

# grace notes

November 2023



Dear People of Grace,

I have enrolled in a two-week class at the Living School, through the Center for Action and Contemplation. One of the aspects of this class is to do deep listening and prayer. In the first week, the readings provided for our reflection used these words: "calmed and quieted my soul," "I wait and listen for the sound of the genuine," and "we can't rush, the season and we can't call for the rain." These are the lines I have been stuck on. Calmed and quieted, wait and listen, can't rush, can't call for the rain. I don't think we do a good job of this as a society. I shared the calmed and quieted piece with someone, who responded asking, "how do you do that?" Great question! How do we calm and quiet our soul?

**QUIET YOUR**  
*Mind And*  
**TO YOUR**  
*☆ Soul ☆*

I just shut the door to my own office because the hallways are loud right now as our daycare gets ready for their Fall Festival. I see, families coming and going every day, and their souls are not quieted! Their lives are busy with little kids, illnesses, jobs, and schedules. As my kids have entered high school and college, things are quieter at our house, but I am still working on calming and quieting my soul. In those quiet moments, it is so easy to look for a distraction, like picking up my cell phone and surfing the internet mindlessly, or to call or text a friend. We tend to fill space with noise so that we can avoid the silence.

But what might the silence be inviting us to think about? As the days grow shorter, and we move into the busy holiday season, how might you find yourself turning off some of the noise and tuning into your spirit, and God's voice within you: a voice that affirms you for who you are, just as you are.

A dear friend of mine shared recently that she overthinks conversations. She will often send a text after a coffee date and say, "I'm sorry, if I sounded snarky," or something like this. Almost always, no one thought she was snarky, but she is overthinking her own actions. When she confessed this to our small group, we all started to share about how we overthink too, and then we gave thanks for the vulnerability of our friendship to tell this fear. Sometimes, I think that we are afraid to turn things off and listen more deeply because we start to overthink. We start to judge, we start to listen to the voice within ourselves that says we are inadequate or not enough. If this is the case, then we need another starting place for our reflection and for our quiet. Because that is the voice of fear within you, that is the face of the liar, or the devil (if you will) that fills you with insecurities and self-doubts. Could you begin your time of quiet, hearing the words of the Psalmist, who pronounces: You are fearfully and wonderfully made. Or the voice of Isaiah who states: "I have called you by name, you are mine." Or the voice of God, who states: You are my beloved, I delighted in choosing you."?

The scripture passage that I have been reading states: I have calmed and quieted my soul like a weaned child. It helps that I have an infant room down the hallway from my office. An amazing thing happens when an infant is feeding, especially when they are little, they turn the world off and that is the only thing that matters. Might I imagine getting that close to God, to nestle in the crook of God's arm and be held and turn everything else off except God's warmth, God's love, God's grace. Might you do the same. Perhaps we will discover that when we listen to God's voice, our souls will be calmed and quieted and we will be filled with overflowing love. Thanks be to God!

Pastor Joanna Mitchell

# Associate Pastor's Message



## *Slow down. Turn God-ward.*

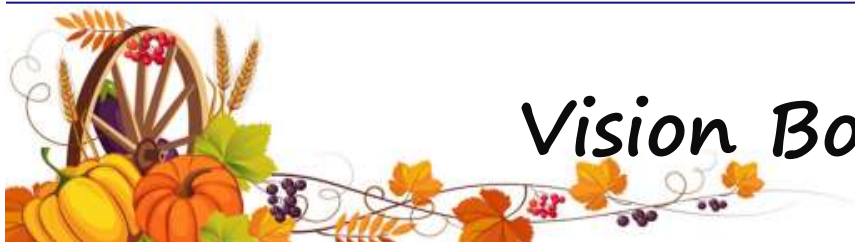
The first week in October a group of us served with Habitat for Humanity Twin Cities. It was my first time working with the organization and aside from Jimmy John's for lunch I didn't really know what to expect. When we arrived at our site, we were immediately told that we actually wouldn't be working at that site, but 6 blocks away at another site. Still I had no idea what to expect, but we trudged on, eager to help. Our Site leader was a man named Jimi. To paint a picture, he wore a Hawaiian shirt, listened to jazz guitar while we worked, and Jimi loved to talk! Our instruction for the day took half of the morning it seemed, and once we got to work he exclaimed, "You are the most efficient crew I have ever had." He gave me a special task to slow people down. Reminding us that we were supposed to be having a good time too, not just working! What I realized working that day with Jimi was the importance of slowing down. A few of us in our haste painted walls the wrong color and had to re-paint them or while cutting in, splashed a little wall color onto the ceiling and had to touch that up too.



