

Good News from Grace

June 2024

Gratitude!

Our Purpose

The purpose of our church is to make a difference by serving others through God's

...the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

Requests were made for my final sermon (May 11/12). It is included at the end of this newsletter.

You have expressed your gratitude for my pastoral leadership during the interim time with **love and abundant gifts**—colorful flowers, gift cards, bottles of wine, beautiful plants, a lovely prayer shawl, more gift cards, a generous gift to my professional organization (Lutheran Transitional Ministry Association), and cards that share the ways that you experienced my pastoral care and leadership. I am grateful for the reception after worship on May 12, giving us the opportunity to greet one another and to exchange words of appreciation. The giving continued into the Council meeting on May 13 and the Bible study luncheon on May 14. We have celebrated heartily!

Now, it is time for me to express my gratitude for you—

- *for opening your hearts to receive me as your pastor when I first arrived on June 1, 2022;
- *for your willingness to trust me—to trust that we could set priorities and focus on a vision to accomplish what has been in the hearts of Grace, expressed through the strategic plan;
- *for trusting me with your confidences;
- *for the privilege of walking with you in times of sickness, pain and sorrow, in times of grief;
- *for your faith in God and in one another that you could indeed forgive, reconcile, and put the past to rest to move forward;
- *for your willingness to learn through God's Word—read and preached, through book studies, through one another's wisdom;
- *for the invitations to lunch and to your homes to get to know one another;
- *for laughing with me, for laughing at me

when I made mistakes, for laughing at my lame sermon jokes!

And so I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the privilege of serving you. My experience with you has been humbling, spiritually enriching, filled with growth, and more than anything, overflowing with love. Yes, our time together has been hard work—very hard work at times—but work that has used my gifts and filled my soul with joy. Frederick Buechner, Presbyterian minister wrote in his book, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*:

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.”

You were hungry for new direction and I was glad to walk with you—wherever that venture was to take us. You were hungry for a united faith community and I was glad to encourage you to gather. You were hungry to take on new projects and I was glad to cheer you on!

Now I pray that you will continue to ride this glorious wave that God has set before you, with the Holy Spirit continuing its surprising work through you, through Pastor Chad, and through the people who will cross the threshold of Grace to experience your abundance, your hospitality, and your abiding faith and love.

We just never know how the Spirit is going to work in our lives and in our faith communities. Be open to the voice of the Spirit and go where it guides you for you will not be disappointed.

With gratitude, Pastor Lois Van Orden



Let's help Pastor Chad learn our names.

Please pick up a name tag before worship or a meeting, write your name on it (first and last), and wear it!

Or, when you greet Pastor Chad at the narthex door, state your first and last name. Please don't expect him to ask you! Just say, Good evening/ Good morning, I am _____.

Let's repeat this for a few months until Pastor Chad is comfortable with our names.

Remember....

***you are meeting one person...
Pastor Chad is meeting many people!***

The Mutual Ministry Team

A valuable resource for every pastor and congregation is the formation of a team to “nurture and strengthen relationships within the group, working toward healthy mutuality, primarily for the sake of the ministry and mission of the congregation.”

At the May 13, 2024 meeting, the Congregation Council appointed the following members to a Mutual Ministry Team to support our new Pastor, the Rev. Chad Butz and to nurture relationships between him and the people of Grace:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Bill Robison | Randy Hamme | Dan Walker |
| Christin Heidingsfelder | Michelle Knight | Pat O'Neal |

This six member team will meet at least every other month, and perhaps monthly, to build relationships among the team members and with Pastor Butz.

Two members will rotate off the team after one year of service, two more members after two years of service, and two other members after three years of service, allowing for two new members to be appointed by the Council President and Pastor Chad each year, to serve a three year term.

