

Isaiah 8:17 -

HOPE

*“I will wait for the Lord  
and I will hope in God.”*



# What Gives You Hope?

By Pastor Joanna Mitchell

In the early years of my ministry receiving a phone call to come to the side of someone who is dying was one of my worst fears. I felt incredible pressure to come and sit by someone and provide answers or hope, something that I felt was beyond my scope of knowledge or power. But in the last few years, although these phone calls are still dreaded because they usually come alongside a beloved member of our community of faith, I don't fear the visit but instead feel incredible privilege and hope.

Unfortunately, in the last year we have buried too many beloved saints at Grace. Some saints who have been here a long time, some not quite as long, but long enough to make an impact on our community, and long enough that I have formed a close bond with these individuals. I have come to the bedside, sat with family members, and had real conversations about life, about death, about God, about faith.



**God is with us in the darkness.  
God shows up in the tears and  
turns our mourning into dancing.**

I confess that I don't have the answers about what comes next. When asked; I admit they will know before I do what it is like to be held in God's grace. And then I talk about the hope I see. The beauty of the ways God shows up in the darkest hour. The love that I have seen poured out as feet are rubbed and bedding is changed. The abundance of desserts that arrive at Grace before a funeral to make sure that everyone gets to walk away with sweetness on their lips. Paul is clear in his writing to the Romans *"..that we do not hope for what we see but we hope for what we do not see and wait with eager longing."*-Romans 8:25-26. Isaiah writes, *"I will wait for the Lord, and I will hope in God."*Isaiah 8:17 This is where my hope lies. Not in someone miraculously overcoming a disease or illness, but in God who works in and through us, in life **and** in death. The promises of God are abundant and also, they don't free us from darkness or death but instead remind us that God is with us in the waiting. God is with us in the darkness. God shows up in the tears and turns our mourning into dancing.



As we turn the calendar page, awaiting Advent and Christmas, darkness will descend. Days will be shorter; nights will be longer. Bitter winds will hit us. As all of this happens, we will gather in the warmth of our church, in our homes, and with friends. We will light candles, and put up decorations, we will wait, and we will re-tell the pivotal story of our faith. *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light and on them light shined.”*-Isaiah 9:2 *“The Word became flesh and lived among them.”*-John 1:14 Angels and messengers will come to Mary, Joseph and the shepherds bringing both confusing and joy-filled news that a Savior will be born to us not just for some but for all.

This story that we remember is a hope that I cling to more and more. While, yes, it is a story of a baby, it is also a story of a people. It is a story about living through the worst of times and knowing that we have a God who doesn't let us sit alone in darkness, but shows up in the hard questions, who shows up in both life and death. Who is willing to hold our hands when we are hurting and who promises something beyond what we can understand in this time and place.

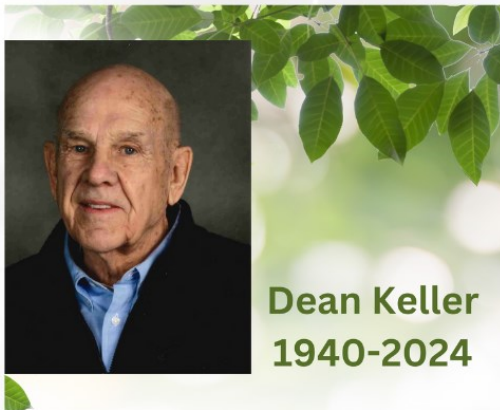
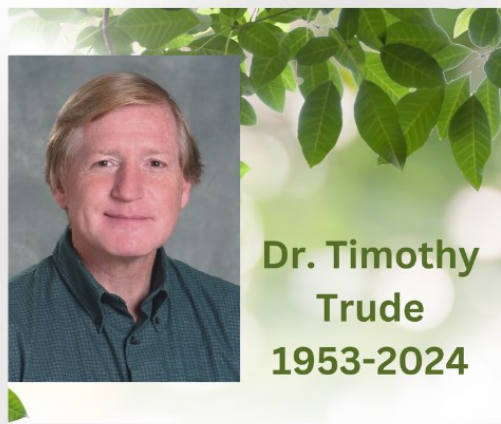
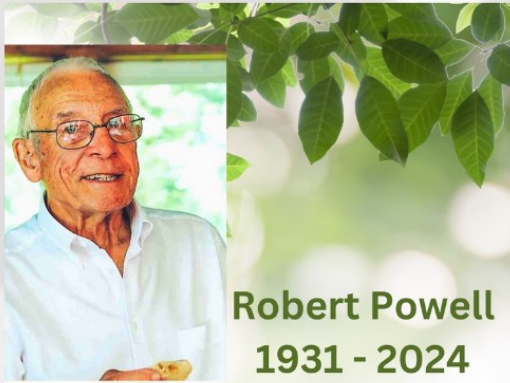


