

grace notes

June/July 2023

What Fills Your Bucket?

A few summers ago, Luther Crest Bible camp in Alexandria, Minnesota had their theme verse as John 7:19-*"And let anyone who believes in me drink for the scripture says: 'and out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living waters.'"* The campers for the entire summer memorized this verse, both studying it and singing and shouting it, over and over again. I will confess that the idea of living waters sometimes confuses me, but I am pretty sure I have just been too literal regarding what Jesus is offering. Recently, I sat with a friend who invited me to ponder the question of "What fills your bucket?" I didn't have an answer, but I could tell her quickly that my bucket was pretty empty. I am tired and have been for a while now. I don't know that I realized the extent of my exhaustion because I have been too busy, but (thankfully) things have slowed down a little bit over at Grace Lutheran Church. Things have also slowed down a bit in my own personal life. My dad's house is sold and he will be moving to his new apartment in just a few weeks. My daughter has moved home from college and I don't have a student graduating again for a few more years. I feel as if I have come to the end of a marathon, and while I am not going to quit running, I do need some time to rest and recover.



This is what summer is often about: recharging our batteries, recovering after a long winter. There is a reason that God commands us to honor the sabbath day and keep it holy. While there are reasons regarding justice and equality, God also knows that it is good for our weary soul to rest and recover. The sabbath is made for humans because we all need to slow down, to be quiet and to quit doing and just be. Summer is a time to quench our thirst and drink the living waters that Jesus offers, or to put it another way it's a time to fill our buckets.

So, what does that look like for you? Is it time away at the cabin or on the lake? Is it a hike in the woods? Is it time alone, or gathering with your friends? As a midline extravert- I need a little of both. There is nothing I like better than spending the day on the couch reading a book and just allowing it to absorb my entire brain, but I will definitely get off the couch to meet friends for happy hour and conversation. Last week, I was away at the Festival of Homiletics (preaching) with Pastor Maria and this was a bucket-filling event. While it was a lot of people, it was a chance to connect with colleagues and a chance to hear God's word from wonderful preachers and teachers. I need a mix of it all. I need quiet time, and also connection. For me, my bucket is filled when I have the opportunity to learn and to grow, but when I am not bombarded with demands and big decisions. It involves a chance to look and listen for God, in nature, and through my interactions with others.

I don't know what fills your bucket, but I hope you will take time to consider it. And I hope that part of your sabbath this summer will include not only getting away, but also drawing closer to God. Hearing God's word in scripture, or through maybe joining us for our Zoom bible study on Thursday morning (good news you can join us from your cabin). I hope you will spend time in prayer, not only talking to God but also listening to what God is inviting you to consider in your life, and how God is pouring a river of living water into you.

Blessings,
Pastor Joanna Mitchell

Associate Pastor's Message

May was such a busy month! I was honored to preside at a graveside ceremony at Fort Snelling. An opportunity I hadn't had yet in my life of ministry. I officiated a wedding and met with three different couples preparing for marriage and an affirmation of vows (something new to me as well). May was also full of preparation for our students who affirmed their baptisms in the Rite of Confirmation. We celebrated with them at a banquet (and rehearsal on a Wednesday) and Sunday morning worship. Pastor Joanna and I were able to attend the Festival of Homiletics (preaching conference), a time of restoration and learning! I celebrated with family and friends the one year anniversary of my stroke! Thanks be to God, I am alive and well! The Child, Youth and Family Director Interview team met with amazing candidates that will lead to a new hire for Grace. We closed our program year for Youth and Children's ministry. We even started a Youth Leadership Team with some of our youth at Grace. And we are planning for summer and all that lays ahead. All the while leading regularly scheduled Bible Studies and worship services. While preparing with the couple for their renewal of vows, they chose Ecclesiastes 3 to be read at their service:



For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to throw away;

a time to tear, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

a time to love, and a time to hate;

a time for war, and a time for peace.

*What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. I know that whatever God does endures for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; **God has done this**, so that all should stand in awe before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by.*

As I reflect on all that has happened in May and I look forward to all that will be done this summer: VBS, new hire for Child, Youth and Family, High School Christikon trip and ASP mission trip, Middle School Summer Festival Camp, Food Truck Events, preparing for Fall and so much more I am reminded of Ecclesiastes 3, there is a time for everything and God has been there for everything leading God's people forward. And God has done this! This is God's work in our midst! Can we see it? Will we join it?

Amen! Thanks be to God! Pastor Maria

Goodbyes

Saying Goodbye



"I can't believe it's coming to an end." "How was that three years?"

These are the thoughts that keep swimming in my head. When I first joined Vision Board I thought a three-year term sounded incredibly long. But I joined without any hesitation. I have always felt a calling to serve and I thought this could be a wonderful opportunity. I wanted to grow and challenge my faith, form closer connections with the members of Grace, and really "join" in with the church family. I was very uncertain of myself and wondered if I was a strong enough

Christian to fill such an important role. But I was welcomed in with excitement and love. All on Zoom in the beginning, as we tried to reopen the church after lockdown.

