

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.

Quilts!

October 25 was Blessing of the Quilts day. 152 quilts were delivered to Lutheran World Relief during that week.

Thank you to everyone involved in this ministry! Donations to support the quilters are always welcome to help cover the cost of materials and shipping.

Quilts are on sale in the Fellowship Hall for \$50 each.

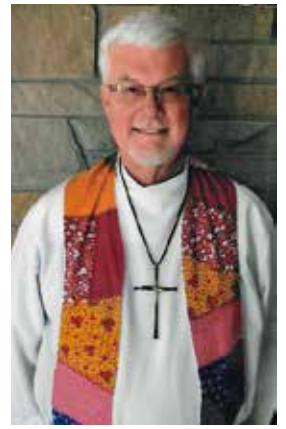


Steve and Marijo Brantner, Carol Kong, and Dennis Struecker load up quilts for Lutheran World Relief.
Photo by Gwen Howard



A quilt waiting for a buyer.

Pastor's Message



In a little over a week we enter the season of Advent. Advent is normally one of my favorite seasons of the church year. The common themes of watchfulness, preparation, and hope are a necessary remedy for the hectic-ness of the season before Christmas! A time where we in the church both anticipate the celebration of God's coming in the form of the Christ Child and also the final coming of Christ in the time to come.

In the midst of a pandemic, that seems to go on forever, Advent will be a little different this year! In some ways it feels like the entire year has been one long season of "advent" waiting. Waiting for a vaccine for the coronavirus, waiting for a downturn in counts of those who have been affected and the tragic deaths we have experienced in our country and in the world. We continue to pray for our world, for creation, and for an end to injustice and violence. Yet, we know God's promises are trustworthy. We know God has not left us desolate. We know God is near. We pray that our faith may be strengthened, that we may be transformed to walk in God's way. This is the promise of Advent.

Advent also brings us familiar texts from the Scriptures. One of those familiar texts is "Mary's Song," the Magnificat recorded in Luke's Gospel. Grace congregation has had a wonderful tradition of using Holden Vespers Service as a mid-week gathering and focus in our worship life. Many of you can even hear the beautiful melody of the singing of these words: "My soul proclaims your greatness, O God, and my spirit rejoices in you... You have looked with love on your servant here, and blessed me all my life through." even as I share the written words here. This year Lisa and others have been working hard to prepare an online sharing of this service with members of Grace and beyond. We hope to have visual components of the singing of this vesper worship as well audio and a brief devotion. It is our intention to have the four weekday Wednesday evenings as a time where we will gather virtually to keep this tradition— in the midst of the ongoing effects of the pandemic. This is a time where we will continue to pray for an end to the pandemic even as our hope has been encouraged with news of vaccines that are on the way. Watch for more information on this Advent tradition and plan to be a part of this experience as we mark this season with renewed preparations and watchfulness.

Even though this Advent will be different, with routine practices and rituals being adapted in worship and in our daily lives, we continue to hold onto Mary's sung reminder that the promises of God's mercy made to our forebears continues today and into the future. And for that, we can all give thanks. Indeed, Advent... even this Advent.. remains a special season in our life together.

In Christ,

Pastor Al Berg



The power of touch can be comforting. It can heal. And it connects us in ways that computers and electronic devices can't. But during this pandemic, it's difficult to embrace those who are not in our immediate families.

We know that people heal faster when they're touched. We know that the lack of touch in babies can impair development. We know that the elderly can suffer from touch deprivation even when they are surrounded by people all day long.

We know that Jesus liked to touch people. There are Bible stories where he healed people from afar—so it was something that he could do. But time and time again, we read about how Jesus physically touched people. He even touched those that no one else would.

If you can't reach out and touch someone, who in your life might benefit from hearing you laugh out loud? Who needs to hear someone say, "I'm thinking about you?" Take your lead from Jesus, our model of healing and comfort. What are some ways you can give someone a virtual hug?

This message is an excerpt from a Women of the ELCA blog by Amy Jandrisevits.



**What does the concept of powerlessness mean to you?
How do you navigate within a world where so much is
out of our control?**

Thoughts from Sonia Frojen:

It's easy for me to feel negative, powerless, and frustrated these days. I am aware of sometimes wanting to curl up on the couch and hide. God doesn't let me hide (for long). I have been learning to lean into rest and time to be in silence with my thoughts and prayers. I often turn towards answers, logic, and 'fixing.' What does God ask of me in this time of trouble? The Beatles song, *Let it Be*, is a good start.