**We will sing,  
we will worship,  
we will invite and  
welcome.  
We will show up for  
each other.**

In my years here at Grace, there has been change upon us almost every Christmas. My first year, COVID, construction and more. This will be the first time we gather for Christmas in our new space. I don't know what it will look like or feel like yet. But what I do know is that people will come. God's Spirit will be there. We will sing. We will worship. We will invite and welcome. We will show up for each other. Some will be mourning, and some will be dancing. Some will be nearing the end, and some will have just begun. God will be with each of us, promising to be there in the waiting and reminding us it is in being community together where hope is found. Where do I find hope this Christmas? I find hope in all of you.



# All Saints Remembrances



## For Those Who Walked With Us

For those who walked with us, this is a prayer.

For those who have gone ahead, this is a blessing.

For those who touched and tended us, who lingered with us while they lived, this is a thanksgiving.

For those who journey still with us in the shadows of awareness, in the crevices of memory, in the landscape of our dreams, this is a benediction.

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# **“What Gives You Hope Especially During Times of Waiting?”**

By Steve Martin

When presented with this question, I think back to my personal experience when my life took a drastic turn and spiraled downhill. Due to a career change, my wife, Patricia, and I said goodbye to our friends and family and moved from Wisconsin to Andover, Minnesota looking for a fresh start in July 2013. Little did I know that my entire life would turn upside down just 5 months later.

On December 31, 2013, at 5am, my wife woke me up in a panic. At the time, she was undiagnosed with bipolar schizophrenia meaning she was hearing voices. The voices told her to end her life; so, she did, right in front of me while severely injuring me in the process. A week after she passed and my reconstructive surgery, I returned to an empty home with no friends, no family and two dogs who were dying of bone cancer. As if that wasn't enough, Patricia's family blamed me for her death and shut me out. I was crippled with sadness, lost, and I faced planning her funeral alone with no financial means or assistance. I yearned to find hope in a space in time where I felt alone.

God never gave up on me. Unexpectedly, caring people and healing opportunities filled my life. As such, I started to embrace that hope and faith were intertwined.

**...what gave me hope through the storm?**

**In a word...GOD.**

After my surgery, I received a visit from a hospital clergy who talked to me about grief counseling, which I attended for my mental health. I chose Grace Lutheran to worship. Here, I learned about and attended GriefShare - which significantly aided in my spiritual healing. I had meaningful conversations with the practicing pastor. I met new people at Grace who have become life-long friends. Faith over fear became my mantra. Four years later, I met Dani, we married in 2021, and I gained an amazing stepson in Isaac.

My life was battered and beaten, but hope pushed me through to the amazing life I have now. I am truly blessed. I am now giving back as a GriefShare facilitator. So, what gave me hope through the storm? In a word...GOD. He was always with me even if I didn't see it at the time.

*“Dear God, I humbly ask that you give me hope. With everything going on in my life, I feel lost. I know and believe that you Lord, are the hope for the hopeless. I can't do this on my own; I need you. Please help me keep my eyes on you and not my problems. Be my light when I am weak. Father, give me patience and hope for the future. Remind me you are with me and still in control. Thank you for all you do for me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.” – The Graceful Chapter*



# MICE, MUSIC, AND MIRACLES

By  
Gayle Pacholl

Christmas rituals and traditions are important to us. We hold family gatherings, send greeting cards, and watch our favorite Christmas movies year after year. Without carols, cookies, and presents under a decorated tree, Christmas just wouldn't feel the same.

Among these many rituals is the annual Children's Christmas Pageant. Through music and narration, the children not only learn the story of Jesus' birth, but they are also invited to become the teachers, sharing the wondrous tale of God's salvation with their misty-eyed audience. They may even give us a new perspective on the age-old story.

**...treat others with kindness and remind them that God's love is for everyone—even someone as small as a mouse.**



I decided it would be fun to write a play that would share the Christmas story from the perspective of the mice at the stable in Bethlehem. It was exciting to put my ideas down on paper, and it will be even more exciting to see this story come to life when *The Mouse and the Manger* will be presented at Grace on December 22nd at both worship services! In this whimsical tale, our children will portray mice who are surprised by the arrival of the Holy Family at their stable. As they witness a night of God's miracles, the mice also learn lessons about friendship, love, and forgiveness.

The story offers a message of hope that we can make our world a brighter place by sharing God's love and building relationships with others. It is my hope that this story will touch your heart. I hope it will inspire both you and our young people to treat others with kindness and remind them that God's love is for everyone—even someone as small as a mouse.



