

MAY 2021 • VOLUME 20, NO. 5

Uncovering Strength - God at the center of it all.....by Pastor Amanda Bergstrom



“Wow, I didn’t even know this was here!” While walking around the beautiful grounds at Grace, our four-year-old could not believe there were bricks in the ground. Together we walked a bit of the now faintly discernible path of the labyrinth. We paused every few steps to use our hands and twigs to dig around a bit, and he delighted at the discovery of each brick hidden under grass or weeds or dirt. *“Wow, I didn’t even know this was here!”*

Who else may not know Grace had/has a labyrinth, a meditative walking path through a maze, at which we find a reminder of God at the center of it all? Who knew that apparently May 1st is World Labyrinth Day? Perhaps you will make your way over to Grace and spend some time

uncovering bricks in the spring season ahead. For the next thing I started to hear, though still with a tone of delight and amazement, was *“this is going to take forever!”* Uncovering, revealing, tending to one brick at a time, *“this is going to take forever!”*

These refrains speak to me, not only of our semi-buried labyrinth, but of the Spirit’s nudging and guiding of mission and ministry right now. *Wow, I didn’t even know this was here*, speaks of the great joy in hearing, meeting, and witnessing renewed ministry ideas, people, interests, and opportunities for participation at Grace. And *this is going to take forever!* seems to be an unspoken theme of conversations about restarting, rebuilding and/or creating communication practices and ministry possibilities.

Let’s dig into the tedious labor of uncovering what once was lost but now is found. Underneath the things that get in the way, perhaps we too will discover the resilience and strength of what still remains. As difficult as things may be in life and the world right now, God remains at the center of all things. *Wow, God is here!* and God’s faithfulness endures forever, take all the time that is needed.

A labyrinth is not designed to be a race, the path is winding with twists and turns along the way. I invite you to breathe deep and discover the gifts of an intentionally prayerful journey by delighting in what and who would otherwise go unnoticed or overlooked. Together—discover how God will keep revealing hidden strength, abiding presence, and faithful mission in, through and beyond Grace Lutheran Church.

INSTALLATION OF LEAD PASTOR—On **Sunday, May 2**, we welcome Bishop Jeffrey Clements, Northern Illinois Synod and the Rev. Gary Erickson, Director of Evangelical Mission & Assistant to the Bishop for Outreach & Stewardship to Grace Lutheran Church for worship and the installation of Pastor Amanda Bergstrom as Grace's Lead Pastor. You are invited to worship in the parking lot at 9 A.M., livestream worship at home via YouTube, or pre-register for limited capacity seating in the sanctuary. Please enter from Kishwaukee Valley Road, turn your radios to 89.3 FM, a parking lot greeter will meet you with communion elements.

BULLETIN & PRESENCE LIGHT SPONSORS – We currently have many openings available in 2021, for bulletin & presence light sponsors. This ministry continues whether we are in person, watching from our home or from our parking lot. It continues to be a great way to celebrate occasion's, and honor or grieve loved ones with your church family.

Please contact Carrie or Denise in the church office if you are interested in sponsoring. 815-338-0554

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 Amanda Bergstrom & her family; Grace Staff; Grace Council

Health Concerns: Charlie Bell (friend of Jamielynn Wedoff), Mary Sue Boerner (friend of Paul Lockwood & Diane Baker-Lockwood), Myron Callihan (brother of Susan Payton), Jim Davis, Nancy Davis, Lori Dechant, Patrice Dunn, Stephane Fylpaa-Asher, 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), Denise Hoover, Nicholas Karasch (nephew of Jamielynn Wedoff), Steve Kosmen (loved one of the Koehn family), Elayna Kuipers (friend of the Wedoff Family), Anna Larsen (sister of Al Henniges), Amanda McNally (grandniece of Diane Baker-Lockwood), Kem Moran (friend of Barb Aavang), Gloria Ogle, Linda Page (friend of Joe Evanoff), Georgia Petersdorf (sister-in-law of Gladys Renner), Pat Peterson, Carol Raffel, 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), Nick Resek (son of Tammy Resek-Goggin & brother to Heidi Olsen), Jessie & Sue Robertson (friends of Ron, Mary & Kimberly Koehn), Maria Rossini (family friend of Heidi Olsen and Tammy Goggin), Nathan Ruffino, Nicholas Ruffino, Joan Russell (mother of Sheri Conover), John Rust (Aavang family friend), Colton Sciluffo (infant son of a friend of Joy Oberman), Nathaniel Shipp (family friend of Brian Meyers), Ann Sinnett (friend of Shirley Berna), Andrea Strayer (mother of Lisa Wahkowiak), 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

Sorrow: Art Henniges (brother of Al Henniges), Tim Kline (Troop 153)

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

WORSHIP THIS MAY—Thanks be to God for the good news of Jesus and the grace of God that meets us where we are. Wherever you are as you set aside time to worship God, may Christ’s peace be with you.

