

January 2021



Happy New Year!

2021 here we come! I have learned a lot in 2020. Things I never wanted to know, like about how a virus spreads, how to better ventilate buildings and how long you need to quarantine. But I have also learned some insightful pieces too. I have learned the value of community and my need for connection. I have learned that signs of hope in a window, or chalked in a driveway can brighten my day (at least for a moment), and that God's Spirit can still be present in prayers over the phone and in Zoom bible studies. I don't know what 2021 will look like, and perhaps that is the biggest learning for me in 2020; life is more unpredictable than I imagined, and yet God is faithful.

There is a lot on the horizon for our church. We have some big decisions to make when it comes to our two properties (see the article by Dennis Grabowski and Charlie Wold). Once that decision is made, we need to figure out what the needs are for our physical building and how they reflect our val-

ues. Hopefully, in this new year we will start to be able to gather in-person more and more and reignite some of our small groups that have been on hold, while continuing to use the virtual space for prayer, connection, spiritual growth, and care. There are possibilities on the horizon that I am excited for, I hope you are too.

Beginning right after Christmas we will be reading through the Gospel of Luke in worship. I hope that you will pick up your bible and start at the beginning and read the entire book of Luke between now and Easter. Trust me, it won't be that hard. Luke is the gospel where many of the familiar parables are told: the lost coin, the lost sheep, the lost son and also where we hear the story of the good Samaritan. In that parable, Jesus invites us to consider who is our neighbor, and reminds us that our neighbor is often not who we expect, and acting neighborly is one of the most important aspects of our faith.

In order to understand what Jesus means when it comes to loving our neighbor, which I think is an ongoing life goal, it means that we listen to our neighbor and come to understand their thoughts and experience, not assuming it is the same as our own. In order to do this, I am inviting everyone at Grace to read the book *Waking up White* by Debby Irving in January. Did you know that the Lutheran Church is the whitest denomination in the United States? It is! One of our Vision Board members told the story of going to church in downtown Charleston, South Carolina, expecting it to be much more racially diverse than our own church, only to discover that even there, the Lutheran church was primarily composed of white people.

I read the book *Waking Up White* a few years ago and discovered a lot about my own identity. It made me aware of some of the assumptions I have always held and discover my own culture of whiteness, something I had not spent much time thinking about. Knowing who we are is important especially if we want to be a good neighbor to others. The former Bishop of Southeast Minnesota Synod of the ELCA, Steven Delzer says this: "Reading *Waking up White* was a real eye opener, that helped me become aware of the system that has privileged me for my whole life (white privilege), while this same system has been the source of oppression for people of color, thus perpetuating a system that favors one race over another." I hope that you will join our class on Monday nights and if you don't have time for that, please still read the book and find a partner or small group of your own to discuss it with.

Finally, one of the things we will be discussing in this new year are the values of Grace. Before the pandemic hit in March, I had been meeting with small groups and listening to stories about Grace. Through these stories I was compiling notes about the values that our congregation holds. According to author and church consultant, Susan Beaumont, "Core values are not descriptions of our mission, the work we do, or the strategies we employ. They are principles that we hold and beliefs that we share." Together with a small group of people, I have taken the stories that have been shared and compiled a proposed list of core values for Grace. The Vision Board has also spent time reflecting on them as well. This list is a rough draft that I want to share with you.

