



GRACE

LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Grace for Today

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REMEMBER WHEN.....by Pastor Ken Gibson

As I write this, we are all living out yet another holiday weekend apart (Independence Day), and as we do, I am thinking back on times that use to be. Perhaps many of you are as well. How many of you shared with family or friends over this past holiday weekend, how you remember a 4th of July where it was so hot that “_____.” You fill in the blank. I, for some reason, found myself thinking that these days reminded me of when I was a young boy and the temperatures were just like the ones we have been experiencing. I remembered how my siblings and I slept together on the floor in front of a simple box fan. We had one in one window, one on the floor, and one in the other window trying to pull as much air as we could through the area. We did not have air conditioning. The heat was intense, yet I remember it as a time of closeness and connectedness. There were four of us kids; Terry, Larry, Joe and me, all sprawled out trying not to touch one another in the heat. Yet, somehow we always seemed to end up all huddled together by the break of dawn. Mom and Dad slept in their bedroom with another big fan. It was special and as I recall the heat and humidity, I also recall the love we had for each other and the way in which we knew it was just something we had to do. I can’t help but smile when I remember those days.

All these thoughts also led me to remember how we as a Grace family have been interconnected over the last many years, how we have weathered the seasons time and time again and how we have always found each other in the pews worshiping God together. On hot summer days, on crisp fall mornings, in the freshness of the spring and in the cold of the winters, we’ve worshiped together as a Christ family, sharing in the Holy Eucharist, singing hymns, sharing in the liturgy and hearing God’s word. And as we continue now through the second half of 2020, I think we may all be wondering when we might be able to do such again. We long to be shoulder to shoulder, sharing handshakes, sharing the peace, singing love-filled hymns loudly as one voice and tasting the means of God’s Grace in the Holy Eucharist. Time and time again, I recall these days with much fondness.

However, it is a reality that I cannot make happen. I have been asked dozens of times over the past four months: “When will we be able to be back in the pews together again, Pastor?” And, it hurts me to share, in all honesty, “I really have no idea.” And I am saddened by the reality that I truly don’t have an answer. It is all so beyond my control that I cannot make it happen. Much like I cannot be with my sister and brothers like I use to be when I was younger.

Still, what I can do is remember with much fondness the connectedness that we have all shared. It is impossible to erase the love we shared in those times. Just like it is impossible to erase the commitment God has for all of us who have worshiped in His name. As we recall in Luther’s small catechism in response to the third article of the creed, *“I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith.”*

This is where we turn these days. We remember the love we have shared in the flesh in the past and keep it close in heart. For even though we are physically apart, we are, through the work of the Holy Spirit, never really apart, and that truth is truly worth remembering, especially in the heat.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING UPDATE— Because we do not anticipate being able to have a quorum of members gather together in August, the council decided not to call an in-person congregational meeting. In its place we will host a "Ministry Matters" online meeting on **August 16th**. There will be an annual report with full details as if the congregational meeting were taking place. The only item not included will be voting for elected positions. Those whose terms are expiring graciously agreed to extend their service until the February meeting. The report and meeting details will be sent the first week of August. In the meantime please mark your calendars and plan to attend.

In Peace,
The Council and Pastors

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), 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), 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, Addie Jo Wedoff, Nick Wedoff, Esther Wienke, Ruth Zirves

Sorrows: William Lagerhausen, Clyde Seager (brother of Diane Schulz)

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

READY OR NOT, HERE WE ARE.....by Pastor Amanda

Whew. We did it. We made it through the first half of 2020. Can you believe it? Is this all still really happening? What's next?

Ready or not, here we are. Here we are in the second half of the year 2020, in the ongoing uncertainty of the current, next, and future phases of living in a pandemic, in a time of turmoil, in the heat of a Midwest summer. Ready or not, here we are in a time of endless possibility, in the relative safety of spaces to reside and reflect on life.

