



GraceGram

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH



OUR
MISSION

Saved by Grace.
Called to Worship.
Sent to Serve.

June 2016

HOLY COMMUNION OFFERED EVERY SUNDAY

INSIDE THIS EDITION

From the Pastor's Desk

Different leaders, different pastor,
different times!

by Pastor Paul Kuhlman

A phrase I began using about a month ago has now begun to take on legs of its own: "Different leaders! Different pastor! Different times!" I have used it often, and some or all parts of it have been used in many different settings, and by others too.

I came up with this phrase after hearing many members say, "The way we used to do it..." Or "The way we have done it in the past..." There just seemed to be too much "looking backward" as we planned for the present and future ministry of Grace.

Now let it be understood, I am grateful for the ministry and mission of those who have come before us—congregational leaders and clergy alike. They have left us a heritage that is worthy to cherish.

I am aware that many of our mature members were part of very creative, active, and growing times in the life of Grace. However, the times are different, the leaders are different, and the pastor is different; we are in a present, wondering if we have a future as a congregation and as a church.

Ordinarily, I would say that I hate to be the one to say it, but saying or naming the truth is what the synod has called me to do as an Intentional Interim Pastor: there are new and younger generations clamoring to speak the truth of the Gospel to a different culture, in different times.

Different leaders, different pastors, different times! Get used to it, it is the way of the world, the way of our culture; it is the way of Easter---change, making all things NEW!

- Annual meeting pg 2
- Vacation Bible School dates pg 6
- Grace's Car Show pg 6
- How to get blessed pg 10

A Look @ Next Month—July/Aug 2016

Theme: "Sun, Moon and Water!"

- **More Building Renovation Plans**—what's next to be done?
- **Carpet/Flooring Fund**—where we stand and what is needed
- **Annual Meeting**—July 10 – what to expect, a new budget for a new year

*Deadline for inclusion in the combined July/August GraceGram is **June 27, 2016**. September articles are due August 1 so that Gracegrams are ready on August 14th.*

*Send your articles to Victoria Alt at:
parishadmin@grace-hastings.org*

On the Cover – Windows – a new series in the GraceGram

by Pastor Paul

This month we are beginning a new series in GraceGram, “On the Cover.” Each month we will place a different photo of one of the windows in the church. Your pastor will write a brief description of what he sees in the window and its theology. Your pastor may not get it right, as far as the original meaning of the window, but I will tell you what I see. If I need to be corrected, please do so with gentleness, and I will run an update in the next issue.

This first window “On the Cover” is packed with imagery. The most prominent image is the blue banner with a Chi Rho and two interlocking circles or rings. This has always been the symbol for marriage. The Chi Rho are the first two Greek letters of the word “Christ;” the Ch and r sounds that look like this: χ (I know, they actually look like an “x” and a “p,” but trust me on this. We are talking Greek here). The two interlaced rings represent the rings exchanged at the wedding which now become interlaced or “joined together” in marriage.

I also see a dove, an image that denotes the Holy Spirit, and it rests over a clay pot used for water. I am reminded of Jesus’ first miracle at the wedding of Cana when he changed water into wine; thus blessing a marriage that was threatened to fail because the wine ran out. Christ can do miracles in marriages if we invite him to the marriage.

I also see a pitcher and towel resting on a pedestal that reminds me of the old baptismal font that once stood in the chapel. At weddings we are reminded that we are called to service through the waters of baptism, the same kind of service required in marriages; grounded in the cross of Christ—giving of one’s life for the sake of another, a spouse for instance. The Holy Spirit encourages and reminds us that our lives must be grounded both in the promise and call of holy baptism.

On a table (altar) is a book with the Greek letters, Alpha (A) and Omega (Ω), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. These refer to Christ and to God, the beginning and the end of all things, of life. I would venture to say that the book is the Holy Scriptures, which reveals the nature and will of God in Christ Jesus.

God can turn a wedding into a marriage, as God can change water into wine. That is possible if the marriage and the family are grounded in Holy Scriptures, committed to the promises of baptism, and enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

There, how did I do? Oh, and why is the floor green? You tell me!

Annual Meeting in July

by Pastor Paul

Please mark on your calendars July 10th, the date of the Congregational Annual Meeting. We are required to have 20% of the membership present to have quorum, so your presence is of the utmost importance. Grace will have only one service that day at 10:00 am, and the meeting will follow the worship service.

Why are annual meetings important? Well, first and foremost, the church is a legal entity that must meet regularly to complete certain legal responsibilities. Furthermore, we are part of the ELCA, and our constitution requires us to meet.