Continued on Page 3

Administration



Administrator's Corner

By Frances Fernandez

As we approach the end of this year, we at Grace are excited to welcome a new database system - *Realm*. Realm is replacing our Access ACS platform for a cloud-based system that can be accessed anywhere! *GraceLink* will now be called *GraceRealm*, a system that will allow you to communicate with church leaders as well as members of the congregation. You will be able to sign up for events and groups in an easier fashion, pledge, give, etc. If you had a login to *GraceLink* you should have received a *Realm* e-mail to reset your password. If you did not have a *GraceLink* account, you should have received an invite from *Realm* to create one. Didn't get the e-mail? No worries! Just call us and we'll be happy to send it out so you can connect to the *GraceRealm* community. Feel free to explore the system and don't forget to download the app for your smart phone! The new app is called *RealmConnect* and it will replace the previous *ChurchLife* app. You can upload your photo to update our directory, edit your information, etc. We are looking forward to learning alongside you in building our Community through *Realm*, and appreciate your patience as we update our website. If you have any questions about the system or need assistance logging in, just give us a call at 763-421-6520.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, enacted last spring, includes several temporary tax changes helping charities, including the special \$300 deduction designed especially for people who choose to take the standard deduction, rather than itemizing their deductions. Under this new change, individual taxpayers can claim an "above-the-line" deduction of up to \$300 for cash donations made to charity during 2020. This means the deduction lowers both adjusted gross income and taxable income – translating into tax savings for those making donations to qualifying tax-exempt organizations. For more information/guidance, please visit the IRS website at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov).



Finances

By Marie Kolar

Thanks be to GOD and to YOU for giving of your financial resources during this continuing adversity. Below is a snapshot of our offerings through Dec. 20, 2020. Expenses are shown through the end of November 2020.

Mortgage:

YTD Mortgage Principal paid = \$78,748.42

Remaining Principal = \$496,679.88

	2020	2019
General Offerings 12/20	\$653,346.12	\$622,166.04
Capital Offerings 12/20	\$98,953.72	\$87,301.50
Jan.-Nov. Expenses	\$110,347.48	\$111,690.13



**Thank you!
Thank you!
Thank you!**

By Ann Lange

Thank you for each and every one of your donations which are appreciated by ALL the people receiving them and by me personally. You have blessed us with ALL our requested needs for Sand Creek Elementary Christmas Adopt A Family, Sand Creek hats and mittens, and Stepping Stone Homeless Christmas gift cards! Wow, Wow, Wow you are our servants of God and we say Thank you!



GRACE ABUNDANT

By Debbie Jorgens

God can do anything, you know - far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! God does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Ephesians 3:20 (The Message)

This Scripture passage rings especially true for me today as I reflect on the abundance of grace you have shown to those in need over the past several weeks. With Christmas in mind, we highlighted a number of people and organizations and asked you to respond as generously as possible.

- We asked for 66 gift cards (\$25 each) for the residents of Stepping Stone Emergency Housing. You responded with 89!
- We asked you to adopt a family for Christmas through Family Promise. You gave gifts to each family member and provided some goodies on top of it all!
- We asked for hats and mittens for the kids at Sand Creek Elementary School. You provided several bins full!
- We asked you to adopt 10 Sand Creek families for Christmas. You adopted every last one of them, providing gifts for each family member!
- We asked for donations and onsite help to feed everyone who came for a Family Table take-out meal. You provided all we needed!
- We asked for your Noisy Offerings so that Christmas might be a little brighter for those who are experiencing financial hardship. Your contributions allowed us to provide scholarships for children enrolled in our childcare center; surprise Family Table guests with a \$50 Cub card; and give \$200 gift cards to seven families!
- We asked for your Noisy Offerings so that we can help homeless youth. In addition to your generous contributions still coming in, one Grace family is doubling your gifts to HOPE 4 Youth, and a donation of beautiful quilts from Grace's own Quilters will help keep homeless youth warm all winter long!

Thank you for your overwhelming response! Your generosity is so abundant that it's impossible to capture it all. I am grateful for all of you and for the Spirit who continues to move deeply and gently within us.