I hope and pray that you and your loved ones and neighbors are doing ok in this time. It is so good to hear from you, to see you (online or from a distance in the parking lot), it is so life-giving to pray for you, and be assured of your prayers as well. May God's love and strength, wisdom and healing, rest and justice abound in the world and in our lives.

Last weekend while watching Hamilton, our kids asked what one of the songs meant, "what does it mean when they sing, "the world turned upside down?" We tried explaining how everything the people knew had changed, kind of like right now, how everything we were used to is now different. Then, picking up a snow globe nearby, we turned it upside down to show how disorienting that can be.

What do we do when the world seems to have turned upside down? Do we retreat or engage? Give up or resist? Sit back or lean in? Both and? When the world seems to have turned upside down, when life as we knew it has shifted and keeps changing faster than we can comprehend, what do we do? What is a faithful response?

I think our responses may vary by person, by situation, and by the minute even. But I think one faithful response can be to rely on and foster community because we need it and because we are created for relationship—with God and with one another. I also believe that God knows something about this disorienting experience of a "world turned upside down."

Mary sang about a world about to turn when she was pregnant with Jesus. She sang a song of praise to magnify the Lord, for the mighty one with mercy from generation to generation, the one who brings down the powerful from their thrones and lifts up the lowly, filling the hungry with good things, and sending the rich away empty (Luke 1: 46-55). Mary sang of a world about to turn by the good news of Jesus.

Jesus changes everything. In Jesus, the world *as it is* turns towards the world *as it should be*. And when we do not know what to do next—we trust that God is with us—ready or not, here is God, Jesus, Holy Spirit. Here is the promise of the resurrection that breathes life into being, that brings forth life when you would otherwise only see death. Here is Jesus, the one who is steadfast and compassionate, the one who endures and redeems.

Ready or not, here we are, a people created, forgiven, nourished, and sent forth by God into this beautiful and weary world. May God's love and grace be made known to you now, in this second half of the year 2020, and always.

"CHRIST IN OUR HOME" DEVOTION BOOKLETS— The new "Christ in Our Home" devotion booklets for July, August and September 2020 are now available. They are located in the black box at the front door of the church. If you have any questions, please contact the church office.



PARKING LOT WORSHIP SERVICE—You are invited to a parking lot worship service **Sunday, July 19th at 9:00am**. We will gather together, at a distance, to hear God’s good news and worship together. We will be broadcasting to your car’s FM radio: Tune in to **89.3 FM!**

When you arrive, please park every other space and staggered. Cones will be used to mark where not to park. You are invited to sit or stand next to your vehicle while listening to your car radio. If you do, please wear face masks and maintain physical distancing. Of course you may stay in your vehicle if you prefer.

There will not be congregational singing or communion, but there will be music. The building will not be open for bathroom use. If you prefer to give your offering in person, you will have the opportunity to drop it in a basket from your car on the way out.

This worship will be recorded in the same way as the earlier Wednesday prayer service and posted to the Grace website on Sunday as soon as possible after the worship service ends.

Further details and the order of worship will be sent by Constant Contact and posted on the Grace Facebook page. If you do not have access to these resources and would like to have a printed copy ready for you at the worship, please contact the church office.

GOD’S WORK. OUR HANDS. SUNDAY—ELCA SERVICE DAY— Sunday, September 13 will mark the 8th year that Grace Lutheran Church and thousands of ELCA congregations participate in this dedicated day of service, gathering to serve communities in ways that share the love of God with all of God’s people. Unlike prior years, we will likely not be able to gather in-person this year after worship for food and fellowship with over 100 volunteers, wearing those bright yellow t-shirts to go out into the community to serve in small groups with community partners. However, just like the creative and adaptive changes in many other areas of our life together, we can still find ways to celebrate being church together, freed in Christ to love and serve our neighbor.



If you have ideas or are interested in planning physically distant service opportunities this year, please contact Pastor Amanda.