There is always work to be done. But it will get done. And site supervisor Jimi is right. We should slow down and talk to one another. We are supposed to be having a good time too.

Last week our Faith Practices and Neighboring Practices team had our first gathering. There were teams from 16 different churches in the Minneapolis Area Synod. Over the course of 24 hours, we focused on two keynote practices: daily prayer and one-to-ones. That's it! We shared meals together, learned a little, and conversed a lot. Once again, I was reminded to slow down. Instead of driving to produce and program, striving for measurable outcomes, we were invited to slow down. Sit with God and with one another and in doing so we listened, learned, and grew in faith. Our spiritual directors for the weekend invited us into thinking about prayer and daily prayer as any time we focus God-ward! You can be sitting in silence, journaling, creating art, walking, conversing and more --all of this can be considered prayer! They encouraged us to set aside time daily for a prayer practice, a time of turning God-ward. We were also invited into the practice of one to one conversations. You might be thinking of a conversation with two people. And you would only be half right. One-to-one conversations are intentional conversations between two people intended to build authentic relationships, discover gifts and strengths, identify self-interest, and gather information. These conversations require intention and attention from the person requesting the conversation as well as purposeful and curious listening. Meaning if you are invited to a one-to-one, chances are you will do 70-80% of the talking during the conversation. And the person who invited you will listen and ask questions, drawing you deeper with the motivation to learn what is important to you! Peter Block, one of our presenters, is convinced small group conversations had in this way, as well as probing questions will change the world for the better. You may be a skeptic like me, thinking but what will we DO to change the world? What must we produce? What I learned is we can simply pray, turning God-ward. And be intentionally in relationship with each other- drawing one another deeper through questions and understanding. This is my invitation to you as we turn the corner from fall into the holiday seasons. An invitation to slow down, savor time spent God-ward and in intentional relationship building conversation. Who knows, but let's check in, in a couple of months and see how we feel?! Thanks be to God! Pastor Maria Markman





## Vision Board Message

*"Give thanks in all circumstances;  
for this is the will of God  
in Christ Jesus for you."* 1 Thes 5:18

This verse has been on my heart frequently in recent months, both when giving thanks has come easily, and at times when it has been much more difficult. I have been greatly blessed with a close family including my 92-year old parents, 3 siblings, spouses, children, and grandchildren for whom I have thanked God all my life. Earlier this year when my parents came down with Covid, we began a journey which ended in my mother's passing in early August. Along that journey through many tears, I have had occasion to offer many prayers of thanks:

- For the opportunity to create new cherished memories with my mother and others,
- For the promise that we were all held in Jesus' tender care,
- For my father and other family members supporting my mother and each other,
- For the flexibility of time afforded by retirement to participate in their care,
- For the numerous expressions of prayer, support and sympathy offered by so many of you in my Grace "family" that have warmly touched my heart.



I have also reflected on our lives together here at Grace from the perspective of the great many things for which we can be grateful, even in the face of personnel changes, construction delays, budget revisions, design changes, and other things that might seem counter-intuitive to giving thanks.

- The transforming of hearts with continued emphasis on listen, grow and serve,
- The dedication of our pastors, staff and volunteers,
- The growth in numbers of participants in many ministries of the church,
- The generosity of contributors to our capital campaign in new commitments or recommitments,
- The new and established avenues for reaching out to our community and our world to share the love of God.

