

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.



Thank you to those of you who wrote a reply to the question: What does faith feel like in these challenging times? These are the unedited answers I received. I decided to let them be as they were submitted – there is a strength in each of these people's thoughts.
Sonia

Graphic by Nina

During my devotion time as I was praying for God's intervention in all our world's problems, I heard a still small voice saying to me: "The weight of the world is not on your shoulders." What a comfort that was to me! That comfort is what Faith in our Savior feels like to me. --*Jane Schwencke*

I'm really feeling my age (86+). It seems like every obituary, or article about someone who had died, gives their age as "86". My health isn't terrible, but not at all comfortable. The only time I get into town is to see a doctor, and that happens several times a week now. I miss my family, and long to be with them. I wonder if I ever will, since travel is out of the question. We text, and talk, but Zooming doesn't work for me. I have an old computer that has no camera, and my cellphone is very small. Zooming means spending the entire call frantically moving the screen from side to side to see who's there and who's talking.

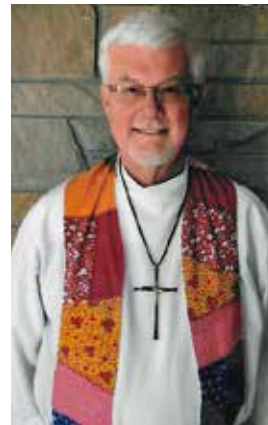
So, I'd say that my faith, in the time of COVID, has become more frantic than peaceful. At times, I simply break down and weep. But then, I reach for a GLC pew card on which I've written something that Pastor Coe mentioned in one of his sermons. He said that it helps him when he feels low, and it helps me now. When I'm really down, I make myself stop, sit down, shake the misery out of my head, and say "Jesus Christ, Son of God, let me feel Your Peace." I have faith that He hears me, and that I will (and do) feel His Peace, at least in that moment. -- *Ann Bambrick*

continued on page 3



Dear friends,

I believe most of us “feel” the same. When we first started out with the realities of living with the Covid-19 virus, no one expected that we would be still feeling and experiencing the seemingly unchanged effects of this deadly enemy into the second week of September! And yet.. here we are with the recognition and awareness that it will undoubtedly be with us into the fall and ominously beyond. This is a time of great anxiety, worry, and concern for the unknown. The threat of the pandemic for our loved ones and for ourselves has caused a “great pall” to fall over us and we all “feel” it. It tests us. All of us—people of faith and those who just try to cope with any means possible.



For Christians, we are mindful of the promises and the “tools” given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. We know we are not alone and that we are bid to cast all anxieties on the One who knows us better than we know ourselves. I’m talking about prayer here, my dear friends. And I am finding prayer ever more important during these times.

I am grateful to a friend’s suggestion of a prayer practice they have found very helpful in these times. It was found as she explored a little book entitled *Spiritual Practices* by Ignatius Loyola. Loyola (founder of the Jesuits) called the practice “Examen.” It can be done alone or in small groups. One might call it a “prayer of review”—a short reflection back over one’s day, recalling events and taking note of your feelings. The “down-to-earth” purpose is to become more aware of the ways in which God has been present to you, the times when the Holy Spirit was drawing you towards life. Before beginning the five steps, prepare yourselves by finding a quiet time where you focus on simply breathing slowly and consciously...and do it throughout the spiritual exercise.

Step one: Pray to understand and appreciate the past day. Look back over the last 24 hours. Make a list in your head and heart of all that has happened in your life. You can even take time to jot down some of these experiences.

Step two: Review the day with gratitude. What brought you joy? As you look at the things you did, work, the people you may have interacted with (even if—socially distanced!) What did you receive? What did you give? Where are you thankful to God? Pay attention to the small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures.

Step three: Pay attention to your emotions. When did you feel most grateful? Least grateful? When did you love? When were you loved? What drained life from you? When did things feel out of place and off? When did you experience the fruits of the Spirit? When did you feel like a time of God’s absence?