Pastor's Message

Continued from Page 1



Grace Lutheran Church is a community that is:

- **Christ-centered:** In the person of Jesus, God became flesh and lived among us demonstrating the importance of being in relationship with humanity. Our identity begins at the cross, where Jesus opened his arms to all, proclaiming: "you are mine, beloved, forgiven and blessed." As God's people, we find unity in our diversity and inspiration to live as people doing the work of God in the world.
- **Accepting of Everyone:** You are invited to come as your true self, knowing that everyone else is invited to do the same. We honor and celebrate the cultural diversity of God's creation: all races and ethnicities, all genders, all sexual orientations, all abilities, all levels of education, old, young, poor, rich, conservative, liberal, single, married, certain, doubting, hurting, thriving, regardless of where you are on your faith journey. Each person brings a unique, valued and necessary perspective and voice to our community, allowing us to learn and grow in our relationship with God and with one another.
- **Compassionate:** We intentionally and actively care for each other and the earth God gave us. We are forgiven and forgiving people, striving to live out our name as an extension of the grace and mercy God grants us, as we live and interact with one another. We pay attention and listen to the cries of God's creation when it is in pain, and respond in faithfulness and care.
- **Connected:** As people of faith, we recognize the importance of a strong relationship with God, knowing that it transforms our hearts, minds and spirit, and it inspires our love and care of our neighbors. Relationships are vital within our church community and are essential in our local and global partnerships, as well. We value not only caring for others, but really knowing and learning from each other. By building strong relationships we can deepen our faith, be transformed in our thinking and grow as individuals and as a community.
- **Empowered to share God's love:** The Holy Spirit is blowing wildly in our church and pushing us out into the world to share the good news of, and be the hands, feet and heart of Jesus. God will not leave us as we are, but will transform us by moving us out of our comfort zones, challenging us to take risks and inspiring us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus in his radical walk of proclamation, invitation, acceptance, love and care for the world.

This is the rough draft because I want your input. What are we missing? Are there values that we hold that haven't been expressed here? Are these the right ones? Knowing our values will help us as we move into the future and consider the future mission and vision of Grace. In fact, we are planning on using our values to share our conversation during Lent this year.

Vision Board

Finally, I want to say a word of thanks. It has been a rough year. People have been hurting, grieving, struggling, isolated and feeling overwhelmed and even with the doors of our church locked and closed for much of the year, you have lived out your faith in worship, prayer, connection and care for our community and the world. I hope you pay attention to all of the ways you gave to others (see articles by Debbie Jorgens and Ann Lange) without any hope of receiving something back, but because generosity is an act of faith. Thank you for living your faith, showing God's love and reaching out to our neighbors through acts of compassion.

Happy New Year! I'm excited to see where God will lead us in 2021.

Blessings, Pastor Joanna Mitchell

Vision Board

By Dave Trapp, Vision Board Member
The last time I wrote an article for Grace Notes I was talking about devotionals. In the following short article I am quoting from the devotional *Christ in Our Home*, August 19, 2020. The author for this particular day describes how we see Jesus through our own reflection in the mirror. Depending on our culture is how we typically picture the physical aspects of Jesus. "In Japan, he looks Japanese. Pictures of Jesus in Africa show him with dark skin and black hair. In Northern European cultures, he is often depicted as fair-haired and blue-eyed with a light complexion. This isn't shameful or wrong, unless we impose our image of Jesus on others. It is natural to view Jesus through our own lenses, but if we take the body of Christ seriously, we recognize Jesus in all types of people, for all humans are made in the image of God." (*Christ in Our Home*, August 19, 2020.) I think the author put it in such a way guiding us to understand other cultures. It also helped me understand the current meaning of the true body of Christ.



Grace has recently expressed the true body of Christ in their generosity to others during the holiday season. I think that is the essence of who we are here in Andover, Minnesota. It is our way of expressing our gratitude toward Jesus who has given his life for us, which leads us to care for others.

Your Participation Is Needed

Please mark your calendar for January 17 or January 24 and plan to participate in one of the informational meetings concerning Grace's plans for our future via Zoom. Information will be provided concerning Grace's two properties, our current church site on Round Lake Blvd and the property we own located on Nightingale, just off of Crosstown Blvd. For excellent information concerning these meetings, please go to our church web site Grace-Andover.org click on the search icon or 3 bars in the upper right corner and search for "Building Committee". We also anticipate a vote on January 31 concerning these two properties. Your participation is of the utmost importance for the future of Grace.