We all have so many things for which to be thankful to God in times that are good and in times that are less so. May we each develop a practice of gratitude and daily thanksgiving, whatever our circumstance! Holly Dodds, Vision Board

### Highlights

### Highlights from Vision Board August/September

- Planning for Rally Sunday and God's Work Our Hands Sunday.
- Church office closure on Fridays to continue indefinitely.
- Discussion of changes to Noisy Offerings to make them more responsive in a timely manner to unplanned or emergency events. Regular partner ministries will be incorporated into budgeting process for Stewardship planning.
- Discussion of how to insure balancing quality and cost of event participation especially for Youth events.
- Confusion for new attenders due to changing worship service times. Will remain as 8:45 and 10:30 through program year and then change permanently to 8:30 and 10:00 beginning in late May 2024.
- Grief support group in partnership with Our Saviors Lutheran (East Bethel) to begin in November.
- Continued monitoring of building plans and progress.
- Review of monthly Sr. Pastor, Administrator and Financial reports.



# Transforming Inside & Out And Finances



Transforming  
INSIDE + OUT

**Thank you!**  
for investing in the  
future of Grace!



## Transforming Inside and Out: Reboot and Results

I want to say a huge thank you to everyone who participated in our Transforming Reboot this past month. We had a tremendous team of people who worked on planning a Spirit-filled event. The food was delicious, and the stories shared were impactful. You are making a difference in growing and building the faith here at Grace Lutheran. Thank you!

Thank you also for your generous response. We had many people confirm their promises allowing us to know that indeed we can rely on the finance promises and we also had 14 families join in the campaign by making their first promise. Thank you for taking this profound step! We also had 14 families increase their initial promise.

Grand total increase in pledged amount = \$41,816.00

New Total Transforming pledge = \$1,571,804.00

We are so grateful for the generous outpouring of support for our campaign! Thank you again!

Pastor Joanna Mitchell and Pastor Maria Markman

Thank you to our Reboot Team:

Communication: Pastor Maria Markman, Scott Christensen, and Nancy Jenkins

Event planning team: Stephanie Chandler, Brook Vanderleest, Julie Linaman, Greg Ackerson, Tracie Russell, and Pastor Joanna Mitchell

### Income

|                               | YTD thru 9/30/2023  | Budget              |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Grace Contributions           | \$ 531,360          | \$ 575,440          |
| Transforming Receipts         | \$ 278,406          | \$ 375,000          |
| Capital Receipts              | \$ 65,720           | \$ 86,250           |
| Grace Registration Income     | \$ 23,099           | \$ 32,641           |
| Grace Other Income            | \$ 75,889           | \$ 83,687           |
| Seeds of Grace Tuition Income | \$ 482,860          | \$ 496,350          |
| <b>Total Income</b>           | <b>\$ 1,457,334</b> | <b>\$ 1,649,367</b> |

faith and  
finances

### Expenses

|  |                     |                     |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Operational Ministry Expenses                            | \$ 1,131,811        | \$ 1,251,319        |
| Capital Expenses   | \$ 302,033          | \$ 423,138          |
| <b>Total Expenses (includes Seeds of Grace expenses)</b> | <b>\$ 1,433,843</b> | <b>\$ 1,674,457</b> |

|                  |           |             |
|------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Operating Margin | \$ 23,491 | \$ (25,090) |
|------------------|-----------|-------------|



Minneapolis Area Synod  
of the ELCA

## Election of New Bishop

We will be electing a new Bishop in 2024. If you want to be a part of this process and learn more, attend one of the listening sessions. Also, we will be electing our Lay Voting Member for our Synod Assembly in February at our congregational meeting. If you are interested please reach out to Pastor Joanna Mitchell at [joannam@graceandover.org](mailto:joannam@graceandover.org)



## Ministry News



### Fan the Flame Within 2024 Women's Retreat

Women of Grace! We want you to attend our 2024 Women's Retreat this coming February. This Amazing, Relaxing, Fun -Filled Event is happening on February 23-25, 2024 at Luther Point Bible Camp in Grantsburg, WI. This event, entitled "Fan the Flame Within", is our annual overnight weekend Winter Women's Retreat where we invite ALL Grace women and their friends to come.