- **Livestream & Video.** Worship continues to be livestreamed to the [Grace Lutheran Church YouTube Channel](#). You can subscribe to the channel and turn on notifications; or go to the Grace YouTube channel before worship begins on **Sundays at 9 A.M.** The worship service video will continue to be available online after Sunday morning as well.
- **In-Building.** The option to worship in the sanctuary continues by pre-registering Monday-Thursday for the upcoming Sunday through the link on the front page of the website, or by calling the office.
- **Parking Lot.** You are welcome to worship in the parking lot for Sunday worship at 9 A.M. (no need to pre-register). Please enter through the Kishwaukee Valley Road entrance and a greeter will meet you with communion elements. You can listen to 89.3 FM from your car, or stream via YouTube on your phone (note there is a few seconds delay for the livestream).

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES—In mid-May, Jen Freeman will conclude serving as Grace’s Director of Educational Ministries. Grace’s council accepted Jen’s resignation with sadness and appreciation for Jen’s deep love and connection to Grace. We are very grateful for Jen’s willingness to continue as a volunteer with the newly-forming Christian Education Committee. As we navigate next steps and options for leadership in Educational Ministries, please reach out to Pastor Amanda with ideas and interest in coordinating Sunday School and Confirmation ministries in the year ahead.

COMMITTEE NIGHT—It was good to reconnect and gather around new ideas for renewed Grace Priorities & Ministries last month. Which of Grace’s ministries are exciting to you? Where is God calling you to participate? You are invited to gather for the next Committee Night on **May 4, at 7 p.m.** to talk with others and council liaisons about ministry opportunities. We will gather via Zoom (watch for the meeting link in Grace emails or call the church office for the phone number to call in by phone). We will begin as a whole group, go to breakout rooms for committee conversations, and return to the whole group at 7:40 P.M. to share an update. We hope to talk with you soon!

SPRING CLEAN UP—The Property and Grounds Committee has planned a work day on Saturday, **May 15** from 8:00am until noon. Volunteers are welcome to assist clean up efforts at the front of the church, preschool playground and elsewhere around the building. Volunteers are asked to bring their own gloves and tools for planting/planting bed clean up and leaf removal. Let’s get together for some community building, conversation and fun while we freshen up Grace! Let’s hope the weather cooperates. If you have any questions, please contact Ken Zank.



GRACE SEWING CIRCLE—Time for spring cleaning? Please remember Grace Sewing Circle as we would love to re-purpose your sheets (any kind), lightweight blankets, any fabrics, yarn, pillow stuffing or quilt batting. The ladies are still busily sewing, keeping their hands occupied creating quilts for LWR and lap robes and other items for 10 local nursing homes. If we cannot use the items donated, we pass it on to the Marengo Food Pantry (MORE), where fabric scraps are recycled by a company in return for money which is then used to purchase coats for the needy. If you have access to Thrivent Action Teams and are not using those funds for anything else, please consider using it for Grace Sewing Circle so that we may purchase batting.

Thank you so much for your consideration and sharing! If you have any questions, please contact Marge Birk (815) 338-0958, Faith Watkins (815) 451-2592, or Tammy Hansing (815) 338-5387 or drop items in the foyer at church and we can collect it from there. Many hands are at work, but we welcome more if you wish to join us.

BUILDING ENTRY & COVENANT OF CARE—At Grace we are asking everyone who enters the building to commit to care for one another through posted guidelines and entry procedures. All staff and building guests are to practice health safety precautions, including wash/sanitize hands, wear a mask, and stay a minimum of six feet apart. If you test positive for COVID-19 within the next two weeks of being in the building, you commit to informing the church office ASAP. We ask everyone to review three screening questions about COVID-19 diagnosis, exposure, and symptoms within the last 14 days each time you arrive at the building. Please call the office first at 815-338-0554 if you plan to stop by during the week.

REOPENING TEAM—Grace’s Reopening Team is continuing to meet to update information as available by the state of Illinois, church and public health guidance. As we increase building usage opportunities, the priority continues to be with care for one another’s well-being and attention to best practices for air exchange and cleaning practices.

After beginning worship in the sanctuary on March 21, pre-registration to worship in the sanctuary continues to be available Monday-Thursday for the following Sunday through Grace’s website or by calling the church office. Beginning in May, the parking lot services will resume at the same time as limited capacity indoor worship on Sundays at 9 a.m. The worship leaders will alternate presiding between indoor and outdoor and the service will continue to be livestreamed via Grace’s YouTube channel.

Options for limited small group building usage requests are also available through the building usage request forms. Outdoor meetings continue to be an option, with limited access to bathroom use.

Thank you for the volunteers supporting worship, if you are interested in volunteering as an Usher, Greeter, or Reader- please contact Fay Wilson faymwlsn@yahoo.com. If you are interested in learning to be a camera operator, sound or livestream technician, please contact Bill Nattress bill.nattress@gmail.com.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation as we continue to navigate worship and community as a congregation.

Reopening Team: Nancy Kreznor, Mike Liedtke, Matt Meiners, Bill Nattress, Pastor Amanda, and Grace Church Council

GRACE MEET & GREET—Are you, or do you know someone, newly connected to Grace Lutheran Church and interested in learning more? You are welcome to gather for a Meet & Greet with Grace’s staff & council members at one of two upcoming gatherings. We would love to get to meet & talk with you, share about Grace’s mission and ministry, and answer questions.