Step four: Choose one of your feelings or encounters (positive or negative) and pray from here. You might have a vivid moment of pleasure, peace or grace. There might be something that at first seems rather insignificant. You might have great pain. Look at what you have chosen. Examine it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, lament, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

Step five: Look toward tomorrow. Ask God for guidance in facing tomorrow’s challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you look forward. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God’s guidance. Ask for God’s Spirit to help you to understand. Ask for wisdom and protection. Pray for hope. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude.

Then, Loyola invites you to end with praying the Lord’s Prayer. (You may even hear and reflect on those familiar petitions in a whole new way as you do so)

We are living in strange and difficult times for awhile. But we are not alone in this. We are a community even when we are apart. We are God’s beloved children. May you experience God’s Holy Spirit with you as we walk in Christ together.

Thinking of you and praying with you....

Pastor Al Berg

Agape from page 1

I am struggling with faith in this moment. What comes to mind most in the midst of my thrashing about the sanctuary of my soul is something a former pastor once said, “When you don’t feel God is when you had better know God.” I am in a place where I cannot feel God, I cannot see God, I cannot hear God. All I am clinging to like a slim and fraying thread is that I know God. For me right now in this time of overwhelming division, destruction, deception I can only trust what I know to be true and that is found in Psalm 46, especially Verse 10—Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. – *Beverly Williams-Hawkins*

The question regarding Faith has settled in to my morning practice as I develop a sense that often, when I think that nothing internally is happening or changing within me, things might be moving so slowly that I can’t see the progress within an expectation of change or relief from discomfort. There might also be some impatience on my part, to feel better NOW; to know the outcomes of all that is unsettled; to have answers for all the questions.

Faith feels like knowing God is in the present moment. God is not in the past, not in the future. God helps me remember to be present in mind, body, spirit—to get off of the treadmill of ‘stinking thinking’ and to be truly present in this moment. To arrive at the banquet table, just as I am and sit and rest. Even when I don’t truly feel God, I know God is there because I have experienced it before and the Faith allows for me to make a leap and understand that “This too shall pass.”

20 minutes of daily centering prayer is a new practice, thanks to an online course (with help from the GLC Scholarship I received) I am taking through Center for Action and Contemplation, based on the Richard Rohr book *Breathing Underwater*. As I settle in to the silence, my mind jumps and judges, twists and analyzes. I bring my breath back to the moment. The inhale I say “Let God,” on the exhale I say “Let Go.” By the end of 20 minutes, I may have had only a total of 30 seconds of calm heart and head space without compulsive thinking. This is a start. All I need to do is to make a start. This continual attempt to be present is what faith feels like right now; to keep showing up for my spiritual practice. There was a moment last week where I was very emotionally upset and mad at God, with the news of a young person in our community committing suicide. I asked God, “Why?!” I brought all of the anger, sadness, frustration, and fear to God, and God met me there in the darkness

God will hold all of me, with grace and gentleness, as a shepherd does in Psalm 23: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

Thomas Keating has a prayer that resonates in these challenging times, calling for me to stay with the discomfort, called *Reflections on the Unknowable* (Excerpt 2):

“Powerlessness is our greatest treasure. Don’t try to get rid of it. Everything in us wants to get rid of it. Grace is sufficient for you, but not something you can understand. To be in too big a hurry to get over our difficulties is a mistake because you don’t know how valuable they are from God’s perspective, for without them you might never be transformed as deeply and as thoroughly.”

“Solitude is the furnace of transformation. Without solitude we remain victims of our society and continue to be entangled in the illusions of the false self,” is written by Henri Nouwen. In this time of social distancing, and indoor living with the poor air quality, I pray that our connection to our (true) selves, and to our Faith practices grow and evolve as we also grow and evolve. Perhaps try a day without turning on the news—perhaps quiet the mind and breathe in “let God,” breathe out “let Go.” Perhaps call a neighbor to have a discussion that is difficult; to truly ask “How are you managing?” and to listen to their answer without the need to fix or change, to defend or explain.

