

# grace notes

January and February 2020

---

## ***Incline your ear and come to me, listen so that you may live! Isaiah 55:3***

I have been working on listening to God. This is probably not something that is comforting coming from your new pastor, but it's true. It takes work to listen to God. Listening to God is hard. So often in my life, I have plenty of things to *say* to God. "God could you help me with this." "God could you guide me with that." "God let me know the plans that you have for me." I have become very confident in God's skills as a great listener. But my ability to listen to God is something that I must work at. I know that I'm not alone in this, even as a spiritual leader. Our world is busy. Our lives are noisy. Silence is something that can feel uncomfortable and sometimes even unsafe. Often in the silence our insecurities creep in or our "to do" lists overtake our brains. But over the past few months I have been making a conscience effort to just sit in silence. I often begin with a prayer: "God I am listening. Help me to hear you and what you want for me to do." I will admit that often what I hear is silence. I have on occasion been successful in clearing my mind and not having it immediately filled with all sorts of distracting thoughts, but even when that happens, I haven't walked away with a clear sense of what God was saying to me. It is hard listening to God. But often it is the hard things that are the most important things for us to do.

We have a lot of important decisions on the horizon for Grace Lutheran: decisions about where God is leading us, decisions about what our new vision is, decisions about our properties and building projects. I am convinced we cannot go forward in any of this unless we are spending time listening to God. Because while, I am called to be



your new pastor, the truth is I am not the one who is leading Grace, God is. God is the one who is guiding our church and all of us. When we lay aside our own agendas and listen to God, I truly believe that God will speak. God will lead us in the right direction so that we might know what we are called to do as God's people today.

So I am hoping that you will join me in listening to God. As a staff we are listening to God by praying our way through the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel that we will be reading and studying this upcoming year. I hope that you will join us in this venture. Read a small section of Mark. Start at Jesus' baptism and read only that section and wonder. What is God saying to Jesus? What is God doing?

What is God saying to me? What words or phrases captures your attention? What questions do you have? Sit in silence for five minutes listening to God. After Jesus' baptism move onto the next session and do the same thing until you have worked slowly through the entire first chapter. Please don't rush it. Take it slow and listen.

A few weeks ago, I spent a busy day at work constantly talking to people on staff and other members of Grace Lutheran. As I was thinking and dreaming about our future, I kept wondering about the past. "What are the stories of Grace Lutheran that I need to know?" I pondered. "How do we share these stories?" Later that evening as I was walking my dog and praying- a voice entered my head and my heart telling me "Look forward." It might have been the wind, or just the movement of my body, but the longer I walked the more clearly the voice was "Look forward." I realized in that moment that God was telling me something, while I do believe the stories of Grace's past are important and have shaped this church, I believe it is time for Grace to look forward and to move ahead. You all have done important and meaningful work by being a part of Grace. I am so thankful for the ways your previous pastors have nourished your faith and helped you grow closer to God. Grace has a strong foundation to stand on. A foundation that begins with God's love for you and for the world and has been sculpted and molded by your faithfulness and your willingness to follow. And now God is leading us forward to a new future and a new vision for tomorrow.

Mark's Gospel begins with these words: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." We are at the beginning of a new year, the beginning of our time together, the beginning of a new vision for Grace Lutheran. I hope that you will join me in this time of listening to God, because I know God is still talking and in inclining our ear to God that we will have life. I know God has amazing plans for us as we look forward together.

*Pastor Joanna Mitchell*

## Grace Lutheran Church Staff

**Senior Pastor** .....Joanna Mitchell  
Ext. 110.....joannam@graceandover.org

**Visitation Pastor**.....Delwayne Hahn  
Ext. 105 .. delwayneh@graceandover.org

**Dir. of Youth Ministry**.....Kristi Larson  
Ext. 100 .....kristil@graceandover.org

**Coord. of Youth Ministries**.....Tom Baker  
Ext. 123 ..... tomb@graceandover.org

**Dir. of Outreach Ministries**.....Debbie Jorgens  
Ext. 109 .....debbiej@graceandover.org

**Dir. of Worship & Music**.....Jonathan Orwig  
Ext. 113 .... jonathano@graceandover.org

**Dir. of Children/Family Ministries** ...Maria Markman  
Ext. 112 .....mariam@graceandover.org

**Church Administrator**.....Kate Morpew  
Ext. 102 ..... katem@graceandover.org

**Administrative Assistant**.....Kris Miller  
Ext. 101 ..... krism@graceandover.org

**Custodians**.....Mark Kempenich & Dan Tkachenko  
Ext. 117 .....markk@graceandover.org

**Dir. Of Golden Rule Child Care Center**  
Sandy Schmoll...sandys@graceandover.org 421-1996

*If you would like to contact any of the Vision Board members, please visit [graceandover.org](http://graceandover.org) and click on leaders.*

