



MAY 2024 GRACEGRAM

Grace alone . . . Faith alone . . . Word alone . . .

A Message from Kate Watson

It came as a surprise to me on the Sunday that I was the lay leader for two worship services, that I had a really hard time deciding what I would say when it came time to give a message. You see, when I volunteered to be a lay leader, I thought that if I could get up and sing in front of all of you, and if I could get up and read the Assisting Minister's parts of the worship service, that filling in as worship leader should be no problem. I guess I forgot that when I sing, someone else has already written the music for me, and when I am the Assisting Minister, someone has written down all my lines for me...no such luck with writing and delivering the message.

I read the day's readings over and over looking for some new angle, some fresh take, or unique lesson that I could find in them. (Sunday's readings were: Acts 4:32-35, 1 John 1:1-2:2, and The Gospel of John 20:19-31).

But the more I read them, the more I felt that they really just remind us of three simple but important truths that we're told over and over in the scriptures. Boiling these three readings down to one sentence each, I have:

(Acts 4:32-35) Share your resources generously and use them wisely

(1 John 1:1-2:2) Be honest with yourself, and straightforward with God

(John 20:19-31) Whether you have doubts or are, somehow, able to believe without proof, you are loved

I think these three truths are a timely message for our congregation. Really, they are smart advice for how to handle yourself when you are facing uncertainty.

We, Grace, are going through some uncertainty. As a congregation, we're wrestling with our pastor being placed on leave. Our congregation's council is wrestling with how to lead through this uncertainty, and, very importantly, how to lead afterwards. We're also adjusting to the loss of some members who chose to leave our congregation. So, what can we hear for us in these three reminders right now?

Message number 1. Share your resources generously and use them wisely. The reading says *"Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common."* Like those in the early church, our congregation is generous, and shares resources easily. But also like the early church, we are people of modest resources. We don't have the funding that we once did, and a dollar doesn't go as far as it did just a few years ago. We need to ask ourselves: how can we use our resources most wisely? What investment of resources is most important to help our ministries continue? Are we putting our resources there? If not, will we be able to continue our ministry long-term? The Apostles of the early church put their shared possessions into one place: *"giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus"* and increasing in believers.

Message number 2. Be honest with yourself, and straightforward with God. *"If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."*

(Message continues on the Following Page)



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

(Continued from Previous Page)

One of the most valuable things I've learned as an adult is that no issue or difficulty can move forward towards resolution until I am honest with myself and straightforward with the others involved. Our reading from 1 John today tells us that to move forward through any sin or division that we first have to be honest with ourselves – to expose the sin or the issue to the light so that we can see all its facets. Then, once it is illuminated and we can see all of it, we have to be straightforward in bringing that issue to God. If we do this, he is faithful to forgive and show us a path forward.

You may have felt like Pastor Ken's leave came out of left field. Like a light switch flipped on in a dark room, I know that it felt startling. My hope, and that of Council's, is that once you adjust to the glare, that you will see that we, Council and Pastor Ken, are doing our best to be honest with ourselves and straightforward with each other. We are doing our best to illuminate issues (and every church has issues) so that we can take them, honestly and humbly to God and listen for direction on how to best serve Grace and how to ensure Grace's ministry endures.

Finally we have message number 3, from the story of Doubting Thomas. When I first encountered the story of Doubting Thomas, I interpreted his story differently than I do today. As a child, I thought the point of the story is that Thomas should feel ashamed of himself for not believing Christ's resurrection until he held the proof in his own hands. I thought Thomas was a cautionary tale about never wavering in your belief, lest you be called out by God.

But today, I read and interpret Thomas's story through the lens of the whole of God's message, which is consistently about God's overwhelming love and God's washing away of shame and sin. That let's me see the story completely differently. As believers in the year 2024, we may be among those who are "*blessed to have come to believe but not yet seen*" in a literal sense, but we have plenty of other opportunities to doubt and to question. We all have days when our belief is more shaky or more doubtful than others. Even Mother Theresa recorded in her personal letters that she went very long periods of her life feeling abandoned by God, though she did not allow that feeling to stop her amazing work.

When I read Thomas's story today, I see it as one more reminder that God loves each and every one of us even when we doubt or question. It's not explicitly written, but to me, it feels like Jesus made that second appearance just for Thomas – so that Thomas could feel Jesus's hands and side and believe. I think Jesus did this because Jesus loved Thomas and knew what Thomas needed.

