to make this marvelous afternoon happen.



Thank you Lisa!

And thanks, especially to all of you for being here to enjoy a concert of great music. Your support provides a third of the funds needed for our young Ugandan scholars. The great news is that because of your support, this year we've been able to add an additional 12 young orphans to the program, bringing it to a total of 30!

There's more good news: Those of you who were at last year's concert saw a video of our medical student Vivien Nanfuka. Well, she is now Dr. Vivian Nanfuka and doing her internship year. Her first rotation was in obstetrics and gynecology, where, she says, she learned to make quick decisions so as not to lose one or both of the lives entrusted to her hands. Her next rotation was in surgery where she faced the tragedy of losing patients because they had waited too long to seek help, or because the hospital did not have the specialists or equipment to save them. Yesterday she wrote to say she is on the pediatric ward in the neonatal intensive care unit. She writes "Children generally respond quickly to treatment, though there are exceptions we cannot save. I am grateful to God we can save some of our young population." She also writes "You are the people God has used to bless my life and I am forever grateful for your sacrifice."

We also owe our thanks and gratitude to Kenneth Kasule who, in 2019, celebrates 15 years of administering our Ugandan program as well as guiding, counseling and mentoring the children he considers as his own.

Kenneth recently wrote to me with reflections on those years. He said I could share them with you. He wrote:

"The children provide me with so many memories, when I recall how I started with them, how big they have grown, and how significant they have become in our society. It reminds me of my own personal circumstances.

My mother left me at the age of 3 to a stepmother who wished me dead. My great-grandmother took me to stay with her and this wonderful woman of God showered me with all the love she ever had. God called her when I was in primary four and the world turned again into a horror movie. I started working for my own education with jobs I wish for no child. At 12, I joined Mpenja secondary school and applied to be a school dependent. I was granted the offer on condition that I work for the school to make up for my tuition, room and board. I was responsible for providing the school with 7 truckloads of firewood every term, for working in the school gardens and digging out the roads and walk-through leading to the school. I was often pulled out of class to do whatever chores were required.

One day, hungry and alone in the forest cutting down trees while keeping a watchful eye out for poisonous snakes, I made the decision that once I am grown I will help needy and orphaned students so that they never have to go through what I had to experience for my education. The only way I thought to repay the love of my great grandmother was to show the same love and care for other children. But I had no idea how I would do it. Thank you so much for being the mechanism that helped me realize my dream."

So, again, thank you all for your continued support.

Letters From Uganda

Dear all members of Grace Lutheran church,



Lugya Dagalous Solomon

I greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who has given us a gift of life. I have greetings from Mr. Kenneth Kasule and my fellow students. We hope you are fine over there. Back to me I am fine and happy.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your continued support towards our education and our life at large. We have received many gifts like clothes, a mattress, bed sheets, shoes and so many others from you. On behalf of my fellows, with tears in my eyes and joy in my heart, let me take this opportunity to thank you for supporting our education which is our future.

I was in primary pre when Mr. Kenneth came and helped me. I had so many problems at school and the most problem was that of school fees. I would be sent back home to look for school fees, I sat at home for a period of time and missed so many lessons. When Mr. Kenneth got for me a sponsor, I was very happy from that day until now. I am no longer sent back home for school fees and I don't miss my lesson. For that reason, Please thank you very much.

I would also like to thank Miss Lisa who has organized the ceremony which will take place on Sunday. My fellows have told me that they are very happy and are proud of you. I am a Ugandan who wants to become a doctor and help people. I am in Senior three but how will I achieve it without your support. Please, I request you, continue with that heart of supporting our education and we shall never disappoint you.

We pray that you have a nice time during the ceremony. I send greetings to Mark and Sharon Dembro who have sponsored me and we hope we can get a picture of Grace Lutheran members. We hope to have good news after the ceremony. May the joy of the Holy Spirit enliven your hearts. We love you all.

Lugya Dagalous Solomon
On behalf of my fellow students

This is a brief synopsis of a letter from Nicholas Lukuway, which unfortunately was very blurry.

Greetings to the entire Grace Lutheran community.

Hoping the grace is still keeping you well. We are well here, a community with wide smiles

We really appreciate the good acts and support that we have received from you and the support of our lives spiritually as you pray for us each Sunday. Also we thank you for academic financial support, letters and gifts we have received from you. Many of us have joy emanating from our eyes with smiles and a lot of deep hope in ourselves.

