

community matters



From the Staff of Grace Loves Park Church & Preschool, we wish you...



Christmas Eve Worship

Our Christmas Eve will be full of worship opportunities this year!

Sunday morning, December 24th, we will celebrate the 4th Sunday of Advent at 7:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. (no 10:30 a.m. service).

Sunday afternoon and evening, December 24th, we will offer 3 Christmas Eve services with Holy Communion:

- 3:00 p.m. Family Christmas Eve Worship with Holy Communion
- 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship with Holy Communion
- 9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship with Holy Communion

How can we live in a country where our veterans account for a high percentage of the homeless? We appropriately honor our veterans on holidays yet because of the hell they experienced in war, yet many veterans suffer PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder), physical limitations including amputation, and drug and alcohol addiction. All of these symptoms can lead to family dysfunction, divorce and isolation ending in homelessness.

Dave is a veteran who served overseas, worked as a machinist in local shops, saw his marriage disintegrate, battles stage 4 cancer and lives in a broken down mobile home. His life has been hard, hurts have been many and still he comes to worship when he is able. Thanks to Sheri and Tom Cannell who have provided occasional meals out of "Sheri's Place" café for this former Harlem student. Thanks to Grace as well because we have been able to assist with groceries, gas monies for doctor appointments in Madison as well as a tow when Dave's vehicle's axel broke. Like many caught in the web of poverty, Dave does not receive enough money to rise above the financial margin.

As Pastor JoAnna and I do our weekly visits to the hospitals, we hear on many occasions how thankful the sick and elderly are for the pastoral visits of Pastor Park. Because of your generosity, Pastor Park has been a champion of visitation since September 2000. If you have been visited by Pastor Park, you know what I am talking about. If you have a parent or family member he has consistently visited, you know how much they value his visits, prayers and words of encouraging faith. He has touched many lives every year in the past 17 years.

I cannot stinking believe that I have been blessed to work with you in the Greater Parks area for eleven years (11/27/2006). Measured by the amount of notes, emails and conversations, one of the most impactful parts of my time at Grace has been journeying with individuals and families as death draws near all the way to the celebration of life. Carl Lee came to worship on my first Sunday at Grace (12/3/2016) and died two days later. Carl was an anchor at Grace as well as in our schools and community. This marked the beginning of a myriad of lives we have celebrated over these years together.

One of the characteristics I love most about Grace is that we celebrate peoples' lives well: members of our faith community and our neighborhood members alike. We have so many volunteers who serve food and coffee with compassion and grace as those who grieve eat and visit with family and friends. These eleven years we have celebrated the lives of 154 members with 261 total funerals and memorial services to date. 2008 was the least with 14 funerals and 2009 was the most with 30 funerals, averaging out to two funerals a month. Let me share a few stories to demonstrate how your money makes a difference in our neighborhood.

Richard Button was a local school teacher who by the time he was 70 lived as a resident in the Clayton House Motel on the southwest edge of Loves Park, where he was found dead in 2011. No family could be identified, and among his few possessions were a guitar and a well-read Bible. Four staff and a member of the motel staff attended a memorial service where Richard's notes in his Bible were read, a song sung, and a candle lit to honor his passing. Mary Frykman cried and said, "This was the most moving funeral service I have ever attended." We gave thanks to God for one of the influential leaders of Loves Park and a member of Grace, former mayor Joe Sinkiawic, that same month.

A church committed to our local neighborhood, I have been blessed to know our neighbors on Grand Avenue. One of our closest neighbors on Grand Ave was the former secretary to Mayor Sinkiawic, Jeanette Griesman. I got to know Jeanette and her husband Alex very well over the years. Many times I began my visits on Grand Avenue by stopping to check on these two Grace members. Jeanette's funeral was on January 27, 2014 which Alex watched on Skype from his bed at P.A. Peterson. Alex died just five days later on February 1, 2014.



