

grace notes

April 2023

Stuck in Holy Saturday: Chaos, Disruption and the Promise of Easter Morning

I have never paid much attention to Holy Saturday until a friend invited me to read about it in a mental health book. Holy Saturday is this place in between the death and resurrection of Jesus. For those who love the Easter Vigil, like Pastor Maria, this worship invites you to experience the chaos of the Easter story in its darkness, disruption, and move toward hope, promise and resurrection. It is dramatic and filled with elements that inspire our senses to participate in worship. It occurred to me recently that I have been stuck in Holy Saturday for a while now and often don't see the rising of the sun, or the light coming near. Instead, I feel stuck in the darkness.



Now don't get me wrong, I am not without hope, but as Paul says, "...for who hopes for what is seen?" I long for what I do not see, which would be the promise of Jesus right in front of me, leading me down the path of what is next. The latest disruption in our building project being way over budget has invited me to revisit the darkness. There is grief, frustration, and an awareness that we must move forward. I feel as if I have stumbled upon a tomb and the rock is in the way. And like the women on Easter morning, I am wondering how we might roll away the stone that is in front of us. The truth is I don't know how to move the stone yet. In some ways, I feel like our next steps forward in discernment of what is next, and how to proceed is a little bit like walking in darkness. However, last Sunday (March 12th), when I announced this latest hiccup in our building project and invited you to a family meeting, we had very good representation from the Grace community, even though it was Spring Break. People asked thoughtful questions in which I felt both heard and affirmed. When I looked around the room at members of the Building Task Force, I knew that I didn't stand alone. We stood together in leadership. I am so blessed to have such gifted leaders who follow through and research options, so that we aren't leaving any stone unturned. I am beyond grateful.

I wonder where do we look when we stumble along in the dark? The women in the Easter story stayed on the path that was ahead of them. They kept walking in the darkness, even though they were quite certain that the path they were on would lead to the grave. Little did they know that an earthquake would come and roll away the stone. Little did they know that Jesus would meet them on the path. Little did they know that this disruption would change their lives, their faith, their hope forever.

People of Grace, I don't know what darkness you might be walking in today. But I do know that we have a God who waits for us on this path, invites us to come and see. I don't know what barriers you need to remove from your life, but we have a God who moves stones and opens up tombs. I don't know how lonely you feel, but I assure you we have a God, named Emmanuel, who has promised that God will be with you always till the end of the age.

If you are stuck in Good Friday or Holy Saturday, do not be afraid, the light will shine, and hope will come. For if God can overcome death and the grave, then God can do anything!

Blessings, Pastor Joanna Mitchell

Associate Pastor's Message



A Warm Welcome

Last week I sat in on one of the many ministry team meetings at Grace! The group was discussing worship they had attended and an upcoming event they were planning for the congregation. Many around the table buzzed with excitement because they had met many different guests at worship that day. Some were folks who had returned to Grace after many years, others, first time visitors. In the same way we get excited by flowers poking their heads through the snow, these new visitors are signs of hope. Signs that God is up to something, in and through us here at Grace! That is not to say God isn't at work in the desert wilderness, God is there too! It is just that these new faces are reassuring and hopeful signs, and I am grateful for them!

Since the beginning of January, we have been studying The Gospel According to St. Matthew. In his telling of the life and times of Jesus, Matthew shares many of the stories Jesus tells, teaching about the kingdom of heaven. These parables begin: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like..." These stories call us to imagine how we might live differently now to bring God's kingdom here. How might it be possible for God's reign in human hearts to begin right here, right now, with us, and through how we live? What is our identity in the kingdom, and how might we be patient and also prepare for kingdom life right now?

Throughout Lent we have studied the book B.L.E.S.S. : 5 ways to love your neighbor and change the world by Jon and Dave Ferguson. This book too, invites us to imagine the real life implications of living the way Jesus did: B-beginning with prayer, L-listening, E-eating, S-serving, and S-sharing our story. What would happen if we prayed for our neighbors, listened to them, ate with them, served them in meaningful ways, might we then have an opportunity to share our story with them about the difference God has made in our life? These 5 simple practices invite us to love our neighbors in a way that Jesus loved those he ministered to. And we are all proof that what Jesus did, how Jesus lived, did in fact change the world!

So what does kingdom life, identity, patience, preparation, and "BLESSing" have to do with the people God has brought into our lives? The new faces at worship, the new neighbor down the street? My hope is that we won't miss our opportunity to be welcoming.

