

# GLAD & GENEROUS HEARTS



**CONNECTIONS**  
GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OCTOBER 2024

VOLUME 2



# My Heart Overflows

By Pastor Joanna Mitchell

I am writing this the day after our Grand Opening and what a "grand" day it was indeed. Our worship was full, the music soared, the food was excellent, the hospitality and fellowship were amazing, and when it came time to clean up everyone helped, and we were closing up the building quickly. My heart is filled with gratitude for this church community and for all the ways you have given so generously over this past year.

**"...I have repeatedly been moved by the generosity of this community."**

This past year has been one in which I have repeatedly been moved by the generosity of this community. I have seen this in so many ways. First, in the volunteers who show up day after day, willing to help and do their part. I am not sure how we would have gotten through this last year without the dedication of time by Charlie Wold who served as a liaison to our building task force and Nancy Jenkins who organized the moving of all things and the movers. What a gift! But it is far more than these two people. Countless others: our GRAMPS, our gardening team, newly retired folks, families came by and did their part. In serving and giving generously of time and resources connections were formed, stories were told, and our building project was completed. One of the funny things I was told that "none of our GRAMPS like to paint." But you would have never known it because they had smiles on their faces and a spirit of love and care. What a gift!

There is a story in Acts 2 about life in the early church. Acts 2:44-47: *All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.*

**"In serving and giving generously of time and resources connections were formed, stories were told, and our building project was completed."**

"They broke bread and ate their food with glad and generous hearts." This is exactly how I felt as I sat down to eat at our Grand Opening. I saw glad and generous hearts everywhere. In people picking up garbage, in volunteers moving tables, in our food preparers refusing to leave the kitchen. There was a gladness that I have to believe was God's Spirit of generosity was resting upon us.

**"I am so grateful for your glad and generous hearts that inspire me and have moved me to live more generously."**

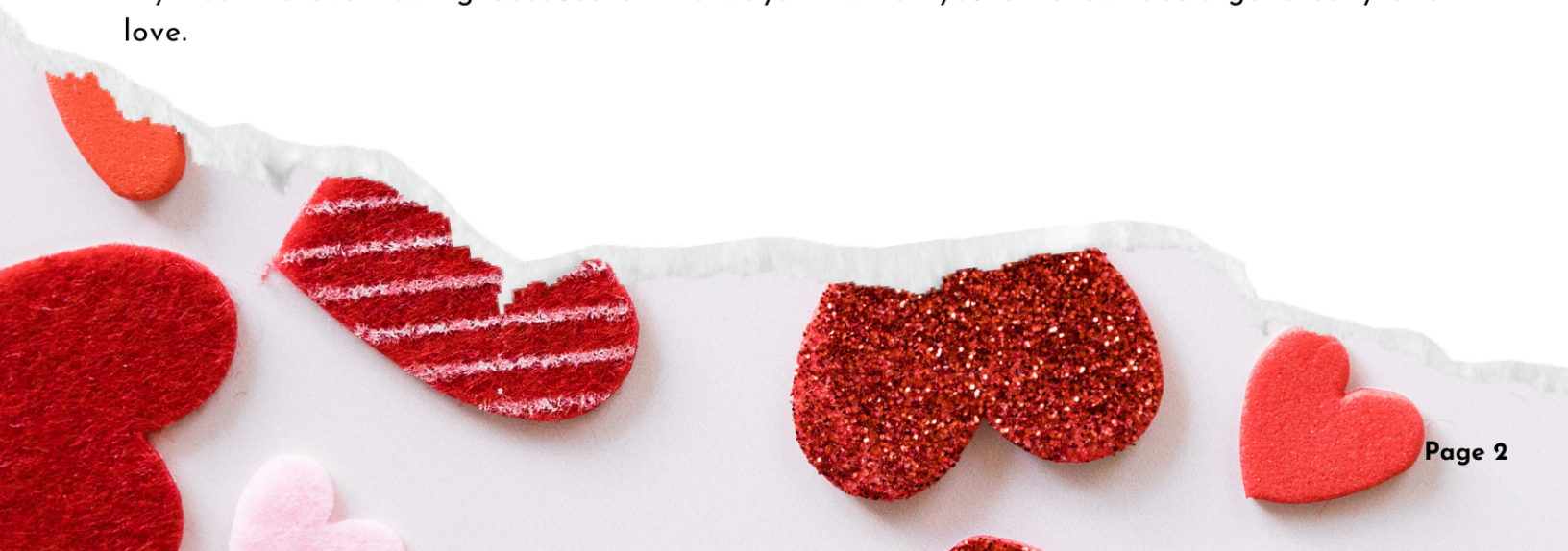
There is so much to be grateful for: the completion of our building project, the kickoff of a new program year, gifted leaders, new visitors and members, a vibrant day care, a committed staff, and a church that is willing to follow the Spirit of God. For the last 5 years, we have been working toward the completion of this building project and it has transformed us, not just our building, but us. I have seen this congregation move from fear to trust, from question "do we have enough", to demonstration of abundance and a willingness to give. I am so grateful for your glad and generous hearts that inspire me and have moved me to live more generously. Thank you.