My sweet Mom sent me a link (dailygood.org/story/2324/deepening-our-comfort-with-uncertainty-kristi-nelson) that helps me understand that I can be uncomfortable with not knowing, and at the same grateful. I can be afraid for the future, and at the same time have strength to show up to my job every morning to be present for my students. My faith relies on the practice of being okay with uncertainty, and choosing to participate anyhow.

"You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith, and hope. " ~ Thomas Merton

This quote was brought to my attention by the story my mom shared, and it reminds me to be present, to share with others, and to remember that Hope is shared by many, sometimes forgotten with stress, loss, hunger, fear... Krista Tippet, the OnBeing Podcast host, quotes the lyrics to:

Let it Be, The Beatles

When I find myself in times of trouble,
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, Let it be
And in my hour of darkness, She is standing right in
front of me
Speaking words of wisdom, Let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom

Let it be

And when the broken-hearted people, Living in the
world agree
There will be an answer, Let it be
For though they may be parted there is, Still a chance
that they will see
There will be an answer, Let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom

Let it be

And when the night is cloudy, There is still a light
that shines on me
Shine until tomorrow, Let it be

I wake up to the sound of music, Mother Mary comes
to me
Speaking words of wisdom, Let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom

Let it be

During this period of time fraught with political and health controversies, I often find myself troubled because of my own strong opinions. Then, when I honestly examine my upset state, I realize that I do not have that much knowledge about the issues but I have chosen a side nevertheless. At that point I need to recognize that my uneducated opinions are prejudices, nothing more and nothing less. I also need to tame my ego and accept the fact that I do not need to have an opinion about everything.

Today whenever I am in contact with a group of people, I try to be guided by two questions: What can I learn? How can I serve? I also try to remember that the most over-rated skill that I possess is the ability to talk and the most underrated skill that I possess is the ability to listen. In order to really listen I need to get my ego out of the way, look the other in the eye and direct all my senses toward their messages. These guidelines are much easier to say than they are to carry out, but I believe I am a better person when I try to practice them.

Peace, Jerry Schnell

The Concept of Powerlessness has come full-bore as I have been living alone for almost a year and a half now. Even in Konrad's last few years, as he lost the ability to do common household tasks, I needed to pick up the gauntlet and take on the challenge myself. Some of those challenges I could accomplish on my own and of course in my own human way I would "pat myself on the back." However, when attempting other chores and trying and failing several times, it was time to seek a Higher Power, namely Jesus!

Knowing that the Lord has always been there for me I found myself turning to Him more and more, not only for help in menial tasks but for wisdom in helping Konrad

see next page

Agape from page 3

through his increasing stages of dementia. I would flood Jesus with prayers for patience and strength for myself as well. Even the slightest prayer, "Now where did I put that?" or "Please, Jesus, help me figure this out," and there He was with an answer. I now find that I cannot go through a day without consulting my Holy Spirit.

So the concept of powerlessness for me is knowing that I can go to the one who is all-powerful and seek His aid. Jesus never fails! His power is LOVE. His LOVE is FORGIVENESS. His FORGIVENESS is His willingness to suffer and die, to be resurrected and ascended to His throne on high so that I might be saved FROM myself – FOR Him. Thank you Jesus! All Glory to God!

Jane Schwencke, 11/2/20

Hello, my name is Gay and I'm Sonia's mom. I have enjoyed worship and fellowship with Grace folks several times during my visits to PT.

About powerlessness . . . 44 years ago I was introduced to an Al-Anon group and the concept of powerlessness. As a young mother in a stressful marriage situation, I found myself being whiplashed between trying to control everything around me and giving in to deep despair. The simple and profound 12 steps of Al-Anon were an antidote to these ups and downs.

The first step: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable." Having some quiet time each day, to think about how I could use this step in a practical way, was an immediate help to me. And in the years since, I have seen its applicability in many other areas of my life . . . especially recently in the area of politics.

The serenity prayer of 12 step programs is a partner to that first step . . . "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

When anxiety enters my life, I am well served by quiet time with the serenity prayer and the first step.