## Vision Board Members

|                                  |                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Johnna Rohmer-Hirt(Pres.)</i> | <i>Alden Riley</i>  |
| <i>Chad Hadler (V.P.)</i>        | <i>Carla Renner</i> |
| <i>Vickie Meade (Secretary)</i>  | <i>Ann Lange</i>    |
| <i>Dave Trapp</i>                |                     |

## PRAYERS

### We keep in our prayers the newly baptized:

Lincoln Karlson Hodgins,  
son of Kris & Kayla Hodgins  
Crosby Alen Hanson,  
son of Trent Hanson & Devin Meyer  
Dominik James Terrell,  
son of Hannah Heath & DJ Terrell

### We keep in our prayers those in need of healing:

Jason Beckman, Caitlyn & Andy Jax and newborn  
twins; Karen Swedberg, Wes Hiller, David Zupon,  
John Malecha, Wayne Welle, Linda Christiansen,  
Jack Zirkle, Kathy Lovik, Judi Wold,  
the Hammon Family

### We keep in our hearts and prayers the families with recent loss of:

Sylvia Lindgren, Lauren Fechner, Arnie Jensen,  
Elaine Lange, Terry Trude, Jim Eaton, Mary Klein,  
Mason Ryan, Patric Vitek, Mary Welle's sister Carol,  
Nick Cenaiko, Barbara Gleckler, Frederick Kroeger



**The entire building of Grace is being re-keyed. If you have a key and you feel you need a replacement, contact your ministry team lead or Kate Morpew.**



January 26th is the Annual meeting to vote on the budget for 2020. We will only have one meeting in the time between Sunday morning worship. We will share some highlights to the operational budget for 2020 and vote to approve the budget. The 2020 operational budget will be available the weekend before. If you have questions about the budget please contact, Pastor Joanna or Kate Morpew.

2019 Contribution Statements will be mailed out in January.

## Thank You Grace!

*~We can't express our gratitude fully for the generosity you have shown us. The quilts made by the ladies and the collection from the parishioners...we were so moved by your generosity. We are extremely lucky to have Grace as a neighbor and are looking forward to being close again. Thank you so much! God Bless, Ron & Dana Hammon*

*~Your continued support and love of our students and their families is incredible! It does not go unnoticed. You've touched and helped so many lives. We truly appreciate all you do! Thanks you, Sand Creek Elementary Staff*



*~We appreciate the way members of Grace willingly dug deep into your pockets two weekend in a row for the noisy offering. Our son, Jack, was hit by a drunk driver and suffered substantial bodily injuries. His auto insurance maxed out with just one surgery with another surgery and physical therapy scheduled. He was between jobs without medical insurance and the suspect who hit him was uninsured. The gift of money was used for a payment to his surgeon.*

*We thank you for your generosity and we thank you for your prayers and support! God Bless you all! Pete, Lynn, Heidi & Jack Zirkle*

*~Thank you to our Grace Family for remembering us with your thoughts, prayers and cards on the death of Norm's father, Frederick, who was blessed with a long life of 101 years. Thanks be to God. With appreciation, Norm & Gloria Kroeger*

*~Thank you to everyone who helped with the Love of Grace Bazaar this year. Many of you donated items to sell in the Grace Emporium and food for the kitchen. Others donated your time by working a shift in the kitchen, welcoming shoppers, helping to set up on Thursday and Friday evenings and take down and put our church building back into working order on Saturday after the bazaar.*

*Because of all of you, our bazaar was a great success. Our church was full of vendors and shoppers on Saturday. We hope they felt the love of Grace.*

*With the funds raised, we were able contribute to Children's Bibles, Robin's Nest and Sharing Grace Food Bags at Sand Creek Elementary School. We are also purchasing two new serving carts for the kitchen.*

*Thank you! We could not have done it without all of your help.*

*The Love of Grace Ministry Team*

## Men's & Women's Ministry



### Women's Retreat 2020

Ladies – Please join us for our Women's Retreat Feb 7-9, 2020 at Luther Point Bible Camp. We are so excited to have a Guest Speaker this year! She will be helping us with Stress Management and How to Simplify our Lives. ***Simplify + Surrender = Peace.*** Space is limited so Register Today!