As we move into 2024-2025, our desire is to keep transforming. To keep sharing with the community around us through our outreach programs. To continue to provide meaningful worship. To listen to our neighbor and to recognize the gifts they have, and wonder how we can work together. I also believe we are invited to ask the question of "What's next?" Where is God leading us and who is God inviting us to work alongside as the Spirit leads. God continues to pour out love, generosity and hope into our congregation and we as people of Grace are invited to respond. Thank you for all the ways you give of yourself.

Two quick stories: Jennifer Weingart posted on Facebook that as she drove by our church her 15-year-old daughter declared: "I love our church." She replied: "I do too. We are so lucky!"

Lynn Hansen wrote: "I know many churches say they welcome everyone and is a safe place for everyone, but my church truly is that. When I walk through those doors, I feel the weight of all the stress and worry lift off of my shoulders, this is the moment I can truly feel relaxed (which is, if you really know me, is not very often)."

My heart is overflowing because of the ways in which you all show God's generosity and love.





# Generosity Beyond Our Doors

By Nancy Jenkins

Each time we meet with our Faith Practices & Neighboring Practices cohort of churches, our leader, Nick Tangen, asks us, "Where did you see God this week?" That's a great question and I invite you to pause and ask yourself that question too. Where did you see God this week?

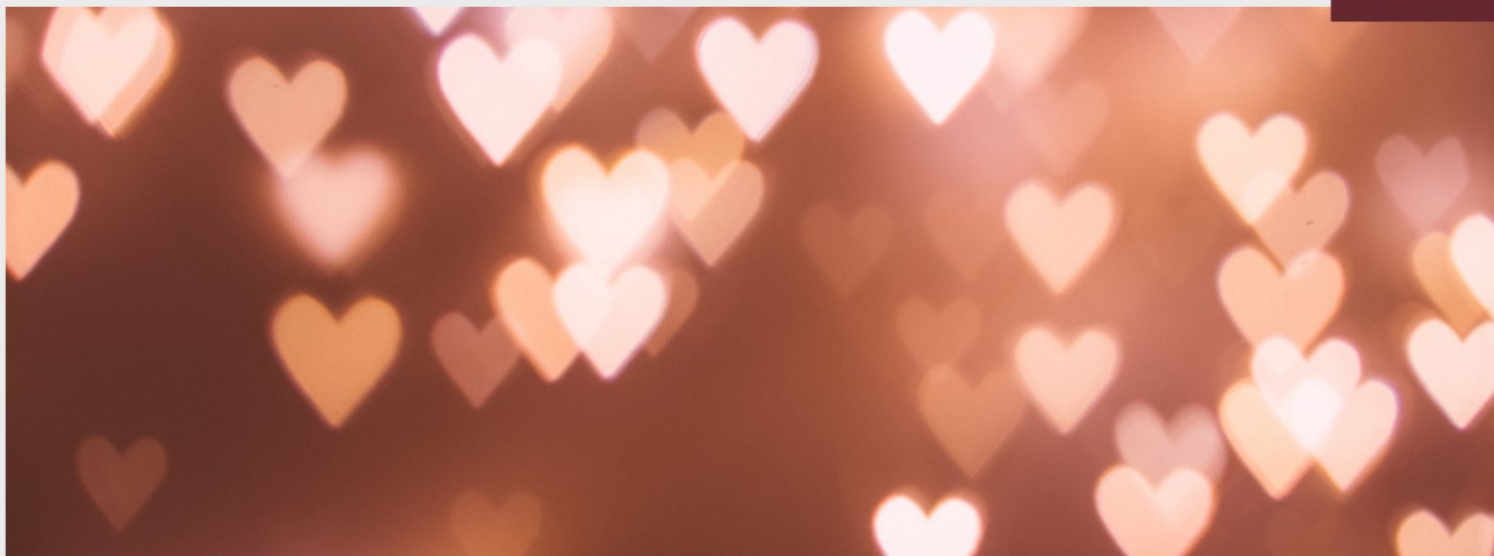
One of the things I enjoy about volunteering is interacting with people, both at Grace and in our community. As part of our "Transforming Inside & Out" generosity campaign, we have heard many stories of God's generosity. Let me share with you some of the stories I have witnessed firsthand.