We really want to say that our hearts have changed, and now through that love and connection that God brought between us you are now like parents to us. You enable us to become important people tomorrow through your support of our goals and dreams through education. The saying "United we Stand" means to us we thank you all, for you stood with us even in difficult times. As it is written that "blessed is the hand that gives," it is our prayer that may God keep you alive and bless you.

May the grace of God that is new every morning be with you always.

Nicholas Lukuway

Concert 2019



Penny's Thoughts

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This is my last missive to you as congregation president of Grace. At the June 30 meeting, there will be three new council members voted in, one whom will have my position, which is ending after 3-1/2 years.

There is an often-told joke about those people who don't show up for a meeting end up getting elected to some position. Easy to do when they're not there! That's what happened to me.

In the fall of 2015, we lost our then-council-president, Jim Hladecek, to cancer. It was a tragic loss and we still miss him. I volunteered to be on the nominating committee to find Grace a new president.

The holidays then came around, life was busy, and then I broke my arm in mid-December which required major surgery and about three months off for recovery and therapy. The nominating committee was farthest from my mind.

Mid-January, Pastor Coe called me at home and wanted to talk about the nominating committee. "Great! I said, "What's been happening on that front? I'm sorry I haven't been able to attend any meetings. Blah blah blah." Well," Pastor replied, "they have found someone," and.....it was me! It's a good thing I was sitting down because being on council was the last thing on my mind, not to mention being president. Jeepers.

So I asked for a couple of days to think it over and Pastor was fine with that. I prayed a lot, thought about it a lot, and prayed some more. My decision to say "yes" was because I love Grace Lutheran. We have the best congregation members with the best pastor and I figured it was time to give back.

It's been an amazing 3-1/2 years learning about how our church functions. We have been expanding Grace's presence in our community through donations of all kinds and physical labor to help others. We've been taking stands on controversial issues. Any disagreements that came before the congregation were handled with respect to the views of others and agreeing to disagree without rancor. Through the generous hearts of our members, we have a very healthy budget with no debt.

Thank you for the honor and privilege to serve as your president, and I wish my successor the very best! Let's keep on keeping on through our love of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. "Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Psalm 29:2

God bless you all. See ya!

Penny



Build Day at Habitat House May 22 and 23, 2019



May 22 team



May 23 team

“You Can’t Make a Silk Purse Out of a Sow’s Ear”

by Nina Daly



This used to be a favorite saying of my mother’s when something just wasn’t working out. It was usually said with a smile and a shrug. I thought of my mom and this adage recently when I was working on a new piece of art.

I had been inspired by the psalm read at church that Sunday, Psalm 30. I wanted to incorporate it into a picture. I started working with pastels. It has been a while since I did a figure drawing so I looked up some “helpful hints” online. I was able to do a drawing of a woman and she looked like she was dancing, which was my objective. As I started working on other sections of my picture, I realized that I had chosen the wrong type of paper and little pinholes of light were showing through. It was not fixable. My imagined “silk purse” had become a “sow’s ear.”

As I was contemplating getting rid of the whole thing, I thought of something an art teacher once said to our class. “When you really think you’ve messed something up, continue working on it. You will not be afraid to take chances. Sometimes when artwork is going well artists are so afraid of losing what they have they don’t take chances and become inhibited. There are times when something that starts as a failed work of art becomes something more precious than what could have been imagined. “

I decided to follow my art teacher’s advice. I cut out my figure and made it a part of a collage. I haven’t done a collage in a long time and soon discovered something I could enjoy and not worry about the outcome. I am still working on it and hopefully it will come to fruition and be in the next gallery showing.

God the great Creator makes good out of circumstances that we would, if we could, crumple up and throw out in the trash. I look back at times in my life that I would have liked to erase and start over again. God, the Artist of all, had other ideas! He took these experiences and remolded and reshaped me in a way that the negative became positive. God took my life experiences and used them and called me to work with people who are struggling.

I am trying now these days to see God’s hand working in my life and others. The Creator has plans that cannot be imagined. The studio is set up! Let God do His work in us. Amen.

Heaven is for Real, by Todd Burpo with Lynn Vincent

A book report by Nina Daly

This is a really sweet story about a young boy and a visit he made to heaven while he was having an emergency appendectomy. This was told with an innocence of an almost-4-year-old. Don’t miss the photos at the end of the book.