*pastor
dahlseng*

Finally, I was sitting in the Griesman home on a Saturday in January 2011 when sirens began racing past on Grand Avenue. I left quickly to discover the home on Grand Ave where all the emergency vehicles had stopped. It was the Steiner home that I had visited many times. I ran down the snowy street and turned up the driveway, Phyllis came out and shouted "Jordan is dead." A recovering heroin addict, I had visited Jordan a few times at the jail. Having recently gotten released, Jordan overdosed and died on a dime bag of heroin. He was young, 27, and I knew from my visits he was a man of faith, a follower of Jesus who had an addiction.

On the one hand, Jordan was truly free from his addiction. On the other hand, it was a tragic death, way too young. I met Micah Young that day as Jordan's good friend. He later became our amazing custodian and friend. This was one good thing that came from a sad situation. The people of Grace who served that day as we celebrated Jordan's life were phenomenal. The love of the Lord was clearly seen. You all made me proud on that day – and many others!

How do we measure the lives we touch each week? Who knows exactly what impact our loving service provides? We do it in the name of God and for God's sake, not our own. This is one example of the ways your dollars you invest in Grace touch peoples' lives. All I can say is this is a tangible way you can see your offering at work as the hands of Jesus. Thank you for your generosity and thanks be to God!

Here it is 7 times: thank you; thank you; thank you; thank you; thank you; thank you; and thank you. No one person can make this happen. Together, God is using Grace Lutheran Church to do some pretty amazing things. May we finish 2017 strong and start the New Year of 2018 with our eyes peeled for what God has next in store for us!

A blessed Christmas to you and your family,

Pastor Brent Dahlseng

Blessed Advent to you all!

Advent is a time to slow down. To reflect on the coming of the Christ child. To celebrate the fact that our God comes to us, to live and move and love among us. And yet the world around us is in a rush and bustle. In the midst of this busy season I would like to invite you to take some time out. To share a meal with people you love. A slow home cooked meal. It is a one pot wonder so clean-up will be a breeze, but the flavor is so amazing you won't believe it! It does take a good bit of time, but your family and you are worth it! This recipe (found on the insert) is one of my favorites. I found it in a book I have been reading *For the love: Fighting for Grace in a World of Impossible Standards* (Great book by the way!). It is adapted from an Ina Garten recipe and I highly recommend it. In fact, I think I will make it tonight! Maybe you can too. Take the time. Slow down. Just for one day!

As you gather around the table, take time to give thanks. To be grateful for all that God has given you. To appreciate the people who are around your table. To give thanks that we serve a loving and forgiving God who promises to walk with us through it all. Be still and know. Know and trust. Peace to you and yours this Advent! And Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year!

Pastor JoAnna+



*Be
still
and know*

Christmas Caroling

Join us on Saturday, December 16th from 10:00-11:00 a.m. at River Bluff Nursing Home to bring some Christmas cheer! We will meet there at 9:45 a.m. to begin caroling at 10:00 a.m. All are welcome! We will have some cards made by the Preschool and Sunday School, but feel free to bring some as well! If you have any questions, please see Stacie Leese.

Children and
family news

Moms & Tots

Here are the upcoming Moms & Tots Playgroups. We meet every other Wednesday from 9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.

Wednesday, December 13th – Christmas Party
Wednesday, January 10th – Happy New Year!
Wednesday, January 24th – Snow, Snow, Snow

Grace Kids Musical Update

Our Grace Kids Musical has been re-scheduled! We will host an informational meeting for kids and parents on Sunday, February 4th at 10:00 a.m. Rehearsals will begin in March with our performance taking place in May. More information to come, please see Amanda Monroe with any questions!

Save the Date for these Preschool events!

- Our next Chef's Night Off is January 18th at the Beef-A-Roo on North 2nd from 4:30-7:30 p.m.
- Our 2nd Annual Family Music Night will be January 23rd! If you or someone you know plays an instrument and is willing to demonstrate, please contact Stacie Leese.

Preschool
news

Preschool Registration for 2018-2019

It's hard to believe how fast the year is going, but it is already time to start thinking about the 2018-19 school year. Registration will open at the end of January and we will have options for 2, 3, and 4 year old students. Visit our website at www.gracepreschool.net or find us on Facebook for more details as we approach the end of January.