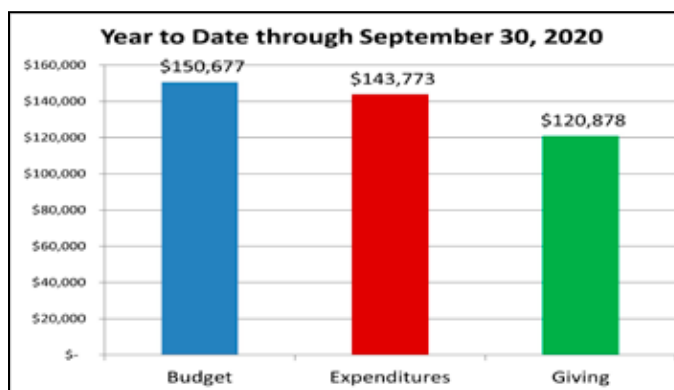
Please report back and help me answer the next Voice of Grace -Agape question: What does the concept of powerlessness mean to you? How do you navigate within a world where so much is out of our control?

** Thanks for reading, y’all. Take Care.

Peace be with you.

In Christ’s Love, *Sonia Frojen*

Grace Financials



Reminder!

Have you met your giving pledge? You can drop your donation off at church, mail it in, or go online to the website at gracelutheranpt.org and click on Giving.

Even though we can’t be physically in our church home, the expenses of keeping it up go on.

Pastor Al,



I just wanted you to know that we really enjoy Grace's Audio worship, and we particularly enjoy your sermons. We also share Grace's audio worship with friends and family across WA state and with one aunt in Colorado.

While we live in Ephrata, in eastern Washington, and worship at Holy Trinity Lutheran, we still consider Grace to also be a church home for us....we're fortunate to have two church homes and two church families that we love dearly. I started attending Grace in, I believe, 1981. Jane and Konrad Schwencke were my "shepherds." I was baptized at Grace in 1987. I met Debra, my wife-to-be, in 1992, when we served as Grace's delegates at a synod assembly at Pacific Lutheran University. We were married at Grace in 1994. Both of our sons, Andy and Ben, were baptized at Grace respectively in 2000 and 2003. In 2003, I transferred from the US Forest Service to the Bureau of Reclamation in Ephrata...but we've still kept an associate membership at Grace, which again is also a church home for us.

I retired from Federal service in late 2017, after almost 43 years. Andy, 19, is a WSU senior/pre-med student. We/Andy are very honored by the recent Grace scholarship grant to Andy. Ben just turned 17, and will be starting his junior year at Ephrata HS, and (following in Andy's footsteps) will also be starting "Running Start" at Big Bend Community College in Moses Lake...he wants to become a mechanical engineer, and maybe later a lawyer. Debra, who also has an engineering background, is a para-educator at Ephrata Middle School. We have for many years owned acreage in the Brinnon area. We still have some thoughts about either retiring there, or to Port Townsend, sometime after Ben leaves home for a university to complete his bachelor's degree. He wants to attend the University of Washington.

While Andy and Ben have grown up at/within Holy Trinity, they also know Grace very well, and now have

memories of attending services at Grace many times with their grandfather, Herman/"Dick" Dinkelman, who lived in Quilcene, and for awhile in Port Townsend before he passed away last December. Pastor Coe visited with Dad and family frequently during his last days and with family members after he passed. Our Lutheran Christian faith, Grace and Pastor Coe made this last journey so much easier for Dad and for family. It's my understanding that prior to his retirement Pastor Coe discussed with you the memorial service and columbarium interment at Grace that's been planned for both my dad and mom (Louise), but has been postponed indefinitely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Perhaps the service/interment can happen sometime next year.