After three short years I feel absolutely humbled. It was an amazing experience. I want to thank you all for supporting me, and the Vision Board, as we try to do God's work. It has been a very touching experience watching this church recover and grow into what it will become in the future. It was all because of you, the congregation, showing up to support one another, leading and participating in outreach ministries, and supporting this church from the inside.

We have accomplished a lot over the course of my time on Vision Board. We were one of the first churches in the area to reopen during COVID precautions and one of the first to launch online services. We watched the dream of a church remodel born and started a very successful capital appeals campaign. We created our building task force to develop plans for the remodel. We created a Children Youth and Family Ministry. It is a long list of accomplishments that we should all feel proud about but there is still much work to do.

1 Peter 4:10 says, *"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in your various forms."*

Our CYF Team continues to interview prospective hires. Our building team continues to plan for a project that fits our budget. Our financial team continues to incorporate Seeds of Grace under our umbrella.

As I hand over responsibilities this June to our incoming Vision Board President Anna Welle. I feel confident of the exceptional job she will do. I know how much she cares for this church and its members. I know she will do a fantastic job leading us into the future.

Brook VanderLeest
Vision Board President

Dear Grace Lutheran Congregation,
I regret to inform you that I am resigning from my position as CYF Assistant Director with Grace Lutheran Church, effective June 1st, 2023. I have given much thought and consideration into this decision and it is one of the hardest decisions I have had to make. I have really enjoyed my time here, but I believe this is the right step for me given that I have another job that is demanding and full-time. I truly want CYF Ministries to have a leader who can put all their time and effort into the ministry and unfortunately this was my biggest struggle to balance. My time at Grace Lutheran has been full of growth, learning, and understanding. I will dearly miss all the children at Grace the most and I'm forever grateful for this congregation and staff who have offered me so much support during my role here. I will be spending my last weeks preparing for Fall 2023. Thank you for your understanding during this transition.
Peace be with you, Kelsey Russell



Ministries



This spring, Family Promise begins transitioning into a new trauma-informed way to shelter and serve families experiencing homelessness with the opening of the first phase of the Family Promise Campus. The Family Promise Campus is more centrally located and accessible to the families we serve, partnering organizations that assist them, and other resources families need. The campus has two properties. One property is commercially zoned with a building for our offices and service center and space for future expansion. The second property is residentially zoned with a house that will soon shelter one family at a time and land for future micro-sized apartments to shelter additional families.

"Our hope is that, when a young child looks back at their family's time in our program, they won't even realize they were in a shelter," says Executive Director David Frei.

We hope you will share our Family Promise Campus vision and help us raise the \$260,000 total goal by the end of the year. These funds are dedicated to renovate our new spaces to serve families and children experiencing homelessness and building plans for phase two.

Spring Forest Qigong Practice Group



Spring Forest Qigong practice group led by Randy Sparer meets at Grace the 1st & 3rd Mondays of each month at 2:30pm. Through gentle, yet powerful healing movements and meditations, you will learn how to heal yourself. Questions, contact Randy Sparer 612-812-2392.



Financials

Financials were not available at the time of printing. We apologize for the inconvenience.



LET'S PLAY BALL!

Join the OK @ Play group on Tuesday, July 25, 2023 for a St Paul Saints game against the Toledo Mud Hens at 7:07 pm at CHS Field. The price of the ticket is \$47 which includes your ticket and a pregame picnic meal at the Cub Cabana, outside the left field wall.

This event is open to all Grace Lutheran attendees, family members and friends. We have a maximum of 100 seats, so tickets will go fast. Please purchase your ticket via REALM or drop off a check at the church office NO LATER than Friday, June 23, 2023. Please contact Vickie Meade at 763-712-0496 with any questions.



Empty Nesters/ Parents of Independent Children

Summer Events

We are a fun and welcoming social group that enjoys getting together for food and beverages and conversation. We can't wait to connect this summer! Here are the "deets":

- Tuesday, June 20th – starting at 6 pm at Chanticlear Pizza in Coon Rapids
- Monday, July 24th – starting at 6 pm at Invictus Brewing in Blaine
- Monday, August 21st – starting at 6 pm at Forgotten Star Brewing in Fridley

You may not be able to join us right at 6 pm but don't let that stop you! Our start times are flexible; arrive when you can! If you have any questions, feel free to email, text or call Nancy Jenkins

Ministries



Ruth Circle

Ruth Circle is a group of mostly retired women who meet the first Monday of each month in room 105/107 for bible study from 12:30–2:00pm. During July and September circle will meet on July 10th and Sept 11th due to the national holidays on the first Monday of those months. Join us as we study and fellowship together.

Our study together follows the monthly ELCA Gather Magazine Bible Study. Please contact the church office or Low Jackson to participate.