As a Christian and an artist, I wonder what will heaven be like? This book had me wondering about many things and it somehow made me smile while I contemplated what my loved ones would look like and how it would be to see Jesus.

This is available as an ebook and as an audio book on Washington Anytime Library.

Celebrate the Temporary

a poem by Clyde Reid

*Submitted by Judy Best in loving memory
of our blessed Konrad Schwencke*

Celebrate the temporary
Don’t wait until tomorrow
Live today
Celebrate the simple things
Enjoy the butterfly
Embrace the snow
Run with the ocean
Delight in the trees
Or a single flower
Go barefoot in the wet grass
Don’t wait
Until all the problems are solved
Or the bills are paid
You will wait forever
Eternity will come and go
And you will still be waiting
Live in the now
With all its problems and its agonies
With its joy and its pain
Celebrate your pain
Your despair
Your anger
It means you’re alive
Look closer
Breathe deeper
Stand taller
Stop grieving the past
There is joy and beauty
Today, it is temporary
Here and now and gone
So celebrate it
While you can
Celebrate the temporary

Meet the Brantners

by Don Fristoe



Steve and Marijo

We all know that our Lord works in strange and intricate ways, in His own good time, and for His own good reasons. Just over a year ago He blessed Grace with two wonderful new parishioners, Steve and Marijo Brantner. In a very short time, Steve put his talents to work on the kitchen remodel, and Marijo has added her beautiful voice to our choir. How did this come about? Well, it all started in Juneau, Alaska, where they both were born.

While they lived only a few blocks from each other for a time, they weren't destined to meet until many years later.

While growing up in Juneau, Marijo Toner developed an avid interest in theater and the arts. When it came time for college, the University of Portland offered a drama program. While enjoyable, in time she felt the need to switch her major to English. That in turn led to graduate degrees, after which she returned to Juneau to pursue various jobs until 1996, when she went to work for the Chamber of Commerce. Her skills were not unnoticed, and sometime later the Hospital Director offered her a job as the Communications Director. Subsequently this led to her being the IT Planner for the State of Alaska.

Meanwhile, life took the Brantners to Seattle when Steve was three years old. Growing up in the Green Lake area, Steve was an avid scouter, becoming a Star, Life, and finally, achieving the rank of Eagle Scout. Following in his father's footsteps, Steve chose to serve his country in the United States Coast Guard. He graduated from the Academy in New London, Connecticut, and his 17-year career included commands in San Francisco and New Jersey, as well as two tours in Seattle, during one of which he was on Bering Sea Fishery Patrol. Duty returned Steve and family to Juneau for what became the final phase of his service. While there, and realizing it was time for a new change of professional direction, he resigned his commission and began a new career in financial planning. It was while serving as a member of the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors in 1996 that he met Marijo and they became family friends.

Sadly, Steve was suddenly widowed five years later, which left the task of raising his children John and Maren as a single father. Like everything else, he tackled this job with love and sound judgement, and two beautiful young people are the happy result.

In time the friendship between Steve and Marijo began to develop into love, and they eventually married in 2003. When it came time to retire, they both knew they wanted to relocate to a friendlier climate, while retaining the green maritime scenery

they loved. Where better than the Pacific Northwest? They checked the Seattle, Tacoma, and Bremerton areas but passed when they discovered Port Townsend, and more specifically, Marrowstone Island. Nothing was left but to look for a church, and in April of 2018, their search ended at Grace....and aren't we glad that it did!



This is the way a burning-bush moment works: In a God-given moment that you didn't expect and couldn't have planned, you catch sight of the glimmering of some holy flame and your life opens up. You find yourself on a journey, following the glimmering to a place where you can give your gifts and receive the holy gifts of others—by the love of God, through the Grace of Christ, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

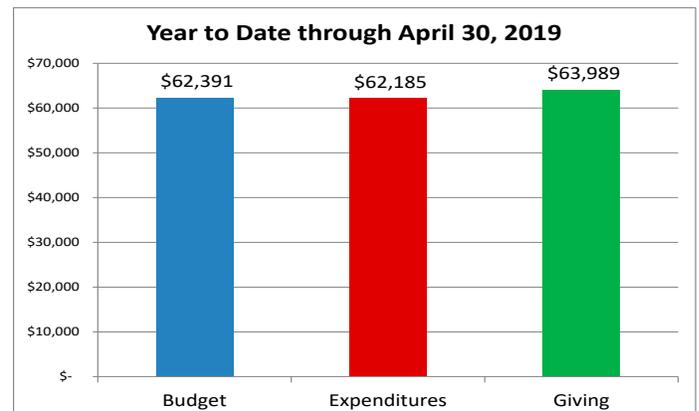
There are these moments glowing with possibility and power for each of us if we will notice. You never know when. You never know where. It is true that the flaming glory of the Lord is everywhere, but human beings need to see it somewhere in somebody in particular. And when we do see the glory of the Lord gleaming in somebody, then everybody else we see has flaming possibilities too.

