

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.

Sunday School at Grace

Yes! We do have Sunday School at Grace. At present, it is a small one, but it is growing. There are 5 elementary school age children and two moms. The moms lead Bible study, offer a craft and include a hands-on activity. They recently started using a new curriculum from Spark.



Three of the Sunday Schoolers admiring their "Alleluia" art work.



The Sunday School class-room wall shows what they have been doing.

Worship - Sundays, 10:30 a.m. and
Online at gracelutheranpt.org



May 2022

Grace Lutheran Church, 1120 Walker Street, Port Townsend, WA 98368 - (360) 385-1595 www.gracelutheranpt.org

Quilting for Lutheran World Relief

Our quilters here at Grace have been very busy. Recently they packed up 100 quilts for sendoff to LWR. They meet every Monday morning, rain or shine, sun or wind, and sort, cut and sew a seemingly endless supply of odd fabrics and magically turn them into beautiful quilts.

Here you see them displayed on our pews in the sanctuary awaiting blessing before being packed up.



A quilt's progress.



Pastor's Message

I happened to turn 39 years old on April 3, just a few short weeks ago.

The familiar joke is that it is to be the first of many 39th birthdays. I don't know about that. I don't expect to hide it at all when I reach the big 4-0 next year but I do expect it to be a bit surreal.

"People assume that time is a strict progression from cause to effect, but actually from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint," the Doctor (as in Doctor Who) proclaimed. "It's more like a big ball of wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey stuff."

Isn't that the truth? In some regards, it seems time froze in my mind. Mention "20 years ago" and my instinctive estimate is, "Oh, yeah, sometime around the late Seventies."

Well, no, come to think of it, that can't be right. Well, surely that's no later than 1990 ... right?

I get a song stuck in my head and Google a line in the lyrics I can't remember. I am thinking this is a new song I just started hearing on the radio "a couple of years ago" and the world's know-it-all knowledge database will tell me it's more like 14 or 15 years old.

Ugh.

Now, I know no small fraction of those of you reading this article have experienced twice as many birthdays and then some. Perhaps my naïveté about the perils of aging are worth a chuckle.

But I noticed something when recording Betty Nelson's April 23 funeral service in my personal book of pastoral records. I have now presided at 39 burials and/or memorial services. I have little doubt that will become 40 before I become 40.

There is plenty of reason for lament and grief when there is a death and we lay someone to rest. Beyond personal connections, it is often seen as another sign that the church herself is dying. I have been a part of congregations (though I have heard this at Grace, specifically, I should note) in which sighs of resignation preface the concern that our only outreach these days seems to be funerals.

I don't think that has actually been entirely true in any context where I have heard it. Yet I have had occasion to ponder, maybe we really shouldn't dismiss the potential in this form of outreach.

I don't know that I would be a part of a Christian community today, and if I were it probably would not be a Lutheran one, if not for the hospitality my family received at Trinity Lutheran Church in Freeland on Whidbey Island when my grandmother died at age 65. I was 13 then and the day of her memorial service is largely a blur. Sitting in the front row at the center. The green shade on the reading lamp. Kind words and handshakes. Finally, a framed portrait used in the service gifted to us when the fellowship hall was being cleaned and put back in order and it was time to go home.

There was nothing particularly extravagant or exceptional about the way we were received that day. Just that the church invited us in at all, in a time of great need and loss of grounding, as people who had never previously darkened the doors planted a seed. That metaphor, I fear, is painfully overused sometimes these days. In part because it's easy to say we did it, we planted the seed, and all we can do now is hope. We read and we hear the Parable of the Growing Seed in Mark 4:26-29 but more often than not, we never see the seed grow and we can be discouraged. But the seed planted in me that day went underground and lie dormant for a number of years.

When I was invited to Sunday morning worship for the first time in my life five years later, that seed predisposed me to be warm toward Trinity. To give church in general benefit of a doubt I might not have otherwise after a Wednesday youth group experience ended up going sour.

In my life, that seed eventually blossomed to a point where I got married in that church, baptized my youngest son there and became ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament there.



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So don't sell the potential for outreach – even amidst the sadness accompanying a funeral – short. God indeed works in mysterious ways. Not the least of which is bringing, out of death, new life. 'Tis the season, after all.

And none of us is too old for that story.

With the blessings of Eastertide,

Pastor Sean

So, What Is Via de Cristo?

by Mary Ronen

Lately, you may have heard Pastor Sean and some others speak of their Via de Cristo weekend. You may be wondering just what that is. First off, it's not a cult, nor is it another church.