This past spring I had the opportunity to go with Scott Christensen, our Director of Outreach, to Stepping Stone, an emergency housing shelter located in Anoka. Because he hadn't been to their facility before, Scott had arranged for the two of us to have a tour. When we finished the tour, Scott asked if we could also see the Director of Stepping Stone. Scott hadn't told anyone there that he had

brought with him a check for \$5,000 for Stepping Stone as part of our tithe from the capital campaign. Scott presented the check to the director and our tour guide, and the look on their faces was surprise, pure joy, and gratitude. Our tour guide, who is also a pastor, then turned to me and said, "There are a lot of churches who claim to be 'missional', but your church actually does it! This is so cool!"

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One of our first improvements during the building project was to enhance the speakers and sound system in the sanctuary. There were two smaller speakers and two larger speakers (think huge!) that were taken down from the ceiling. David Phelps, our Worship Director, was looking for a way to give these outdated speakers away so that they wouldn't end up in a landfill. Somehow, strangely, I remembered that a kid from Lord of Life had told me during VBS the summer of 2023 that he loved





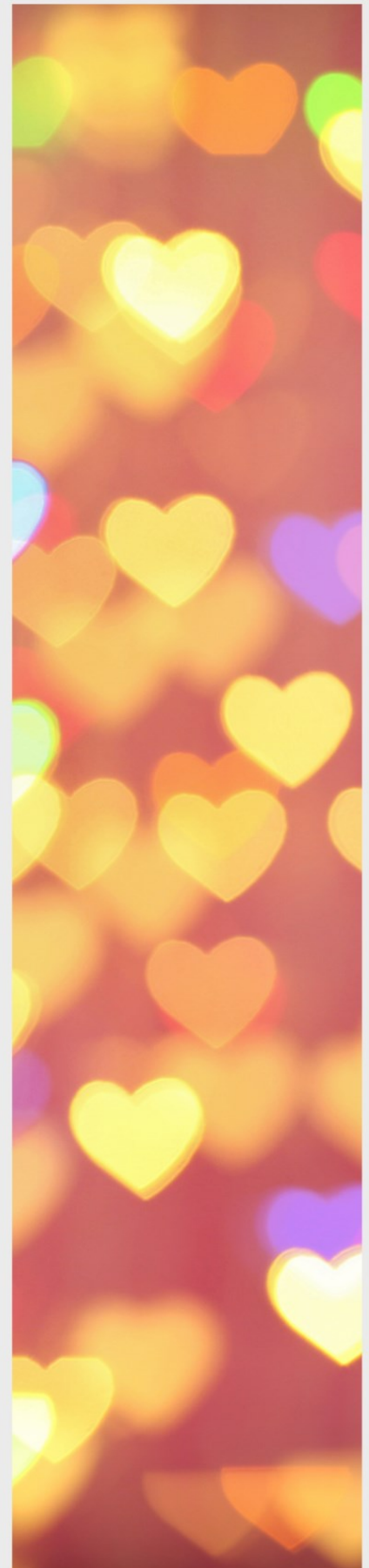
**“...I was optimistic that we would reach the financial goal because I know God’s generosity and the generosity of the people of Grace.”**

