



GRACE

LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Grace for Today

MAY 2020 • VOLUME 19, NO. 5

WELL... "HOW ARE YOU DOING?"by Pastor Ken Gibson

The above question is one that I am sure many of us have heard many times as we have watched the minutes turn into hours and the hours into days and the days into weeks and now the weeks into another month of living during this pandemic. It is actually a good question to ask, as I think, in these times, that it is truly meant as a genuine inquiry into one's health and wellbeing. No longer is the question being used as a passing remark or a simple way to put voice in what is sometimes awkward silence when two people meet. No, not these days. The question is real and the intention and desire for an answer is surely heartfelt.

I know I have asked the question several times a day of late, and I have also been on the receiving end of that same question. I am grateful to those who inquire how I am doing and am compelled to ask the question of others. In addition to our desire to hear and know we are well or to stand ready to help if needed, it is keeping us connected even when we are apart. Our physical separation is tempered a bit by phone calls, handwritten notes to one another, Grace's online offerings, organized drive-by's, etc. as we weather these times together. I thank all of you for keeping in touch with each other as we carry forth our mission of *Sharing God's Grace*. Even during a pandemic, we live this reality. Sharing God's Grace is not merely a phrase for us but rather is a way of life as members of this community of faith we call Grace.

I thank the Grace council for their leadership these days and for making calls to everyone on the Grace roster. If you have not received a call, please call the church to update the records with your current phone number. Our council members have tried to call everyone, as I know they truly desire to know the answer to the question: "How are you doing?"

We sincerely pray for all to be well and living in the midst of God's Grace. We do not know when this world of separation will end, but we do know to whom we belong. Thanks be to God for the gift of our baptism that binds us together with bonds that can never be broken. Can you hear us all singing that great old hymn? I can and it is beautiful. So then, be well and keep asking the question. Let's continue to be the Grace-filled living hope that we are called to be.

GRACE'S SEWING CIRCLE IS GOING STRONG AND NEEDS DONATIONS- Grace Sewing Circle is still going strong by sewing at home and doing a progressive method of dropping items on doorsteps for the next person to complete our projects, thus keeping our members busy. We are still sewing quilts for Lutheran World Relief, quilted and knitted or crocheted lap robes, small pillows and walker bags and other items for local nursing homes. We also have a few people making face masks.

With this in mind, we are in need of donations of fabric, sheets, lightweight blankets, flannel sheets, yarn and narrow elastic. If anyone would be willing to use their Thrivent dollars for us, we would use it to buy quilt batting and pillow stuffing. Faith Watkins has agreed to have items dropped on her doorstep (2305 Linden Drive, 815-245-7977) to be sorted and distributed. Please contact Marge Birk at 815-338-0958 or Tammy Hansing at 815-338-5387 with questions or if you are interested in joining our group.

2020 NOMINATIONS- The Nominating Committee invites you to prayerfully consider serving as an elected committee member for open positions with terms beginning in fall 2020. This year, in place of paper nomination forms, we ask you to send nominations either by mail to the church office or email nominations to cfiorina@gracewoodstock.org . Please submit nominations by **June 21** for consideration.

2020 Nominations should include the following information:

- Your Name** (submitting the nomination)
- Name of Person you are nominating** (if you are nominating someone other than yourself, please verify that it is OK to submit their name)
- Position** you are nominating them for
- Reasons** why they would serve well in this position at Grace Lutheran Church

Elected committee/board member openings include the following: 3 openings for Church Council (3-year term), 3 openings for Nominating Committee (1-year term), 1 opening for Endowment Board (5-year Term), 3 openings for Preschool Board (3-year term), and 2 male, 2 female, 1 male alternate and 1 female alternate as voting members to represent Grace at the 2021 Northern Illinois Synod Assembly.