Other responsibilities of the team include:

- Serve as a “focus group,” representative of the congregation, as leaders share ideas for ministry and seek to assess how best to accomplish what is being proposed.
- Be alert to the early warning signs within a congregation of misunderstanding that may eventually lead to difficulty.
- Provide a means to resolve concerns/problems; however, this team is not the “complaint committee.”
- Serve as a source of support for the Senior Pastor in times of personal or professional stress.

Let's embrace the work of this newly formed team and give thanks for those who are serving.



Join us for Worship!
Saturdays at 5:00PM
Sundays at 9:30AM
 or

[via Live Stream](#)

Sunday School
Sundays at 10:45am
September to May

This Month at Grace...

The Sanctuary Lamp Sponsorship for **June** is given by Jan Utter in remembrance of Garry Murray.

The Special Benevolence Offering for the **June is Lutheran Camping Corporation.**

To contribute please list the dollar amount next to Special Offering Ministry and list *Lutheran Camping Corporation* under comments.

2024 Sponsorship Opportunities

[CLICK HERE](#) to see available dates for 2024. If you are interested in sponsoring one of these weeks you can either sign up on the bulletin board across from the elevator or contact Diane in the church office at 717-737-0439 x15 or ddeppen@gracecamphill.org.

Note: Other Altar Flower dates are available for sponsorship at special request by contacting the church office two weeks prior to the date you wish to sponsor.

If you sponsor a week, but do not plan to take the flowers home please let the church office know prior to that week. We have a member who will deliver flowers to Grace's homebound members.



Senior Helpers

Grace's Senior Helpers are here to get you where you need to go. Contact the church office Monday - Thursday from 8am - 12noon by phone 717-737-0439 or by email office@gracecamphill.org for a list of members who are available to drive you.

If you'd like to be added to the Senior Helper list to take member places contact the church office.

Lost & Found



Lost & Found

Don't forget to check the Lost & Found tub & coat rack in the Library if you are missing items. Grace will hold the items for one month. If they are not claimed by then the items will be donated. Unable to stop in then call the office (717-737-0439) and we'll look for you.

There is no Coffee Hour during the summer. Coffee Hour will resume in September 2024.

Sunday School

September - May

Sundays 10:45 - 11:30am

Sunday School is on hiatus for the summer. Watch the August/September 2024 newsletters for information for the Fall Sunday School Schedule.

GYG Upcoming Events

JUNE

16 - 22 Confirmation Camp

JULY

14 - 21 National Youth Gathering in New Orleans, LA



Children & Youth—Financial Assistance for Summer Camp

A generous bequest in the amount of \$45,000 was given to Grace by the late Diane Brokenshire who died September 18, 2023. Diane wished to provide for all children and youth (up to age 18) of Grace and those who regularly participate in youth ministry, to attend a faith-based summer

camp; those with or without the financial resources to do so.

Please send an email to Jesse Woodrow, Children, Youth & Family Minister, indicating the camp that you plan to attend, the dates and the amount of assistance—50% or more. A recommendation of fifty percent of the camp cost along with additional funding (as requested) will be considered for all requests by the Children, Youth & Family Minister and the Senior Pastor. Distributions will be sent directly to the camp.

Email Jesse Woodrow: gracechyg@gmail.com

Trindle Springs Vacation Bible School (VBS)

July 8-12 | Trindle Springs Lutheran Church, 14 State Road, Mechanicsburg

This year's curriculum comes from Illustrated Ministry and is entitled, "Compassion Camp: What Every Living Thing Needs!". It will run from Monday, July 8—Friday, July 12. Each evening will begin with a kid-approved diner at 5pm, and then a night filled with stories, crafts, games, music and service projects will begin in the Sanctuary at 5:45pm. There will be classes for kids ages 3 through those who have just finished 5th Grade as well as a class for adults. Register at <https://vbsmate.com/events/trindlespringlutheranvbs/28480>

Youth Food Cards

Karns, Weis and Giant grocery cards in the dollar amounts of \$25, \$50, and \$100 are available at the church office Monday - Thursday from 8am - 12noon.

If paying with cash please have exact change. Checks should be made to GELC.