### REGISTRATION IS OPEN NOW!

**Date:** Friday, February 7– Sunday, February 9

**Time:** Arrive at camp between 6-8 pm Friday  
Depart at Noon Sunday  
Carpooling available

**Place:** Luther Point Bible Camp in Grantsburg, WI

**Price:** January 1 - January 31 = \$90  
includes All meals and lodging

Contact Stacy Surratt with any questions at [stacysurratt@yahoo.com](mailto:stacysurratt@yahoo.com)

**Register on GraceLink**

### Women's Opportunities

W.O.W - Wednesdays at 9:30am

Bible Study on Mondays at 6:30pm

Ruth Circle - 2nd Wednesdays at 12:30pm

Quilters - Wednesdays at 9:00am

Grace Quilters 2 - Last Mondays at 6:30pm

Girls Night Out - 1st Thursdays 5:30-7:30pm  
at Davanni's (18+)

### Men's Opportunities

BWW Connection - 1st Tuesdays @ 6:30 pm

Men's Gab & Grub - 3rd Sat. at Baker's Square 8am

Bible Studies on Mon. 6:30am or Sat. 8am

# Recap of the Cottage Meetings

## **“Getting to Know You Gatherings”**

with Pastor Joanna  
What you said about  
Grace Lutheran Church

*In the fall of 2019, I met with 112 people from Grace Lutheran Church in small group gatherings mostly in people's homes. I heard many stories of faith and also stories about what brought people to Grace and how Grace became your faith-home. I am grateful for this opportunity. I also spent time listening to your thoughts on Grace. Each person had the opportunity to answer the questions:*

*What is one strength of Grace?*

*What is one growth area for Grace?*

*What is one community need for Andover and the surrounding area?*

*What is one thing you are passionate about (hobby or interest)?*

*All of our Vision Board members attended at least one of these cottage meetings. I reviewed the responses, counted them, and grouped them into categories. The top responses and categories from the first three questions and a summary of the responses are listed below. Percentages are based on the number of responses in each category. This winter, the Vision Board and Staff of Grace will review these responses to help us plan our future ministry together.*



**AREAS OF STRENGTH:** (128 responses)

**WELCOMING/FRIENDLY** (32%)

The spirit of welcome that is a part of Grace Lutheran is one of our greatest strengths. I heard that Grace is a welcoming/friendly church repeatedly at every single one of the small group gatherings. People feel well welcomed and felt like they were seen when they walked through the doors of Grace. This has allowed for Grace to feel like coming home to many people and because of this it has become their Spiritual home.

### **MISSION/OUTREACH (22%):**

Grace's ministry extends beyond its doors and into the community. You are a church that puts your faith into action. Grace cares deeply about our neighbors and believes that part of living your faith is responding to the needs of people around us. People are thankful for our

participation in Family Promise, Sand Creek Elementary, Haiti and Rakai. We have both a local and international focus in caring for others.

### **PEOPLE/CONNECTIONS (19%):**

YOU are the greatest strength of Grace Lutheran. Along with being welcoming and friendly, being a caring community is at the heart of Grace Lutheran. You show up for each other. Grace as a family of faith knows how to care for one another during times of grief and difficulty. Your connections have helped you grow spiritually in small groups and you have developed meaningful relationships. WOW was listed as an important source of connection and “Sundays at Grace” were listed too.

### **INCLUSIVITY (6%):**

People are thankful that Grace Lutheran welcomes everyone regardless of your family situation, your sexual orientation/identity, and background. When we say, “all are welcome,” we mean it. Some people wonder how we might make this inclusive welcome more known to people outside our walls. Is it time to raise a rainbow flag or to indicate our open welcome in some other way?

### **OTHER (under 5%)**

People are thankful for the work of our staff and their care for them. Our worship services were praised for their music and also for their grace-filled relatable sermons. People feel that our location on Round Lake Blvd. and Bunker is an advantage for us because we are so visible to people driving by. Finally, our dedication to youth and children's ministry is a strength that we have at Grace.