Doubt and questions are indicators that we are searching for truth, just like bringing light into darkness. God doesn't shy away from our doubt or our questions because God is light and God is truth. God is sufficient to not only endure our doubts and our questions, but to love and cherish us on the doubtful days as well as on our days of unwavering, unshakable faith.

-Kate Watson

Flower Sale

If you would like to purchase flowers, please fill out and return the slip below with your payment of \$6.00 per plant. Order forms are available in the bulletin and this GraceGram. Flowers will be available for **pickup on Saturday, May 11. Orders are due on Wednesday, May 8th to the office.**



Good Friday Cross Walk

We were blessed with a sunny yet cool day for the Cross Walk activity this year. We had a total of 13 participants ranging from 7 years old to 80 and had one person participating for the first time. Our “thanks” to Bill Freedlund for taking some pictures of the event and for those who provided ample refreshments for all of us at the conclusion of the walk.



New Address:

Doris Allering
c/o Woodlawn Meadows
1821 N. East Street—Room #15
Hastings, MI 49058

**Women of Faith
Will not meet
on Tuesday,
May 28**

The
Congregational Care
Meeting will take place
on
Monday, May 20th
At 3:00 p.m.

**Deadline for the
June GraceGram
is
May 17, 2024.**
Send your articles
and calendar events
to
Brenda at
[parishad-
min@grace-
hastings.org](mailto:parishad-min@grace-hastings.org)

Easter Flowers

We thank the following people who purchased Easter flowers and helped beautify the worship space to the glory of God. An additional thank you to those who donated plants to others.

Jeanette Ulrich
Jack and Carol Vos
Karen Halstead
Erin Franks
Jeanette Markwart
Jeanette Kogge
Ken and Laura Scheck
Bev Swanson
Brenda Hess



RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE **Thursday, May 23rd** **11:00-5:00**

The Red Cross has asked us to host an additional blood drive on **May 23rd** after the original host church had a calendar conflict. Cindy from Red Cross scheduling is very grateful to Grace for stepping up to cover this donation day.

Please see the bulletin board for more information and sign ups.

Thank you for providing blood to those in need.



**American
Red Cross**

Blood
Services

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Executive Committee:

President: *Tim Schoessel*
Vice President: *Vickey Argo*
Secretary: *Lisa Pobl*
Treasurer: *Linda Maupin*

Church Council Members/Liaisons:

Vickey Argo (Congregational Care)
Doug Neeb (Property)
Patti Comp (Outreach)
Jamie Heise (Youth & Family)
Bill Freedlund (Social Activities)
Greg Franks (Stewardship)
Deborah Wilke (Small Groups)
Kate Watson (Worship)
Mark Anton ("Free Agent")

8:00 am and 10:45 am
Worship also online:
www.grace-hastings.org



CHILDREN'S CHURCH

10:45 am
1st Sunday after Labor Day
through May @ 10:45 a.m.
Seeking a coordinator

Our Staff:

Ken Scheck II
Minister of Word and Sacrament
kscheckii@aol.com

Cindy Olson,
Minister of Music

Brenda Hess, *Parish Administrator*
Mon-Thurs 9AM - 1PM
parishadmin@grace-hastings.org

Kim Domke,
Bell Choir Director
kdomke08@gmail.com

Aurora Collins,
Nursery

Nathan Freedlund,
Custodian

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

Grace Lutheran Church

239 E. North Street
Hastings, MI 49058

Website:

www.grace-hastings.org

Facebook:

Grace Lutheran Church- ELCA Has-
tings, MI

Phone:

269-945-9414
269-945-2645



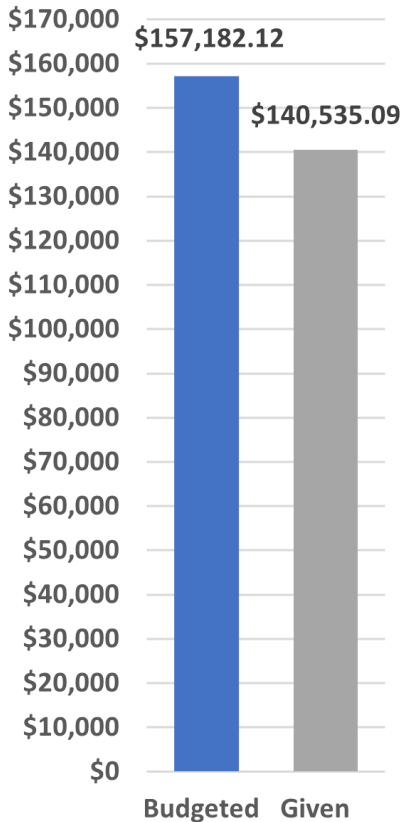
Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America