At this fun event, you will meet and get to know more women at our church, laugh a lot, and RELAX. We have everything planned and provided for you except your overnight bag – The team will provide all your meals and snacks, daily devotion sessions, carpooling, lots of free time, a field trip to a creamery, outdoor hiking (if you so choose), and wonderful women fellowship that you can only get at a Women's Retreat.

Our goal for this retreat is to grow in relationship with one another and God; provide tangible spiritual take-aways to apply to your daily life and have LOTS OF FUN AND LAUGHTER. This Women's Retreat is also a safe and encouraging environment where EVERYONE is invited to come.

Space is limited so registration will be required for this event- Go to Realm NOW to register. The Early Bird cost thru Dec 31st is only \$120 which include 3 meals and snacks, 2 overnight lodging and carpooling cost. Packing list and additional details will be sent to you once you register!

Can't wait to see all you Fabulous Women at this Wonderful Event in February 2024. Reach out to Stacy Surratt for any questions – [stacysurratt@yahoo.com](mailto:stacysurratt@yahoo.com)

### Adopt A Family

Would you like to share God's grace in a very tangible and REAL way this Christmas? Then please consider "adopting" a local family who will be truly blessed by your generosity. Through our partnership with Sand Creek Elementary, we will connect families from our church with local students and families in need.



During November, you will be assigned a specific family for which you'll be given the age and gender of each family member, along with clothing needs and wish list for a toy or book.

If you are interested in Adopt A Family or have any questions, please contact Jan Margotto at 763-434-4617 or [margotto@msn.com](mailto:margotto@msn.com)



### Empty Nesters / Parents of Independent Children

Our next Empty Nester event will be at 6 pm on Monday, January 8 at Esmeralda's in Riverdale. Their address is 12759 Riverdale Boulevard in Coon Rapids. Esmeralda's is in the former location of the CR Acapulco's. As usual, you don't have to arrive right at 6 pm to join us. All are welcome! If you have any questions, please reach out to Julie Erickson or Nancy Jenkins.



# Ministry News



## Graceful Seniors

All seniors are invited to join us for fellowship and Bible Study on the 2nd Tuesday of the month (11/14). We are studying the book of Genesis (12-50).

8:30-9:00am Donuts and Coffee

9:00-10:00am Pastor Maria led Bible Study  
Come and join the fun! If you would like to join Graceful Seniors please call the church office.

Shirley Christenson will share her newest Christmas book with us. She will be selling her books for \$10 each. A great gift for grandchildren for Christmas.



## FMSC MEAL PACKING EVENT

Sat., Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>/9:00-10:30 AM

Calling all Meal Packers! Grace will be hosting a meal packing event at Feed My Starving Children in Coon Rapids on Saturday November 18<sup>th</sup>, from 9:00 until 10:30 AM!

Grace has produced thousands of Mana Pack meals over the years that feed hungry children and vulnerable families around the world. The current need has never been greater, with a famine in the Horn of Africa and the war in Ukraine disrupting food shipments globally.

Please join me on Saturday Nov 18<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM to pack meals. We have reserved 100 slots, so feel free to bring a friend, neighbor, or family member. You can sign up through the Blue Sheets in Worship, or by calling the Church Office. **Deadline for signing up is Monday November 13<sup>th</sup>.**

Thanks for serving and sharing God's Love!  
Scott Christensen  
Outreach Ministry Team Leader



## Ruth Circle

Ruth Circle will meet on November 6th at 12:30-2:00pm. Ruth Circle is a group of mostly retired women who meet the first Monday of each month following quilters (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.