Apart from all of this legal stuff, however, it is an opportunity to discover what the church has done and plans to do in the coming year. We see how the budget was spent, as approved from the year before, and we make decisions about how to spend our income for the next year, focused on the mission and ministry of Grace. All of the officers, committees, and the pastor give reports of what has happened and often times offer direction for the coming

year. We see how we have grown over the past year, who has left us, and how well we have attended worship (Statistical Report).

Just like giving an offering and participating in worship are a signs of our commitment and membership at Grace, so participation in the congregational meeting is an annual sign of our commitment to the nature and function of Grace. It is one more way to be the “Body of Christ.” To that task Jesus called us in our baptism. See you there!



Words from Bishop Satterlee

by Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, PHD., Bishop

When you receive the June newsletter, I will have gathered with several hundred of our friends at our synod assembly at the Crowne Plaza in Grand Rapids. If you weren't at the assembly, please know that we missed you. Please also understand that the synod staff and I were very busy at the assembly. I say this because I was surprised last year to receive phone calls and emails during the assembly from pastors and congregational leaders not attending the assembly who had tasks that they expected me to attend to immediately, and who were disappointed that I neither called them back immediately nor dropped everything to take up the work they had for me to do. Part of my surprise comes from the fact that roster leaders are expected to attend synod assembly.

Leading the synod assembly is all that my staff and I can handle during the assembly and afterwards we're spent. So, except for genuine emergencies, we were incommunicado through Wednesday, May 18—the assembly concluded Tuesday and synod offices were closed on Wednesday. After our assembly, I attended the Northwest Ohio Synod Assembly from Thursday to Saturday, to bid farewell to Bishop Lohrmann, the 50th anniversary celebration of Lord of Life in Portage on Sunday, and I preached at the Summer Institute on Theology and Disability in Holland on Monday and Tuesday. I suspect that Pastors Sarah and David had an equally rigorous schedule. Thanks for your patience.

Very early last fall, I was asked about plans for the 2016 synod assembly. I hadn't spent the summer thinking about it so I had nothing to offer. I am attempting to do better. Our 2017 assembly will be May 21-23 in Mount Pleasant. I've received several suggestions for assembly themes. I've been keeping a list:

- Honduras (or one of our other global companions—Latvia and Papa New Guinea)
- Care of the Creation
- I Love to Tell the Story: Biblical Storytelling and/or Talking About Jesus
- A Real Issue (Like Defending Marriage)
- “An Old-Fashioned Assembly” with reports from every synod ministry
- Promoting Health and Wellness
- Music
- Antiracism
- Community Organizing

If you have something to add to the list, or an idea on how to flesh out one of these themes, please drop us a note at assembly@mittensynod.org. We will work through them in good time. For now, this year's assembly is about all I can handle!

President's Perspective

by Doug Neeb

The spring season is a season I welcome. The earth warms up, everything turns green, flowers bloom, signs of growth and renewal are everywhere and I have not yet grown tired of running the lawn mower. It's like the earth is giving us a visual show of how to live out God's call to be made new over and over. As great as it is to watch the spring season unfold, it is seldom without setbacks and it seldom moves forward seamlessly.

I saw the same things watching our children grow up. There were growth spurts and growing pains, both physically and emotionally as they grew. I could see them struggle physically, with coordination and learning to control their new larger bodies. Emotionally, as they desperately wanted to be considered an adult and they learned to deal with all the new demands of being consider one.

I see signs of growth here at Grace both physically and spiritually. I am reminded that it will not come all at once, or without pain and I am reminded of a quote of one of my teachers of years past. “If it is green it is growing, if it ripe it is dying.” The teacher was trying to get us to see that we must continue to grow and change or risk dying. It seems like a good lesson for our church body here at Grace to learn.

Short Report on the Yard Sale

by Pastor Paul

Grace's participation in the Hastings-wide Garage Sale was a huge success. Not only did we clear out a bunch of stuff we no longer needed and we made over \$1,400 for the Carpet Fund. More importantly, hundreds of our neighbors from as far away as Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo and Battle Creek came to sort through our gems, finding things they could not live without.

We are grateful that we could help out our neighbors in some small way. They in turn helped us by taking home items we displayed on tables throughout the Fellowship Hall. More importantly, we greeted all who came with joy. We helped them carry their things to their cars and we helped them feel “welcome” in this place of God. They came trusting the church, and they left feeling fulfilled.

