



GRACE
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Grace for Today

MARCH 2020 • VOLUME 19, NO. 3

WHY DO WE DO WHAT WE DO?.....by Pastor Ken Gibson

You will be receiving further communication over the weeks and months to come regarding our budget, but allow me share some of my thoughts as we proceed with this discussion.

As some of you may have surmised watching me over the years, when it comes to the numbers side of things, I tend to stay out of the details. While I understand the spreadsheets, the budget and all the nuances relating to this work of the church and appreciate its importance, I also trust and appreciate our bookkeepers, our treasurers, and many others who have worked so hard to make sure everything adds up. These folks are remarkable, truly remarkable. We are blessed to have them with us, and at the very least we need to say; "Thank You."

During our annual meeting last month, we discussed the budget and the realities contained therein. What I want to share is not so much the numbers and the budget "lines" and making sure all the i's are dotted and t's are crossed, but rather that we understand the information with knowledge and passion of how the numbers, how these budget "lines", as it were, reflect our mutual ministry and, in so many cases, I would suggest, real lives.

For example, as we look at the compensation line, what I see behind that line are not just the expenses of having pastors. I see a dedicated staff who I know work extremely hard every day. As the one who has served with most of these dedicated people now for a number of years, I have come to realize several things. One is that we do not pay all that much. In fact, with the skills sets they possess, and I have observed, each of them could make more salary in other settings. Further, none of our staff members receive any benefits like health insurance or dental or eye care etc. through their employment here at Grace. These realities cause me to try to be a gracious supervisor. After all, it is our name. I try hard to make our staff feel loved and appreciated. I grant extra days off outside of the handbook at times when they share a need to do such. I don't insist on a "must be in the seat in the office during work hours" type of approach. Rather, I have tried to suggest that as long as we get done what we know has to be done, some flexibility can be afforded.

And, as I look at the budget lines of worship and music, I see and know and hear each week the countless hours of dedication that not only our music director(s) put in, which are far too numerous to count, but also those many wonderful members who rehearse and prepare for the services each week. Putting forth countless hours of dedication like that, quite simply, always amazes me. Or, when I see the line for education, I see the faces of our Sunday school children in Sunday school singing and smiling and learning of the ONE in whose name we gather. Likewise, in that same line, I see the faces of wonderful faithful men and ladies who gather each week to share in Bible study, sharing the wonder of God's word through scripture. Or in our confirmation line, I see our young people growing and sharing in their faith in the classroom as we read the Bibles we provide for them, and I see them at Bible camp where they can share and experience in a safe environment a faith that comes through sharing with others.

Yes, in each of these lines there are people of God, and in some of these lines there are people we will never meet or ever come to know. Our benevolence to the church-wide ministries of the Synod and the ELCA are not just dollars. They are lives needing the love of Jesus, and in our giving, we help the Gospel go forth in this synod, this country and around the world. Our local benevolence dollars further lift up people in our own Woodstock community who need to know God is real and Jesus is there for them through us and these "lines." I guess I am asking us to consider how we might answer the question: "Why are we doing all of this? All of it? Why do we do it? Our answer must be: ***"Because the Gospel is worth it."***

LENTEN SOUP LUNCHESES—Lenten Soup lunches began February 26 with Ash Wednesday and will continue through April 9, Maundy Thursday. **We are desperately in need of more cooks** to create the soups we serve each week. You can be reimbursed for your expenses. Please see the Activity Binder for more information or to sign up. If you have any questions, call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063.

PHOTO DIRECTORIES ARE IN—If you had your photo taken with Lifetouch, your photo directory is labeled with your name and is available at the Welcome Desk. If you did not have a picture taken, but would like a copy, they are on sale for \$10.00 in the church office.

BULLETIN & PRESENCE LIGHT SPONSORS— Our 2020 **Bulletin & Presence Light** sponsor sheets are available in the green binder at the Welcome Center. A month prior to your sponsoring, a form will be sent to you requesting information and a donation of \$20 for the Bulletins & \$10 for the Presence Light. Thank you for helping us fund the weekly bulletins and presence lights.