speakers, I texted his mom to see if they might be interested in our speakers. His mom texted back, “Yes!” Declan’s mom told him about the smaller set of speakers, but she kept the huge set as a surprise until he came to Grace. When I showed him the huge Bose speakers stored in the church garage, Declan was ecstatic! His whole face lit up! His mom told me later that Declan kept saying to her, “Why did Nancy reach out to ME? Why me, of all the people?” She said that giving Declan those speakers made him feel like an “MVP!”

The truth is that I see God at work often in little ways too. For example, one time I was moving a table in the garage at church with another volunteer and we realized that we needed tape to keep the table legs in place. My friend said, “what we need is some tape!” I looked up and there on the shelf in front of me was a roll of tape! We both smiled and laughed at the timely provision.

Recently I called my best friend in Kansas City and told her about our efforts to raise money for re-doing the Grace parking lot. I told her that our goal was to raise \$200,000 so that this expense wouldn’t be included in our church’s future mortgage. I shared with her about our progress so far and that I was optimistic that we would reach the financial goal because I know God’s generosity and the generosity of the people of Grace. The next morning, she texted me that she had put a check in the mail to Grace to go toward the parking lot project! That financial gift was never my intention; I was simply sharing with my friend about my life, my hopes, my “work.” I believe this is how God often works - through our words, our work, our lives, and our sharing of stories. And so, I wonder, where have you seen God this week, and who will you tell?

**“...I wonder, where have you seen God this week, and who will you tell?”**





# A GLAD AND GENEROUS HEART

By Maydelle Fennick

Our Grace Church giving envelope reminds us that 'God loves a cheerful giver' (II Cor. 9:7). Psalm 112:5 indicates that *Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely.*

So, the age-old chicken and the egg question: which comes first the gladness or the generosity? Does a "glad heart" foster "generosity" or does "giving generously" assure a "glad heart"?

Circumstances should not decide whether we are glad or generous. My mother is an example of this. Using a wringer washer and galvanized tubs, she washed clothes for 8 people every Monday, hung them out to dry and then on Tuesday she "sprinkled them" so that they were damp enough to iron. This is not a recipe for a glad heart; however, my mom chose to be joyful, and we would hear her whistling and singing while she worked (in an unairconditioned home in South Texas).



We lived on a cotton farm and though we did not have monetary wealth our lives were **full** of giving to others. We hosted many missionaries in our 3-bedroom home and often had our friends over after Sunday night service for my dad's famous burgers.

You see, giving generously does not stem from inherent wealth. It can be rather inexpensive and heartfelt: the gift of time, the gift of really listening, the gift of genuine acceptance of those different than us, the gift of a smile, and the gift of a short note of friendship and understanding.



Giving generously is an act of worship which brings gladness to the heart because all that we have is ultimately God's. I have read and heard so many comments about generosity and its effects on the giver:

- Actor Danny Trejo: Everything good that has happened to me is a result of me helping someone else.
- Karen of Good Bones: When we do something for someone else that is when we are whole.
- Description of Amish Bishop's wife: 'her face was lined with the wisdom and kindness that came from years of serving others.'

**"Giving generously is an act of worship which brings gladness to the heart because all that we have is ultimately God's."**

So as followers of Jesus and His disciples, we follow Christ's commands and the disciplines of being His disciples. The greatest commandment of all from Mark 12:30-31 asks us to: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.*

My dear fellow Christians, this is not an option, it is a command. How does that look in our daily walk? This is an outflow of grace and love emanating from us to all around us. As Christ demonstrated inclusive grace and generosity towards us, we should be full of grace and generosity to everyone we encounter in our everyday walk. We are invited to consider if we can selflessly give more of our time and our finances to the advancement of the Gospel.

Disclaimer: Even with careful and thoughtful self-talk about being "glad and generous," at times our mental health will hamper our spirit of service and generosity. In these instances, we may need the intervention of medical specialists and medication.



