

grace notes

September 2020

Dear Grace friends,



My phone is blowing up today with text messages from friends who are worried about school starting and the lack of information we have received as of today. My kids' school starts on Tuesday and we lack a lot of information. My youngest daughter does not have a schedule yet and we don't even know how to log on for distance learning. Both my girls have brand new principals and there is also a new assistant principal at the high school too. As a leader of an organization during the time of COVID-19, I am holding them all in grace. It is SO HARD to communicate enough and to supply the answers to questions you haven't thought of quite yet. Americans are used to having the information we want, when we want it or even before we thought about it. In the church, I have been used to almost always working 6 months ahead to prepare, plan, pray and communicate. But this year is different. We don't know how things will end up. We don't know what life will look like three months from now, let alone a week from now. All our planning at Grace has been done with an asterisk in which we note: "If we are able to do that..." But frankly we

don't know. So, we prepare, plan, pray and wait.

Ephesians 4:1-3 states: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Our various calls are unique depending on our stage of life. We are called, both through our work and our relationships, to follow Jesus, and in doing so we have been called to lead lives of humility, gentleness, and patience. We have been called to bear with one another. These attributes of humility, gentleness and patience are things our world desperately needs. In the grand scheme of things, a strong start to the school year, while important, ultimately will not make a huge difference in the lives of my kids. What will matter, is how they learn to navigate these uncertain times. What example will I set for them? How can I demonstrate my own humility, gentleness, and patience? How can I bear the burden my kids feel? How can I maintain a spirit of unity and peace with my neighbors, with our school leaders, with our church community and more? For me, the answer is putting away my own agenda and allowing God to lead and teach me. Because God's ability to bear with me in love is more than I deserve, and knowing that leads me to want to extend that same grace to others.

The Grace community has been working hard at being flexible and versatile during this time. What we have heard from you is that you miss our community. You miss your connections with one another. This is a good thing. We have been working on creating spaces and places for connections to happen; some in person and some virtually. I am excited about the variety of small group opportunities being offered this fall, which are outlined in this special edition Grace Notes. I hope that you will try one out and explore your faith in a new way. I am thrilled that the Grace is finding creative ways for us to teach our young people, serve our community and expand our ministries in this time and space. I will confess some days I wonder if we can get it all done. But then I remember the grace of this community and know that if we walk together with humility, gentleness, and patience we will be okay.

Blessings,

Pastor Joanna Mitchell

Reopen Team

Dear Grace,

The Reopen Team has been working hard (meeting weekly) as we discern the right path forward for our community. Our desire is to help as many people to worship in the way that feels safest and most comfortable for them. Therefore, we are committed to providing online worship opportunities into our future. We also will continue parking lot worship as far as we can into the fall. Finally, we will have limited indoor opportunities as well.

Indoor Activities at Grace:

In an effort to provide for the health and well-being of those who worship with us. We have developed a matrix to guide us in appropriate levels of people to have in our worship space and also to guide us if or when we might need to move back to distance only worship.

We are using the school matrix from Governor Walz and the numbers for Anoka County to determine the number of cases per 10,000 people.

- 10-20 cases 20% capacity of our sanctuary- 60 sign ups.
- 20-30 cases per 15% capacity of our sanctuary 40 sign-ups
- 30-50 cases 10% capacity for our sanctuary 35 people sign-ups.
- 50+ Virtual only.

Masks are required at ALL INDOOR EVENTS.

Protect others by staying home if you are sick:

If you have a fever, or a cough, sore throat, fatigue, body aches, new loss of taste or smell, or feel sick in any way, or are awaiting COVID-19 test results, please stay home.

Parameters for Large Group Gatherings:

Large group gatherings should be limited to ½ hour in length. We do need you to sign-up in advance for indoor in-person worship so that we can maintain records and limit the number of people in our worship space. These numbers will also be used for funerals, baptisms, and any other large group activity in our sanctuary.

Small Groups:

The Reopen Team has also developed a map of all our rooms and designated the size of a small group

that can gather in that space. This will allow for us to have bible studies and small groups in-person if they desire. Small group gathering times are limited to 1 ½ hours.

All Events:

Food and beverages will not be served at indoor events at this time.

Mitigating Risk:

We know from listening to the leading epidemiologist that the primary way that COVID-19 is spread is through aerosols. Which means it is important that we sit physically distanced from each other and we also do whatever we can to decrease the amount of air that is circulating. However, as many precautions as we might take to stop the spread of COVID-19, anyone who is choosing to attend an indoor activity is taking a risk.

If you end up testing positive for the virus after you have attended an indoor activity at Grace, we do ask that you let the church office know. We will protect your privacy but will also need to inform small groups or others in close contact of their exposure.

We especially urge those who are 65 and older to be cautious. We know that church is a vital aspect of your life and are so thankful for your faithfulness. God's Spirit does not rest in the church building but in all of us. God is with you as you worship in your home and in your neighborhood. You are a part of the vulnerable population and your health and wellness matters greatly to all of us. If there are other ways, we can help nourish you in faith, please reach out and let us know.