PRAYERS—Please lift up these petitions in your prayers—To become a praying member of the Friends in Prayer, please submit name and e-mail address to dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org.

World: Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, churchwide staff & their families, Bishop Jeff Clements, synod staff & their families, those serving in military conflicts, Arusha Town Lutheran Parish in Tanzania (our companion parish), Scott Bunch serving in the military.

Woodstock: Pastor Ken Gibson & his family; Pastor Amanda Bergstrom & her family; Grace Staff; Grace Council Health Concerns: Charlie Bell (friend of Jamielynn Wedoff), Rev. Jim Berg (friend of Marlene Botts), Shirley Berna, Mary Sue Boerner (friend of Paul Lockwood & Diane Baker-Lockwood), Dee Bohn, Brian Bradford (friend of Diane Baker-Lockwood), Myron Callihan (brother of Susan Payton), Jim Davis, Nancy Davis, Lori Dechant, Patrice Dunn, Robert Giron (brother of Patty Kozlow), Tom Goggin, Becca Guenther (niece of Gretchen & Claude Hutchens), Tamasa Gutierrez (mother of Patty Kozlow), Sue Hanson-Smith (friend of Barb Aavang), Liz Henniges (wife of Al Henniges), Steve Kosmen (loved one of the Koehn family), Elayna Kuipers (friend of the Wedoff Family), Anna Larsen (sister of Al Henniges), Elizabeth Lynd Loser, Amanda McNally (grandniece of Diane Baker-Lockwood), Dick McNally, Sarah McAllister (friend of Lauren Kleinjan), Karen Millman, Tammy Millman (daughter of Karen Millman), Kem Moran (friend of Barb Aavang), Collene Nelsen (cousin of Debbi Lynd), Gloria Ogle, Andrea Paetsch (aunt of Debbi Lynd), Linda Page (friend of Joe Evanoff), Georgia Petersdorf (sister-in-law of Gladys Renner), Pat Peterson, June Peterson, Carol Raffel, Bruce Randolph (husband of Ila Randolph), Carol Rank, Shawn Rank (son of Carol Rank), Barbara Readel, Sheila Readel, Jayne Reicher (great niece of Barb & Wayne Japp), Herb & Bev Renner (brother & sister in law of Ken & Gladys Renner), Jessie & Sue Robertson (friends of Ron, Mary & Kimberly Koehn), Carl Rossini (Godfather to Heidi Olsen), Nicholas Ruffino (brother of Nathan Ruffino), Joan Russell (mother of Sheri Conover), John Rust (Aavang family friend), Michael Schnepf (nephew of Sue & Terry Aavang), Colton Sciluffo (infant son of a friend of Joy Oberman), Nathaniel Shipp (family friend of Brian Meyers), Elsie Stoddard, Andrea Strayer (mother of Lisa Wahkowiak), Ginny Stroh (mother of Fay Wilson), Dave Sundby (brother-in-law of Deborrah Evanoff), Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahan), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Bev Visconti, Gino Visconti, Addie Jo Wedoff, Esther Wienke, Bud Winter, Ruth Zirves

Sorrow: Russ Freeman, Lois Bloese, Art Koeller (friend of Caryl Dierksen and former member of Grace), Eleanor Setser, Gary Zirves (son of Ruth Zirves)

If you wish to add a prayer request for the newsletter, please call the church office at 815-338-0554. Your prayer concern will run for one week and may be renewed. Submissions to the *Friends in Prayer* e-mail and phone teams may also be submitted by telephone to the church office or by e-mail to Gracewoodstock.org. Due to confidentiality laws, hospitals no longer notify churches or pastors when a member is hospitalized. If you or a member of your family have a medical procedure planned or is admitted to the hospital, please call the church office.