Associate Pastor Message



People of Grace,

Now that Christmas and New Years have passed, we have entered into the season of the church year called Epiphany (it's festival day marks the seasons beginning on January 6)! I know my church nerd tendencies are showing when I begin talking about the seasons of the church year, and sometimes I just cannot help it.

While on a walk with a friend we were discussing Mary's encounter with the Holy Spirit in the annunciation narrative and we compared it to Simeon's experience of the Holy Spirit in the next week's text when Jesus and his family go to the temple. Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, Simeon was guided by the Spirit. We thought how neat is that? Moving from a shadowy darkness, a time of trusting, but not knowing, "how can this be?" to a light filled revealing where Simeon exclaims, "Master, you are now dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

Epiphany is the season of this kind of revealing. Revealing who Jesus is and what Jesus came to do. This year we will primarily be reading from the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Both said to be written by the same author. And each illuminates certain themes: The work of the Holy Spirit, Salvation, and an upsetting of the establishment and spreading the good news and reaching out to those on the margins of society to create a community that reflects the magnitude and inclusivity of the kingdom of God. Those last themes reveal to us our call as Christians today! Throughout the year we will not only look at who Jesus is, but who we are; what is our identity in Christ. The books of Luke and Acts will illuminate our way.

And don't get me wrong, now that this has been revealed to us, doesn't mean that we will always get it right. Epiphany, this year, for me is an invitation to enter into a journey or a conversation with God and with the world around me. This invitation is for us to grow and learn together. To have conversations like the upcoming book study "Waking Up White" and not knowing the answers or even the questions to ask sometimes, but entering into the conversation together, walking together through life anyway. Hopefully through our work together with the Holy Spirit's guiding, God and God's messages to us will continually be revealed to us!

May the Light of Christ make your darkness bright!
Pastor Maria Markman

Ministries

GRACE 4 RAKAI EVENT Sunday, February 21st 10:30 AM via Zoom

By Debbie Jorgens

Mark your calendars now for this rare opportunity to hear directly from Richard Johnson, **LIVE from Rakai, Uganda!** In an interview conducted by Ann Hill of African Children Today, Richard will provide an update on our sponsored children and the initiatives underway to improve the lives of those in the community, especially vulnerable women and children. Please note that this event is *not* only for those who sponsor children in Rakai – **EVERYONE** is welcome!



FAMILY TABLE

By Debbie Jorgens

Since last August, Grace has been serving Family Table meals "drive-up style!" Our attendance has grown over time - from 14 guests in August to 57 in December! Lynda Wilde graciously committed to overseeing this ministry after Michelle Healy and Jeff Burrell stepped down after 20+ years of faithful leadership (and terrific cooking!). Grace serves the Family Table Community Meal on the third Sunday of every month, now from 12:30-1:30. Please watch upcoming issues of Grace-at-a-Glance for ways to become involved in this ministry, whether it's providing food items in advance or being onsite to dish up food or deliver it to our grateful guests!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED at ACBC Food Shelf

By Debbie Jorgens

We've been asked to spread the word: ACBC Food Shelf is in great need of volunteers! Help is needed with food packing and delivery for their homebound delivery program; order processing and loading during their drive-thru food distributions; sorting and packing food to prepare for distribution; and phone support.

You can choose to volunteer once, or sign up for a regular shift. Please call ACBC at 763-422-0046, ext. 1 or email naomi@acbcfoodshelf.org. If you're interested in volunteering with others from Grace, please email Debbie Jorgens at debbiej@graceandover.org. Thanks for considering this opportunity!



Ministries



The Women's Retreat Team

By Stacy Surratt

The Women's Retreat Team is excited to be hosting **"Social Devotions"** – A monthly virtual Zoom Gathering for ALL Grace Women. Because of COVID-19, there will not be an overnight GLC Women's Retreat this year in February 2021– But the Women's Retreat Team still wanted to connect and encourage every woman at Grace Lutheran Church during these trying times.