Thanks to the Yard Sale Team! Thanks for your efforts, your energy, and your commitment to being signs of God's grace to our many visitors those two days. You set the bar high, and you influenced the whole team to be kind, helpful, and caring. That is what made the Yard Sale a success!



Notes from the Veep

by Chris Bush

By the time you read this article, you should have received a copy of our proposed new Constitution in the mail. Yes, there's a lot to read and it will be quite dry to most, but please DO read it. It contains updated language for the ways we *have* been doing things at Grace and language on *new* ways we can do things at Grace. I won't belabor those points here. Just know there were many discussions - in the Task Force, in Council, and with the Congregation. There will be more opportunity for discussion, between services the first three Sundays in June. And then, on June 26, we will have a Special Congregational meeting to vote on whether or not we want to adopt this Constitution.

So, with the Constitution done, what ever shall we do with our spare time?? Well, it's summer time, and with summer comes Vacation Bible School! Perhaps you have seen the sign-up board in the narthex - VBS is a big production and we need front-line and behind-the-scenes help for the week of faith-building, fellowship, and fun being planned. The dates for VBS are July 10-14 (Sunday through Thursday), in the evening. We will start with a light dinner from 5:15-5:45. Don't worry if you can't make it for dinner - we'll be happy to see you at 5:45, when we start gathering in the sanctuary. At 6 PM each night, we'll kick off the evening by singing songs, learning the theme of the day, and hearing a Bible story from our puppets. Then it's off to games, crafts, and science activities, to reinforce the theme; a snack mid-evening; and finally finishing up the night in the sanctuary, reviewing the things we learned and the fun we had. We will plan to be done by 8:30 or 8:45 every night. Please consider how you want to help this year: sponsor one of the dinners, run the registration table, be on the decorating team, lead a group of children, or help with the activities. Talk with Chris Bush or put your name on one of the volunteer lists on the sign-up board. Dive in!

Finally, a word of thanks to those who have been rolling with the changes that have been happening at Grace. It has been a delight to watch people take a few minutes to visit with each other after worship over coffee and a snack in the narthex. How exciting to see Children's Church taking off! And the Herculean efforts of those who de-cluttered the building (note I referred to Hercules and not Sisyphus - look that one up!) and the commitment of those organizing and running the garage sale are so very much appreciated. But God's work is never done, is it? We've got more to do, inside our walls and out, so let's continue the team effort and help others "Discover Grace!"

Children's Church

by Kate Watson



The Children's Church Pilot Project has come to a close as of the end of May. We are still evaluating the feedback, but overall it has been a really great experience. Children were able to participate during worship in short lessons based on that week's readings and were led by different adult volunteers each week. Everyone had lots of fun! If you have feedback OR want to be involved in next year's elementary aged children's ministry, contact Kate Watson at [269-205-2462](tel:269-205-2462) or kp0027@gmail.com.

Newest Member Bulletin Board

"The Newest Faces, the Newest Gifts"

by Pastor Paul

Around 20 new people, adults, youth and children, joined Grace in membership in the month of May. You can see their pictures on the red bulletin board, just outside the sanctuary. See if you can find them during coffee and welcome them in person. Those pictures will be posted though June.

At the brunch in May we were moved to tears by the kind words expressed by our newest members. We are glad we gave them time to speak. The room was filled with chatter and joy as we shared a common brunch and conversation.

More importantly, we are hopeful that our newest members bring gifts, talents, and visions of mission and ministry that will help us to focus our commitment and service in a way that gives greater glory to the name of Jesus. The efforts of most have already been felt in their commitment to a wide variety of programs and teams at Grace. Thank you for your service, newest members! You inspire us to greatness!

By the way, how will we get to know each other if we do not wear our **nametags**. You may think everyone knows you, but that is not true. When we do not wear our nametags we are refusing to be welcoming and thinking only of ourselves. Jesus calls us to think of others!

Community Outreach News

by Bill Freedlund

The May meeting of Community Outreach began with a discussion of Chapter 5 of Living Lutheran by Dave Daubert. Highlights of this chapter included:

The chapter dealt with vision. Often when we think we have things figured out, the outcome is not what we expect. Vision is always incomplete. It is clear that more than half of congregations do not have the ability to process images that are yet unseen. We have a vision of a church filled with people but many times our vision is of a church that looks like the 1950's. Our vision needs to reflect appreciation of the past but a willingness to be open for the future. None of us can see the future exactly as it will be.

Vision = Purpose + Guiding Principles + Time.