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE—The deadline for the March newsletter is **March 15th**. Please send articles to Lauren Kleinjan at lkleinjan@gracewoodstock.org, or the church office. Questions: Call the office at 815-338-0554.

LENT.....by Pastor Amanda

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

After festive worship services on Transfiguration Weekend we enter the season of Lent on Ash Wednesday with the glaring reminder of our mortality and incredible reminder of the cross of Christ-ashes imposed on our foreheads in the sign of the cross.

The season of Lent marks a turning, a returning towards God in the forty days preparing for the joy of Easter and the good news of Jesus’ resurrection. Yet until then, we slow down for a few intentional faith practices. Perhaps you intend to fast from something or add something to your daily life, to carve out a bit of time with God. Maybe you’ll slow down in worship as we kneel or remain seated for confession or gather around the altar for Holy Communion. We hope you’ll gather for midweek worship services too, for Holden Evening Prayer and reflection around the “Christ hymn” in the letter to the Philippians (Wednesdays at noon & 6:30 p.m.).

For even as we reflect on dusty ashes and death- we lean towards the signs of spring and new life that promise to surprise us. From death to life, Jesus leads us into the promise of the resurrection. Blessings to you, in these days of prayer and intentional faith practices. May the spirit stir up life from the dust and a sense of holy wonder at the name of Jesus.

SOUPER BOWL THANK YOU- Your generous offerings for the Souper Bowl of Caring on Super Bowl weekend created a \$505 gift to ELCA World Hunger. Thank you for joining Grace’s high school youth group in this nationwide effort to tackle hunger.

COME PRAY WITH US- Spirituality Team would like to invite you to come pray with us during the Prayer Vigil, which will be held on Good Friday, **April 10th**, from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. in the parlor at church. Look for the sign-up sheet to make sure all our time slots are covered, but there can be more than one person praying at one time. If you have a prayer request, please find the purple prayer cards at the Welcome Center. The congregation will have the opportunity to fill out the purple prayer request forms during the services and then place them in the basket at the Welcome Center, or put the card in the offering plates during services. These requests will be made available for everyone to pray for during the vigil. There will also be art supplies available in the parlor for other expressions of prayer. The Prayer Vigil is open to all ages. This would be a wonderful way to end our Lenten season. Please consider spending some time in prayer at Grace during the Pray Vigil.



PLAN TO PARTICIPATE; JOIN THE JOURNEY— Grow in your church life and identity!

March 4th begins our five Wednesday 30 minute **Mid-Week services held at noon and 6:30 P.M.**, a new time designed to connect our PrimeTime meal event. The services will increase our understanding of the Palm/Passion Weekend liturgy which begins with shouts of Hosanna! and as the story unfolds tells of the coming cries to Crucify. Come experience a convenient dinner with the family at our Wednesday PrimeTime meal (5:15-6:15 p.m.) and stay for our 30 minute Lent worship service at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Be twice fed!

This Lenten journey more fully prepares us to experience the depth of **Holy Week**; April 9th, Holy Thursday’s focus on the servant life; April 10th, Good Friday’s last hours of Jesus’ life and our response at noon and 7:00 p.m., and April 11th, the Vigil of Easter at 7:00 p.m. recognized as the single most significant event in the Christian calendar all of which bring us to celebrate the joy of resurrection on Easter Day, April 12th.

SENIOR LUNCHEON– Come join us on **March 24th!** Our menu consists of the Perfect Winter Salad, Scalloped Potatoes & Ham, Peas & Carrots, Rye Bread and Upside Down Sunshine Cake. Then we will learn about the woodworking talents of our very own Howard Hoyt. This retirement passion of his has evolved into an art form. Come and see many of his creations and learn how you too can use retirement to follow your passion. Sign up in the Activity Binder by March 22nd. If you have any questions, please call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063.