**AREAS TO GROW** (86 responses):

### **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY (22%)**

All of the transitions in our children's ministry programming over the past few years has been difficult for Grace. Children are an important aspect of our ministry and people want to continue to invest in our children so that we can continue to nurture and grow our young people. Our lack of VBS last year was a lament shared by a number of people. VBS has been such a strong program that involved many people and our church desires for this to continue to be true. Suggested ways to invest in our children's ministry: consistency of staff (if possible), work to establish a closer connection with our daycare, involve kids in worship, intergenerational activities.



## Recap of the Cottage Meetings

### **PEOPLE/CONNECTIONS: (20%)**

While connecting with one another is seen as a strength, it is also a growth area for Grace Lutheran. Some of our newer members are wondering how they might become more connected. Many people said they feel well welcomed initially but then struggle to find the next step. Some of our outreach programs have felt closed to them. People desire more follow-up when they sign up for an event or a volunteer opportunity. On the flip-side-people who are leading these program struggle to find people to volunteer. They feel tired and want more people to join their groups. People also want more adult education and small groups (couples' groups, singles groups and intergenerational and family ministry along with ways to grow spiritually and support groups.)

### **YOUTH MINISTRY (11%)**

People want ways for our youth to be more active in the everyday life of the congregation: in worship (music, serving communion, reading) and in service (how are youth a part of our outreach?). This has been such a vital part of Grace's ministry; recent numbers have fallen in enrollment and so there is some concern among members (however we still have 90 youth in catechism). There is a desire for there to be ministry for young adults and to make sure we don't lose kids after confirmation.

### **BUILDING 10%**

Our building, at times, gets in the way of our activities. Our narthex is not large enough to provide a space for fellowship after worship. We also have the portables that provide classroom space, but they need to be removed soon. What will we do instead? Our building has been added onto many times and so we have multiple heating systems that prove to be difficult. There is also the question of the land on Nightingale. What is the best location for our future ministry? Round Lake Blvd or Nightingale? What will we gain or lose in either location?

### **WORSHIP (7%)**

People are grateful for the variety of worship that is offered but some would like there to be more distinction. Some desire a livelier contemporary service that might engage seekers with occasional dramas. Others want to embrace more of the traditional elements of worship like a regular confession/forgiveness and using the Apostle's creed more often. Sound is also a concern and one person suggested that we mic the choir.

### **NEEDS IN THE COMMUNITY**

(65 responses):

#### **CONNECTIONS (32%)**

The greatest need identified by our participants was a way for people to connect with each other in our community. People are concerned about loneliness and isolation for people of all ages (our youth (15%) and our seniors (5%) were repeatedly named). We also wondered about how to connect with people who are "unchurched."



#### **HOMELESSNESS/HUNGER (27%)**

Homelessness and hunger are a major concern for our community. We want to make sure people have their basic needs provided for. Our engagement in Family Promise continues to open our eyes to the needs of people who need stable housing. Other concerns for housing were affordable housing and senior housing.

#### **MENTAL HEALTH (11%)**

Anxiety, depression and other mental health concerns rose to the top of our concerns for our community. You want to make sure that there is adequate support for people with mental health concerns and have a particular concern for our youth's mental health.

#### **DIVERSITY (7.5%)**

Diversity was raised in two different ways. One was the lack of diversity that is present in Andover. The second way was a wonder about how to reach out to people of different diversities and how we as a faith community might be more inclusive.

#### **OTHER:**

Some other needs there were named were a lack of mass transit (2 people), employment opportunities (3 people), spirituality of our community (3 people), affordable daycare (1 person) and drugs (1).

*Thank you for taking the time to read the results of my cottage meetings. I believe that this information is useful in our discernment about who we are at Grace Lutheran and where God is calling us to go in Jesus' name. I hope that you will join me in praying and listening to God as we envision our future together.*

Pastor Joanna Mitchell

## Children's Ministries



### SONday School & Worshiping with Our Children!

Continuing this year at Grace every Sunday will be Family Worship Sunday. This means children and their families will be in worship together until after the children's message. After the children's message children will be dismissed to SONday school, to their classrooms. Parents must pick up their children following worship in their child's SONday school classrooms.