Music
news

The **ECHO (Ecumenical Community Handbell Organization)** handbell group performed on Saturday, Dec 2 for the Nativity Walk at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Rockford. This group, under the direction of Dianne Londo, features 12 members ringing 4 octaves of bells. Members of ECHO are volunteer, non-denominational religious based, and include representatives from Grace Lutheran Church, Court Street

United Methodist Church, Grace United Methodist Church, Second Congregational/First Presbyterian Church, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Riverside Community Church, Roscoe United Methodist Church, and Westminster Presbyterian Church. This group was formed in the summer of 2017 and hopes to spread the joy of handbell music to the community. Keep a look out for a handbell festival being planned for the late spring!

Christmas Cantata

Please join Grace Choir as we celebrate the joy of the Christmas season with our annual Cantata performance! Performances will be at the 7:30 and 9 a.m. services on Sunday, December 10th. The selection this year is "Hope" by Joel Raney. The combination of Scripture and familiar carols set into

rhythmic gospel-style arrangements work together to remind us of the hope brought to the world by the birth of Christ. The choir will be joined by an instrumental ensemble comprised of Grace members Gloria Lynn, Adam Crandall, Mike Owens, Andrew Hall, and Reed Orland. A new face, Derek Walton, will join us on the bass guitar. Narration will be given by Mike and Kathy Crandall. Let this musical experience get you into the spirit of the season!



Winter retreat is canceled because so many of our youth are saving for our big trip to Houston next summer! Right now we have 17 youth and 4 adults registered to attend our ELCA National Youth Gathering! While I am sad that we are not able to enjoy time together in the Dells for a Winter Retreat, I am rejoicing that we have so many of our youth signed up for a life changing event!

2018 Youth Ski Trip

- Cost
- \$47 – Lift, Lesson, Rental (Ski or Snowboard)
 - \$29 – Lift Ticket Only
 - \$8 – Meal Deal (Voucher worth \$10)
- Register Online at www.ChestnutMtn.com

- Click Rates & Passes
- Then Group Booking
- Book Group Reservations Enter group name as: "NIS Grace Loves Park"

Questions? Call Pastor JoAnna. 815-633-8075



Our **Parable of the Talents Fundraiser** was a smashing success! I do not have the final tally to share quite yet, but I have heard a few stories that I would love to share with you. One of our youth took \$20 and bought baked goods and offered a bake sale for our vendor fair. She was able to turn that twenty into more than \$100! One of our Bible Study ladies took \$50 and offered a prime

rib dinner in her home. She turned that fifty into more than \$200! One of our Preschool teachers took \$50 and purchased supplies to create a board painting night at our church. She also turned that \$50 into more than \$200! It is amazing what God can do with us! I am giving thanks for all those who took a chance and risked this venture! Well done good and faithful servants!

Financial Peace University

Join us for a 9 week class offered on Sunday afternoons in January, February and March over lunch in Founders hall. Registration is available through the office and costs \$93.00 for the course materials.

For more information contact Pastor JoAnna.

DO YOU CONTROL YOUR FINANCES?
OR DO YOUR
FINANCES
CONTROL
YOU?



*thank
you's*

- Rockford Rescue Mission, thank you to Sheri Cannell and your church family for sharing with our Mission family! We know that God used you to bring hope to people who really needed you on that day.
- Norma Peterson, thank you to the ladies from Sarah Circle for the thoughtful card they sent. Also, thank you to Pastor Park for all of his visits. They are very much enjoyed.
- Mark Miles, thank you to the church and the wonderful people that helped to provide snacks, beverages and support after my mother Sharon's services.
- Carpenter's Place, thank you to the Grace members who put their "Live Generously" motto into action by preparing and serving a hearty lunch for CP guests.
- Mary Frykman, thank you to all who helped set up, cook, clean up and attend the Annual Meeting held on November 19th. Many hands make light work and it showed with all the helping hands that were involved!
- Wallie Stewart, thank you to Grace for the generous gift given on my behalf to the India 2018 mission trip. I look forward to sharing pictures with you when I return! Blessings to all!