Up until about this past Memorial Day weekend, we had been enjoying the Wednesday morning Grace Zoom meeting Bible study. Unfortunately, that weekend, Deb took a serious fall onto our cement driveway, and fractured her right knee and compressed a lumbar vertebrae. The knee had to be put back together with surgery in Spokane. She also had to start wearing a back brace. She's been using a walker. So, we've been in recovery mode these past three months. Along the way, medical scannings uncovered a slow-growing cancer spot on one of her lungs...the pulmonologist we talked with isn't overly concerned at this time, and the spot will be taken care of with surgery later this year.

Some nodules on Deb's thyroid gland were also noticed during other scannings, some more testing is scheduled.... but they may not be as concerning as originally thought. Anyway, we've had a roller-coaster of a summer this year. On the up side, this past week Deb's leg surgeon says that her knee is recovering just as he'd hoped, and, she can now start putting weight on her right leg/foot again, gradually over the next month, and she can start therapy for learning how to walk again. Her doctor/nurse for her back say that her injured vertebrae is healing, and they'd like to start weaning her away from the back brace. She's also doing back therapy. She's going to continue working (a blessing for her), from home, for up to four hours a day, for Ephrata Middle School, though she's also, at the recommendation of her nurse practitioner, taking some advantage of the Family Leave Act leave through December. Her principal and school staff have been very supportive through these last months.

Anyway, we will continue to listen to Grace's audio worship...again, your sermons are super...and hopefully we can soon again start attending Grace's Wednesday Zoom Bible studies. Thanks to Grace for also continuing to include communion in the Sunday audio services.

Thanks again.

Dick, Debra, Andy and Ben Dinkelmann

A Reading List

by Beverly Williams-Hawkins

In recent weeks, several white friends have reached out to me asking for recommendations for books about race and racism in America. Following is a brief reading list for those called to take up the challenge of increasing your racial awareness, learning how you can become an anti-racist and ultimately how to become an active racial ally.

1) *Understanding and Dismantling Racism: The Twenty-First Century Challenge to White Americans*, Joseph Barndt. This is the updated version of Barndt's widely acclaimed book *Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America*.

2) *So You Want to Talk About Race*, Ijeoma Oluo. With both empathy and directness, Oluo offers both white people and people of color guidance for having sincere, honest and frank conversations about race and racism and how they play out in American life.

3) *White Fragility, Why It's So Hard to Talk About Race*, Robin DiAngelo. Of this book my best friend who happens to be white says, "Oh bestie, if I had known what I am learning in this book, I would have been a better friend and ally all these years. I am so sorry I didn't know and I promise you I will continue to learn and I will become a better friend and ally for you and other people of color." I could not draft a better commentary than that.

4) *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent*, Isabel Wilkerson. Again I will present you with a personal commentary from a friend who happens to be white. "Beverly, I just finished reading *Caste*. Oh my, all I can say is that it is the most Important book I have ever read. I am amazed and grateful that you have chosen to trust someone like me, a wealthy white woman, thank you."

5) *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US*, Lenny Duncan. "Part manifesto, part confession, and all love letter, *Dear Church* offers a bold new vision for the future of Duncan's denomination and the broader mainline Christian community of faith. *Dear Church* rejects the narrative of church decline and calls everyone—leaders and laity alike—to the front lines of the church's renewal through racial equality and justice." (Amazon product description.) I have not read this book yet. It came to my attention by way of Pastor Coe.

I offer this short list as both inspiration and challenge for all in our congregation willing to take up God's call to us to "...do justice..."

George Thomsen Memorial

My daughter Jeanne, who lives in Mexico, managed to connect up with my son, Carsten and wife Nicole, and with Pastor Al at Grace Lutheran on August 5 in the late afternoon to have a service for my George.

Pastor Al made the service special by talking about George, reading Scripture, and reading all his requests as noted from his Memorial Service, which were powerful (read Romans 8). Jeanne managed to send hymns with music for a joyful end to the service. And, yes, we sang with joy.

We then followed Pastor Al to the Grace courtyard carrying the beautiful urn, and with prayer and love put George to rest in the Grace Columbarium. It was a lovely and peaceful moment.