Gay Frojen

**** Thanks everyone who shared their thoughts!**

The question for the next *Voice of Grace: How does prayer change you? How does prayer change the world?*

Endowment Grant Applications Due

Grant applications are due December 31, 2020, and can be sent to Lois Sherwood at lolo.sherwood@gmail.com or the church office at gracelutheranpt@gmail.com. Check with Lois Sherwood or Crissy Dunlap for guidelines



Call Committee

Please pray for your council as they work toward filling this committee, and for those who commit to this very important process of calling a pastor. Watch for the names of those who have agreed to serve to be announced in the very near future.

Greetings from the Transition Team!

By the time you read this, the MSP (Mission Site Profile) will be complete and on its way to the ELCA. It's been about a five-month project for us (Joe Wagner, Marijo Brantner, Dennis Struecker, Penny Westerfield, Brad Lee, and me, Patty Dunmire.) We were advised by Pastor Al Berg, who was very helpful. Crissy Dunlap also helped us throughout this process.

We are very thankful that so many Grace members took the time to fill out our surveys. The surveys were instrumental in completing the MSP. A number of things came through consistently. Grace is a strong congregation with many areas of outreach and service to the surrounding community. Grace has willing and talented people to do God's work. A sense of being ready to grow in different areas came through in comments and responses. Even in the midst of a pandemic we as a congregation are looking forward to increasing our membership by reaching out to younger folks and others. There were a number of comments that dealt with social justice and how Grace can be more involved. We miss our friends at the Emmanuel Apostolic Church in Bremerton. We are missing being together each Sunday and at the other activities that take place at Grace.

I believe that there is someone out there right now that will be our new pastor at Grace. God will lead them here with the comments that describe Grace in the MSP that we completed.

Next part will be for the Call Committee.

Thanks for your prayers and support,
Patty Dunmire, Chair of the Transition Team

Goodbye and Hello

The year 2020 has been a long, hard one. We've had covid, politics, and unrest to deal with. We have dealt with stress and some of us have lost loved ones. Now, it's time to say, Hello, 2021! and Good riddance to you, 2020! It is especially time now to work at being our best Christian selves—compassionate and caring human beings. The New Year traditionally is a time to make resolutions, so let's make one to focus on what is good in our family, our friends, and our neighbors.

My son has just finished decorating the outside of our home. Now, it looks like my job is beginning – decorating indoors. Decorating the tree and the house has always been something that I looked forward to doing. This year, because of the restrictions, it feels very different. There will be only me, son Mark and daughter Laura – the rest of the family of course won't be making the trip. I admit I didn't feel much like decorating. It occurred to me that a lot of my efforts might have been for the benefit of others. But then, I said to myself, "Self, it is just as important to decorate as usual, and maybe even more important, this year. Even though there are only three of us and not a crowd, these three need the same traditions where possible." In years past, the house was full and noisy with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and children. Gradually things have changed with people moving away, and yes, passing away. Now we have travel and gathering restrictions. There will be phone calls though from those not able to be here and we will all get a chance to say I love you and I miss you. We do still have the memories and the traditions.

Perhaps this year will be a year to have more time to quietly reflect on what the season is really about. I have been looking at Advent devotionals, of which there are many. There is a nice one that I downloaded from the *Gather* page at ELCA. It's called Singing, Writing, Moving, Connecting – Advent Rituals for Uncertain Times. One of the items suggested is keeping a gratitude journal. I am not a good one for journaling, but a gratitude journal is much simpler—just write down the things for which you are grateful. And truthfully, there are many.

Let's work together, all of us, towards making 2021 a year of moving forward to understanding and peace.

Mary

Video Worship!

Did you get a chance to attend the video worship? Isn't it great! We owe a big thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make it happen.