As our meeting continued, one of the participants asked if we pastors could point out those who might be new, so we don't miss the newcomers. Yes! We can! (actually this is one of Pastor Joanna's super talents. She is really great at connecting people!) We can point out who is new. And as well intentioned as the question is, you don't need **us** to connect you. God calls each of us to this work! You may feel their faces look familiar and so you may be hesitant to introduce yourself. I have never been offended when someone asks my name again. I am quite simply delighted that they have recognized me or noticed my presence and reached out to say hello and get to know me.

We also heard from a member of Grace who hadn't been welcomed well here. They stated it had been a long time before anyone introduced themselves or even smiled and said hello. Often feeling sideways glances instead of a friendly hello. I know I do this. Usually I am trying to determine if I know the person or not and so end up looking at them weird. This is not the way forward people!

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Children, Youth & Family Director

Interserve Update On Children, Youth & Family Director

The work together is continuing to flow nicely along. Grace has an amazing team with a heart for God and youth, as well as considerable skills that are so valuable to this process. Some are doing screening calls, some scheduling, and all have contributed to slim down the number of questions to make sure we are asking questions that align with Grace's needs.

The Search team is made up of two members from the listening team to ensure continuity throughout the process Tom Baker and April Anderson, as well as Pastor Maria, Mike Russell, Chrissy Gast, Mary Coleman, Lynn Noren, Michele Behnke-Nead, with myself (Molly Schroeder) facilitating the process. The role of InterServe in this portion of the work is a Non-Voting Facilitator. While I will suggest warnings and concerns, the decision for hiring must solely be by the team. I will help Pastor Maria discern whether or not a candidate is the right fit for the team and help recruit and tap into resources that help in the search process.

There have been several applicants already and are working through the process with each candidate, screening and setting up interviews.

Join Our Team!

Child, Youth, and Family
Ministry Director






Want to join a creative team invested in people? Curious what God is up to in our world? Interested? **Listen, grow and serve so that all might experience grace!** Grace Lutheran is seeking an innovator and difference maker, a passionate leader who partners with children, youth, their families and teams encouraging faithfulness and showing students they matter.

To Apply:

This is a full-time position. Compensation includes salary, health benefits, retirement package and funds for continuing education. Pay based on experience starting at \$45,000 with 3 weeks paid vacation. Send your resume and cover letter to Grace Lutheran Church mariam@graceandover.org

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It doesn't matter if I know them or not. In both instances I am called to be welcoming! To seize the opportunity to welcome them. To see if they have any questions. To learn about what brought them to Grace; maybe they are returning, maybe they are new to town, maybe they are just looking for something new! Chances are, after you have listened you will know how to better connect them to Grace, either through a ministry opportunity or someone else you know at Grace. And if you don't know many people at Grace, this might be your way of getting connected and getting to know our community here! This is our kingdom work. Will we be welcoming?

Lastly, I reflect on our Transforming Inside and Out building campaign and project. From the beginning of this campaign we described a transformation both inside and out. Our building will see changes- changes that allow us to be more welcoming: ADA bathrooms, new floor plan so we might unlock our building doors to name a few. But all these changes will be for naught if we have not changed ourselves to be welcoming of ALL who enter the building! Next time you are at church, introduce yourself to someone you don't know. Learn a fun fact about them and share it with someone else, connecting that person to them as well. Let us be welcoming, O God, to those you send our way. Amen.

Pastor Maria Markman

May 7, 2023



Please come for Worship on May 7th. It will be a very busy day of life and celebration at Grace! Grace will give thanks for our ministry volunteers and celebrate our graduating seniors. There will be a congregational meeting to vote in new members of the Vision Board, reflect on Grace's accomplishments and discover what God is doing and calling us to in the future!

Worship 8:45am

Congregational Meeting 9:45am

Worship 10:30am

Please Pray for Grace Lutheran's 2023 High School Graduates

Kyla Abrahamson	Alex Froslee	Raeanna Jones	Natalie Mattson
Annika Ahlstrand	Victor Haag	Ben Kopetzki	Aidan McCarty
Jason Blankenship	Reya Hadsall	Christina Lewis	Anna Slavik
Gracie Brausen	Maiya Haggerty	Dash Lewis	Noah Stromberg
Katie Evans	Camron Hamling	Olivia Lien	Olivia Surratt
Addy Farber	Danika Hanson	Carly Lindquist	Maya Vanderleest
Samantha Fernandez	Chloe Hoffmann	Samarah Love	Lucas Wheeler
Jesse Fritz	Tate Johnson	Anna Mathews	Nathan Wilkerson

*We apologize if we missed anyone graduating this year. Please let us know if we did.