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), Myron Callihan (brother of Susan Payton), Jim Davis, Nancy Davis, Lori Dechant, Patrice Dunn, Robert Giron (brother of Patty Kozlow), Tom Goggin, Hal Goodman (friend of Bob & Janice Laird), 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), William Lagerhausen, Elizabeth Lynd Loser, Amanda McNally (grandniece of Diane Baker-Lockwood), 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), Maria Rossini (family friend of Heidi Olsen and Tammy Goggin), 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), Ann Sinnett (friend of Shirley Berna), Elsie Stoddard, Andrea Strayer (mother of Lisa Wahkowiak), Ginny Stroh (mother of Fay Wilson), Dave Sundby (brother-in-law of Deborah Evanoff), Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahan), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Bev Visconti, Gino Visconti, Addie Jo Wedoff, Nick Wedoff, Esther Wienke, Bud Winter, Ruth Zirves

Sorrows: Evelyn Schroeder (grandmother of Bryant Williams), Ralph Westman (grandfather of Zack & Nick Olsen), Carl Rossini (Godfather to Heidi Olsen), Judy Kettmann (sister of Al Wilson), Judith LeBaron, Bobbi Davis

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—Please send articles to Lauren Kleinjan at lkleinjan@gracewoodstock.org, or the church office. Questions: Call the office at 815-338-0554.

WE NEED TO SEE YOU JESUS.....by Pastor Amanda

Open the eyes of our hearts, Lord- we need to see you, Jesus. We need to see you in the midst of all this—in the uncertainty and fear, in the dying and the rising, in our homes and our venturing out. We yearn to be reminded once more of your presence, your healing, and your wholeness. And we give thanks for the ways we do see you. We see you in the love of neighbor, in the brave strength of frontline workers, and in the ongoing care of the vulnerable.

Yet seeing—with wide open eyes and hearts and minds—is hard work. It's painful to see the sickness and death and disparities revealed by the pandemic. It's also painful to remember that illness and mortality and inequality existed before all of this too. We are struggling with the unprecedented effects of COVID-19 in part because we have collectively been pretty good at hiding from some of the pain and messiness of life that has been here all along.

We need to see you, Jesus, because the things we're seeing as we slow down during this pandemic—death, disease, hunger, loneliness, racism, and so much more—render us desperate for you. Open the eyes of our hearts, Lord.

In this Easter season, where life is seen in an empty tomb, Jesus walks with us even when we can't see him, and Jesus prepares a place for us. We remember, too, how Jesus always sees the people and systems and injustice and brokenness we'd rather look away from. Jesus shows us another way—a way of truth and life.

In Jesus, we see a vision of God's kingdom, and we are called forth into newness of life in Christ. Perhaps you've seen a post on social media about 'not wanting to go back to normal, because normal wasn't working.' Jesus calls us to see the world as it is—filled with life, people, sin. And then Jesus calls us to see the world as it could be, the world God is calling us into and creating for us —filled with living and loving.

For God is at work, and we have seen Jesus. Jesus calls us and speaks to us, even in our homes, reminding us the ways of death will not have the last say, even today in May of 2020, even in the middle of a pandemic.

May God keep prying open our eyes and hearts and minds, and may we see in Jesus a way of being whole in an unknown future. May the Holy Spirit stir up within us strength for the days and nights ahead, patience with ongoing sheltering for the sake of another, restlessness with complicity and complacency, and newness of life beyond anything we could imagine or create on our own.

Peace be with you, dear friends in Christ. Thanks for continuing to be church together even while we are apart. I so look forward to seeing you again sometime soon.

Sabbatical Postponement- In early April, after conversation with Grace's Council and the Lilly Endowment's National Clergy Renewal Grant that Grace was awarded for my sabbatical this summer, we have formally postponed my sabbatical leave from summer 2020 to summer 2021. In this time of COVID-19, I would not be able to participate in the renewal activities outlined and afforded by this generous grant, and I believe this summer to be an important time to be here with our faith community, especially as we still do not know when we'll be back together and we will have a lot of reconnecting and healing ahead of us all. I am grateful for the flexibility of this grant to be postponed to next summer and look to see what next summer may hold for a time of renewal.