**Give something unexpected
this Christmas.**



*Shop ELCA
Good Gifts
for 50 gifts that
grow the church,
fight hunger and
transform lives.*
www.ELCA.org/goodgifts

Look for the Christmas tree in the Smith Lounge with ornaments for you to take and a catalogue with further information. Or log on to your computer and shop now. Visit <https://community.elca.org/elcagoodgifts> for more information.

Deadline For 2017

All donations for this year must be in the office or have the check dated by December 31, 2017 to be accounted for with your contributions for the tax year 2017.

RRVBC Blood Drive

Mark your calendar and prepare to give the gift of life this Christmas. Our next blood drive is Monday, December 18th from 3:00-7:00 p.m. To schedule an appointment, please call or text Joni Meichtry at 815-988-3125.

**LET'S
CELEBRATE!**

January 18, 2018

Ladies of Grace will host a birthday celebration In Founder's Hall starting at 10:00 a.m.

No one is too young
Or too old to be used by God.
You are always the perfect age.
Happy Birthday

Come and enjoy a festive brunch and sit at your birthday table. There will be a special birthday program and a special mystery guest.

Look for a signup sheet on the connection card. Or RSVP to Judy Kretsinger at 815-985-4249

There will be a free will offering.

We extended our Sympathy to:



To Gail, Julie, Lynn and family on the death of their mother, Nellie Oswald.

To Gail, Linda, Susan, Shelly and family on the death of their mother, Betty Torsrud.

To Norma and family on the death of her husband, Hugo Peterson.



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1—Judy Papini—75
- 3—Norma Kessel—90
- 5—Floyette Ancona—75
- 8—Loretta Clark—76
- 12—Mary Ann Willard—75
- 17—Mary Casarotto—81
- 17—Marlet Throndsen—85
- 17—Joan Webber—83
- 19—Gladys Westfall—94
- 27—Joyce Mershon—83
- 27—Helen Schultz—89
- 30—Edwin Quick—88
- 31—Gary Park—83

Birthdays that are published are 75 and older. Anniversaries that are published are 25th, 40th, 50th, and any Anniversary after the 50th. If you wish not to have it published please call the office (815-633-8075).

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 15—Donald & Marjorie Edwards—53rd
- 28—Gerald & Marilyn Johnson—63rd

STAFF BIRTHDAYS

- December 14—Mary Frykman
- January 8—Loretta Clark (Preschool)
- January 24—Chrissy Axe (Preschool)

Pastoral Acts for October & November

Wedding

Jordan Broughton and
Adrian Malady

Baptisms

Levi Brown
Makayla Hartmann
Davin Murphy

Funerals

Donna Wick
Robert Paulson
Constance Peterson
Jean Foss
Nellie Oswald
Betty Torsrud

General Fund (Mission and Ministry)

November 29, 2017

General Fund Income

Income: \$585,490.85
Expenses: \$581,188.05

Rebuilding Grace

Income: \$67,915.47
Expenses: \$101,420.40
Balance: \$44,994.52

Thank you for your giving hearts ~ Mary Frykman

Check out electronic giving and make a contribution. We are also accepting Credit Card donations

The next newsletter will be published on Friday, January 19, 2018 and mailed out Tuesday, January 23, 2018. Items for that issue (February Calendar) are due in the church office by NOON, Friday, January 12, 2018.

PLEASE NOTIFY THE CHURCH OFFICE

...when members of your family are hospitalized so the pastors may visit them.
(Also let the hospital know you are with Grace Lutheran Church)

...when a member of your family has passed away so the pastors and members of the congregation may express their sympathy and include you in their prayers.



Grace Loves Park Church and Preschool
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Email: grace@gracelovespark.org

Upcoming Events at Grace



Grace Kids Sounds Of Christmas
Christmas Program
Sunday, Dec. 17th @ 4:00 pm

Worship
Opportunities
at Grace every
Sunday

7:30 a.m.
*Weekly
Communion
Worship*

9:00 a.m.
*Traditional
Worship*

10:30 a.m.
*Contemporary
Worship*

*1st & 3rd Sunday,
Holy Communion
at
9 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.*