Give Thanks for Grace Lutheran's Volunteers and Ministry Teams

Vision Board	Family Promise	Hope4Youth	Nursery Attendants
Building Task Force	Family Table Meal	Seeds of Grace Board	Sunday School Teachers
Own Your Faith Mentors	WOW Leaders	Prayer Shawl Ministry	Catechism Leaders
Transforming Inside and Out Team	Feed My Starving Children	Stepping Stone Emergency Housing	Children's Ministry Team
Finance Team	Global Health Ministries	Gifts of Grace	Faith Formation Team
Nominating Committee	Grace Quilters 1 & 2	Giving Tree at Christmas	Grace Notes Volunteers
Circle of Grace	Grace2Haiti	God's Work Our Hands	Youth Ministry Team
Mental Health Team	Grace4Rakai	Grace Bazaar	Office Volunteers
Men's Ministry Leaders	VBS Volunteers	Women's Retreat Team	Offering Counters
Communion Set Up Volunteers	May All Be Fed Food Shelf	Fellowship Time Volunteers	Communion Bread Bakers
Graceful Seniors callers and volunteers	Faith and Community Partnership with Sand Creek Elementary School		
Garden Ministry Team	Lawn Mowers	Funeral Ministry	Worship Volunteers
Women's Ministry Team			

Associate Pastor's Message

Ministries

Ruth Circle

12:30-2:00pm

A group of mostly retired women who meet the first Monday of each month following Quilters 1 (12-12:30pm lunch 12:30-2:00pm study). Our study together follows the monthly ELCA Gather Magazine Bible Study. Please contact the church office or Low Jackson to participate. On April (3rd), we will be finishing the second study in the January/February Edition of the Gather Magazine and moving onto the first study in March/April.



Looking for Grace Leaders

The Nominating Committee for the Vision Board is looking for Grace Members that are interested in serving a three year term on the Vision Board. The election will take place on May 7th at Grace's Congregational Meeting.

If you are interested in serving Grace Lutheran in a leadership position, you should prayerfully consider serving on the Vision Board. Please contact the Church Office 763-421-6520 or Daron Yates at 763-443-4999 by **Friday, April 7th**. Members of the nominating committee are: Daron Yates (chair), Jamie Zupon, Mandi DeGrote, and Gayle Pacholl. If you have questions about serving on the Vision Board, please contact Daron Yates or Pastor Joanna Mitchell.

Grace Girl's Night Out is BACK



..and our first event was on Tuesday March 28th at 6pm at Acapulco in Andover.

Starting on May 2nd-we will meet the 1st Tuesday of each month at 6pm. Future locations TBD and communicated through Grace at a Glance.

No RSVP needed-just come! All women are invited to attend! Hope to see you all there. Thanks Gayle Pacholl for setting this event up! If you have any questions - please email Gayle at pacholls@comcast.net



January 1-February 28, 2023

Current & Capital Offerings \$127,896.13
Other Income \$460.06
Expenses \$149,192.17
Building Project Offerings \$67,156.00
Dedicated Offerings \$6,528.41
Dedicated Funds in Balance Sheet \$98,668.60

January 1-February 31, 2022

Current & Capital Offerings \$142,000.24
Other Income \$436.00
Expenses \$139,948.21
Building Project Offerings \$54,539.00
Dedicated Offerings \$6,835.92
Dedicated Funds in Balance Sheet \$75,516.62

Ministries



A Reflection On Graceful Seniors

by Coni Winterfeld

I have found Graceful Seniors to be a time of fellowship (with donuts and coffee!) where you can develop and grow friendships and share ideas about your faith and the Bible. Graceful Seniors provides a relaxed environment for discussions and opportunities to ask questions about your faith.

I feel blessed for the friendships I have made and for the opportunities it has given me to grow in my faith and the confidence to go out and be a "Blessing" to others around me!

Graceful Seniors is a group of mostly retired folks who meet the second Tuesday of each month in the Fellowship Hall for fellowship and a Bible study (8:30-10:00am). Our next gathering will be April 11th. Our Organist and Outreach Director AP Hopper lead our continuation through Revelation 16-end! If you are a senior and interested in joining us on the second Tuesday of the month please call the church office so we can make sure we have coffee and a donut for you! We would love to have you join!