PHISHING SCAM REQUESTS- Grace's pastors, staff, and leaders will never text or email you to request gift cards or fund transfers. A number of nearby church members have received phishing emails or text messages that seem personalized and appear to be from a pastor or staff member. Please call the church office or talk to a pastor or staff member in person if you receive an odd request; thank you!

HOMEMADE FACE MASKS AVAILABLE- We are blessed that many Grace members have been sewing and donating cloth face masks. Here are a few that are available for free:

- Shirley Busse: Masks available for pick up in bin on front porch. 14219 Perkins Road, Woodstock
- Cindy Mellinger: Text her to arrange an order (815) 404-0077
- Tammy Hansing: Call or text to arrange an order (815) 338-5387

PADS THANKS GRACE FOR THEIR GENEROUSITY- Grace's ministry to feed homeless people sheltering at the Kishwaukee Valley Road PADS site with local restaurant deliveries is having a big impact. The following is a letter of thanks that was sent to me with the request that I pass it along to our members. If you have any questions or wish to participate in this ministry, please contact me, Gretchen Hutchens, at 815-341-7544.

First, let me start by saying how extremely generous it is of your congregation to do this for our PADS clients. This means more to them than any of you could ever know. Our clients have always enjoyed the food you have brought on the 3rd Saturday nights of the month, but in all honesty, having food delivered from local restaurants is something they are not at all accustomed to. Most don't have the money to eat out and this is quite a treat for them when you bring in local cuisine. It makes them feel, as they would say "normal", "special", and "cared about".

A couple of them called me after this morning's Isabel's to tell me all about the meal and to ask me to thank you all for thinking of them. One of the ladies was crying tears of happiness because she couldn't believe complete strangers would do something so nice for all of them.

Most times, our clients are ignored in the community. People won't even talk to them or even look at them. People ask sometimes what they can do to help the homeless. Most of the clients say that they just want to be treated like human beings.. A simple hello, maybe look them in the eye or even a smile. They also say that the way they are treated strips them of their dignity and that it actually hurts more than the loss of their "things".

The reason I bring this up is to make a point of how your kindness has moved them and given some of them renewed faith in the community. Thank you again for everything. You have all been amazing!!

Carrie A. Freund, MHP
Director of Homeless Services

WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER (even when the building is closed):

-Grace's Building & Connections: Grace's building is currently closed; however, staff are working remotely and regularly checking mail, voicemail, and email. Grace's church council members also made phone calls to all in our phonebook. If you did not receive a phone call, please call the church office with an updated phone number where you can be reached.

-Worship Videos. For each weekend that our building is closed- please find new worship videos at our website: <https://www.gracewoodstock.us/sermon-category/video/> . We invite you gather in worship in this new temporary way, still worshipping God around scripture & reflection, in prayer, and in song.

-Offering. We give thanks for the variety of gifts, united by Christ- and invite you to mail your financial offerings to the church office or consider one of Grace's eGiving options. The mission and ministry of our faith community continues and depends on our shared commitments; thank you for your faithful and generous stewardship.

-Find us on Facebook. If you are on Facebook, please join us at the public group "Grace Lutheran Church, Woodstock, IL" for community news and Facebook Live opportunities including weekday daily devotional time with Pastor Ken at 8 A.M.

-Gather on Zoom. Included in this newsletter is an invitation to ongoing and upcoming Zoom gatherings. If you would like to gather as a small group or form a small group online, please contact Andy Bellavia (bellavia.a@gmail.com) or one of the pastors to schedule a meeting.

-Connect to Grace emails: please help connect others to Grace's Constant Contact emails- you can send an email to cfiorina@gracewoodstock.org to have an email address added to Grace's update emails.

YOUTH GROUP NEWS- Grace's high school youth group has been meeting weekly via Zoom for devotions, conversation, and prayer. The synod's youth gathering for this summer, Ignite 2020, has been postponed. We invite you to keep our high school graduates in your prayers in this time; blessings on this season of endings and beginnings.