Grace Quilters

Grace Quilters meet on Mondays from 9am to 12pm during the summer but will NOT meet on July 3rd or Sept 4th due to the holidays. Thank you to Grace members and friends who have donated cotton and flannel fabric, cotton sheets, yarn and money for our mission.



Graceful Seniors

Join us **June 20th**, a group of mostly retired folks for a Bible Study and Fellowship. 8:30-9:00am for Donuts and Coffee. 9:00-10:00am Bible Study.

This session we will be starting a NEW study on the Old Testament book of Jonah! Pastor Maria likens Jonah to a first century Comic book! Come and join the fun! If you would like to join Graceful Seniors please call the church office.



OK@Play

Beatles Tribute Concert

Do you remember The Beatles? Who wouldn't from any generation of people! All are welcome! Come join the OK@Play group on June 29 from 6:30 - 8:00 to hear Hard Days Night giving a tribute to The Beatles at The Draw Park & Amphitheater (located within The COR) 7401 Ramsey Parkway, Ramsey, MN 55303.

We have attended concerts at this venue in the past and thought we could kick off the spring/summer by organizing this event on June 29, plus giving you the list of the summer concert series on Thursday evenings to attend in the future and see who else from Grace may show up at any given concert!

We plan to gather on June 29 at 6:00 on the lawn. Bring your own lawn chairs, bring your own food or snacks and beverage to eat and drink together before or during the concert. The cost is FREE! Parking is in a nearby lot, streets, or ramp. Please allow extra time for road construction depending on where you are coming from. Visit the City of Ramsey website for details. No need to sign up or register, just show up! If you have any questions, please reach out to Ann Lange 763-438-5623.



Ministries

Family Table



Family Table is an outreach program sponsored by several churches in the area including Grace. On the 3rd Sunday of each month, during the summer from 11:30am-12:30pm. 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. Whether you are able to volunteer on site, contribute cash, or food, we need you! If you have any questions, you can contact Lynda Wilde at lrwilde@comcast.net.



Generosity

We are grateful for all the ways you support the ministries of Grace. We recognize that many people travel and are away for the summer. Did you know that you can set up online giving through Realm so that even if you are away you can continue to support the church? If you have questions about how to do this, please reach out to our Church Administrator Tracie Russell.

Food Truck Save the Dates

June 28th - 5:00pm-8:00pm (Worship 7pm)
July 26th - 5:00pm-8:00pm (Worship 7pm)
August 9th - 5:00pm-8:00pm (Worship 7pm)

We are working on Food Truck and fun activities. To get more involved and to help plan, please reach out to Pastor Joanna Mitchell, joannam@graceandover.org

Reflection



"A Grace I Never Knew"

by Nancy Jenkins

The little wooden plaque was there on the wall of my childhood bedroom. Nancy means "the grace of God is with me". I didn't see it then. I was too busy chasing dreams and being my fully passionate self with family, friends, sports, school, jobs. But I see it now. Grace was there all along holding me, filling in the gaps, and somehow pointing the way.

I saw grace again this week. As moms and dads kept their cool while taking their kids to preschool. In the willingness to get up early to help a friend. I saw it the other day when I cried "toothpaste" tears. It was like my eyelids squeezed out the tears and I wasn't even doing the squeezing. I saw grace in action again briefly this morning and a single tear flowed from one eye.

I know now what grace is not. Grace isn't harsh or demanding. It's not loud or heavy handed. Grace doesn't point fingers at others or boast. Grace is gentle. It quietly bridges the gaps. Grace smiles instead of losing its patience. Grace whispers, "I am here for you" and means it. Grace is constantly saying "I love you" but often in wordless ways that we don't see or understand.

And so I pray - Gentle Grace, visit me and hold me. Soften my heart and open my eyes so that I might see you and know you today. Amen.



Children and Youth Ministry



Summer Children's Worship Opportunities

At Grace, we love having our children in worship. We love their questions, their voices, and their movements; however we know this can be hard for parents, and do wish to offer opportunities for parents to have a break during worship as well as children.

- 8:30am-Nursery will be opened and staffed for any children who need a break during worship.
- 10:00am-Nursery will be open, but we ask parents to remain in the nursery with their kids. The TV in the nursery can always be switched on and worship can be heard and viewed there. Children will be invited out of worship during scripture and sermon for Kid's Time, if they need a break and will return to worship before the service ends.



Middle School Summer Stretch

Cost: \$300 Sign up on Realm today! Friends are welcome! Other options available: full summer option, and three week only option.

High School Volunteers for Summer Stretch are needed!

Summer Stretch is a great way to get involved and Grace, build your leadership skills and get service hours! As a Junior leader you will get to attend all of the service projects and adventures. You will also get a T-shirt! \$90 for the whole summer or \$20 a day. For more details and to register to be a high school junior leader for summer stretch register on Realm.





Grace Lutheran Church

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