**We are looking for a preschool teacher for 10:30am. If you or someone you know might be interested - high school age and up, please contact Maria**

**[mariam@graceandover.org](mailto:mariam@graceandover.org)**



### Baptism Reunion Party

**Sunday, Jan. 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:45 am**

Baptism is an important step in the life of a family and their congregation. We will discuss how God is at work in baptism during the Baptism Class at Grace. We will also share insights to help you as you raise your child to know and love God by creating experiences and keeping God in the center of your everyday life.

### Valentine's Special Person Dance

**Wed. February 12<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30-8pm**

Bring your Child, Grandchild or a special child in your life.

Join us for a night of dancing, crafts, and treats. Get your photo taken in our photo booth with the special child in your life. Cost is \$5 per Child or \$10 per family. We invite all!!

Look for registration in January.



**Look for more Children's Ministries Events soon! Bible classes, play and pray, 1<sup>st</sup> communion and so much more!**

### Adding a Grace Family Library

It is so important for faith to be nurtured at home! Listening to NPR recently, experts noted the importance of stories in shaping young minds. In our Baptism course at Grace we talk about the importance of starting your family faith library! We want to help you by building our church family's faith library. If you have books you are looking to get rid of and would like to donate please drop them off in the Children's Ministries office! If there are titles you would like to see in the library, let Maria know, otherwise keep your eye out for when the library comes to life, so you can look at and borrow some books for your family to read.



### Nursery Registration

There is a new registration on GraceLink for those of you who use the nursery. Registration does not cost your family anything but it helps us keep track of you and your child's needs. Please take the time to register your child in the nursery!



### Kids Night Out!

Wednesday Nights from 6:30-7:45

Come learn about God's love and how to share it through service!

Also we will play games, sing songs, and make art installments for the worship center! All kids in

kindergarten thru 5<sup>th</sup> grade are welcome to join!

Please register on GraceLink or show up on

Wednesday night for family pizza at 6:00 and have your children stay for Kids Night Out!

### NO SONday School

February 9

April 12

### NO Kids Night Out

April 8

(during Lent, KNO will go to worship)

### No Catechism

April 8

## Youth Ministries



### January 2<sup>nd</sup> 9am-4pm

A bus will pick us up from Grace at 9:05am (students meet by 9:00am) and we will serve at FMSC in the morning. After, we are heading to Faith Lutheran Church for lunch and games and then to Urban Air for fun. We will return back to church around 3:30pm. Cost is \$23/student.

For middle school & high students. Invite your friends!



### Ultimate Middle School Lock in at the Maple Grove Community Center

Friday January 24<sup>th</sup> 10 pm to 6 am Saturday

Be at Grace at 9:45pm

Leave Grace at 10:00pm

return to Grace by 6:15am on Saturday

All 6th-8th graders are welcome to attend (and friends!)

Cost: \$25.00 plus \$5.00 for bus transportation  
Swimming, ice skating, 9 square/ air, great music with DJ, inflatable games, knockerball, dodge ball, dance, ga ga pit, ESCAPE ROOM, food (pizza) and much more!!!

For more information or to sign up go to [www.graceandover.org](http://www.graceandover.org) or contact Tom Baker at [tomb@graceandover.org](mailto:tomb@graceandover.org)

### High School Supper Club

January 7 and February 4

5:30-7pm

9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade students are invited to join us to cook dinner together (and then eat!) Please bring \$5 to off set the cost of food. RSVP to Kristi by the day before.



### Green Ribbon Group

January 7 and February 4

7:00 pm

For parents who have children (through college age) who struggle with mental health. (Including but certainly not limited to anxiety, depression, bipolar, eating disorders, behavioral issues, RAD, etc.) YOU ARE NOT ALONE! We meet the first Tuesday of each month at Grace Lutheran Church. The group is open to all parents inside and outside of Grace, so please invite anyone in need of support. The group is meant for support and solidarity. While we may not have answers or solutions we can be there for one another to listen.



For more information please contact Kristi Larson at [Kristil@graceandover.org](mailto:Kristil@graceandover.org). If your child struggles with mental health and you are unable to join us but are still in need of support, please contact Kristi.

# YOUTH MINISTRIES



# LENT 2020: Following Jesus into the arena

Brené Brown begins her book *Daring Greatly* with a quote from Theodore Roosevelt, often referred to as the “Man in the Arena.” It is from his speech at the Sorbonne in Paris, France in April 1910.