## Family Promise Wish List



(Please keep in mind our families do not have much storage space)

### Our top needs are:

**Toilet Paper (Individually Wrapped 4-6 pack)**  
**Paper Towels (Individually Wrapped)**  
**Cleaning Spray**  
**Toilet Cleaner**  
**Laundry Detergent**

We are also in need of:

Body Wash  
Hand Soap  
Dish Soap  
Dish Washer Pods  
Wipes  
Diapers Size 4-6  
Pull Ups Size 5 and 6  
Nighttime Pull Ups Size S/M and L/XL



## Third Annual Advent Cantata

Come and sing with us in the 3rd Annual Advent Cantata, "The Jesus Gift" with the Lord of Life Music Family!

Rehearsals start Tuesday November 5 from 7:15-8pm. More information can be found on the Grace website or contact David Phelps.





## GRACE4RAKAI

### Grace 4 Rakai Sponsorship Update

The community of Grace, including many of our members, former members, friends and relatives sponsor more than 100 children at the ACT Schools over in Rakai, Uganda.

The schools will be soon completing their school year before the holidays. Many students are taking exams to complete the school year.

Students in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Grades will be taking national exams given to all students in Uganda. How the students do on the exams will determine whether they can move on to High School, Prep for University, or even qualify to move on to University. The national tests are beginning now and will wrap up by early December with results to be published in January. The ACT Schools are excellent, and the students normally do well, but they still need our love and support!

Please be sure and pray for all the students, but especially those sponsored by Grace that are taking National Exams. Pray that they may stay healthy, have a clear mind and the peace they need to succeed:

10 –Students in Grade 13-taking exams to see if they qualify for University.

13 –Students in Grade 11-taking exams to continue University Prep

7 -Students in Grade 7-taking exams to qualify to enter the ACT High School.

Thanks in advance for your prayers of support! If anyone has questions about their sponsored child or the sponsorship program feel free to reach out to me!

Scott Christensen / Grace4Rakai Ministry Team  
Child Sponsor Program Team Lead

## Ministry & CYF News



### Children's Christmas Program Register on Realm Today!

Rehearsals for actors will be on Sunday Mornings.

9:50-10:20am Music Rehearsal

11:30am-12:45pm Skit and Song Rehearsal

Sunday Oct. 29 11:30-12:00 Info and script hand out

Sunday Nov. 5 11:30-12:15 All Narrators

Sunday Nov. 12 11:30-12:15 Scenes 1, 3, 5

Sunday Nov. 19 11:30-12:15 Scenes 2, 4

(No rehearsal Sunday Nov. 26 Thanksgiving break)

Sunday Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> 11:30-12:15 All narrators

Sunday Dec. 10 11:30-12:15 Full Rehearsal

Saturday Dec. 16 Dress Rehearsal 10:00-12:00

Sunday Dec. 17 Performance 8:45 and 10:30  
(arrive at Grace 8:15)



### Green Ribbon Is Back!

Do you have a child who struggles with mental health? Are you feeling isolated as a parent and in need of support? Come join Green Ribbon group. A group of supportive and confidential parents supporting other parents raising their children. Our next meeting will be November 22nd at 6:00 PM in Pastor Maria's office. Meetings are led by Jeff Anderson and Dan Brasgalla. If you are curious or have questions please reach out to Pastor Maria and she will help get you connected!

# CYF Ministry News



## Christmas Camp Out!

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Christmas Camp Out Event is happening Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2023 in the Fellowship Hall from 5:00PM -7:00PM. Gather around the "campfire," friends! It's time to celebrate the season with a fun camping trip. The best part is . . . you don't have to go anywhere! We are bringing the great outdoors to you with a cozy, indoor Christmas Campout. Twinkling lights, popup tents, camp-themed snacks, fun new crafts, and exciting new games and activities help families spend time together learning about the gift of Jesus. No need to sign up! We can't wait to see you there! This is a family event so all ages are invited. Like at any good campout, hotdogs will be served for dinner and we ask that you bring a pot luck "side item" to share. Reach out to Stacy Surratt for any questions – [stacysurratt@yahoo.com](mailto:stacysurratt@yahoo.com)

Church  
Office  
Closed  
11/23-11/24

Happy  
Thanksgiving!