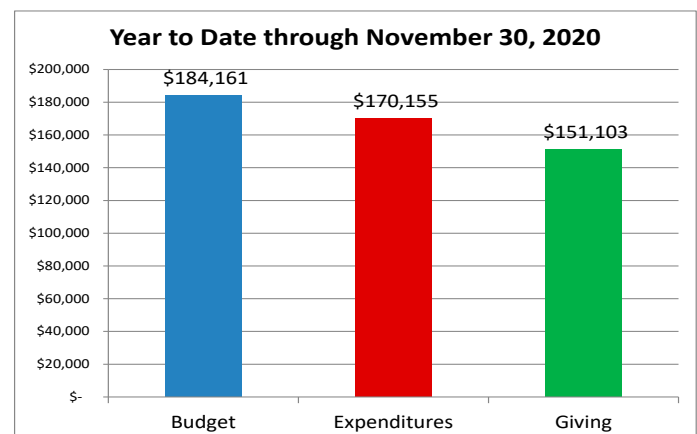
Martha's Quilt

contributed by Jane Schwencke



My mom, Martha Zeits, was not a seamstress. I knew she belonged to the quilting group at Grace Lutheran, but was surprised when, at her memorial service on August 2, 2019, the ladies of Grace hung her pieced-together (with safety pins) quilt for all to see, which was very kind as it was very large. They insisted I take it and get it professionally quilted. My dear childhood friend, Pat (Pollard) McMinds, being a quilter, took it for me and found a professional quilter in Chimacum. Together we took it there. When it was finished being quilted, Pat then took it with her to Palm Springs and finished it by hand, also sewing four matching pillowcases with leftover material. The end result is beautiful and fits our king bed perfectly. In this case, it certainly took a village for me to receive this lovely, treasured remembrance of my mom. Thank you, Ladies of Grace! Peace be with you all, Claudia (Zeits) Carr

Grace Financials



Grace Gallery

My Favorite Things



The song “My Favorite Things” has many good memories for me. I remember as a young child singing it with my classmates. “My Favorite Things” was the first solo I sang in high school for a music concert. The song once again became a part of my life when I was chosen for the role of Mother Abbess in the Sound of

Music. In the play version, it is sung as a duet with Maria.

The phrase “when the dog bites, when the bee stings when I’m feeling bad” brings to mind 2020. It’s been a difficult year, and yet, with all the hard times there were some good things mixed in with them. People connecting with people in many different ways. Seeing a friend’s happiness when we celebrated her birthday at a distance in her driveway. Delivering medication and food to people who were in need. I’m sure all of you have experienced the negatives of 2020, but have also experienced some favorite things.

I decided to check in with my artist friends and ask them to submit some examples of their own favorite artwork. They did not necessarily need to be made in 2020. Instead, artwork that has given them joy in the making and a “raindrops on roses” kind of feeling.



Art Institute of Chicago

Wonderful museum walking distance from my work. Site of first date with Tom!

South Shore Train

Rode this with my mom as a child to downtown Chicago and later as an adult commuting to work.

Nina



This pastel painting came about because we have been feeding peanuts to squirrels in our yard. First there was just one, then another and today a third one showed up. The first one is getting quite tame. They have competition from a BlueJay who sneaks up and grabs a peanut when he can. So almost everyday we have a wildlife show to watch out the kitchen window. Thank you God, for all the little “critters”.

Glora Sutton



Two of Carol Kong’s favorite Earl art.



Piggy No Bank

This is a favorite of mine; a mistake, though - I forgot to put the coin slot in her!

Mary

Orphan Update From Kenneth

Greetings to you through the loving name of our Lord Jesus Christ! I reach to you greetings from my expanded family and also from our sponsored students. The little David Clark is well and yes, he is making us busy.

Schools in Uganda reopened for Candidate students at both primary and secondary levels, plus the university finalists. The rest of the students continue to receive studies while at home. All our candidates; Kevin, James, Daniel, Juliet, Dagalous, Josephine, Samuel, and Deborah Nakitto returned to school.

The government gave strict guidelines regarding the students who returned to school; Parents are not supposed to visit them and there are no holidays for them in between the terms. We were asked especially monetary support to the students through the accounts offices or class teachers using mobile money transfers and speaking to our students through school teachers' contacts (Class teachers). I am glad to report that all our students are doing well. Our students on skills training also returned this month of November.

Thank you so much for your support,
Kenneth Kasule

If you are a correspondent with one of the children Kenneth mentions who are now back at school, now would be a good time to send them an email of encouragement and care as they are unable to be with family.

On October 15,
Kenneth and Sylvia
were blessed with their
second son --

David Clark Kasule.



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.

Please return your 2021 pledge cards by December 20.
Thank you!