FAITH COMMUNITY CATHERINGS VIA ZOOM- Grace has started gathering through Zoom to prepare for worship videos, for regular council check-ins and meetings, for committee meetings, for Preschool classes, Sunday school, Confirmation class, and High School Youth Group.

Here are a few upcoming ways we might gather as a faith community in the weeks ahead; you are welcome to gather as you are interested and able. Zoom can be downloaded for free on a personal device (smartphone/tablet/computer)- or you can call in on a phone to participate by voice if you do not have one of those devices available.

For each of these upcoming zoom gatherings, please see the Constant Contact emails for the meeting invitation, or please email Jen Freeman (jfreeman@gracewoodstock.org) in advance to receive the meeting invite link and call-in information.

Hope and Darkness. (Wednesday, May 20, 3 p.m.) You are invited to a time for reflection and conversation led by Deacon Judy Rooney around the themes of finding meaning in the chaos and thoughts on self-care; with concepts drawn from “Hope Against Darkness” by Richard Rohr and “Boundless Compassion” by Joyce Rupp.

Open Mic Night. (Wednesday, May 27, 6 p.m.) You are invited to an Open Mic Night on Zoom! The sound quality may not be ideal, but Grace’s got talent so let’s share it! Email Jon Bergstrom (jon_bergstrom2@hotmail.com) to sign up for a spot to share your talent- song, dance, poem, artwork, magic trick, spoken word, etc. Everyone else is invited to join the zoom call for an entertaining evening together online!

Men's Breakfast Bible Study (Tuesdays, 6:45-7:45 a.m.) You are invited to join Pastor Ken for breakfast each Tuesday morning via Zoom to share both a virtual meal and Bible discussions. This temporarily replaces our in-person weekly bible study meetings until we can once again be together.

Afternoon Bible Study (Tuesdays, 1:00-2:00 p.m.) You are invited to join Pastor Ken for an afternoon Bible study each Tuesday afternoon through May via Zoom to share in ongoing Bible discussions. This temporarily replaces the in-person weekly afternoon Bible study meetings we usually hold during the school year. We will decide together later in May whether we want to continue into the summer months.

** If you are using Zoom for the first time, join the call about 10 minutes early to allow time for the app to install. If you have questions about using Zoom you are welcome to email Andy Bellavia (bellavia.a@gmail.com) in advance.*

GRACE RECEIVES MONEY UNDER THE PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM- As many of you know, at the beginning of the pandemic the US government passed the CARES Act, which contained a number of provisions. One of those was the Paycheck Protection Program, or PPP, an incentive for small business and non-profits to retain workers. Though technically a loan, a provision is built in that will grant the money outright if it is used for payroll, rent or mortgage interest, and utilities. It is calculated based on 2019 payroll and is intended to support these expenses for an eight week period.

In April Grace applied for and was awarded \$76,900. We had, at the beginning of the shelter in place order, decided to retain everyone, including paying the preschool staff for the missed classroom time from mid-March until the end of the school year. Therefore, the award will be used for its intended purpose and will help us tremendously. Because, while the building is closed, the utility bills are not high, it may be that after the final calculation we end up with a small portion that cannot be granted. That would remain as a low-interest loan but with no prepayment penalty. We will turn that money back in immediately so that effectively there is no loan at all.

We know that while many of you are able to continue in your regular support of the Grace community, others are struggling with lost jobs and uncertain income. We see this grant as an important supplement to, but not a substitute for, all of your ongoing generosity as circumstances allow. This is indeed a difficult time, but also one in which, working together in many different ways, we are enabling our community to share God's grace today and in the future.

I personally wish to close this note by thanking American Community Bank (where Grace keeps its accounts) for their proactive assistance in seeing our application through to a successful conclusion.