Discover
Grace

2023-2024

Giving as of 4/7/24



Hand2Hand

provides food over the weekend to students at Hastings schools. We are collecting donations of Yoo-Hoo Chocolate Milk, pudding cups, Slim Jims, granola bars, individual size instant oatmeal,



ramen noodles, and ready-to-eat mac and cheese. Please see Sunday's bulletin for information regarding May donation due dates and a list of additional items needed. If you have questions, please contact Patti Comp. Thank you for your continued support of this valuable program.

Time and Talent Survey

A way to grow in your faith journey is to complete a Time and Talents survey, during the month of May. Perhaps you've been thinking about taking on a different ministry or expanding your role in something you already do here at Grace. You might even have an idea for a completely new ministry, something we haven't tried yet.

Please prayerfully review the survey form and complete it for your family so that we can get volunteer lists put together for our ministry leaders. We are so thankful for the love and service the Grace family has in its heart!

Time and Talent Inventories are available in the Gathering Area. If you need a copy mailed to your home, please let Brenda know by calling Grace at 269.945.9414 or by email at parishadmin@grace-hastings.org.

Time and Talent Surveys are due by Sunday, June 30th.



Looking for a convenient way to give?

You can use this QR code by scanning it with your smart phone's camera. Need assistance? Please contact Brenda during regular office hours M-Th 9:00-1:00. Thank you for your continued generosity.

Graduation Sunday



You are cordially invited to come and congratulate our college graduate, **Anna Scheck**, who graduates from the University of Michigan. A celebration of her accomplishment will be included as part of our fellowship time following the 10:45 worship service on **Sunday, May 19th**. Please check future bulletins for additional information.



I would like to thank everyone for the cards, blessings and prayers given to me on the passing of my mother Darlene Limbarger. Then keeping me in your prayers with my car accident a few days later. I am truly grateful to my church family.
Deb Watson

Bratwurst Sale

The Brothers of Grace are having a brat sale benefiting the Alpha Women's Center. The cost is \$6.00 for a package of 4. Orders are due by Sunday, May 12th with pick up on Thursday, May 23rd between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. here at Grace. Brats will be made on Wednesday, May 22nd from 5:00 p.m. until approximately 7:30 p.m. Sign ups for ordering and helping are on the board in the Gathering Area. If you have questions, or need an alternate time to pick up your order, please contact Joe Longcor.

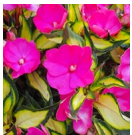


A reminder from the Social Activities Committee regarding the **Turkeyville** trip to see **Oklahoma**. We will be leaving at **10:30 on Friday, May 17th** from the church parking lot.



Sun Patients

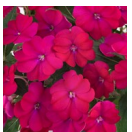
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Number of
TROPICAL ROSE



Number of
ELECTRIC ORANGE



Number of
ROSE



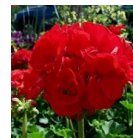
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LILAC

Spring Flower Sale

\$6.00 each

Geraniums

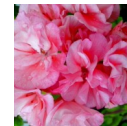
(full sun to light shade)



Number of
RED GERANIUM



Number of
WHITE GERANIUM



Number of
PINK GERANIUM

Name _____

Phone Number _____

Please write the number of plants you want of each type of flower. Color match is not guaranteed. Each plant is \$6.00. Return order form back to church. 239 East North Street, Hastings, Michigan 49058 Thank you for supporting the youth at Grace Lutheran Church.

Orders due May 8, 2024. Pick-up on Saturday, May 11th.

Commitment Sunday

Pledge Form

May 19, 2024



Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

I/We commit myself/ourselves to responding to God's work and blessing by supporting the ministry of Grace Lutheran Church in 2024/2025 with my/our gifts of service, prayer and financial support as God empowers and enables me/us.

Amount Committed for 2024-2025 \$ _____

Acknowledgement - For your records

I/We _____

have pledged \$ _____

To Grace Lutheran Church for 2024-2025

Temple Talks

Temple Talks allow us to reflect on how our offerings help Grace ministries. The final Temple Talk will take place on **Sunday May 5th**.