The tension between pressing forward and waiting patiently is one of the most important aspects of leadership. Vision, purpose and guiding principles are God directed and come about through prayer, Bible study, community discussion and leadership.

The car show has been set for August 7th. Plans are underway for a complete day of worship, fun and activities. More information will be distributed with plans from various committees. Advertisement costs were requested from the Hastings Reminder.

The Grace Banner will be completed with updates and will be available for summer events.

The new member Brunch was planned for May 15th, 2016 between the services. Grace members from both services were invited to attend to greet our new members.

Welcome calls were made to 3 visitors through the use of our participation cards.

Discussion was held on the Barry County CROP Walk for 2016 along with ideas of using the Grace Christmas float in the Hastings Christmas parade. We also discussed the possibility of a car wash for Summerfest. The Christmas float and car wash ideas were referred to The Youth Committee to see if there is interest. Other Summerfest ideas were discussed. Kim Domke has recently volunteered to sponsor the CROP Walk this year.

The committee approved spending the money to place an ad in the Reminder for the Grace yard sale.

Grace's Youth

by Jana Bishop



The May 1st meeting was well attended by high school youth. We had 10 youth come and the devotional was time at the cross, which the youth had wood burned for Lent. The cross now has a permanent home in our church's lawn.

Geranium sales were on May 14th in conjunction with the city wide garage sale that Grace participated in. The homeless event is still being planned, likely in June (details now being discussed).

Youth do not plan to meet May 29th as that is Memorial Day weekend.

Middle school youth continue to meet every other Sunday night with an energetic group.

Youth met April 19th to prepare for the Stewardship Moment to be presented on May 1st. Our youth volunteered at the Barry Roubaix at the 64 mile First Aid station. They handed water and snacks to the racers as they flew by early in the race and the later riders often stopped and thanked the youth for being there.

The next God's Children is planned for May 18th from 5:30-7 with dinner being provided.

All Youth: Youth from all the groups provided the Stewardship moment at the May 1st service for the congregation. Their theme was "Thank you for giving to the Lord" – Katie Pohl sang a song by Ray Boltz titled the same, all ages of youth participated in singing the chorus and shared what they were thankful for at Grace. There is a video on the Facebook page for those who missed their moment or would like to share it.

As we begin planning for 2016-2017 I would appreciate your prayers in determining new leaders for the HS youth and how to encourage attendance with God's Children or where that ministry is headed.

Community Notes

by

The polling location for the August 2 and November 8, 2016 elections will be the Hastings Baptist Church on Woodlawn Avenue. Polls will be open 7 am – 8 pm.

The Middle School, where polling usually takes places, will be unavailable due to construction this summer and fall as part of the Hastings Schools' facility projects.

Brothers in the News

by Joe Longcor, BOG lead

Tigers, tigers, and more tigers. Did anyone count all those tigers? Brothers of Grace coordinated an inter-generational trip to the Tigers versus Rangers game on May 7. Fourteen individuals ranging from 7 to over 70 made the journey by meeting at 6:30 a.m. and spending this day of faith, food and fun together. We joined about 9,000 other Christians for a morning of faith and fun before enjoying the game with over 38,000 of our closest friends.

Devotions and music were shared from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. Willie Horton shared his message of finding God and faith late in his life and career. James McCann, current Tigers catcher shared both his parents and personal story that transcended questions of possible abortion, to him now living his dream and doing God's work every day.

I personally was very impressed by the life stories of three umpires that spoke that day. Each sharing how challenging it is to be on the road all the time away from family. These men shared openly about the temptations they had lived, the "change" that happened, and how thankful they each are to have God and family.



Granted; the Tigers didn't win...but I think we all did in a BIG way as we shared faith moments, grew to know one another better, and energized our own purposes with God.

A BIG thank you to Tim Schossel for the use of his Excursion as well as to Rosenbergers for driving. Together we made the trip without incident and look forward to next years event.

Living Waters Ministries

by Joe Longcor

Thank you to those that donated to help 20 foster youth attend summer camp at Living Waters Ministries this year. Your kindness will allow each youth to have a camera to capture memories and sun screen to protect them from the weather. This simple generous act lets youth "just be one of the campers" with the common things other campers bring. Peace be to you as you let your Grace shine through.



Grace Car Show in August

by Pastor Paul

The Second Annual Grace Car Show is being planned for August 7th. You will see that it falls on a Sunday this year, so that more members of the congregation can be a part of the event, and to continue our efforts to put Grace in the midst of the "public square." We hope to have more cars present, and we hope that more of our Hastings neighbors will join us in this event.