Thank you for your patience and for bearing with us as we navigate these next steps. Please keep the staff and Grace community in your prayers.

The Reopen Team:

Pastor Joanna Mitchell, President Chad Hadler, Frances Fernandez, Ann Lange, Lori Ackerson, Mike Schaaf and Dave Trapp



Small Group Offerings



NEW! Small Groups at Grace

By Maria Markman

Stay connected or re-connect with small groups at Grace. If you are anything like me, this time of living in a pandemic has been difficult. It has been especially hard to find connection with others. Please join us in our new initiative: SMALL GROUPS at GRACE. *We want YOU and everyone at Grace to sign up and connect!*

Small groups will start the week of October 4-10th and run for 6 weeks (November 14th). Small groups will be led by staff and/or lay leaders. Sign up for a group that interests you, meets a way you feel comfortable, and at a time that also fits your schedule. Sign ups for a small group begins Rally Sunday, September 13th in-between worship services from 9:20-10:20am or by calling the church office.

Centering Prayer

With Anne Weikle, in the Grace Worship Center on Thursdays at 1:00 PM (start date Oct. 8th). Centering Prayer is a practice in which one intends to quiet the busy mind and intentionally spend about 20 minutes resting in the Loving Presence of the Trinity. When done with others, Centering Prayer can build community.

Worship Music in the Parking Lot

With Greg and Lori Ackerson, Grace parking lot, Sunday evenings at 7:00 PM (Start date Oct. 4th). We will be playing worship music in the church parking lot. We will be gathering to sing to contemporary worship music and see what conversations are sparked! Lyrics will be provided. As this is a voluntary, social gathering held outdoors, masks will not be required, which is in compliance with the MN Executive Order as this will be an outdoor event.

Nonviolent Communication Book Study

With John Anderson, Zoom Monday evenings at 6:45 PM (Start date Oct. 5th). *Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life: Life-Changing Tools for Healthy Relationships* by Marshall Rosenberg. Learn tools to listen, understand and speak! Books are approximately \$10.50 from most sources.

Young Adult Meet Up

With Bekah Hirt and Pastor Maria Markman, Meeting day, time, and format TBD. Seeking young adults ages 17-35 at Grace. Together we plan to explore what it means to live and be people of faith in our world today. Our course will span from fun “get to know you” conversations, to real talk on issues facing ourselves, our church, our country, our culture, and our world. Our hope is that after this 6 week small group, the group might continue to serve the young adult population at Grace and in our community as a ministry of Grace.

Conversations on Mental Health and the Church

With Debbie Jorgens and Nancy Jenkins, meeting day, time, and format TBD. Join us in learning how we can be more compassionate and responsive to those struggling with mental health. As a guide to our discussion we'll use the book, *Whispers in the Pews: Voices on Mental Illness in the Church* by Chris Morris. This book is a collection of essays from various authors: men and women, pastors and church members, counselors and nurses, parents and children. All have a unique view of how mental health conditions affect people, and how the church has responded to these circumstances.

Life Moments Through Memoir: Everyone has a Story to Tell

With Jan Anderson, Zoom Tuesdays (starting October 6th) @ time TBD. We will explore moments within your life in the form of memoir to form her-story or his-story, because everyone has a story to tell. We will also look at different memoirs, some long and others short. This will allow us to read and write, learning from others as they in turn will learn from us!

Our Response to COVID-19: Finding Compassion

With Lavonne Hite, Zoom Thursdays at 2:00 PM (Starting October 8th). Circumstances are different. Now, home is the safe place, outside of our home we need be vigilant and stay aware. Our collective grief from the sickness and death can be overwhelming and at times ignored as we continue on with our overwhelming, responsibilities. During these 6 weeks, we will explore our sense of mission, purpose and joy, by finding the right balance between caring for our loved ones, work, community and our own needs of practical, emotional and spiritual support. Books that will be discussed: *The Inner Voice of Love*, by Henri Nouwen, *Good Grief*, by Granger E. Westberg, *The Caregiver Support Guide*, Ester R.A. Leutenberg & Carroll Morris, *Kathy Khalsa, OTR/L*

W.O.W.

God's Work, Our Hands



By Kate Morphew

This year WOW (Women on Wednesday) will offer both in person small groups and virtual groups via Zoom. We will meet as a large group from 9:30 until 11:00 on September 16th and 23rd, hopefully outside, or on Zoom in the case of inclement weather. Then we will meet in small groups studying your choice of books. Books being offered this year include *The Book of Faith – Genesis, I'm Still Here* by Austin Channing Brown, *Out Live Your Life* by Max Lucado, *What Love Is* by Kelly Minter, and *Missing Pieces* by Jennifer Rothchild.

Please register in advance by logging onto GraceLink or calling the church office at 763-421-6520. This will help us prepare for big WOW gathering outside or contact you if we need to move to Zoom for inclement weather.