Wishing you God's peace on behalf of the entire Council,
Andy Bellavia—Council President

eGIVING OPTIONS- In addition to weekly offering envelopes, Grace has additional electronic giving options available. Please give in the way that is most convenient for you and let us know if you have any questions.

Give through automatic withdrawal program. To participate, please complete an enrollment form and return to the church office to schedule pre-authorized electronic funds transfer (EFT) from your bank account. You can change, stop, or temporarily hold your giving by contacting Grace's church office 4 business days in advance of a scheduled contribution.

Give Online at our website: www.gracewoodstock.org

Give by Text by texting **877-698-3604**

1. **Get Started:** Enter the 10-digit GivePlus Text number (877-698-3604) and the amount you wish donate, then press send.
2. **Register:** You will receive a registration link. Click the link and enter your contact and payment information. Tap "Process."
3. **Give:** After registration is complete, you will receive a verification text as well as a receipt via email.
4. **Repeat:** For future giving, simply send a text with the amount you wish to give, and it will process automatically.

Give through Give+ Mobile App by downloading the app

- Download the FREE app on your Apple or Android phone by searching for "GivePlus Church" in your app store
- Make one-time or recurring donations using your debit/credit card or checking/savings account
- Securely and conveniently manage donations using Touch ID/Fingerprint, PIN or password
- Log in or donate as a guest

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

GRACE STAFF & COUNCIL

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Meiners, Phillip Paulson, Jessica Potoczky

council@gracewoodstock.org

Office Hours: 8:30 am–3:30 pm, M–Th

8:30 am–12:00 pm, F

Presence Light Sponsors:

March 22

In honor of Dylan's 25th birthday and to the glory of God, given by Darby & Dee Brown

March 29

To the glory of God for my church family, given by Marge Birk

April 5

In honor of our upcoming Anniversary, given by Bill & Nancy Kreznor

April 12

In honor of Jerry's 83rd birthday, given by Mary Johnson

April 19

In memory of Mary's brother, John Holman, who passed to eternal life 2/5/2020, given by Jerry & Mary Johnson

April 26

In honor of our grandson Jakob's birthday, given by Ken & Kathy Zank

May 10

In memory of Sheri's dad, Stan Russell, who passed 2 years ago, given by the Conover family

May 24

In memory of many of Bert's birthdays we shared together, given by Carol Rank

May 31

In memory of Bob Foerster, given by Laverne & family

Bulletin Sponsors:

March 14 and 15

In memory of my husband, Irvin E. Aavang, Jr, given by Joy Aavang

In honor of Paul's 60th birthday (March 14th), given by Paul Lockwood and Diane Baker-Lockwood

March 28 & 29

To the glory of God on my 100th birthday on March 28th, given by Marge Birk

In memory of Lyle Bungard, given by Donna Bungard

April 4 & 5

In memory of Mary's parents, Arnold & Linda Holman, given by Jerry & Mary Johnson

In honor of Adalynn's First Holy Communion, given by the Wedoff family

April 9 - 12 Holy Week

In memory of my twin brother Todd, who went home April 19th, 2019, given by Tammy Resek-Goggin

To the glory of God, given by Ila Randolph

In honor of Bob Shook's 87th birthday, given by his family

April 18 & 19

In memory of my husband Bert and the many years we had together, given by Carol Rank

In memory of my husband Bill on his birthday, given by Marlene Botts

April 25 & 26

In honor of our grandson Jakob's birthday, given by Ken & Kathy Zank

In honor of Borgie Stenoien's 90th birthday on April 28th, given by the Friday night group

In honor of Zach's birthday, given by Andy and Mary Beth

In memory of Sheri's Dad Stan, given by the Conover family

May 2 & 3

In honor of Jodi & Kirk Larson's anniversary, given by Dallas & Ellen Larson

To the glory of God, given by Diane Schulz

In honor of the upcoming birth of grandson #3 (Eli), given by the Conover family

May 16 & 17

In honor of our grandson's birthdays (Liam, May 15 & Nolan, April 14), given by the Conover family