# H.O.P.E.

## HEALTHY OUTCOMES FROM POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

By Pastor Maria Markman

In September, I met with clergy who lead in congregations that belong to Mental Health Connect. We use this every-other-month meeting to connect with one another, to share ideas about mental health ministry, share about our own mental health, and the mental health of our congregations. We also spend part of our time learning. This time we heard a presentation on H.O.P.E. (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences).

In 1998 the original study on ACEs or Adverse Childhood Experiences was published. It showed that exposure to adversity in childhood had lasting impact on the brain and body. Abuse, substance use, divorce, mental illness of a parent, incarceration of a parent, immigration, neglect, bullying, community crime, homelessness, etc. are all examples of ACEs that cause toxic stress and have harmful outcomes on children even as they become adults.

H.O.P.E. or Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences emphasizes the importance of positive experiences. PCEs (Positive Childhood Experiences) can positively influence development even in the presence of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences).

### **What does this have to do with Grace and where do I see hope?**

**The four building blocks of HOPE are:**

- Safe and supportive relationships**
- Safe, stable, equitable environments**
- Opportunities for engagement**
- Opportunities for emotional growth**

I see Grace as a community offering many PCEs. Churches are uniquely situated to support families and communities because we are based in traditions of meaning making, we are intergenerational in nature - connecting children with many caring adults and support systems beyond a family unit. I have seen this especially on Wednesday nights at Grace and even more on our faith fundamentals nights where we all gather together to learn core tenants of our faith and traditions. It is safe and supportive with opportunities for engagement and growth. And I don't just experience this on Wednesday but Sundays too and at special events. Thank you, people of Grace, for providing safe, supportive, and equitable environments for engagement and growth- healing and wholeness as we live out the Christmas Gospel-Jesus-God incarnate, in the flesh, Emmanuel, God is with us.

HOPE



# Ways to Give Hope

By Ann Lange

Hope – What is hope and what gives me hope? Hope in God is a hope that will never disappoint. Being confident in the love of God fuels hope in us. We believe God is in control in this life and after. God is always at work and has our best interest at heart for our lives. Even if a situation looks bleak, it is NEVER hopeless.

As a long time member of Grace and leader of multiple ministries at Grace, and a cancer fighter, my heart and head are full of the many ways to give hope to others. Currently I lead the ministries of Sand Creek Elementary and Stepping Stone Emergency Housing. Both of these partnerships provide food, shelter and care to families during difficult times. With the holidays around the corner the needs and blessings for those in need are abundant.

At this same time, I would like to take this opportunity to say “THANK YOU” to all the Grace staff and volunteers that helped me over the past 16 months while fighting cancer. Those that provided transportation, mowed, picked my garden, trimmed my trees, provided food, sang at my doorstep, visited, brought communion, and prayers, etc. I am so grateful for all your generosity and hope that you gave to me! So, you see, there are ways beyond your imagination that you can show your love and be a servant of God. My philosophy has always been: Give and share your time, talents, finances from your heart . . . till it hurts, till you feel it, so others feel the hope. It’s a reflection of your priorities and a blessing to all. Trust God, give hope.

**Hebrews 6:19a**  
***“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.”***



**2 Corinthians 9:7** ***“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”***





# Giving Hope to Our Partners

There are numerous ways to inspire hope in those who are struggling! Serve as a beacon of light, help transform the lives of those who are less fortunate, remain open-minded, and inquire about their needs. Studies have demonstrated that donating to charities and volunteering can boost happiness levels just as much as earning double your income.

## How to help Sand Creek Elementary:

- Donate a turkey at Thanksgiving. 13 were already given this year. Thank you!
- Contribute to our Sand Creek Fund at Grace allowing us to provide Christmas Food Boxes.
- Join us for Adopt-a-Family by signing up to shop for a family using their wish list.
- Year-Round Donations: Provide Food and Clothing
  - Sharing Grace Backpack Food bags are always needing monetary donations
  - Sand Creek Snacks: Nature Valley Granola Bars, Nutri Grain breakfast bars, Goldfish, Skinny Pop, fruit snacks (all individually wrapped)
  - Clothing Donations: boys' bottoms, girls' bottoms, all sizes (Bottoms can be leggings or pants with elastic waist (no jeans) that are new or gently used.)
  - Sock Donations: kids sizes from K-5 for the upcoming winter/wet months

## Give to our Stepping Stone Christmas Wish List:

- \$25 gift cards to Kwik Trip, Walmart, or Target (no electronic)
- Full-size men's and women's toiletries (shampoo, body wash, deodorant, etc.)
- Men's and Women's razors and shaving cream
- Fingernail clippers
- Perfume/Cologne
- Lip balm/ChapStick
- Winter hats, scarves, and gloves (adult sizes)
- Monetary donations can also be given on Realm or through the church office. (Stepping Stone Christmas elves will do the shopping for you!) Be sure to put a note in the memo that your giving is for Stepping Stone Holiday Gifts. Deadline for Stepping Stone donations at Grace is Sunday, December 8th.