On August 7th, the Car Show begins at 9:00 am and runs to about 3:00 pm. During the show, the people of Grace will gather on the front lawn for worship, inviting anyone and everyone to join us in the Word of God. After worship we will gather with our neighbors for lunch brought to you by Thrivent and our own Social Activities Committee, sharing a variety of foods from the grill.



Invite your friends and neighbors to this event. If you would like to contribute to the cost of this event, place your contribution in an envelope and mark it, "Grace Car Show." Your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Vacation Bible Schools in our area

Middleville United Methodist Church
June 14-17, 9:00 - 11:30 am

Hastings First Presbyterian Church
June 20-24, 9:00 am - noon

Middleville Peace Church
July 11-14, 6:00 - 8:30 pm

Grace Lutheran Church – The Great Bible Reef
July 10-14, 5:15 - 8:30 pm (includes light dinner & snacks)

Middleville First Baptist Church
August 1-5, 9:00 am – noon

Caledonia Spirit of Life
August 9 (time to be determined)

Hastings St. Rose Catholic Church
Dates TBD (early August)



7 Signs Your Church Will Never Change

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<http://careynieuwhof.com/2015/12/7-signs-your-church-will-never-change/>

HELPING YOU LEAD LIKE NEVER BEFORE.
DECEMBER 14, 2015

There's a very good chance you're trying to change something in your church or organization. There's even a decent chance some of you are trying to change *everything*. I've been there.

Just because God never changes doesn't mean your church shouldn't. In fact, the most effective churches change constantly. Effective churches never change the mission or the message (those are eternal). But they always change the methods to make sure the mission stays alive and the message gets heard.

And that means change. Change is at the heart of leadership because a leader's job is to take people from where they are to where they need to be. You can't do that without ushering in change.

And yet, trying to engineer change can be one of the most difficult things you'll ever do as a leader.

How do you know when your church is simply so resistant to change that it isn't going to budge? How do you know the problem is so deep that radical intervention is required?

Here are 7 signs your church is never going to change.



1. You keep having the same conversation over and over (and over) again

Ever have that feeling like no meeting is ever a new meeting—that you're talking about the same issues month after month, year after year? Far too many church leaders have that feeling, actually.

Without getting into specifics, I worked a report on church growth 15 years ago for a church group experiencing decline. Last year, I saw the same group of people table an

almost identical report addressing the exact same issue. By all accounts, they had made no progress on the issue despite studying it for a decade and a half. The only thing that changed, of course, is that now the problem is far worse than it was before. The attendance decline they were experiencing has morphed into a free fall.

Talking about an issue—even talking *passionately* about an issue—and doing nothing about it is a complete waste of time. Awareness doesn't solve problems. Discussion doesn't solve problems. Insight doesn't solve problems. Action does.

In my latest book, **Lasting Impact: 7 Powerful Conversations That Will Help Your Church Grow**, I devote an entire chapter to how to lead your board through a productive conversation that leads to actual change.

2. Every time someone raises a new idea, someone lists 3 reasons it won't work

Of course the reason you have the same conversation again and again is because every time you raise a new approach, someone lists three reasons it won't work.

You know what won't work for you long term? Coming up with reasons why it won't work. There are a thousand reasons innovations won't work. Until they work.

In 1876, cash-strapped Alexander Bell offered to sell his new invention, the telephone, to Western Union for \$100,000. They rejected it. This, by all accounts, was their report:

We do not see that this device will be ever capable of sending recognizable speech over a distance of several miles. Hubbard and Bell want to install one of their telephone devices in every city. The idea is idiotic on the face of it. Furthermore, why would any person want to use this ungainly and impractical device when he can send a messenger to the telegraph office and have a clear written message sent to any large city in the United States? Ignoring the obvious limitations of his device, which is hardly more than a toy. This device is inherently of no use to us. We do not recommend its purchase.

Take that to your next board meeting.

3. Fondness for the past exceeds passion for the future

A sure sign that people will never change is a deep love for the past that eclipses any enthusiasm for the future. How do you know this might be you? It's simple: monitor your language. When most of your stories (and even your verb tenses) are in the past tense, it's a sign you're looking

backward, not forward. If all of your cultural references (songs, movies, shows) are rooted decades in the past, it's a sign you've lost touch with the present and the future. When your fondness for what you used to do is greater than your passion for what you're going to do, you're in trouble.

Bottom line? When all of your excitement is about the past, you haven't got much of a future.