We thank Pastor Al, and appreciate the time, love, and understanding of how much this closure meant to our family. We will always remember this special moment on this beautiful day,"

Praise the Lord,
Joan Thomsen

Can You Help?

The quilters are getting low on fabric. Do you have fabric left over from some project? Or maybe even some that you just happen to have that you no longer need or want? Donations can be taken to the church, or a quilter can pick up. Cotton is the fabric of choice. Contact Gwen Howard at 360-395-0927 or 206-948-4790.



Grace Worship Online

Plans are in the works to video record the worship services. Currently there are two videographers and one editor. We would like to have an additional videographer and an additional editor. Recording would take place late in the week after the music recordings are available. If you have an interest in doing one or the other or both, please contact Pastor Al, Mary Ronen or Jim Norman.

Help Wanted

The *Voice of Grace* is looking for writers of stories, events, poems, or ?? Pictures are always welcome. The pay? Not so much (well, none, really.) But - just imagine seeing your work in print! Submit your items to maryeronen@gmail.com

Grace Gallery

At the Gallery

by Nina

As I write this I am rejoicing over a blue sky and hoping and praying that the fires are abating. It has been a difficult week, and let's face it, a challenging year! Last week found me driving through fog and smoke and seeing people with masks walking gingerly down Uptown streets. It's like we have been transported into a science fiction movie.

I decided to go to Fort Worden on Friday. Our air was starting to clear a little and I needed a break from the paper mill smell that had infiltrated the office. To be honest, I needed some quiet time with God. Sometimes being alone in my car parked at the overlook can be as sacred as any cathedral.

The special gift from God of rain on the windshield proclaimed God's own Hallelujah Chorus. I couldn't help writing in my journal and taking some pictures.

The rain hits my windshield.
A steady pattern - God's song.
Gray sky - less smoke.
Will the rain cleanse us?

Friday afternoon looking out.
A deserted beach; I'm worn out.
Tourists avoiding; me welcoming.

The day says it all!



Laura's Clay Art



Gloria Sutton says, "These were done from photographs that I found online. I like painting country lanes, old barns or other country scenes. "



I haven't been able to do any clay work since the pandemic started as I don't have access to our group's kiln. These are some things I did pre-covid. I formed these vases using leaves—I love using various sizes and types of leaves for clay work.

Mary



Note!

Calling artists of any kind! While we aren't able to enjoy our Gallery in the Fellowship Hall at church, we can still enjoy seeing our artists' work here in the *Voice*. Please submit photos of your work to maryeronen@gmail.com,

A God Moment

by Laura Anderson



One day I felt that I just had to get out of the house and get some fresh air. I've always felt calmer at the beach, so that's where I decided to go. I was relaxing there, listening to the wind, the waves crashing, and the birds chirping—it was so peaceful. Nearby there was a little boy playing in the water.

A pitbull came walking up with her owner, started barking and wagging her tail at the little boy. She started playing with him. The boy was in the water up to his knees, and the dog came up to him, barked, then swam around him in a circle. She stopped right in front of him and barked. Then the boy started “walking” on his hands like he was swimming. and for about 15 minutes the little boy “walked” in the water while the dog swam around with him, barking and splashing him with her paws for about 15 minutes. The dog was barking and the boy was laughing. It was a most beautiful God-sighting.

One Fine Day



Linda and David Gaenicke are keeping Grace Lutheran's gardens looking well cared for.

Photo by Gwen Howard

I Am So Blessed!

One morning last month Mom texted me saying that people were trying to reach me and I was not answering the calls; they wondered where I was. She said that I should call Betty. I did; and she said there was “a gang of guys gathered here.”