Prayer List Additions

Everyone appreciates prayer but not everyone wishes to be added to the “out loud” prayers.

If you are aware of a member of Grace who could benefit from being added to the prayers, please let one of the pastors know. They will contact the individual to find out whether they wish to be added to the “out loud” prayers, ongoing prayers or prayed for “quietly” by the Community Prayer Group.

We hold in prayer especially this week...

Madelyn Kase, Jeff Turner, Beverly Earhart, Brian Bookshar, Rose Keller, Evan Houck, Judi Fenicle, Mike Hillegas, Darlene M, Debbie Aldridge, Paul & Linda Glance, Dr. Robert Little, Kelly Ackley, Shirley Davis, Bob Little, Dean Jury and the friends & family of Susan Gasswint.

We hold in ongoing prayer...

Jo Ann Renshaw, Al Hughes, Pen Hoover, Pete Psychogis, Bonnie Peechatka, Marcie, Eric Rome, Dana Moore, John McNichol, Kay King, and Justin Minnich.

We also hold our homebound in prayer:

Betty Bennett, Gladys Cline, Yvonne Gettys, Joan Harman, Janice Hench, Frank Hills, Sis Hoffman, Shirley Hughes, Howard Lauver, Janice Light, Lou Lore, Patti Reed, Bob & Ruth Rhodes, Mary Louise Shetter, Dorothy Shreffler, John Shuey, and Sandy Yetter.

Praying for our Homebound Members

The pastoral staff wishes to lift up this special group of members on a regular basis during the prayers. Each week, a group of homebound members will be included in the out loud prayers.

...sometimes we forget to tell others that someone has healed...

Let's be good stewards of our prayer list. If someone has healed, or if someone has moved on to eternal life, please let the church office know. Names will automatically be moved to the ongoing prayers after a month on the weekly prayers, which are read out loud during worship. They will then be removed from the ongoing prayers after another month unless you let us know to keep praying.

For Pastoral Assistance or At Home Communion

Please contact Pastor Chad (717-737-0439 x10 or pastorchad@gracecamphill.org).

If you are in need of a pastoral emergency outside of normal working hours you can contact Pastor Chad on his mobile phone at 610-297-2514. A pastoral emergency would be a death, or life threatening circumstances.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. - [1 John 5:14](#)

From the Church Council



Council Actions for May 2024

- Council voted to approve the purchase of new office equipment as proposed by the Tech. Committee, including a 32 gig upgrade. The \$7060.00 cost will be taken from Memorials.
- Council voted to present candidates for Church Council: Christin Heidingsfelder, Bonnie Barton, George B. Osswald, and Julie Flook at the June Congregational Meeting for a vote.
- Council approved a Continuing Resolution for a Mutual Ministry Committee. Also approved were six members who agreed to serve on the Mutual Ministry Committee: Christin Heidingsfelder, Pat O’Neal, Randy Hamm, Bill Robison, Dan Walker, and Michelle Knight.
- The agenda for the June 16, 2024 Congregational Meeting was approved.