Via de Cristo started as "Cursillo®" in the late 1940s in the Spanish Catholic church and moved to the United States in the late 1950s. In 1971 some Lutheran lay and clergy attended a Catholic Cursillo. The first Lutheran-sponsored weekends were held in 1972, and have now been held in over 25 states and some foreign countries. In 1986 the National Lutheran Secretariat changed the name to Via de Cristo, meaning "Way of Christ."

Via de Cristo is a highly-structured weekend designed to strengthen and renew the faith of Christian people and bring them to a new awareness of living in God's grace. It is a combined effort of lay people and clergy toward renewal of the church.

During a Via de Cristo weekend, there are morning and evening chapel services, communion, prayers, and music. Meals and snacks are provided. There are talks given by members of the clergy and laity followed by group discussion. It doesn't stop there: we have twice-monthly "reunion" meetings here at church, and there are several larger reunions with the greater VdC community.

I first attended a Via de Cristo weekend in 2013; and for me it was a very powerful and moving experience. I had had unanswered questions and doubts about my faith and many were answered and resolved during this time. If I am counting right, 17 of our friends here at Grace have attended a weekend. Everyone experiences the weekend a little differently, but everyone has the opportunity to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ.

The next planned weekend is in the fall of 2023. I would be glad to answer any questions you may have, or direct you to someone else if I don't have the answer.

Grace Gallery

A Work in Progress!



As you look at the gallery you may notice that the art is not being changed out all at once. We have started a progressive gallery. This works quite well as people tend to work at a different pace.

We still have some blank spaces so please participate! We could really use some art done by the Grace children. Whatever your age, feel free to join in on the fun.

A Poem of Victory

by Judy Best

*I have faced the enemy and
I have won
Not with lies and devilery
Or conceit and trickery
But with the truth.
In the end
Good will always
Conquer over evil
God is the good in
This universe and
When He came to dwell
As man, died then rose in glorious victory,
He gave the power to you and me
To conquer evil
If only by death.
"For it is in dying we are
born to eternal life."
St. Francis of Assisi wrote in
The 1100s.
He gave man the power to conquer
Hate with Love
And suspicion with trustworthiness
And hell with Heaven.
Every day is a good day because
"God is with us"
Emmanuel
Jesus Thank you*



Lutherans who work with fibers often turn to their fabric or yarn when faced with calamity. It's calming to work with fibers, and productive outcomes (quilts or shawls) often go to those facing the calamity directly. It's no different with the Russian assault happening in Ukraine. Here are some ways you can employ fiber and make a positive impact on this developing humanitarian crisis.

Quilts and kits previously made are being sent to aid those directly impacted by the assault on Ukrainian people, according to Lutheran World Relief reports. When you're feeling helpless and don't know what to do, you can continue making quilts and assembling kits. LWR will need to replenish supplies, and you can make a positive contribution with your work. Maybe you can even invite someone new to the efforts.

Praying is always an appropriate response: prayers for those directly impacted, prayers for world leaders, prayers for peace and justice. Combine your prayer petitions and yarn by making prayer shawls or prayer squares. While your shawls and squares might not end up in the hands of a Ukrainian, they can benefit people closer to home. Check out Women of the ELCA's free resource, *Knitting as a Spiritual Practice* (womenoftheelca.org/filebin/pdf/resources/Knitting)

For patterns, do an online search for more information about prayer shawls and prayer squares or check with other fiber artists in your congregation or community. See the blog post (their most popular ever!) that includes prayer squares, and you can check there too for a prayer square pattern, womenoftheelca.org/blog/post/will-prayer-squares-inspire-a-new-ministry-for-you



How to neighbor

For a Christian, all the world's a neighbor, and "neighboring" one another is the only way to live in the neighborhood. Jesus, in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, leaves the lawyer with advice for living in the neighborhood: "Go and do likewise." He doesn't say: "Go and do exactly the same thing," which would limit disciples to searching out men beaten and left for dead on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Copycat behavior is not discipleship. But Jesus also doesn't say: "Go and do whatever you want," which would let the disciples do their own thing. Anything-goes behavior is also not discipleship.

Rather, Jesus challenges the lawyer to "Go and do likewise," which dares him to neighbor everyone around him in any situation he finds himself in, acting with the same kind of gut-wrenching compassion that the Samaritan did. That's biblical mercy in motion – and with skin.

This message is excerpted from "A story within a story," by Martha Stortz in the March 2018 *Gather* magazine.