So feel free to *Virtually* swing by to get a "Spiritual Nugget" and Socialize with the Women at Grace on a monthly Zoom Call. Each month's call will have a different theme and is meant to uplift and provide a few spiritual truths for you to apply to your daily lives.

Our first **Social Devotion** will be on Sunday evening January 17th, 2021 from 7pm-7:45pm. The Zoom Link will be available for you on the GLC website under Church online – zoom meetings. There is no need to RSVP – just pop on each month and enjoy seeing our Grace Women and hearing how God can impact our lives!

Below are the Monthly Themes and Dates:

January 17, 2021 – God Has A Plan
February 21, 2021- The Power of Love
March 21, 2021 – Faith and Worry
April 18, 2021- Sing for Joy
May 16, 2021 – You are Not Alone

We are looking forward to seeing every GLC woman's beautiful face starting on January 17th at 7pm. Please look for an email and a card in the mail that will remind you of this fun and encouraging event! If you have any questions – contact Stacy Surratt at 317-506-6362 or stacysurratt@yahoo.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Coming in January: "Waking Up White" Book Study

By Pastor Maria Markman

YOU are invited to join our congregational book study of Debby Irving's, "Waking Up White", a classic story about white (dominant) culture, race and racism. We will be meeting on

Zoom the four Mondays in January (4, 11, 18 and 25) from 6:30 to 8 pm. Pastors Maria and Joanna will be leading the large group discussion each week and then we will break into smaller groups to discuss questions. Everyone is invited and everyone is welcomed, no matter where you are in the journey to learn more about racism and privilege.

We have a few copies of "Waking Up White" available for you to borrow. Please contact Kris Miller if you are interested. We know that people have varying levels of interest and availability for reading and so we are offering different options for people:

- Read the whole book
- Read the select chapters:

Week 1 Awareness – 32 pages total

Section 1: Childhood in White – Chapters 1 and 3 (8 pages)
Section 2: Midlife Wakeup Calls – Chapters 6, 7, 10 and 11 (24 pages)

Week 2 Confession – 32 pages total

Section 3: Why I Didn't Wake Up Sooner – Chapters 12, 13, 14 (18 pages)
Section 4: Rethinking Key Concepts – Chapters 17, 18 and 20 (14 pages)

Week 3 Reformation – 31 pages total

Section 5: Twenty Five Years of Tossing and Turning – Chapters 23, 24 and 28 (16 pages)
Section 6: Leaving My Comfort Zone – Chapters 29, 30 and 32 (15 pages)

Week 4 Transformation – 31 pages total

Section 7: Inner Work – Chapters 34, 38 and 40 (13 pages)
Section 8: Outer Work – Chapters 41, 42, 45 (13 pages)
Section 9: Reclaiming My Humanity – Chapter 46 (5 pages)

- Don't read the book; simply rely on the videos and reading summaries provided by the pastors each week and still join the Zoom discussions
- Read the book on your own or with a friend, watch the video summaries posted on the Grace website each week; and answer the questions at the end of each chapter

We are asking that you register on GraceRealm in advance. Whether you are new to these conversations or consider yourself well-read, please join us. As Debby Irving wrote in her book, "conversations are the way people think together" and "when it comes to racism, everyone has something to teach and something to learn."

Ministries



Family Promise

By Alden Riley

Grace Lutheran has partnered with Family Promise to provide hospitality and shelter families experiencing homelessness in Anoka County.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Family Promise has successfully isolated families in an extended stay hotel. To date none of the family members have tested positive for the COVID-19 Virus.

While families are being sheltered in place. Grace Lutheran and other host congregations are still providing hot meals and delivering needed supplies in hospitality bags.

Our next hospitality week will be January 24th through January 31st. Please watch future Grace at a Glance issues for opportunities to sign up and help out with needed supplies.

"Grace will Lead us Home"



January 10th is a connection Sunday. Children and their families are invited to join us for a time of connection and play, while also celebrating our baptisms. Please pray that we have snow for this day! All members are invited to come during this time for a blessing, to pick up communion cups, or drop off your offering. Families will also receive Virtual Sunday School Supply kits these days!