4. Small things always become things

As a leader, you'd love to solve some *big* issues. But the challenge when you lead a group that won't change is that you never reach any big things because the small things always become big things. You know what I'm talking about.

The debate on whether you should have carpet or hardwood lasted six months. And then they decided on carpet. Which itself then became the two month discussion on what color the carpet should be. Which then became the four month debate on who should install it.

You know what you should do when you face a leadership stalemate like that? Break in one night and install it yourself. I'm kind of only half kidding. Or call an audible and say something as direct as "Hey, we've been talking about this for FOUR months. We have to stop and move on to make progress. Why are we stuck like this?"

When small things always become big things, you'll never tackle any truly big issues.

5. People are still complaining about the last thing you changed

You know you're leading people who don't want to change when they're still complaining about the last thing you changed. And that was five years ago. I don't know what else to say about this except...that was FIVE YEARS ago. Really? Stop already.

6. "We've never done it that way before" has become a theme song

It's easy to get smug and think "only super traditional churches fall into traps like this." But not really. Successful, growing churches struggle with this tension too.

Why? Because effectiveness, once experienced, is something most leaders don't want to jeopardize. As leaders, you become so afraid of breaking what's working that you resist change. Even success creates barriers to innovation. The greatest enemy of your future success is your current success.

7. Your leaders don't bring unchurched friends with them

A sure sign that people have given up on change is that no one in leadership is actually investing in people who don't currently attend church. When you're not praying for, investing in or hanging out with unchurched people, your leadership conversations become about personal preferences, not biblical principles. And when your church becomes all about your personal preferences you lose the mission.

What To Do? If this is you, what do you do? Three things.

First, as a leader, call the situation for what it is. Maybe [start](#) by personally owning your resistance to change. We all resist it, and your resistance might be born out of fear. Or maybe, out of frustration, you've just decided your church will never change. In which case, if you believe that as a leader, it won't. So confess that, and own it.

Second, repeat the process for your leaders. Share your fear of change and your attitude with your leaders and apologize. Then ask your leaders to talk about their fear of change. Have an honest conversation. Perhaps it will lead to a place where your leaders look in the mirror and say "Houston, we have a problem. And it's us." That would be a breakthrough moment.

And finally, just realize that—contrary to the title of this post—change IS possible because not *everyone* is actually opposed to change. We just *feel* like change is impossible and everyone is opposed.

As I wrote about in my book, [Leading Change Without Losing It](#), rarely are more than 10% of people opposed to change at any given moment. It's just that the opponents are loud, and we often confuse loud with large.

If you doubt that *everyone* is deeply opposed to change, write down the names of the vocal opponents on a sheet of paper. Chances are you will have trouble identifying more than 10-20% of your congregation by name. Don't let the 10% of people who are opposed to change determine the future of the 90% who aren't.

ABOUT CAREY

Carey Nieuwhof is lead pastor of Connexus Community Church and author of the best selling books, *Leading Change Without Losing It* and *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity*. Carey speaks to North American and global church leaders about change, leadership, and parenting.

Flowers and boxes and sunshine and hail . . . oh my!

by Joe Longcor & Gwen Hansen, High School youth leads

Many thanks to all that bought geraniums this year to support high school youth group. A big added thanks to Thrivent for their continued financial support as well. We anticipate netting about \$900.00. Five youth helped out with the sale. In addition the team was rounded out by "keep us on task" Kay Howell, "telemarketer extraordinaire" Mary Rider, "thank you cards" Gwen Hansen, "show me da money" Vickey Argo, and "git r done" Joe Longcor. A well-deserved thanks to Contants' for again providing great flowers at a price that allows us to raise funds. Family Fare also put up with us bugging 'em for boxes several times.

On a Happier Note

by Ingrid Morgan



The month of June 2016 will be "blessed" month for our families.

We are celebrating the graduation of my grandson, Connor Wales, and the addition of a little bundle of heaven called Raylan. My granddaughter Shayna's and grandson James' prayers were finally answered after 5 years of waiting, when the adoption agency called saying that they have a baby waiting. The baby was only 4 pounds and was at Bronson Hospital's neo-natal care unit, and waiting to meet his Mommy and Daddy, and later the rest of the family.

One can only imagine how thankful we are for the blessings to our families. For me, being a great grandma now, I give thanks to a woman I don't know, but who made it possible for Shayna and James to have their little miracle.