Gather Magazine

Selections from *Gather* magazine called Daily Grace are often reprinted here. As the magazine of WELCA, *Gather* an interesting mix of articles, devotions, and stories that anyone can appreciate. It is published 10 times a year. A \$19.95 print subscription also includes digital access. For information and to subscribe, go to gathermagazine.org.

Mark Your Calendar

Adult forum, Sundays, 9:15 a.m.
Worship, Sundays, 10:30 a.m.
Quilting, Mondays, 10 a.m.
Lectionary Study, Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m.
Men's Bible Breakfast, Fridays, 8 a.m., at The Roadhouse
ViadeCristo Reunion, 2nd & 4th Friday evenings, 5:30 p.m.
Council, 2nd Tuesdays, 5:15 p.m.

Semiannual Congregational meeting, June 26, 11:45 a.m.

Sign up for Daily Grace

Daily Grace is an on-the-go companion for your spiritual journey, offering a faith reflection every day. Encounter God's extravagant, boundless, and often surprising grace by signing up for a daily email message. You can also download the app for your IOS and Android devices. Learn more at welca.org/dailygrace.

Orphan Update

by Sharon Dembro

Below is a message from Kenneth Kasule. The cost for the extra between-term program to help prepare for the national exams is \$42 per student. We have forwarded funds to pay for our ten students who will sit the exams.



Caroline Katshusabe

Thanks to all who have signed up to correspond with one of our children. We have two more young women in need of writing friends. This would involve sending them an email via Kenneth three times a year when they meet after each school term. Their pictures, bios and the sign-up sheet are in the Fellowship Hall.

Greetings to everyone at Grace through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

I am hoping that this message finds you in good health. I take this opportunity to reach out to you with greetings from all our students, they are doing well. It's only Mike Ssempijja I found with a cut on his foot the last time I visited Mpenja secondary school, and Deborah Nakitto from Kasaka secondary school had got Malaria for the second time this term. She got treatment and we discussed getting long-sleeved shirts and long skirts she can wear during preps because we realized that it is perhaps during that time in the night reading outside her bed mosquito net that she gets mosquito bites. (I had already provided her

with a bed mosquito net she is sleeping under.)

The Covid 19 situation in the country is getting better, and better every other day to the point that people have started behaving as if it is over which worries me a little! We have vaccines in the country and people keep getting vaccinated.

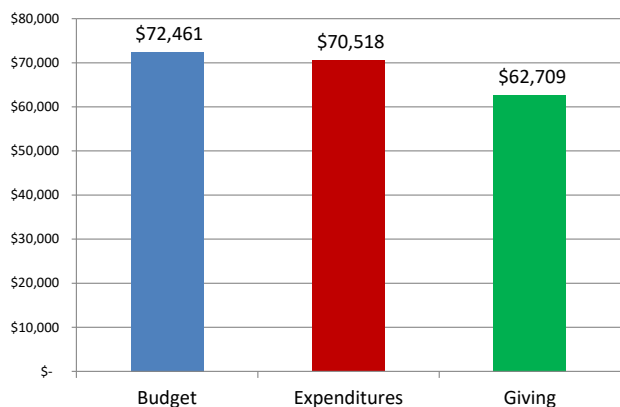
Please I request your guidance; students have started writing their exams for the end of term one. We had parents meetings so far in both Azizi Mulambu's school and for Mpenja Secondary school. Among the ideas discussed in those meetings, schools were requesting us to let the candidate students stay at school for special Holiday programs to help them cover some areas that they feel were not covered and stand a chance to cover the syllabus by the end of the year before seating for National Exams; Parents approved schools requests in those meetings. I have called other schools to know if they will have the same programs and it seems all schools are going to have the same programs for their candidate students. However, students in the boarding section will each have to pay UGX 150,000 for that program and they won't have a break between the ongoing term one and term two.

God bless you, *Kenneth*



Dagalous with his Easter package

Grace Financials



God, our hearts are broken at the senseless deaths caused by gun violence. Families mourn, children live in fear, and some respond by arming themselves with more guns to end life. We ask that you touch our hearts with your love, heal our brokenness, and turn us away from violence toward peace. Help us to transform our own hearts and to seek peaceful ways of resolving our differences. Let our hands reach out and connect with those who feel alone, those who live in fear, and those suffering from mental illness. Let our voices be raised asking our legislators to enact gun laws to protect all in our society. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Port Ludlow Woman Returns from Her Native Land Ukraine with Emotional Saga

by Elena Salaks

Editor's Note: Elena Salaks, a self-described "sleep-deprived marketing/tech professional, mom, wife, friend and human rights activist," lives in Port Ludlow. She recently returned to her native Ukraine on a mission to help those impacted by the Russian invasion. This is a condensed version of an article she posted online. It was printed in the June issue of the Port Ludlow Voice, and is reprinted here with permission.