*It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worsts, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly...*

Every time I hear this quote and imagine the man stumbling in the arena, his face in the dirt, I imagine the face of Jesus. Those critics standing on the sidelines with all their judgment and all their questions and disapproval seem familiar. I’ve encountered them in my own life, haven’t you? But what gives me courage in my day to day life, is knowing that I am not alone in having encountered the critic and the judge, but Jesus has faced it too. In fact, Jesus faced it day after day in his ministry and every time he did- he showed us what it is like to face vulnerability. He showed us what it was like to live a life of courage, and to dare to step in the arena because this is where authenticity happens, this is where truthfulness, beauty and love can grow.

If you haven’t heard of Brené Brown, I hope that you will watch her TED Talks: *The Power of Vulnerability* and *Listening to Shame* (yes plural- one on shame, one on vulnerability (both are great!)). I know that one of our WOW groups is currently studying her book, “The Gift of Imperfection.” Often times we think of vulnerability as being a weakness. We don’t like feeling vulnerable because when we do we feel exposed and yet, Brown argues that vulnerability is not weakness at all. Vulnerability is courage, in fact it is daring to show up and be seen.

When I think about the Gospels and the ministry of Jesus, one of the most consistent things I notice is that Jesus sees people. He really sees them. Often there is a critic in the background busy judging the person, busy hiding his own truth, but Jesus always moves beyond that. Jesus walks towards people. He walks toward vulnerability and he shows up in the lives of people and allows them to know that they are not alone. Brown

states in her research that the biggest weapon against shame is empathy. When those things in our life that we have been conditioned to be ashamed of erupt we often want to hide them and then shame grows. But if we

**VULNERABILITY  
IS OUR MOST  
ACCURATE  
MEASUREMENT  
OF COURAGE.**

expose our shame to the light, to empathy it dissipates, the power is gone. When Jesus walked along and encountered people, he not only saw them, but he looked at them with eyes of compassion, with empathy. He took away

their shame and in place of words of judgment, he empowered them with words of love and belonging. I believe in our lives as Christians this is what we are called to do—to walk alongside Jesus having the courage to be vulnerable, having the courage to be seen and to see others; having the courage to receive empathy and be empathetic in our care for the world so that we and all people might live whole-heartedly.

For Lent this year we will be using Brené Brown’s research and book *Daring Greatly* as an outline for our study of the Gospels. We will be encountering the stories of Jesus and examining his courage, his vulnerabilities and the ways in which he empowered people to live whole-heartedly. I hope you will join us in this study. There are two ways you can participate. There will be an opportunity to be a part of a small group from 6pm-7pm that meets together during our Lenten dinners. Please sign up in January and February to be a part of a small group. However, you don’t need to be a part of a small group to participate in our Lenten Worship. If you don’t want to be a part of a small group, I hope that you will still join us for worship at 7pm where we will explore stories in the Gospels through the lens of Dr. Brown’s work.

We live in a culture of scarcity. Where we are often told there isn’t enough or we are not enough. But Jesus gives us a different message: as God’s children we are enough and so is everyone else. Knowing this, how can we let go of our own feelings of unworthiness, our fears, our anxiety and our desire to numb and instead move to be authentic, thankful, courageous, creative, and have trusting faith.

I hope you will join us on this adventure facing vulnerability and shame together so that we might dare to follow Jesus into the arena and experience more compassionate, courageous and connected lives.

Pastor Joanna Mitchell



## 10 Years Serving Family Promise



Thank you to everyone who helped serve our Family Promise guests over the Thanksgiving Holiday. Homelessness is an extremely trying time for families and especially poignant over a holiday. The families we served were all very grateful for our hospitality.

Family Promise is actually a nationally recognized program and the nation's leading nonprofit fighting family homelessness. Karen Olson, the founder of Family Promise, was inspired to do something after discovering that homelessness was affecting families right in her own community of Union County, New Jersey. Karen had an idea to bring together people in need and people who wanted to help. Existing community resources could provide shelter, meals, and housing. Volunteers could use their skills, knowledge, and compassion to help their homeless neighbors find employment, reconnect with society, and restore their dignity. The first Interfaith Hospitality Network was opened on October 27th, 1986. When other communities in New Jersey heard what was happening in Union County, they began to develop their own networks. In 1988, the National Interfaith Hospitality Network was formed with a goal of bringing the program nationwide.