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

-Worship Videos. While we are gathering for worship in our homes or in the parking lot, please find new worship videos posted each weekend at our website, www.gracewoodstock.org. Blessings on your time set apart to worship God around scripture & reflection, in prayer, and in song.

-Offering. We give thanks for the variety of gifts, united by Christ- thank you for your faithful and generous stewardship. You are invited to mail your financial offerings to the church office or consider one of Grace’s eGiving options to support the ongoing mission and ministry of our faith community.

-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.

-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.

BISHOP'S BOOK STUDY INVITATION—Bishop Jeff Clements of the Northern Illinois Synod shares this invitation for the members and friends of the synod to join him in a book study:

“Dear friends in Christ, I am inviting you, as a member or friend of the Northern Illinois Synod, to join me in a **six-week** book study of *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo. Racism is a really tough subject to discuss and I think this book will help us get into an important and timely discussion.

From the back cover: “Referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially, white fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence.” Does that resonate with you? It certainly does with me.

If you are interested in joining with others, in what I hope will be a challenging discussion without being threatening or scary, please plan to read and join in. We will meet by Zoom **Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. beginning July 29**. You will need to register so that I can send you the Zoom link to participate. Reading assignments will be made in advance.

Order a copy of the book by whatever means you normally use. It is available in print or e-book forms. I am looking forward to spending this time with you. Register here: [Bishop Clements' Book Study](https://nisynod.org/white-fragility-book-study/).

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Walking with you, Bishop Jeffrey Clements.”

WORSHIP VIDEOS & TABLETS — We continue to give thanks for the commitment and time in preparing worship videos. We have heard back that a few people do not have internet access at home and we have been working on a way to download the worship service on a tablet that can be dropped off at people's homes so they can worship alongside the video services. If you are interested in being a part of this ministry (download the video to the tablet at your home and then contactless drop off & pick up with someone without internet access); or if you do not have internet access and are interested in this possibility, please contact Pastor Amanda (please call and leave a message at the church office at (815) 338-0554 or email abergstrom@gracewoodstock.org).

BLOOD DRIVE— Donor blood is badly needed, so Grace has again worked it out with Versiti (formerly Heartland) to run a blood drive while maintaining a 10 person limit inside Luther Hall on **August 11th from 2:30pm—7:00pm**. With such a big space everyone will be very well spread out. We've arranged an easy flow, but there are some special procedures:

- Register for your appointment time on line at Versiti. No walk-ins.
- Once you register, you will get links to their phone app or online form. On the day of donation fill out the form using the app or PC. Follow the instructions there. You will either bring your phone (with app) or a printed verification from your PC.
- Also bring a proper photo ID and a mask.
- Arrive at the lower parking lot just before your appointment time. A person will be outside guiding donors.

If you have any questions, please call Gretchen Hutchens at (815)341-7544. Thank you for donating!

GRACE PHOTO MISSION— Many members of our congregation have submitted photos to be in the Grace Photo Mission video. If you are wondering what our Grace families have been up to during our time apart, please check out the Grace Photo Mission video that was posted on our website and on our Facebook page. It is always fun to see familiar faces!

Presence Light Sponsors:

July 5

- In honor of Darby III on his 27th birthday, given by Dee & Darby Brown

July 12

- In Memory of Sheri's Dad Stan Russell & Mike's mom Susan Moyer, given by the Conover family

July 19

- In memory of my granny Lillian Miotto's birthday, given by Dee Brown

July 26

- In memory of our grandson, Alex Zank-Bauman, given by Ken & Kathy Zank

Bulletin Sponsors:

July 4 & 5

- In honor of our 59th wedding anniversary, given by Jerry & Mary Johnson
- In honor of blessings received for our 35th wedding anniversary, given by Janice & Bob Laird

July 18 & 19

- In honor of our 25th wedding anniversary on July 15th, given by Joe & June Pienschke
- In honor of Andy's birthday, given by MB, Rachel & Zach

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

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