I traveled to the Ukrainian border with the intent to help those displaced by the Russian invasion in Ukraine. I will never forget what I saw and heard ... the faces, the tears, the kindness, and the horror. I still find it hard to reconcile my thoughts into something cohesive—but here's a rambling attempt.

I joined an organization called Solid Rock Mission that was coordinating two-week rotations as a way to supply a steady funnel of volunteers to help those escaping war atrocities. I have the privilege of a supportive family and flexible employer. I was on a flight to Poland a week later.

The week leading up to the trip was a whirlwind of anxiety and gratitude. Our \$7,000 fundraising goal was surpassed within 24 hours, and we ultimately raised over \$45,000.

Once we (five volunteers) arrived in Poland, a contact was waiting for us, and we were joined by four more volunteers.

Our first assignment was to help at the Krakow Main, a large train and bus station where many Ukrainian refugees were passing through on their way to their final destinations.



I loitered around the temporary shelter at Platform 4, near a booth that gave free tickets to refugees for select regions across Europe. Countless refugees would come, dazed from exhaustion, looking to find out where they should go next. We'd then scramble to find the information ourselves and verify with seasoned volunteers, so we could give refugees useful input.

Our ambition, curiosity, and language skills made us impactful at the train station and later at the border, orphanage, and refugee center.

Volunteers came from all over the world, so I'd leverage my English alongside my rusty Ukrainian and Russian to translate, connect individuals, and help moms with their kids and grandparents figure out where to go.

Many of the Ukrainian refugees were predominantly Russian-speaking, and some of the Polish volunteers and staff nearby didn't speak English, Russian, or Ukrainian. The Ukrainian and Polish languages have enough similarities that I could translate what the refugee said in Russian to Ukrainian for the Polish individual to understand.

The label "refugee" incites feelings of pity in me. But this was different. These were women with their children and grandparents—exhausted, infuriated, scared ... yet brave. And I could see remnants of what they were like before the war broke out. I saw myself in them. And it wasn't pity I felt. It was hurt. My heart physically hurt.

Hearing their stories hurt even more.

A mom about my age showed me a picture of what was once her apartment, now showing two gaping holes in the wall after shelling tore through the brick.

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There was nothing I could do but listen. I tried to give her money, some cash I had on hand. It was my attempt to help ease her journey.

“I don’t need your money. I need my home,” she said.

Although we hadn’t initially planned to go inside Ukraine, we ended up crossing into Ukraine as soon as we arrived at the border, as that was where we could be the most help. I had never crossed a border on foot.

The situation on the Ukraine side was starkly different from what we had just left. Along one side of the corridor was a long line of people. Some had been waiting for eight hours. My first act of service at the border was to pass out food to refugees waiting in line.

Each day was different in how we’d help. One day I joined the group that was to bring food for the guards. We got it at the Ukrainian restaurant where we ate at the night before. While waiting for the food, one of the local volunteers shared her perspective on the war and described what middle class life is like in Ukraine (or what it was like before the war).

She was from the same region where I was born, so it was enlightening to hear what my life would have been like had my parents not immigrated to the States.

The Polish guards refused to accept our food, so we gave it to the Ukrainian guards, who got teary-eyed, explaining that they do 24-hour shifts and hadn’t had a chance to eat, given how busy it was.

There’s no doubt the war is leaving emotional scars. When we heard air raid sirens, the kids refused to walk through the walkway that had windows because they worried that they were being bombed. And when we heard an airplane, they got scared, saying it was Putin coming to kill them.

My trauma response is to disassociate, so I spent much of my mental capacity trying to intentionally stay present. It just didn’t feel real. I felt like I was in a movie, listening to these stories. I haven’t experienced it, but these humans in front of me were telling me what they saw, and their eyes were so sad. Even children just six years old had sorrow in their eyes. I will remember their eyes, their hugs, their stories.

I wish we could do more. Coming home and going back to just donating money feels transactional and distant. It robs me of the aura, the smell, the energy of my people. I empathize with the people who want to volunteer but can’t. And at the same time, I cry that such an opportunity has to exist.



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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.

The 11th Uganda Concert

The Uganda Concert was held May 22 at First Presbyterian Church for the first time since the Covid pandemic began. It was a wonderful, well-attended concert on a beautiful afternoon. The music was just fantastic with standing ovations more than once!