Commitment Sunday will be on **Sunday, May 19th** this year. Commitment Sunday is where we'll fill out pledge forms for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. This information helps Grace leadership balance anticipated income with the budget. In June, the Committee will have a draft budget available for review which will be in advance of the Annual Meeting.

The **Grace Annual Meeting** will be **Sunday, July 14.**

A Commitment Sunday pledge has been included on this page for your convenience.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the ministries here at Grace.

Thank you from Family Promise

Greetings,

Thank you for your donation of \$1,500 to Family Promise of Barry County. It truly does help in ending homelessness one family at a time!

At Family Promise, our vision is a community in which every family has a home, a livelihood, and the chance to build a better future., Thanks to you, we get close to that vision every day.

In 2023, we served 24 families, 58 children, 98 individuals, prevented 7 evictions and stabilized 5 families.

Thank you for your continued support, dedication, and generosity. We couldn't do this without you.

Blessings,

Abbie Benton,

Executive Director



Let Us Pray: If you are aware of others that should be put on the lists, please notify the office.

Homebound:

Opal Gillons Thornapple Manor
2700 Nashville Road
Hastings, MI 49058

Wes Gillons Thornapple Manor

Elsie Merrow Woodlawn Meadows
1825 East Street
Hastings, MI 49058

Doris Allerding Woodlawn Meadows #15

Beverly Brown Woodlawn Meadows

Shirley Beck Hope Landing
1252 North Cochran #116
Charlotte, MI 48813

Karl Golnek Medilodge
2786 - 56th Street, SW
Wyoming, MI 49418

Military:



Grandson of Freedlunds
Parker Stancil (US Army)

Daughter & son-in-law of Cherie Clements
Myrina & Cody Crawford

Granddaughter of Gwen Hansen
Cynthia Rudesill

Nephew of Joe & Sharon Varkula
LT Joel Taggart (USN, Virginia)

Grandniece of Karen and Bill Halstead & Jan Schreiner
Julia Ehredt (Bahrain)

Nephew and Godson of Ed and Kim Domke
Seth Domke (Cherry Point, North Carolina)



MAY BIRTHDAYS

Sharon Varcula 05/03

Sandra Mikolajczyk 05/05

Cheryl Drumm 05/09

Kay Howell 05/13

Todd Pontius 05/15

Russ Trongo 05/17

Molly Rosenberger 05/23

Myles Rosenberger 05/23

Angela Pruitt 05/24

Ann Bolton 05/24

Tim Schoessel 05/28

Happy Anniversary!

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

Pastor Ken and Laura Scheck 05/19

Bill and Lorraine Freedlund 05/22

John and Teresa Burdick 05/24

Todd and Tina Pontius 05/30

The Fine Art of Floating

By Kailyn Ranguette

You wade into the water until your toes no longer reach the bottom. The sun is beating against your sunscreen soaked body and the air smells of freshly mown grass. Using your arms and legs as propellers, you tread the water. Desiring a more peaceful swim, you allow yourself to give in to the weight of your tired body and float. Your lungs fill with air as you arch back, squinting your eyes against the sun that will soon tint your skin into a shade of warm bronze. Tipping, Tipping, until you are suspended along the water in a delicate balance. You could sink at any moment. In order to protect this balance, you take small, quick breaths. The lungs inside of you serve as a floatation device. The pressure builds and your chest cavity becomes constricted. A light breeze tickles your forehead, reminding you to take another breath. The world disappears, along with any sense of direction. At any moment you could drift into deeper water. The slow swivel of your hands anchors you in place. Something about being on the edge of both lake and sky makes you feel restless. Relax. Let the muscles of your face loosen and slow your breathing. Allow yourself to be vulnerable to the hands of nature. You never know when you will get the opportunity to forget again. Forget all of the burdens that once weighed you down and release them into the water that cradles you like an infant in its arms. You may never have this chance again.

The first memory I have of floating goes something like this. It was the end of the second grade and I was eager to begin my first swimming lesson. As a child fresh to the understanding of my own potential I was eager to test my own limits. The limits that I set for myself as a seven-year-old, that is. My instructor, I don't remember her name, was already in the water when I arrived and invited the children to join her. One foot at a time, I lowered myself down the concrete steps and into the frigid water. The contrast between the warm summer air and that water took my breath away. We were told that the first lesson would be about gaining confidence and getting to know the water. "What a silly idea," I thought. What was there that we needed to know? I watched as she demonstrated treading water, bicycling one leg after another to stay afloat. The next moment her body was drifting upward, as if being pulled like a magnet to rest upon the top of the water. She was floating. I raised my middle to the sky and leaned back, trying with all of my strength to imitate her. I gasped for air as I was sucked under the water and reminded that this too would take practice. It was then that I realized what she had meant. It was a long time before I learned how to float with the ease and elegance that she had. To gain the confidence in myself to trust in the water around me... To get to know it. I sometimes wonder if that is how she lived her entire life.