## Church Office and Seeds of Grace Day Care Closed

The Church Office and Seeds of Grace Day Care will be closed on Thursday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> & Friday, November 24<sup>th</sup> in observance of the Thanksgiving Holiday.



## Youth Christmas Parties

Come join us for Christmas themed celebration, games, prizes, and activities at our youth Christmas parties coming up in December! Feel free to invite your friends.

### Middle Schoolers (6th - 8th grade)

Friday, December 8th from 6:00-9:00pm

### High Schoolers (9th - 12th grade)

Friday, December 15th from 6:00 - 9:00pm

## Save The Date:

## 2024 Youth Summer Trips

It is already time to start thinking about summer trips! We have a middle school and a high school summer trip planned. Registration will be available soon. There are several amazing fundraising opportunities that make these trips much more affordable, as well as scholarships available, so please don't let the price tag scare you away! Set up a meeting with Will Weikle to learn more at [WillW@GraceAndover.org](mailto:WillW@GraceAndover.org).



### Middle School Summer Trip

Summer Festival Camp  
Gustavus Adolphus College, St.  
Peter, MN  
July 14th - 17th—\$350

### High School Summer Trip

Christikon  
McLeod, Montana  
July 26th - August 3rd-\$850







## CYF Director Message

It has been a wild ride learning everything in this new role here at Grace! I have been having a blast, and the youth and their families have been such a joy to work with. I would like to start a segment in Grace Notes where I give some updates on the Youth Programming here at Grace!

So far this year, the kick off for all of the different youth programs have been going splendidly. Sunday School has been great, and our Children's Choir tripled in size! The children's choir is now called "The Treble Makers" and we just sang for the first time on October 15th. They sang beautifully. Our next performance will be the Christmas Program on December 17th.

Catechism has been going well. We have an amazing group of adult leaders who have done such a great job at creating a space for the middle schoolers to ask their big faith questions. 15 of our Catechism students and Own Your Faith students (9th graders) went on a retreat to Camp Wapo in Wisconsin at the end of September, and we had such a blast.

Our Youth Group has been getting back into the swing of things as well! We have an average of 18 high schoolers in attendance every Wednesday evening, which is too big of a group for our current youth room! We have been stuck doing bonfires every week and being forced to eat s'mores for all of our meetings. I know, so terrible, right? But on a serious note, thank you for everything you have done to make our Transforming Inside and Out building project possible, so that we will have a Youth Room that actually has enough space for everyone to be welcome.

I am looking forward to what's to come as our Children, Youth and Family program continues to grow! Thank you to all of the Sunday School volunteers and parents, Treble Makers volunteers and parents, Kids Night Out volunteers, and the Children's Ministry team for supporting and building up our Children's programming. Thank you to the Youth Ministry team, the Catechism small group leaders, Catechism parent volunteers, Own Your Faith mentors, Youth Group leaders, and all of the people behind the scenes for helping to build up our Youth programming. And thank you to all of the staff at Grace for everything you have done to support me in this role! There are so many people who make our Children, Youth and Family program possible.

Each month, I will give a special shout out to one volunteer in particular. This month, a huge shout out to Nancy Jenkins for everything you have done to support the Youth Group! I truly feel like so much of the success we have had in Youth Group has been due to the behind the scenes work you've put in, the honest conversations you and I have had, and the love and care you show towards our Youth. You are the GOAT LW1. Thank you, Nancy.

Will Weikle  
CYF Director





# Grace Lutheran Church

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**Nov 22**  
START 7PM

**Grace Lutheran**

**Wednesday Programing  
Begins at 5:30pm with  
Worship at 7pm.**



Grace Lutheran Church  
...experience grace

**Sunday Worships  
8:45am & 10:30am**