Special Event With Nancy Howe

Monday, April 17th
6:30-8pm



Nancy Howe, the Director of Children's programming at NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) is coming back to Grace. There will be a short presentation followed by a time of Q&A. Nancy will share briefly about the mental health concerns parents, guardians, and other adults may have about a young person in their life and how to approach this individual to have a constructive conversation about their mental well-being. Nancy is well-practiced at how to have challenging conversations with young people about their mental health. Although Nancy is the Director of Children's Programs, this presentation and Q&A session will focus on individuals 25 and younger.



Family Table

Family Table is an outreach program sponsored by several churches in the area including Grace. On the 3rd Sunday of each month, Grace is privileged to prepare a variety of meals for our guests. Many of our guests have been affected by the rising costs in food and gas, and truly appreciate the meals we provide. Others are looking for opportunities to share a meal, conversation with friends, and get to know Grace. If you are looking for a fun way to volunteer, please check out the *Sign-up Genius* link in Grace At A Glance or Grace's website. The calendar is posted thru July 2023, so you can do some planning. Come help us help others! Whether you are able to volunteer on site or contribute cash or food, we need you! If you have any questions, you can contact Lynda Wilde at lwilde@comcast.net or call/text 612.418.6444.

Ongoing Need: Sand Creek Snacks for Students



Throughout the school year, we are continually gathering healthy snacks for students at Sand Creek Elementary. The following snacks can be left in the tub in the Narthex.

- Nature Valley Crunchy Granola Bars
- NutriGrain Soft Baked Breakfast Bars with Real Fruit
- Gold Fish (individually packaged)
- Skinny Pop (individually packaged)
- Fruit Snacks (preferably with real fruit nutrition)

Children's Ministry

Vacation Bible School



June 12-15, 2023

@ Lord of Life

14501 Nowthen Blvd NW, Ramsey, MN

Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School this year is just like sending our kids to camp! We will be partnering with Lord of Life in Ramsey! This change allows Grace to continue outstanding programming for our children while also navigating a building project, and while we search our next Child, Youth, and Family Director. If you're children are interested in attending and for more information, sign up through Lord of Life (QR code below). If you are interested in vol-

unteering, please email Pastor Maria ASAP (mariam@graceandover.org). Joining Lord of Life and Grace together means we will still need many volunteers and donations to make the week a success. As we get closer to June be on the lookout in the blue sheets for items to donate!

In addition to Vacation Bible School Programming in the morning, in the afternoon the older children have the opportunity for more learning! Elaine at Lord of Life just informed me that one of these events will be a trip to the University of Minnesota Bell Planetarium! Your kids will not want to miss this!



Scan the QR code to Register

**Teaming up for a joint VBS
experience: Lord of Life and Grace
Lutheran Churches**

Autism Awareness Day and Moving from Awareness to Acceptance

April 2nd is considered Autism Awareness Day. This day was created to help our world better understand what it means to have autism. It is a complex neurological diagnosis that presents itself very differently from person to person, which is why it is considered a spectrum. There are two main areas of need related to social communication skills and repetitive stereotypical behaviors. Social communication skills needs can look very different from someone who does not use verbal language to someone who has long in-depth conversations, but misses subtle social cues. Repetitive stereotypical behaviors can look like hand flapping or rocking, to someone frustrated when their schedule is interrupted. When individuals were first diagnosed with autism, it was only those with the most significant needs. Recently our understanding of autism has grown to encompass many more individuals who still need some help, support, and understanding, but have less significant needs. This has led to a world where I am sure many of you not only know someone with autism, but love someone with autism.



Now that awareness of autism has grown, moving from awareness to acceptance is essential. Many people see autism not as a disability but rather as a form of diversity, neurodiversity. Individuals with autism spend 1,000s of hours learning how to look, act, and speak like neurologically typical individuals. It is time for the rest of the world to spend some time moving towards accepting individuals with autism and celebrating things that make them unique and wonderful people. Many people with autism will still need support in schools and the workplace, but acceptance will go a long way in making this world a better place.

What can you do to be more accepting of autism? 1) Learn more about autism and talk to or watch videos created by advocates who have autism. 2) Provide visuals whenever possible, as processing verbal language and content can be difficult. 3) Provide clear schedules of events, and whenever possible, ample time to prepare for changes that must be made. 4) Don't be easily insulted by what is said to you; for example, they will tell you if they don't like your haircut. 5) Stop insisting on eye and physical contact, such as a handshake and hug. 6) Be aware that if you have met one person with autism, you have met one person with autism. If you have questions or comments, I would be happy to answer any of them. If you or someone you know needs advocacy or support, please let me know, and I will be more than happy to help or connect you with someone who can. Bonnie Ingelin Bonnlynne@yahoo.com

Youth Ministry

**SUMMER
FESTIVAL**

Middle School Youth Join us this Summer for Summer Festival Camp

For a week during the summer, teens have the chance to get away from real life, hang out with people from all across the Midwest, deepen friendships, and talk about God. Everyday speakers come to share inspiring and challenging stories about real life, God, and where the two intertwine. The days are packed with fun surprises of all kinds. From the music, the movies, the games, the speakers, and club – all with laughter to tears – Summer Festival Camp really has something for everybody.