Look for the Grace Giving Tree in the Narthex. Take an ornament and return it and the requested item to Grace. These gifts go to families in need in our community.

If you would like to see other opportunities to give hope to our outreach partners, please visit the Grace website at [grace-andover.org/give-to-our-partners](http://grace-andover.org/give-to-our-partners). All Donations can be dropped off at Grace's donation station outside of the food shelf.



# The Thrill of Hope

By David Phelps

This year marks the fourth year in a row we are partnering with Lord of Life and Cross of Hope for our Advent Cantata. We will be presenting a work by Joseph Martin and Heather Sorenson called “The Thrill of Hope.” It promises once again to be a wonderful presentation by all involved. Performances will be Sunday December 15th at Grace’s morning services, and Sunday December 22nd at Lord of Life in the afternoon.

When thinking about the Advent and holiday season, the title “The Thrill of Hope” makes perfect sense. As the saying goes, “anticipation is always better than the real thing.” We get to experience that anticipation, that hope and wonder of Advent each year, however, we already know the real thing is so much better. We already know the full story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we know we are loved and saved.

One of my absolute favorite things is singing in harmony with other people. The idea that we can create such joyful music together simply with what God has given us is amazing. That is one of the many reasons I love this Grace community. Every Sunday morning and Wednesday evening our sanctuary is filled with joyful music and glad hearts.

In late 2020, singing with others was nearly impossible to do. We were in the midst of COVID and unable to worship together. Around Thanksgiving, my sister Stephanie asked if I could help her record a song to send out to her family and friends. I jumped at the chance to make music again. We recorded a version of “All is Well” by Michael W. Smith. As I worked on the recording, the words hit me hard:

**All is well, all is well. Angels and men rejoice.  
For tonight, darkness fell into the dawn of love's light  
Sing Alleluia.**

At that time, we were indeed finding our way out of the darkness. Starting our journey back from the pandemic, searching for a new sense of normal. I was searching for a new direction in my life. Once I really heard that line, everything made sense.

I find great hope in the things God is doing in and through our community. The love and joy that abounds every day. Compassion and support to those in need. The fact that we work to follow Jesus’ ways and bring his love and life to all.





**CHRISTMAS CAMP-OUT**

No! NOT A REAL CAMP-OUT!  
 Grace Children's Ministry's  
 3rd Annual Christmas Camp-Out!

Sunday December 8th  
 Fellowship Hall  
 4:00-6:00 PM  
**POTLUCK** bring a dish to pass!

Twinkling lights, pop-up tents, camp-themed snacks,  
 fun new crafts, and exciting games!  
 Join us around the "campfire" to hear about the gift  
 of Jesus!  
 No need to sign up!  
 We can't wait to see you there!

*Blue Christmas  
 Worship*

**WEDNESDAY,  
 DECEMBER 18TH AT 7PM**

NOT EVERYONE FEELS JOYFUL DURING CHRISTMAS  
 DUE TO CHALLENGES SUCH AS LOSS, DIVORCE, JOB  
 LOSS, OR ILLNESS. RECOGNIZING THIS, GRACE OFFERS  
 A SACRED SPACE FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING SADNESS,  
 PROVIDING A REFLECTIVE SERVICE TO ACKNOWLEDGE  
 STRUGGLES AND PROMOTE HEALING AND HOPE.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

**C H I S T M A S**

**PARTY**

6-9PM  
 13TH DECEMBER  
 GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

**The Thrill of  
 Hope**

**Advent  
 Cantata**

Sunday, December 15th  
 8:30am & 10:15am at Grace  
 Sunday, December 22nd  
 3:00pm at Lord of Life

**CHRISTMAS  
 PARTY**


**HIGH  
 SCHOOL**

**FOOD | MUSIC**  
 December 18 | 7:45-9:30 PM  
 GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

*Childrens'*  
**Christmas Program**

Sunday, Dec. 22nd  
 8:30am & 10:15am

*The*  
**MOUSE  
 and the  
 MANGER**



Dec. 10th at 12pm

**GriefShare**

Dec. 10th at 6pm

**Surviving  
 the Holidays**

Fellowship Hall  
 All are welcome!







*Grace Lutheran Church*

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**Christmas Eve**

**Worships**

**2:00pm**

**4:00pm**

**9:00pm**

**Christmas Day**

**Worship**

**9:00am**

**HOPE**