To make a long story short, I was recovering from recent back surgery. It seems that word was going around that my couch was old, broken down, and in generally pretty poor shape for someone in my condition. Betty heard this, and she told me that she had a pretty good “new-old” couch, and did I want it? Of course I did! Well, she said, “it was all loaded up and on its way.” A few minutes later, the “gang of guys” arrived in a pickup truck. They moved my van (oh, and the van is another story of how I am so blessed!) so they could back the truck in. They stood around and evaluated the situation as to how best to get the old couch out and the new one in—I have stairs and it's a narrow space. In just a few minutes, out she went! I got out the vacuum cleaner and cleaned up the dust that had accumulated there and the new one came in. Furniture was put back in place. The old one was loaded into the truck, ready for the dump. The new couch is amazing—no flat cushions, and pretty besides.

Thank you, brothers and sisters at Grace, for the wonderful gift of the couch and for your hard work and great timing. I miss going to church and I miss the close fellowship I've known there. This wonderful surprise brought that love and fellowship literally home to me; it is one of the many blessings that I have received from Grace since I arrived here a few years ago.

God bless all of you,

Love and air hugs!

Laura



It is God's love and only God's love that can conquer the depths of loneliness; and the church is where we ought to be able to find and experience that love. Perhaps we as Christians need to be reminded that whenever we reach out to another in friendship, each time we help another human being, we are not only offering God's love to that person, we are helping to overcome the loneliness of an aching world.

This message is adapted from “Alone vs. Lonely,” written by Meredith Potter in the March 2013 issue of Gather magazine.

Choy Update, reprinted here with permission

Dear Pastor Al Berg,
Your church sponsored me and my 3 siblings 41 years ago. I am originally from Vietnam. Four of us are the boat-people looking for freedom at the end of the Vietnam War. Your Church members had raised funds and opened their heart to welcome 4 of us to Port Townsend. They had decided to sponsor us from a Malaysian Refugee Camp to America.

August 15, 1979 was the day we stepped on the fertile soil of America. I have a lot of good memories of the good deeds that your Church members did to us.

Your Church members shared their home while looking a rental house for 4 of us. After a few days, a house was found at O and Maple Street, and we moved in.

Being the oldest adult in my group of 4, I had my first job at a fish processing plant called Gilford Packing Company in Port Townsend. I didn't have a car yet. Your church members gave me a bicycle so that I could ride to work. It was cold and wet on that working day, I used a shopping bag from a Safeway store to cover my head while riding on the bicycle. To help me see and breathe better, I made 2 holes thru the brown grocery bag and put the bag bottom up on my head as if it was a rain coat for my head. To protect the grocery bag from getting wet and soggy, I used a bigger plastic to cover the brown paper bag.

We have done very well thanks to your love and support and the prosperity that America has been offering. To remember our 41 years in America, my brother, Tin Vong and I, Choy Vong, are enclosing a check as a small token to show our appreciation to your church member sponsorship.

May you and your Church members be always healthy and safe

Choy Vong

And it Goes on...and on...and on

Yes, we are still shut in and masked. Things look sometimes like they are improving, and then, uh-oh, they are not. So we devise new ways to cope and we pray that being cautious will eventually win out. I get so discouraged and disheartened, and wonder when we will ever be able to be together in worship. When we finally are able to be together, what will it be like? I miss you all.

Writing this article is making me think long and hard about where I am and what is happening. It is easy to have faith when things are going well—not so easy when they are not. I look around and see others who are in a worse position than mine whose faith is still strong. And maybe some whose is not. I admit, I am one who is struggling. I wonder what makes the difference? Yet, even when I am struggling, I know in my heart that God will not let us down. He will see us through this and more. That is just what He does.

There seems to be lots going on at church, even when we are not IN church. Gaenicke's have been gardening, and quilters have been quilting. Meetings happen either at church or via zoom. Bible study on Wednesdays meets virtually on zoom as well. Pastor Al's Sunday audio worship with music and readings is very much appreciated. Emails and phone calls between our church friends help to keep spirits up.

What gives me hope for the future is reading what you have sent to me for this issue of the Voice of Grace. This is the fellowship we are blessed with at Grace—people helping each other and sharing how they are managing during this trying time.

God bless,

Mary

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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.