Summer Festival combines wild games, gut-busting humor, a messy fight, meaningful music, relevant speakers, breakout sessions and small group discussion time for a unique experience. Camp helps students draw closer to Jesus, each other and to the leaders from their church.

Where: at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN. We will leave Sunday morning after church and check in at Gustavus around 1:30pm.

When: July 16th- July 19th.

Cost for trip is \$325. Financial assistance is available. Any questions please talk to Pastor Joanna Mitchell.

Sign-up today on Realm. **Registration ends May 1st.**

High School Sunday Mornings



We will continue to meet Sunday mornings after each service at 10:00am and/or 11:45am in the Youth Room for conversation and games with some friendly competition for a weekly prize and of course, yummy donuts!

**SENT
TOGETHER**



SUMMER STRETCH 2023

Summer Stretch

Summer Stretch is a dynamic summer ministry for middle school students who have completed 4th-8th grade! Summer Stretch runs every Thursday (June 22nd – August 3rd - from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm.) Participants will need to be dropped off and picked up from Grace Lutheran Church. Each Thursday, we will travel to various service projects and recreational activities around the area.

The cost (which includes travel, entrance fees, service project fees, guest speakers, snacks, and a tee-shirt) is **\$300 (including a \$100 deposit) if registered before May 1st.** Sign-up on Realm today!

We are offering two different registration options: a full summer and a 3 week option.

Our high school youth may register as junior leaders: \$90 for all summer or \$20 a day. More details on Realm registration. If you have any questions, reach out to Pastor Maria Markman.

Green Ribbon Group



First Monday

of the Month 6:30–8:30 pm

Green Ribbon Group meets the first Monday of the month at 6:30pm. This group is for parents/guardians of children who are growing up with mental health ups and downs, atypical identity, and other hard issues. This group is a confidential, non-judgmental, safe space to talk about struggles others may not understand. Child care is provided.

Youth Ministries



Own Your Faith Okoboji Retreat and Confirmation

Please pray for our 9th Graders as they prepare for the Rite of Confirmation at their retreat April 14-16th. Join us in worship May 21st as our confirmation students affirm their baptismal faith in worship! This class in particular has been through so much in their young lives. It is so important for us as a congregation to surround them in their life and their faith. Own Your Faith Students, their parents, mentors and special guests are invited to Grace on Wednesday, May 17th for a Confirmation banquet. We will provide food and a program. **Please RSVP on Realm so we know how much food to prepare!** Own Your Faith Students are required to be there that evening as it is our rehearsal for confirmation Sunday! Guests are encouraged but not required to attend!

**This year has flown by!
We only have about a month left
of Wednesday Night
Programming.**



There are plenty of exciting options for students to stay connected and enjoy their summer with their friends and Grace community.

The High School students have planned some exciting trips, and the Middle School students can look forward to the Summer Festival at Gustavus and Summer Stretch. Additionally, they can also participate in volunteer opportunities with the Children's Ministry. Don't miss out on these exciting activities! Please make sure to register as soon as possible.

While the High School students have held fundraisers, the Middle School students also have fundraising options to support their summer adventures at Grace. They can choose to sell Green Valley Gift cards or Drooling Moose Chocolates.

To register for summer activities, head to the Grace website and visit the Ministries/Youth section. Scroll down to find the Summer Activities section where you can register for events and fundraisers. Don't wait - sign up today!



Youth Fundraisers Green Valley Greenhouse Gift Cards

Middle School and High School students will be selling Green Valley Gift Cards before and after Sunday worship on April 30th, May 7th and May 14th (Mother's Day)! Green Valley Greenhouse is a nursery in Ramsey, MN.

Drooling Moose Fundraiser

Coming in April: Droolin' Moose Fundraiser for middle school and high school youth. More information will be sent through realm and via Grace At A Glance email soon. Check out their web site to find out more - droolinmoose.com/about-us/





Grace Lutheran Church

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Grace Lutheran Church
...experience grace

God has a plan.
Trust it, live it,
enjoy it