FROM THE TREASURER

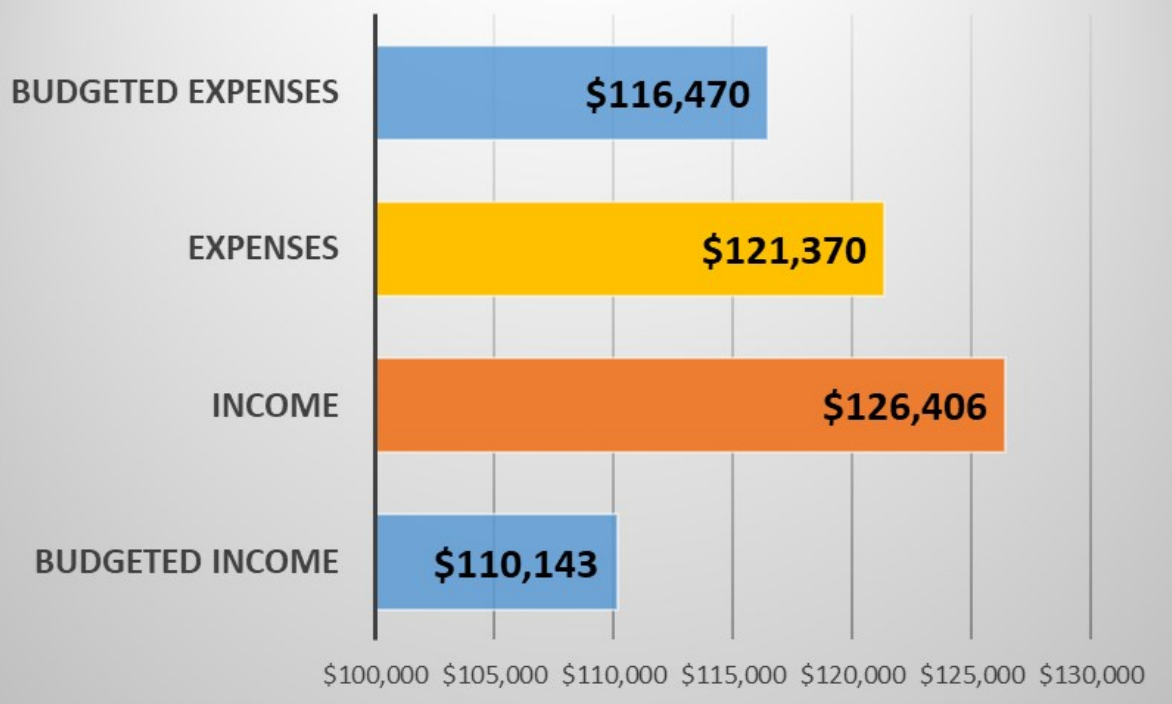


Members and Friends of Grace,

We not only matched the \$20k, but exceeded it due to generous donors looking to cover the rest of our organ expenses, to date. We are still about \$2.7k short for the small, upcoming final payment, plus the shipping cost which is still unknown (can be up to \$1k). It is incredible how responsive Grace was with this project to successfully tackle this large expense. Thank you, and the new organ sounds wonderful!

Susan Dickinson
Treasurer

Grace Lutheran Church, April 2024

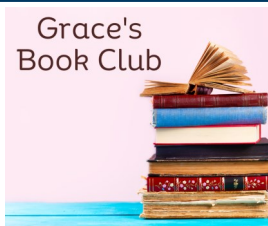


Offering Envelopes and Contributions

There still have been some issues regarding how contribution are being turned in. Please follow the steps below when completing your offering envelopes.

1. Use an envelope for all contributions. Please do not place loose checks or cash in the plate. Envelopes can be found in either narthex, in the library, in the parking lot hallway by the bulletin board or requested from the church office.
2. Write your name or envelope number on the envelope. If you need your envelope number you may contact Diane Deppen in the church office. If it is your first time using an offering envelope please fill out the information in the purple box. (*This can also be used to make any changes to your information*)
3. Place contributions **for one family member only** in an envelope. If there are multiple family members such as parents and confirmed youth, each one needs to complete their own envelope.
4. Complete the information in the green box. If you mark Special Offering Ministry the contribution will go towards the Monthly Special Benevolence. If you wish to contribute to a specific campaign or organization such as the Youth Ministry, the Giving Pantry etc. then select Other and indicate the amount. Under Comments write the name of the organization(s) and the amount for each one if there are multiple selections.
5. Each envelope should contain **only (1) check**. Please do not write separate checks for offering and each organization. Either put it all on one check and follow step 4 above for completing the envelope or place each check in an individual envelope and complete the front as indicated in step 4.

Donations via check is preferred to cash. An alternative to check or cash donations is online giving for either a one time or as a reoccurring payment. To set up online giving please go to <https://www.gracecamphill.org/give> on the website and select the Give Online Now button.