Remembering St. Nicholas

by Linda Gaenicke

During the Advent season my family celebrated the fest of St. Nicholas. David and I also continued this fest with our three children. When we lived in Germany, we were happy to find that it was also celebrated there. Our youngest daughter, Miriam, lived in Holland, and realized that this fest was almost as important as Christmas but it has some different variations. I miss doing this as it marked the coming of Advent for me. The stories and traditions of St. Nickolas vary so you might want to look some of them up.

This is how we celebrated. On the evening of December 5th, we would clean a pair of shoes or boots. We would then place them outside our bedroom doors. Now if you were a good child during the year or at least the last week, St. Nick would leave a treat in your boots, usually gold-covered chocolate coins. Along with that would be some little treat like a coloring book or toy car. If you were not a well-behaved child, you got a hunk of coal. One year my uncle put a piece of coal in a shoe and I was heartbroken, but my parents had also placed the coins and little treat in them.

The story that I learned about St. Nickolas was that during the early medieval times some pirates had overtaken a town in Turkey and captured all the children. The pirates were going to sell the children into slavery. Upon hearing this, St Nickolas, who was the Bishop of Mira at that time, decided to rescue the children. He went into the church and stripped it of all the gold, silver, and jewels and exchanged it for the children.

This story was my favorite one. You will find more traditions and miracles attributed to him if you search the web.

Who is St. Nicholas?

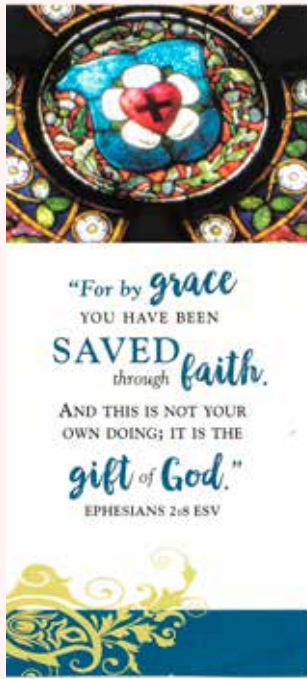
Nicholas was born during the third century in the village of Patara in Asia Minor, on the southern coast of Turkey. He was raised to be a devout Christian. Nicholas used his inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He was made Bishop of Myra and became known for his generosity to those in need, his love for children, and his concern for sailors and ships.

Bishop Nicholas suffered for his faith; he was exiled and imprisoned. He attended the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. He died December 6, AD 343 in Myra. The anniversary of his death became a day of celebration, St. Nicholas Day.

As said by Linda in her story above, you can find out more about this fascinating person on the web. Just google him!

Words to Remember

Contributed by Jane Schwencke



JOY

Joy does not come from positive predictions about the state of the world. It does not depend on the ups and downs of the circumstances of our lives. Joy is based on the spiritual knowledge that, while the world in which we live is shrouded in darkness God has overcome the world. Jesus says it loudly and clearly: "In the world you will have troubles, but rejoice, I have overcome the world." The surprise is not that, unexpectedly, things turn out better than expected. No, **the real surprise is that God's light is more real than all the darkness, that God's truth is more powerful than all human lie, that God's love is stronger than death.**

Henri Nouwen

Contributed by Linda Gaenicke

A Tribute to Jim Espenson

During the previous pastoral interim time, Jim (following Mark Dembro) served as council chair and provided the leadership we all needed. Although he and I had differing views about decisions by the ELCA, we both agreed



passionately on this: Grace Lutheran had much more that connects us than could divide us. We crafted a statement that was adopted by Council and congregation that we would agree to disagree. We would stay together as a unit of the Body of Christ no matter how much we might be tempted to split apart. His calm leadership and strong faith will always be appreciated by the people of Grace.

Jim was a wonderful part of the band that played monthly (or even more often perhaps) at our worship services at the nursing home now known as Life Care Center. He loved singing to the people there and they loved singing along or just listening.

I was saddened to learn of his disease and now his departure, but I like to think of him singing and playing in the heavenly band, his infectious smile adding to the brightness.

Grace and peace,
Beth Orling

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 in the *Voice*. Please submit photos of your work to maryeronen@gmail.com,

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maryeronen@gmail.com
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Church Staff

Interim Pastor: Rev. Al Berg
greaceptpastor@gmail.com
Parsonage 360-344-2517
Office Manager: Crissy Dunlap
gracelutheranpt@gmail.com
Organist/Pianist: Lisa Lanza
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maryeronen@gmail.com

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