I, myself, had an adopted little brother, Rudi. My parents adopted him when he was 6 months old, in Berlin, Germany. He was my only brother, my most beloved brother. Unfortunately, in 1945, at age 11, he became a casualty of war, a tragedy never forgotten. We always told my little brother as he was growing up that he was our chosen child. We picked him from all the children in the world, and so it is with little Raylan Gavin Gibbons. As for me, I hope the good Lord grants me a few more years to follow all my grandchildren's lives, as each of them is deeply loved, and now there is one more to love!

I just wanted to share this with my Grace "family" as all my girls were baptized and confirmed into the Grace family and now Raylan will be too.

Indeed, much to be thankful for!

Sarah Circle

by Kay Howell



The April 2016 meeting had a program led by Pastor Paul about the decluttering in our own lives as well as our church life. A lot of this has already been done at the church building.

There is a need to fill the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer for Sarah Circle. If you are interested, please contact Kay Howell at 269-945-4281. Ingrid Morgan has volunteered to continue on in the position of Sunshine Chair.

After a 25 year history of supporting school children in India, the tough decision was made to end the outreach and purchase \$400 worth of school supplies for an ELCA classroom in memory of Eileen Oehler.

Thank you to all of the women who have been a part of and who have helped with Sarah Circle.

Thank you!

Yard Sale Team – for your time, energy and commitment to being welcoming.

Yard Sale Volunteers – thanks to all who worked, baked, and contributed.

Children's Church Team/Volunteers – your first efforts were well received.

Kate Watson – for the new Children's Church pew cards.

Carl Schoessel – faithfully and joyfully teaching our elementary children every Sunday

Chris Bush –for teaching our middle school youth

Declutter teams – for completing a thankless but vitally important job. Special recognition to Chris Bush and Jana Bishop for their work in the old chapel and Sr. High room – wow!

Renovation Planning Team - for planning the work and design of the renovation.

How to Get Blessed

by Kate Watson

In the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we hear the story of Mary visiting Elizabeth after being informed by an angel that she was to conceive by the Holy Spirit and give birth to God's son.

*⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²In a loud voice she exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³And why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵**Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord's word to her will be fulfilled.**"*

It is the last verse here that I would like for us to really absorb. Mary is blessed just by belief that God would follow through. Note that it doesn't say she is blessed because she carried Jesus, gave birth to Him, or because she raised and mothered him. Neither does it say "blessed is she (or he) who did everything perfectly and never messed up," (Thanks be to God!). Mary was blessed – we will be blessed – simply by believing that God is a God of His word. This very day, you are blessed just by believing God's words when they reach your ears.

So what is God's word to you? First and foremost, scripture is bursting with God's promises to us – here are just a few:

- In Christ, you are a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them (Psalms 34:7)
- The Lord hears the cries of the righteous and delivers them out of all their troubles. (Psalm 34:17)
- Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed (Isaiah 54:10)
- Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. (Luke 11:9-10)
- The Lord is good, ready to forgive, and full of mercy for those who call upon him (Psalm 86:5)
- For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16)
- that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of

God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39)

- A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)
- I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me (Philippians 4:13)
- You are precious to God. (Luke 12:7, Luke 15:4)

These (and more!) are God's promises that we can claim as our own. They are our inheritance as believers in Christ, as God's beloved children (Romans 8:17).

But scripture isn't the only way we receive God's word and promises. Maybe there are personal promises that you feel God has given to you in your own life. Maybe you've prayed for discernment about a question for days, weeks, maybe years, and finally felt the Holy Spirit give you the "go-ahead." When you believe in God to wait for His answer, you are blessed. When you believe in God so that you follow through on what you've discerned, you are blessed.

Maybe through His goodness, God gave you a preview of things to come as you read or prayed His word in a time of worry or distress. When you believe in God to get you to that future, you are blessed. You are blessed with strength, with courage, with humility, with whatever it is you need to get you over the obstacles between you and God's promise - because of your belief.

Our congregation has been so blessed over the past year because of the belief inside so many of our leaders and members that God is going to get us to where we need to go. Here are just a few examples that I bet are surprising, given where we were 18 months ago. In the past year, GLC has:

- Hosted about 400 neighbors at our building for Trunk or Treat
- Become a vibrant, more welcoming after-worship fellowship
- Decluttered our building from so much stuff that was weighing us down
- Held a successful yard sale to welcome the community to us and show our servant-selves to them
- Welcomed 11 family units as new members!!!!