Childcare is provided for a small fee. Contact Kate Morphew, Mary Jo Trapp or Anne Weikle if you have questions or would like more details.



God's Work, Our Hands September 19-20, 2020

By Debbie Jorgens

Mark your calendars for *God's Work, Our Hands* weekend, when we will be serving our neighbors through a variety of activities designed for all ages! Plans are still underway, so watch *Grace-at-a-Glance* for more information. But here are a few key things to keep in mind:

- Outdoor projects (primarily lawn clean-up) will take place on Saturday, September 19th. If you or someone you know needs help with fall clean-up, please call the church office. If you're willing to help with this project, please contact Scott Christensen or Debbie Jorgens.
- On Sunday, September 20th, there will be just **one worship service at 8:45 am** (outdoors, weather permitting). Following worship, you're invited to stay outdoors and participate in one or more activities such as making cards, painting blessing rocks, and assembling hospice or newborn kits for Global Health Ministries.
- ALL activities will be outdoors with social distancing in mind, and no food or beverages will be served. So be sure to bring your own water bottles!

If you're not able to join us, or simply prefer not to gather with others, you can still serve your neighbors individually or as a family! What needs can you meet or who can you help in your own neighborhood? We'll look forward to hearing your stories and seeing your photos!



Grace Notes Articles

By Marie Kolar

Grace Notes will be going out on a monthly basis starting now through the end of the year to help keep you informed on what is happening at Grace. If you have an article that you would like to submit please have the articles in Word format and in to Marie Kolar (mariek@graceandover.org) by 5pm on the 25th of September for October's Grace Notes.

Children's Ministry

Worship and Play: Sunday School

By Maria Markman



Registration: September 13th and on GraceLink following that day. Come to Worship at either the early or late service but stay late or come early for registration during the in-between service time (9:20-10:20am). Sign your child(ren) up for Sunday School. This year we have assessed the greatest need as allowing the kids to be together. This means Sunday School will happen outdoors, just like recess. We will stay outdoors as long as possible so have your children dress accordingly. In the case of rain, Sunday School will be cancelled. Sunday School will be from 9:20-10:20am each Sunday in between services. Children will hear the week's Bible story, play games, do arts and crafts, and dive deep into their faith.



Family Sunday School

By Maria Markman

Each month on the last Sunday of the month, starting in September, we are having Family Sunday School. These lessons are designed for all genera-

tions. We invite all the families of Grace to participate, you need not have a child in our Sunday School program to attend. Families are invited and encouraged to participate together, grandmas and grandpas too.

Come hear Pastor Maria or Pastor Joanna tell stories of our faith and teach about the church, the Bible, Communion, Baptism, and so much more. Each lesson will come with an activity or craft for your family to do together and take home to continue learning at home. After each Family Sunday School, families will take home devotions to continue faith formation in the home.

What do parents do while their children are in Worship and Play: Sunday School?

All the other Sundays, parents are welcome to volunteer or help during Sunday School time. Follow your child around and learn the lessons along with them. Parents may also gather with other parents during this time for fellowship or find a quiet space outside or inside (with masks). Parents can leave during this time and come back. However, please do not be late in picking up your child, many of our teachers are looking forward to going to worship at 10:30 am on Sundays.



By Maria Markman

- September 13 - Rally day and back to school blessing. Come to worship for a blessing and stay or come early for Rally day and registration for Sunday School!
- September 20 - God's Work, Our Hands, families are invited to serve at church or at home with many different service projects
- September 27 - FAMILY SUNDAY SCHOOL, everyone is invited to come and hear the story of the church year and make a craft. Families are encouraged to come together. We will learn about how seasons change, how we prepare for different events in the church, and how even when things around us are changing God is always with us.
- October 4 - Oktoberfest No Worship and Play Sunday School
- October 11 - Worship and Play Sunday School
- October 18 - MEA Worship and Play Sunday School.
*Please dress your children in paint clothes this day.
- October 25 - FAMILY SUNDAY SCHOOL, everyone is invited to come and learn about communion. Families are encouraged to come together.
- October 28 - TRUNK OR TREAT Parade
- November 1 - Worship and Play Sunday School (Look for more decisions following this date about what Worship and Play will look like throughout winter and amid COVID regulations at this time)
- November 8 - Worship and Play Sunday School
- November 15 - Worship and Play Sunday School
- November 22 - Worship and Play Sunday School
- November 29 - FAMILY SUNDAY SCHOOL, everyone is invited to come and learn about ADVENT. We will also be making Advent Wreaths. Families are encouraged to come together.



Autumn Worship Times
Saturdays 5:00pm*
Sundays 8:45am* and 10:30am
*Outdoor Service



Grace Lutheran Church

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

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Join us outside on Sunday, September 13, 2020 at 9:20 am on **Rally Sunday to sign up for small groups, Sunday School and other fun and engaging opportunities!**