FIRST COMMUNION CLASS SIGN UP- We will be holding First Communion on Palm Sunday, **April 5th** at the 8:30 a.m. service. In order to participate, parent and child must attend the preparation class luncheon that will be held on Saturday, **April 4th** from 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. Please sign up in the black activity folder by Sunday, March 15th if you and your child will be participating in First Communion. For more information, please contact Jen Freeman at jfreeman@gracewoodstock.org or call the church office at (815) 338-0554.

SUNDAY BOOK CLUB– Sunday Book Club meets between services in room 102 and is continuing with the book “7 Great Women”. March 1st and 8th we will read & discuss Corrie Ten Boom, March 15th and 22nd will be on Rosa Parks, and March 29th we will begin Mother Teresa. Come and learn about what makes these women great! Homemade treats provided along with a lively discussion. If you have any questions, please call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063.

WOMEN'S RETREAT—LAKE GENEVA– Get excited for a women’s retreat for all ages! Join us on Saturday, **April 25th** at 10:00 a.m. for a team building event led by an experienced guide at Lake Geneva Canopy tours. Sign up on the events board by March 15th. The cost will be \$35 and will be collected when you sign up for this fun event.

CONFIRMATION CORNER

An update on what’s happening in our confirmation program.

This little confirmation corner we hope will serve as a way to keep the congregation up to date with all the events and learnings that are happening in our Grace confirmation ministry.

Last month we were very pleased with our Crandall’s Chicken Dinner Fundraiser event to support our confirmation youth and their continued summer bible camp experiences. Thank you to all who supported this wonderful event.

So then, what is happening in confirmation this month? March brings us Lent and shortened class sessions as we all attend our Lenten worship offerings together every Wednesday evening. Please make note that this year these evening Lenten offerings will begin right at 6:30pm. That is our usual start up time for class. Instead of going to room 106-107, confirmation youth are to head straight to the sanctuary for worship. It is the hope that such a time slot will allow for more families to stay for a half hour service following Prime Time. Please also note that the youth will NOT be done when worship ends at 7 PM. We will still meet after worship and use this time to hear from special guests. It is my hope that we will stay right in the worship space to alleviate so much time loss in having to walk 39 youth back to our usual classroom. **The students will be released at our usual time 7:30 PM.**

In April as we turn toward Easter, watch for the returning Pancake and Sausage Breakfast that will be served by our confirmation youth and families between the Sunday morning worship services!

CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCING EVENT- Please join us for a day of worship and learning at the Congregational Resourcing Event (CRE) **March 14, 2020** at Kishwaukee Community College, Malta, Illinois. Registration and more information can be found at <http://nisynod.org/cre/> then please add your name to sheet on the Activity Board if you are interested in carpooling with a group from Grace. In addition to worship and a keynote address from our ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, workshops feature topics including: Congregational Leadership, Evangelism/Outreach/Hospitality, Faith Formation & Growth, Social Justice, Spirituality/Wellness, Stewardship, Worship, and Youth/Family/Children.

IGNITE & boundless- Every three years, Grace’s high school youth group participates in the ELCA Youth Gathering, with over 30,000 high school students from across the country. The next ELCA Youth Gathering will be in 2021 in Minneapolis, MN around the theme “boundless: God beyond measure.” This summer, youth groups from across the Northern Illinois Synod will participate in a new synod youth gathering retreat, Ignite, at Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center in Oregon, IL. Thank you for your support for Grace’s Youth Group Summer Trips at Chili Fest on Transfiguration weekend, and for your ongoing prayers.

ADULT FELLOWSHIP EVENT- Come and experience the wonderful Sunday Brunch at the Fireside Dinner Theatre with us on Sunday, May 17th. Then shop a bit at the bakery or gift shops before enjoying the comedy “A Mighty Fortress,” another Church Basement Ladies production. The year is 1960 and the ladies are preparing for reformation. Laughter abounds as these ladies rule the kitchen! The Brunch begins at 11:15 with the play at 1:15. We will be car-pooling to this event; please indicate on sign-up sheet if you need a ride. The cost is \$82. For an information sheet or to sign up, please see the Activity Binder. If you have any questions, please call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063.