Children's Ministries



Children's Ministry will continue to host 9:30 AM zoom sessions every Sunday until we are able to gather together again in person! Please consider joining us for this time of fun and connection!



When: January 6th, 6:30-7:30 PM

How: Via Zoom

What: Crafts, games, house blessings and stories of the Magi!

What to Bring: Dress in costume: stars, star gazers, royalty. Make sure you have crown making supplies: paper, stickers, scissors, tape, markers, etc.



Building/Construction Team Update



Building/ Construction Team Update

Proverbs 15:22
*"Plans fail for lack of
 counsel,
 but with many advisers
 they succeed."*

Proverbs 15:22 says it well and defines where the Building/Construction Team finds itself; we need your advice and counsel. The congregation will be asked to make a decision on Jan. 31, 2021, regarding the two properties we have been blessed with: Grace Lutheran Church on Round Lake and Bunker Lake Blvds. and the undeveloped property on Nightingale.

This decision regarding our properties is needed due to the City of Andover mandating the removal of our two portable classrooms no later than spring of 2024. Two congregational meetings have been scheduled to discuss the options before us, regarding these properties. They are scheduled for the Sundays of January 17th and 24th with an anticipated decision/vote from the congregation during our Congregational Meeting, January 31st. The Building/Construction Team continues to gather information and will share that information with participants at those meetings.

Preliminary financial estimates for the available options are:

- Keep both Properties and develop Nightingale - \$4.5 to \$5.0 Million (based upon \$200/sq ft).
- Sell Grace Church and develop Nightingale - \$4.5 to \$5.0 less \$2.0 million from sale = \$2.5 to \$3.0 million.
- Sell Nightingale for about \$800,000 and replace portable space plus repairs and improvements to Grace Church - \$1.0 million less \$800K = about \$200K.

Valuation notes:

- Grace Church Property – Zoned commercial, only suitable use would be church or school, other use would require demolition, land value alone is worth less than \$2 million, current economic

conditions make it difficult to sell commercial property.

- Nightingale Property – Zoned residential, area is growing, empty lot, no demolition required, residential property is currently selling well.

The above efforts are clearly the current priority for the team. Our second priority has been to identify an architectural firm to assist in developing plans once the congregation makes a decision on Jan. 31st. Our efforts to find a professional design partner are moving forward and those we have interviewed appear quite capable of transforming our needs into beautiful spaces. Once a decision is made about where Grace will be, we want to invite the congregation in to share your hopes and dreams and desires for our church building. If you have any questions, concerns or desire more information, please contact a member of the building/construction team:

Dennis Grabowski, dgrabowski925@gmail.com
 Charlie Wold, chasewold@yahoo.com
 Jackie Glockner, jackieglockner@hotmail.com
 Greg Ackerson, grega@apex-co.us
 Neil Hawkinson, nhawk507@hotmail.com
 Frances Fernandez, francesf@graceandover.org
 Pastor Joanna Mitchell, joannam@graceandover.org

God Bless,
 Building/Construction Team



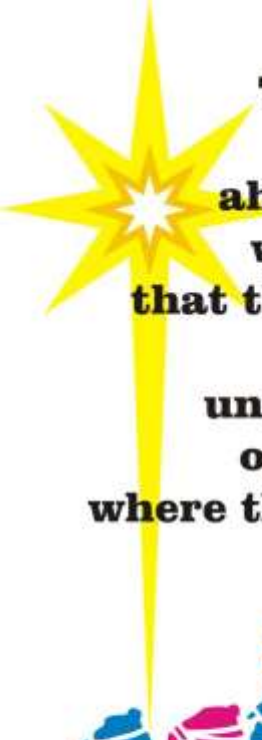


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**They set out;
and there,
ahead of them,
went the star
that they had seen
at its rising,
until it stopped
over the place
where the child was.**

Matthew 2.9



Epiphany