Now, over 30 years later, Family Promise has over 200 affiliates operating in 43 states across the US. Each year the national office hosts a Conference for affiliates and shares the latest ideas, research, practices, and new programs. In 2018 they introduced a cleaner, more modern logo, in line with a two-year brand refresh. As part of that brand refresh, Family Promise affiliates received new logos and other marketing materials that we will be rolling out in the next year. We revealed our new logo for the first time at our Annual Hotdish for Homelessness event on September 19th of this year. In 2020 we will be celebrating our 10th year of serving families in Anoka County experiencing homelessness. We are in the beginning stages of planning for a celebration to occur on Labor Day Weekend, the anniversary of when the first families were hosted by our Interfaith Hospitality Network.

Grace will be hosting Family Promise families again the week of January 26th through February 2nd. Please watch for the sign up opportunities in the blue sheets and prayerfully consider assisting us with this vital mission.

*Alden Riley*

— — — —



### Family Promise Volunteer Breakfast and Training

Saturday, February 29, 9:00-11:00 AM  
Fellowship Hall

To more effectively serve families in need and to continue to improve the experience for volunteers and host/partner congregations, Family Promise in Anoka County is requesting that all volunteers attend a Volunteer Orientation & Training session. The training for Grace volunteers (as well as volunteers from our new partner congregation, St. Katharine Drexel Catholic Church in Anoka) will be held here at Grace on Saturday morning, February 29<sup>th</sup>.

Please note that this training is for people who would like to begin volunteering with Family Promise as well as for our veteran volunteers! **The training is required for all volunteers having direct contact with the families** including drivers, evening and meal hosts, overnight hosts, team captains and coordinators/co-coordinators, etc. Although the session is not required for volunteers that do not have direct contact with families (e.g. setup, teardown, meal providers), we hope you will join us! A full breakfast will be served, and we'll wrap up by 11:00. Watch for sign-up's closer to the event.

## Grace Ministries Updates



### **Grace4Rakai Celebration Dinner Sunday Jan. 12<sup>th</sup> 5:00 – 7:30 PM!**

Please join us on Sunday Jan. 12<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 PM in Fellowship Hall for the annual Grace4Rakai Celebration Dinner!

Ann Hill, President of African Children Today will be on hand to share updates on the ministries Grace supports over in Rakai, Uganda. Ann just got back from Rakai in November and has lots of photos and video clips of the ACT Junior School, Amazing Grace Bakery, Grace quilts and more!

We will be sharing letters and photos of our sponsored children over in Rakai, and Ann will have photos and video clips of many of the kids opening the cards she took over from the Grace community in November. You won't want to miss it!

A lasagna dinner is being provided by the Grace4Rakai Ministry Team. All we ask is that you come and join in the fellowship! RSVP if you can with the church office or with any member of the Grace4Rakai Ministry team. And if your plans are up in the air, feel free to just show up at 5:00 PM on Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>! We so hope you can join us!

— — — —

### **Prayer Shawl Ministry**

Do you like to knit or crochet? If so, please consider joining the Prayer Shawl Ministry Team! The women on this team use their knitting and crocheting skills to make prayer shawls and lap blankets for people who are ill or homebound. Prayers are pinned to the shawls and blankets, bringing comfort as well as warmth to those who receive them. This year, 69 shawls and blankets have been given to people at Mercy Hospital, Anoka Care Center, the Farmstead and others in the community.



Projects are completed independently, but the team meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month at 12:30 to enjoy a meal together and to discuss the ministry they share. If you're interested in joining them or learning more, please call Bev Jovanovich at 763-427-4122.

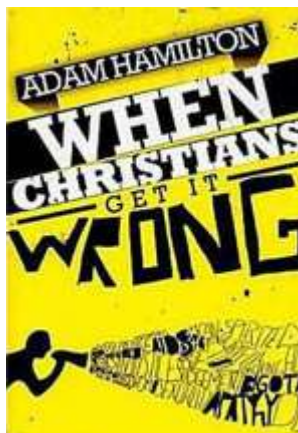
### **Please join us for "Bridging Divides" Thursday, January 16, 2020 7 pm to 8:30 pm**

Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Ramsey  
Admission is free and all are welcome

Grace Lutheran Church is partnering with Lord of Life and Anoka United Methodist Church in a special event featuring national-speaker Ellie Krug. Ellie is a transgender author and activist who uses her own experience of feeling "other" in order to teach about ways to overcome barriers of division. In October, Ellie presented her talk "Gray Area Thinking" at Grace. We are excited to have another opportunity to learn from Ellie and to invite you to experience her transformational teaching.