SHARING GOD’S GRACE THROUGH GIVING—ENDOWMENT UPDATE- Merriam Webster Dictionary definition: Endowment (noun) *“An endowment is a donation by an individual or institution, given with the intent of having that fund serve a specific purpose...”*

Grace Lutheran’s Endowment Committee members provide guidance in allocation of funds to support social services, mission and community. Each year the committee reviews several grant requests to support these initiatives. This year the committee is blessed and honored to approve \$46,700 to the following entities:

Credit Counselling Services of N. IL	\$3,000	Another Child Foundation	\$1,200
Family Health Partnership	\$5,000	One Collective	\$5,000
Scouts BSA, Troop 153	<u>\$2,500</u>	Lunches for Learning	\$6,000
Community Total	\$10,500	Sky Ranch	<u>\$5,000</u>
		Global Total	\$17,200
Wartburg Theological Seminary	\$10,500		
Lutheran School of Theology	\$500	Grace High School Youth	\$2,000
Tanzania Trip	<u>\$2,500</u>	Pastor Discretionary Fund	<u>\$3,500</u>
Synod Total	\$13,500	Congregational Total	\$5,500

WONDROUS LOVE—LENTEN DEVOTIONS FOR 2020- The Adult Education committee invites us all to join in sharing a Lent devotional as we journey together through the Lenten season. You can find the devotional, “WONDROUS LOVE” in the church office. The price is \$8.00 dollars and we hope that many of us can share together this devotional option during our Lenten time this year.

Wondrous Love provides a devotion for each day from Ash Wednesday to the Vigil of Easter. Devotions begin with an evocative image and a brief passage from the Gospel of Matthew. The writers then bring their own unique voices and pastoral wisdom to the Matthew 2 texts with quotation to ponder, reflections and prayers.



e-GRACE — To receive your Grace For Today newsletter online just stop by the Information Center and sign up for this service. No one will be removed from the “hard-copy” mailing list unless they have formally subscribed to the e-newsletter.

UPDATED PHONE AND ADDRESSES— Please contact the church office if your contact information has changed, or you no longer have/use a landline phone.

SYNOD NEWS-

Walking Together is the weekly e-news of the Northern Illinois Synod. Everyone is encouraged to subscribe by using the online form at <http://nisynod.org/pubs/wt/> or by sending names and email addresses to karin@nisynod.org.

SAVE THE DATE-

Sewing Circle—MAR 3
Afternoon Bible Study—MAR 3
Committee Meeting Night—MAR 3
Midweek Lent Services—MAR 4
Lenten Soup Lunch—MAR 4
DAP/Sycamore Dist. BSA Dinner—MAR 5
Adoration—MAR 6
Boy Scout Troop 153—MAR 9
Afternoon Bible Study—MAR 10
Midweek Lent Services—MAR 11
Lenten Soup Lunch—MAR 11
Sycamore Dist. Roundtable—MAR 12
Boy Scout Troop 153—MAR 16
Faith Circle—MAR 16
Sewing Circle—MAR 17
Afternoon Bible Study—MAR 17
Midweek Lent Services—MAR 18
Lenten Soup Lunch—MAR 18
DAP/Council—MAR 19
BSA Patrol Leaders Conf.—MAR 19
No Preschool/Conferences—MAR 19
No Preschool/Conferences—MAR 20
Preschool Spring Break—MAR 23-27
Senior Luncheon—MAR 24
Afternoon Bible Study—MAR 24
Midweek Lent Services—MAR 25
Lenten Soup Lunch—MAR 25
BSA Merit Badge Day—MAR 28
Boy Scout Troop 153—MAR 30
Afternoon Bible Study—MAR 31

Visit the Grace website for the most up-to-date information for all that is happening at Grace!

gracewoodstock.org

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