- **Tuesday, May 11, 7 P.M. (Zoom)** We’ll meet via Zoom (you can participate by video chat or by calling in on a phone)
- **Sunday, May 16, 10:30 A.M. (Outdoors @ Grace)** We’ll meet outside at Grace Lutheran Church (thank you for wearing face masks, maintaining physical distance, and staying home if you have any COVID-19 symptoms, diagnosis, or exposure)

If you’re able to attend one of the Meet & Greet gatherings, please let us know by signing up [here](#) or by calling the church office at 815-338-0554. If neither of these times work for you, please give us a call so we can find another time to connect. We look forward to seeing you soon!

UPCOMING SABBATICAL & SENDING—Grace created a Sabbatical Policy in 2013 to support long-term pastoral calls as one of the goals of the 2013 Strategic Plan. In 2019, Grace Lutheran Church was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Lilly Endowment National Clergy Renewal Program for Pastor Amanda’s sabbatical leave, which was postponed from last summer 2020 to this year, June 1- August 31, 2021. The Lilly grant will fund Pastor Amanda’s renewal activities, a portion of Grace’s pastoral coverage expenses, and congregational renewal activities, as detailed and now adapted from the grant proposal. The theme of Pastor Amanda’s sabbatical and renewal is going marveling—to be filled with wonder at God’s presence revealed in creation, relationships, and travel, even as the ongoing pandemic requires several changes in plans. Worship on **May 30** will include a time of blessing and sending before Pastor Amanda is away for sabbatical this summer, and we will look to welcome a part-time pastor to Grace for pastoral coverage this summer.

QUARTERLY STATEMENTS— Thank you for your support for mission and ministry through your gifts of tithes and offerings. Quarterly giving statements were mailed in early April, if you have questions about your statement, please contact the church office. Thank you for your generosity, thank you for your prayers, and thank you for participating in God’s work through Grace Lutheran Church.

GRACE SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS—The Endowment Committee at Grace Lutheran Church is responsible for administering the Readel Memorial Scholarship Fund and Allen Memorial Scholarship Fund. Both of these scholarships are for post high school education. The Readel Memorial Scholarship Fund is available to students pursuing a full-time Christian vocation or related areas. The Allen Memorial Scholarship is for students attending an accredited Lutheran institution. These funds are for active members of Grace Lutheran Church who are in good standing. The money awarded each year depends on the amount available. Monies are to be paid directly to the institution and not to the student or parents. Applications are available through the Church Office or on the Grace website. On the navigation bar at the top go to education, then scholarships. Scholarship applications for both the Readel and Allen funds are due into the Grace Lutheran Church Office by July 1, 2021. All scholarship applications are reviewed by the Endowment Committee and voted on during the quarterly meeting in July; payments are made in August.

HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH PROGRAM—High School Youth, welcome to YSJ “Youth Standing with Jesus”! - As we move into exciting new beginnings this year, our high school youth program is excited to announce a new name, some new faces, and a fresh focus on Faith in Action! We hope you are ready to reconnect with each other, and to help us plan activities, events, and service that will make impacts, great and small, here at Grace and out in our community. Standing with Jesus, you can make this world a better place by example, build relationships through learning, and grow your faith through acts of social justice...just the way He did! We will announce our first gathering in the coming weeks, as we look forward to meeting safely outdoors in the warmer weather. Look for announcements in Grace Notes, on Facebook, and through emails. If you are unsure if you are on Grace’s email list, please contact the church office to update your information. YSJ is open to ALL high school students, COME AS YOU ARE, and bring a friend! :) We can’t wait to start this journey with you.

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION & PENTECOST—This year on Pentecost Sunday we give thanks to God for the gifts of time and commitment by Grace’s volunteers. We hope you will join in worship wherever you are as we prayerfully give thanks to God for Grace’s volunteers—thank you for sharing in the ministries and life of Grace Lutheran Church!

WEEKLY NOTES— In addition to this *Grace for Today* newsletter, we have additional updates and news shared through our weekly Thursday emails. Please call the office or email Carrie Fiorina cfiorina@gracewoodstock.org to add or update your email address if you do not already receive emails from Grace. The service folder for the upcoming Sunday is included in these emails and is also linked on the front page of Grace’s website, www.gracewoodstock.us.



Presence Light Sponsors:

April 18

In Memory of my dear husband Bert for our 61 wonderful years together,
given by Carol Rank

May 9

To the glory of God for the blessings of family & Friends, given by Nancy &
Bill Kreznor

May 16

In memory of Mary Figard, given by Terry Figard family

Bulletin Sponsors:

April 18

In Memory of my dear husband Bert for our 61 wonderful years together,
given by Carol Rank

May 2

To the glory of God, given by Donna Bungard

May 9

To the glory of God, given by Bob & Joyce Shook

May 16

In Memory of Mary Figard, given by Terry Figard family

May 23

In recognition of and thanks to the Grace staff and all the volunteers who provide the livestream services,
given by Nancy & Bill Kreznor

May 30

In memory of my mom, Gladys Martin, given by Mary Beth



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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