These blessings would not have been possible without the belief of our leadership that the living Lord Jesus Christ is here in our midst and wants to shake things up in so many good ways. Thank you, Lord for all of these blessings. *I pray that more and more of us will believe God for His promises and for the blessings He has planned for GLC. Amen.*

June Birthdays

6-3 Gwen Hansen, Melinda Shepler
Karen Schlachter
6-4 Eliana Reid
6-5 Cheryl Cole
6-6 Opal Gillions, Beulah Benedict
6-10 Beverly McManaway
6-12 Chelsie Hughes, Jack Barnaart
6-14 Vickey Argo, Hope Peck, Emmalee Peck
6-19 Kristen Beckwith
6-20 Tom Drumm
6-24 Tom Duits
6-30 Diana Brown

June Anniversaries

6-1 Larry & Linda Maupin
6-6 Lyle & Joyce Proksch
6-7 Michael & Charlotte Anton
Rod & Marcia Bowman
6-10 Pastor Mike Kemper/Jane Secor
Dan & Melissa Patton
6-12 Charles & Bonnie Converse
6-17 George & Jan Weller, Ed & Kim Domke
Phil & Amy Poholski
6-23 Russ & Linda Trongo
6-24 Steve & Traci Wales
6-26 Jack & Carol Vos

Memoriam

6-1-1990 Anthony Straley
6-15-1995 Irene Golnek
6-20-2003 Carolyn Tossava
6-21-2000 Michael Rogers
6-23-2015 Valborg Bauchman

In Our Prayers

Continuing Prayers

Dean Wenk , brother of Carol Morgan
Marcia Morgan, friend of Carol Morgan

Healthy pregnancies

Jessica Green
Jessica Zimmerman
Corinna Palmer

Births

Military

Kayla Pohl, *daughter of Rob & Lisa Pohl*
Myrina Clements, *daughter of Cherie Clements*
Joshua Wright, *Eve Wright*
Tim Krewson, *grandson of Mary Rider*
Andrew Crumbeck, *grandson of Kay Howell*

Aaron Endsley, Adam Miller, Alyssa Mills, Amber Reid, Andrew Ferguson, Ashley Gillons, Austin Endsley, Ben Curtis, Carl Franson, Charles Krewson, Cole Davis, Dylan Kelmer, Edward Frost, Greg Scott, Jena Harwood, Jon Ingran, Jordan Swank, Josh Lewis, Justin Ogden, Lena Jordon, Noah Daniels, Phil DeVries, Ryan Davis, Taylor Gould, Tom Fenoseff, Zackary Green

Companion Synods in Honduras, Papua New Guinea, and Latvia

Nursing home residents . . . Beth Oehler, Dorothy Mayo, Deb Wood, Vivian Allerdig

Shut-ins . . . Dave Bolton, Ethyl Simon, Ilene Hilson, Jamie Coplin, Opal Gillons, Shirley Smith

Grace Lutheran Church

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ELCA Hastings, MI

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269-945-2645

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Our Staff:

Pastor: *Paul Kuhlman*
gracehastingspastor@gmail.com

Parish Admin: *Victoria Alt*
ParishAdmin@grace-hastings.org
Mon – Thurs 8 AM - 3PM

Custodian: *Nathan Freedlund*
Minister of Music: *Cindy Olson*

Choir Accompanists:
Marcia Bowman, Chris Bush
Bell Choir Director: *Kim Domke*
Organist Emeritus: *Donna Buehl*

Executive Committee:

President: *Doug Neeb*
Vice President: *Chris Bush*
Secretary: *Kate Watson*
Treasurer: *Randy Teegardin*



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Winter

(1st Sunday after Labor Day - May)
Sundays @ 8:00 & 10:45 a.m.

Summer

(June – Labor Day)
Sundays @ 8:00 & 10:00 a.m.

5th Sundays

Sunday @ 10:00am

Advent and Lent

Wednesdays @ 7:00 p.m.

Nursery* and Cry Room are available

*Nursery will not be available at 10:45 service in lieu of
Children's Church during the month of May*

All Ages Faith Building/Sunday School

Winter

(1st Sunday after Labor Day – May)
9:30 AM

5th Sundays

Sunday @ 8:45 am



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.

Committee Chairs

Brothers of Grace – *Joe Longcor*
Community Outreach – *Bill Freedlund*
Congregational Care – *Margaret Wood*
Faith Building – *Lorraine Freedlund*
Property – *Tom Peck & Phil Poholski*
Sarah Circle – *Kay Howell*
Social Activities – *Diane Neeb*
Stewardship – *Tim Schoessel*
Youth & Family – *Jana Bishop*
Worship – *Lorie Gladyness*