# GRACE 4 RAKAI

## HEART-FELT THANKS FROM RAKAI, UGANDA!

By Scott Christensen

Our Grace Lutheran congregation has supported many ministries of African Children Today (ACT) in Rakai, Uganda, for over ten years. In this region devastated by HIV/AIDS, we have financially helped the people build a bakery, schools, a health clinic, a poultry operation, and school dormitories.

Perhaps the largest impact Grace has made in Rakai is through the sponsorship of more than 100 children attending the ACT Schools, which teach children Christian values while giving them a world-class education. The on-going correspondence of letters and photos between students and their sponsors has promoted rich, loving relationships over the years.

Several of the Grace-sponsored students have completed training programs to work in construction, mechanics and elementary teacher-training programs. This year, there are nine students who have graduated from ACT High School, passed their national exams, and are now enrolled in university to study and become engineers, accountants, nurses, and secondary teachers. One of these students, Resty Nakasagga, recently wrote to one of her co-sponsors, "I thank you for choosing me as your new daughter and making a great decision to support my academics. May God richly Bless You! I had lost hope of joining university because my family is unable to support me. You have now restored a big hope, and I see a bright future ahead!"

For several years, Resty has been sponsored by Chuck and Diane Phillips. Now, they are joined by Doris and Lloyd Wang and Vickie Meade in co-sponsoring Resty during her studies at the university level. Diane and Chuck Phillips noted that "It has been such a joy to watch Resty grow into a beautiful young woman! Her letters have always been filled with so much love and gratitude. She works hard and we are excited to see what she will become!" Vickie Meade shared that "I am pleased to be a co-sponsor of Resty along with others from Grace so that Resty can pursue her dream of becoming a high school teacher. Resty is excited to be at university and one day will be giving back to her community and educating vulnerable children." Doris and Lloyd Wang explained their support saying, "There is much evidence to show that education plays a significant role in breaking the cycle of generational poverty, yet it is often the condition of poverty that prevents individuals from attaining their educational goals. It is a privilege to provide financial support for Resty to study at university so she can be qualified to teach high school in her community."

This testimonial is just one example of a grateful child in Uganda whose life has been transformed through the generosity of the Grace congregation! If you would like to sponsor a child, please contact Scott Christensen or come to the Grace4Rakai celebration on November 11th.



Then



Now



# GRATITUDE

To Members of Grace,

We are so thankful for all of your cards, gifts, support, and kindness during Dean's illness. And at the time of his passing. We appreciate the use of the church for his funeral, and Low Jackson and her kitchen crew who served a delicious lunch. Also, thank you to Graceful Seniors for the beautiful peace lily.

Sincerely, The Keller Family



Dear Grace Lutheran,

Thank you. Although the Sanctuary was not available for my husband, LeRoy's service, Grace was. Our family was embraced in sympathy, love, and caring. My W.O.W. friends surrounded me and lifted me up with prayers and love, like the best group hug ever. Thank you, Pastor Joanna, David, Kris, and staff for all your preparation and talent. Grace Lutheran is full of grace.

Sincerely, Ginger Nelson



Dear Pastor Joanna, Pastor Maria and the people of Grace, We want to thank you so very much for your support of Tapestry. Your contributions allowed us to serve more than 3,000 meals and, more important, to share the good news of love, hope, and joy in the promise of Christ Jesus. Bendiciones, Pastor Melissa, Deacon Josue

Grace Lutheran Men's Ministry,

Thank you for your interest in the Haven. We hope you enjoyed your tour. Your donations goes a very long way in providing safe, respectful, productive residence for our Veterans who have served their country. We strive to provide all that they need to be comfortable and to heal where the residence staff cares that all needs are met. Our Veterans give back to each other, and appreciate your partnership.

Sincerely, ElizaBeth & Haven 4 Heroes

Grace Lutheran Men's Ministry,

Thank you all SO MUCH for volunteering to take part in the BBQ this evening over at Stepping Stone! The residents seemed to genuinely appreciate our meal and hospitality, and to know that others care about them. A special "THANK YOU" to the Men's Ministry team, for covering the cost of the food we served. It was so much appreciated!