The arm would have quite an easy time floating if it weren't connected to the rest of the body. As would the foot, or the ear, or the wrist. The tricky part is the fine art of balancing the total weight that the body carries. Take in addition the weight that the human experience adds to its flesh and bones and you have yourself a real challenge. All of the what-ifs, the could-haves, and the debt that looms in the back of every crevice of your mind weigh you down. The broken relationships, nights without sleep, promises and tasks scribbled into your pocket calendar weigh you down. Yet, the human spirit has the miraculous ability to outweigh all of these weights and keep you afloat.

A message in a bottle is an entirely different matter all together. The smooth curves paired with its hollow inside and buoyant cork make floating an easy task for the bottle. With salutations from who knows where addressed to anyone who happens to stumble upon it, a message in a bottle has it figured out. As it drifts out of sight and meets the horizon, this too is suspended in the in-between. Neither sinking into the dark waters nor rising into the sky, it remains in delicate balance. The difference is that it does not fight this balance as a human does. A human remains forever stuck between the past and the future. As if they were floating, they attempt to attain the perfect balance between the two. Become too slack and you risk sinking...clawing for the air that you know is above you but you cannot seem to reach. Yet, remaining too tense will cause you to become tight and achy as you long for nothing more than to exhale the burdens within you. We fight this balance, never seeming to get it quite right. The bottle knows better. It knows to breathe with the current and accept that there may be a storm ahead. It trusts itself to hold tightly to all of the secrets and dreams resting within. The bottle knows that eventually, when the time is right, its message will be cracked open and have its shot at changing the world. But it also isn't so naive as to think that this is a guarantee. At the very least, it trusts that the act of protecting those dreams was a job well worth the journey between two unknowns.



May 2024 Events at Grace

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

<p>Grace Office Hours Monday - Thursday 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. 269.945.9414 parishadmin@grace-hastings.org</p> 	<p>May Day</p> 	<p>National Day of Prayer 2</p>  <p>Bell Choir Rehearsal 2:00-6:00</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Star Wars Day</p> 		
<p>CINCO de MAYO 5</p> <p>Worship Services 8:00 & 10:45 In Person & Online</p>	<p>Social Activities Meeting 4:30 6</p> 	<p>Women of Faith 11:00 7</p>  <p>Executive Committee Mtg. 6:30</p> 	<p>8</p>  <p>Spring Flower Orders Due</p>	<p>Brothers of Grace 6:00 9</p>  <p>Ascension of Our Lord</p> <p>Bell Choir Rehearsal 2:00-6:00</p>	<p>10</p>  <p>Brat Orders Due on Sunday, May 12th</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Spring Flower Pick-Up at Church 9:00-Noon</p> 
<p>HAPPY Mother's DAY 12</p> <p>Worship Services 8:00 & 10:45 In Person & Online Noisy Offering</p> 	<p>13</p> <p>Outreach 3:00</p> 	<p>Women of Faith 11:00 14</p>  <p>Council Meeting 6:30</p> 	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p> <p>SAC Outing to Turkeyville to see ...</p> <p>OKLAHOMA OKLAHOMA OKLAHOMA OKLAHOMA</p> <p>Departure at 10:30</p>	<p>18</p> 
<p>Commitment Sunday 19</p> <p>Pentecost</p> <p>Graduation Sunday</p> <p>Worship Services 8:00 & 10:45</p> 	<p>20</p> <p>Congregational Care Meeting 3:00</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>Women of Faith 11:00</p> 	<p>22</p> <p>Brat Making Party 5:00-7:30</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>Red Cross Blood Drive 11:00-4:45</p>  <p>Brat Sale Order Pick-Up 10:00 -1:00</p> 	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Hand2Hand donations due tomorrow</p> 
<p>26</p> <p>Worship Services 8:00 & 10:45 In Person & Online</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Office Closed</p>  <p>MEMORIAL DAY</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Bell Choir Rehearsal 2:00-6:00</p> 	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>	