Grace's Book Club

Grace's Book Club will next be reading "Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane by Lisa See.

The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane is a novel by contemporary American writer Lisa See. See is one-eighth Chinese, and most of her books feature Chinese history and traditions. First published in 2017, The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane centers around the story of a young girl named [Li-yan](#), who lives with her family in remote tea mountains of China. In their everyday life, her village relies on rituals, belief, and taboos, and they are very detached from the rest of the country. This changes when a stranger arrives in a car, the first vehicle the people in Li-yan's village have ever seen. He serves as a link that eventually connects the village with the outside world, and Li-yan becomes the first in her community to consider leaving the mountain and getting an education. Her plans change when she gets pregnant out of wedlock, and the subsequent decision she makes has a lasting effect on her life and the life of her daughter. Exploring the themes of identity and belonging, [the mother-daughter bond](#), and the effects of progress, the novel brought See great acclaim, in particular for her thorough exploration of Chinese tea-growing culture.

"Join the book club on **Tuesday, June 11 at 7pm via Zoom** to discuss this book.

[CLICK HERE](#) for login information.



Greetings Grace!

We hope this letter finds you well! We would like to share some pictures from our bell choir performance outing and pictures of the organ installation.

Thank you the Grace Bell Choir for giving a performance to the residents at Country Meadows! On Sunday, April 28th, the Bell choir packed up all of their materials and headed to Country Meadows to play various pieces for the residents. It was a wonderful experience! Thank you for your dedication and commitment, and thank you for sharing your musical talents with the community! Check out the pictures!



Bell Choir Members: Michelle Knight, Beth Jury, Bonnie Barton, Collette Runkle, Hope Pancake, Jillian Galle, Tom Blackburn, Emily Hartman, Tristan Abraham, Karen Jury, Pastor Lois (substitute), Sandy Robison

Not Pictured: Miriam Chesky, Cora Chesky, Patti Rohde, Sue Painter



Left Picture: Pastor Lois opening with a reading and prayer



Right Picture: Kristopher Hartman conducting a small group bell ensemble.

We have been enjoying the new organ! We hope you have been enjoying it too! If you have not had a chance to hear it, we encourage you to join us on Sunday mornings or watch the live stream videos to hear the difference in sound! Our new organ has 66 stops, 3 wooden manuals, Genisys technology (pre-recorded instrumental sounds not typically found on traditional organs), a 16 channel expansion (speakers/audio), an adjustable bench, a 128 level memory, and many other exciting features. Thank you to all who have donated to the organ fund! Check out the pictures and explanations below to learn about the installation process.

Blessings,
Kris and Emily Hartman



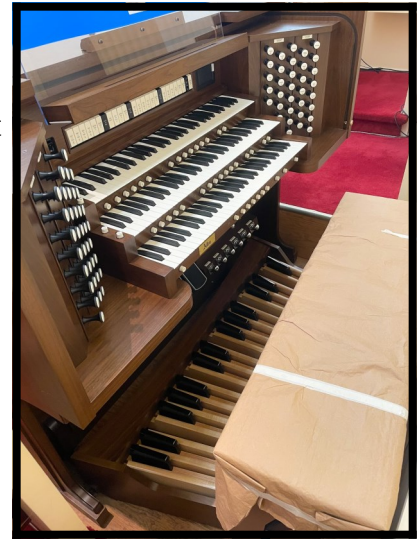
The old 3 manual organ with stops (pedal board not show in photo).



The new organ being prepared for transportation to Grace Lutheran.