This message is adapted from "Burning Bush Chaser" written by Martha Sterne in the September 2011 issue of Gather magazine

Traveling With Grace

Are you planning a trip? Don't forget to pack a copy of this newsletter and get someone to take your picture with it. We love to see the places our friends visit.

Grace Financials



Here is a mind work-out for your spare time.

God's Promises

G	O	D	S	W	O	R	D	A	S	B	P	I	U
R	C	O	V	E	R	I	N	G	I	L	V	J	S
S	F	A	T	H	E	R	S	S	C	E	E	T	O
L	D	E	S	E	R	T	A	S	C	S	O	H	O
P	R	O	V	I	S	I	O	N	U	S	D	E	C
W	I	G	P	E	A	C	E	S	J	I	E	A	I
V	C	A	T	G	U	I	F	I	S	N	I	L	S
V	F	I	N	A	N	C	E	S	N	G	R	I	T
F	A	I	T	H	F	U	L	N	E	S	S	N	C
S	S	H	O	L	I	N	E	S	S	E	M	G	A
O	S	V	V	H	A	P	P	I	N	E	S	S	P
S	I	L	A	G	A	P	E	L	O	V	E	I	S
S	O	C	D	L	T	S	E	S	I	M	O	R	P
N	A	E	O	S	C	P	H	Y	S	I	C	A	L

FAITHFULNESS
PROMISES
HAPPINESS
BLESSINGS
JESUS
FATHER
HOLINESS
AGAPE LOVE
PHYSICAL
DESERT
PEACE
GODS WORD
PACTS
COVERING
HEALING
PROVISION
FINANCES

Play this puzzle online at : <http://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/3557/>



The Bulletin Board

Mark Your Calendar

Mark Your Calendars for These Upcoming Events: Check out the full calendar on the Grace Lutheran website: gracelutheranpt.org/calendar

Saturday, June 22, 10:00 a.m., Grace Gallery setup

Sunday, June 30. 12:00 p.m., Semi-annual congregational meeting

Sunday, July 7, 3:00 p.m., Konrad Schwencke Memorial service

Saturday, July 13, 10:30 a.m., Kim Hayden Memorial service

Saturday, July 20, 900 to 3:00, Summer Prayer Retreat

Cinco de Mayo!



June / July Birthdays

Janet Hutchison	June 6
Liam Peterson	June 9
Elaine Shore	June 9
Susan Reid	June 11
Anna Vaughan	June 11
Colleen Johnson	June 14
Shelley Wolff	June 14
Darla Lacy	June 15
Roger Reichersamer	June 15
Don Shore	June 15
Diana Kenyon	June 16
Marc Helgeson	June 20
Claudia Wagner	June 20
Barbara Thompson	June 27
Marijo Brantner	June 28
Linda Gaenicke	July 1
Bob Haines	July 1
Floyd Thompson	July 10
Chris Kimball	July 17
Betty Oakes	July 17
Jim Espenson	July 20
Dianne Espenson	July 23
David Haugen	July 30
Tammy Rumpel	July 31

Help Wanted

The *Voice of Grace* is looking for photographers to take pictures of Grace events, and writers of stories, events, poems, or ?? The pay? Not so much (well, none, really.) But - just imagine seeing your work in print! Contact Mary at maryeronen@gmail.com

Church Council

President: Penny Westerfield
tink@olypen.com

Vice President: Al Smith

Secretary: Betty Oakes

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Resources (Treasurer): Dianne Espenson

Fellowship: Lucy Hladecek

Facilities: Jim Little

Worship/Music: Dee Dee Norman

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Social Concerns: Earl Kong

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Choir Director: Colleen Johnson

Sunday School Superintendent: Linda Wolff

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Photos of church events may be published in print or online. If you do not want your picture included, please contact the office at gracelutheranpt@gmail.com or (360)385-1595.