On January 16<sup>th</sup>, Ellie will present her workshop: "Bridging Divides: Perspectives on Grit, Resiliency and The Four Commonalities." "Bridging Divides" offers strategies for bridging the divide between "Us" and "Them" that seems to pervade America today. This bridging takes honesty, mindfulness, fearlessness, compassion and a lot of work. Ellie has undertaken that work and invites us to do the same—because it's necessary for our children and our country.

— — — —



**Coming for Lent -**  
*"When Christians  
Get It Wrong" -*  
a book/video/study series  
from  
Adam Hamilton.  
Look for more info in  
February.  
Beginning Monday,  
March 9, for seven  
weeks, at Davanni's  
- Grace SALT Ministry"

— — — —

### **May All Be Fed Food Pantry Volunteers needed**

Help is needed in the Grace Food Pantry sorting donated food and placing it on the shelves, as well as bagging food for those in need. If you can help, contact Michele Behnke-Nead at 763-267-8569 [mbehnkenead@gmail.com](mailto:mbehnkenead@gmail.com) or sign up on the opportunity sheets. Thanks to a very generous donation, the only thing needed in the food shelf at this time is pasta sauce. Drop off your donations in the Narthex or the Church Office. **PLEASE, NO GLASS CONTAINERS OR EXPIRED ITEMS.**

## Mental Health Awareness

Last spring the SALT Team (Grace Lutheran Church's Adult Education and Prayer Ministry) began discussing the issue of mental health and what our church could do to assist in this arena. I think all of us know someone who deals with anxiety, depression, eating disorders, PTSD or other mental health conditions. As part of my own journey and learning, I recently read several books about mental health and the role of the church. Historically, the church in general has not done a great job understanding and accepting the complex medical diagnoses that cause mental illness. Despite the broader church's missteps, people facing mental health challenges (and those who live with, love and care for them) often seek help from the church and specifically their pastor.

During my junior year of high school, I took a psychology class. During that class we began to hear stories of people's experiences with mental health. We heard the ins and outs of their daily life, their experiences and changes in their mental state, and their encounters with the world and how it perceived them. Afterwards we were given the opportunity to have conversations about what we heard. During one of our conversations I saw something that changed my perspective on the topic of mental health for years to come. The boy next to me began to tear up, he took a moment to compose himself and he said, "It's nice to know that the conversation, although it's hard, is something we are willing to have." I didn't understand why he said these words and why it took so much out of him. He later explained in private that he had been diagnosed with mild schizophrenia and that most people only saw one piece of him. He said that he could see in his everyday life the way that people felt about those who had experienced the same mental health diagnoses as him and he knew that they saw him as "not like them." He said that he took the class as a way to better understand himself but never knew that people would want to learn and even talk about the challenges that he faced. I think about this conversation when I open a psychology book or have a conversation about mental health in our world today. It reminds me that all it takes is a moment to listen.

One of the greatest obstacles facing the topic of mental health is the stigma. Many people are uncomfortable talking about the mental health challenges they or a loved one have encountered. In addition, even close friends and family members often don't know what to say or sometimes say the wrong things. When we as the church begin with the simple act of reaching out and being open to hearing each other's stories and entering the conversation on mental health we are helping stop the stigma. Our willingness to listen to one another may allow those who currently feel voiceless to feel heard. When we seek to understand our brothers and sisters - while they are experiencing both their joys and sorrows - then we can see people the way Jesus does.

To help us grow in our understanding of and compassion towards those facing mental health issues, we have formed a mental health team and have begun planning a series of events at Grace for 2020. In early February we will be having a worship service focused on mental health and a presentation from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. We hope you will join us for these events and join the conversation because we want to hear your voice so that we can learn and grow together.

*Nancy Jenkins and Bekah Hirt*







# Grace Lutheran Church

13655 Round Lake Blvd NW, Andover, MN 55304

(763) 421-6520

*A Ministry of Grace in the heart of Andover and beyond!*

*[www.graceandover.org](http://www.graceandover.org)*

NON PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Anoka, MN 55303

PERMIT No. 118

Address Service Requested

## LENT

**Ash Wednesday Worship**

**February 26**

**1pm and 7pm**

**Wednesday Lenten Worship**

**March 4, 11, 18, 25 & April 1**

**1pm and 7pm**