Steve Griffiths, Stepping Stone



Thank you for your support on behalf of our youth, 16-24 and their children. Food and housing insecurity issues are at record highs. HOPE 4 Youth is here to provide pathways to end youth homelessness through great community partners like you. Through your caring hearts, young people are served warm meals, feel valued, and now have grab and go meal kits created by you at God's Work Our Hands Day. Our appreciation is unending; thank you for stepping into the solution of youth experiencing homelessness. Through your generosity, you are bringing hope to those needing a hand-up. We appreciate YOU!

Connie Aase, Hope 4 Youth





Dear Grace Lutheran Church,  
On behalf of Stepping Stone Emergency Housing, I want to extend our heartfelt thanks for your unwavering support of our mission and the individuals we serve. Your generous financial contributions and the dedication of your volunteers are deeply appreciated. Recently, one of your volunteers shared how much he values the opportunity to sit and converse with our residents during dinner service. These simple yet meaningful interactions are invaluable, as they help restore humanity, dignity, and respect to those in our care. Knowing that someone is willing to listen and truly hear their stories means the world to our residents. Thank you for being such a compassionate and caring presence in the lives of our residents and neighbors.

With gratitude, Steve Griffiths, Executive Director, Stepping Stone Emergency Housing

Grace Lutheran Church has been a foundation cornerstone for the work of Family Promise in Anoka County for 15 years. Thank you to the many volunteers, donors, and champions for the cause addressing family homelessness in our community. Family Promise is successful because of the faithfulness and generosity of Grace and our shared commitment to serving.



May God Bless the future of Grace Lutheran from your friends at Family Promise.



Dear Grace Lutheran,  
On behalf of Sand Creek Elementary, Melanie Wohlers (Building Principal), Ryan Lynch (Assistant Principal), Alison Koshiol (Admin Intern) and Sarah Reed (School Social Worker) we would like to send a heartfelt thank you to our faith partner, Grace Lutheran, for their generous donation of school supplies! These contributions will make a real difference for our Sand Creek Stars. Thank you!

Dear Grace Lutheran Staff,  
*Thanking God for you-for the richness you bring...for the difference you make. Thank you all for everything, you all have done. It wasn't easy to work through all the things (construction) that went on. Thanks and love, Bev and Dan Tkachenko*



"Gratitude, like faith, is a muscle. The more you use it, the stronger it grows." - Melody Beattie



# Grand Opening Weekend



## Grace Renewed

By Jan Anderson

Grace Lutheran extended an invitation  
To join us in celebration  
of our Grand Opening on September 8th  
which promised food, fun, and renewal of faith.

We bid our neighbors within our community  
to join hands that day in a gesture of unity.

Whether you live close by or visit stores,  
the idea of neighbor means so much more.

It means going beyond our present location  
to address others' needs across the nation.

Neighbors can be found both far and wide.  
All are welcome, none are denied.

As our praise to God we lift,  
we recognize all have special gifts.

So come and see our transformation  
on which we've built our faith foundation.

**Thank you for joining us!**





**PET BLESSING**

**OCT. 6TH @ 12PM**

**Fall is flu season!  
Get your Flu Shot  
at Grace on Oct. 6th  
9:00am - 12:00pm**

Bring your  
insurance  
card!



**New Member Class**

Sunday

October 13, 2024

11:30am - 1:30pm

Find out what being  
a member of Grace  
is all about.



**TRUNK OR TREAT**

**WED. OCT. 30TH @ 5:00PM**

**GRIEF SHARE**

At GriefShare you'll receive valuable  
guidance and tips, leading you to relief,  
comfort, and peace of mind.

Grace will be hosting  
GriefShare on the 1st and 3rd  
Thursdays of the month from  
6:00-8:00pm beginning  
November 7th through May 1st.



**Red Cross Blood Drive**

**November 14, 2024**

**9:00am - 5:00pm**

**Sign up at [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org)**





*Grace Lutheran Church*

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# *Glad and Generous Hearts*



**Sermon Series**  
**November 3rd-18th**