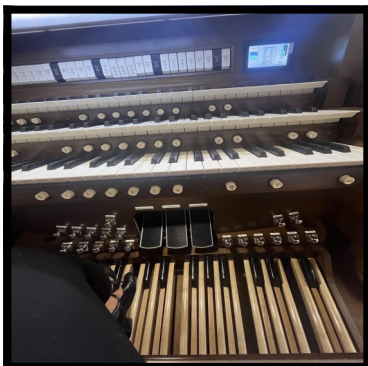


Left Picture: The new organ being installed at Grace Lutheran. Two of the choir pews had to be removed while it was installed. They were then returned once the process was finished (protective tape still on the music stand in this picture).



Right Picture: The new organ showing a different angle. This shows the foot pedal board and the adjustable bench (paper/tape still on the bench in this picture).

The new organ showing 3 manuals, draw knob pull stops, volume pedals, and toe stud preset changes (protective tape still on the music stand in this picture).



The new organ showing a different angle. This shows the foot pedal board, toe stud preset changes, volume pedals, 3 manuals, preset buttons (under each manual), coupler stops, and the Genisys screen for extra sounds, volumes, and reverb/acoustic qualities.



Follow Us on Facebook!

Kentland Retreat Center Facebook Page

Help us promote all the wonderful changes at Kentland by liking the Kentland Retreat Center a ministry of Grace Lutheran Church Facebook page.

If you hold an event consider posting your photographs to the page. Please be aware that there is an Unofficial page out there just listed as Kentland Retreat Center. Please do not post to this page. The more likes we get to our page the more prominent it will be when searched for in Facebook.

You can find a link to our Facebook page on the website at <https://www.gracecamphill.org/Kentland>; log into Facebook and search for Kentland Retreat Center a Ministry of Grace Lutheran Church or click [HERE](#).

Grace Lutheran Church Facebook Page

While you are logged into Facebook you can also like our regular church page if you haven't already. Each week we post the Grace Notes and monthly post the Good News from Grace newsletter to this page as well as other activities going on at the church as well as with organizations we follow such as Hope Academy PA, New Hope Ministries, Family Promise of Harrisburg Capital Region, The Giving Pantry just to name a few.

You can find a link to the Facebook page in the weekly eblast, on the website at www.gracecamphill.org or by clicking [HERE](#).

Center Stage Opera Presents: Hansel & Gretel by Engelbert Humperdinck

Friday, May 31 at 7:30pm

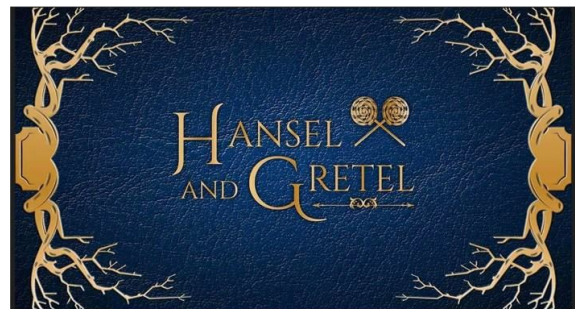
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
1610 Carlisle Road, Camp Hill

Sunday, June 2 at 2:30pm

2nd Presbyterian Church
528 Garland Drive, Carlisle

Sunday, June 9 at 2:30pm

Covenant Moravian Church
901 Cape Horn Road, York



Tickets: Adults \$25 / Students \$10
Tickets available at door - No credit cards

Come join us for the performance of this classic opera, based on a fairytale by the Brothers Grimm. It is a very dramatic and playful story; the opera is very complex musically. Our very talented singers bring the story to life. A most monumental task!

The Opera is sung in English. Our talented singers come to us from Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey.



Visit us on Facebook "Center State Opera PA" or our website
www.CSOpera.org

Coming November 2024: Tosca



- | | | | |
|------|--|------|--|
| 6/2 | Shawn Towsley | 6/15 | William Boor |
| 6/4 | Kami Labell
Jessica Zettel | 6/17 | Tracey Alfano-Douty
Julia Freimuth
Alan Gabel
Ann Hawkins
Jocelyn Little |
| 6/5 | David Hurst
Barbara Miles | 6/18 | Dean Jury
Andrew Labell
Pamela Rickert
Scott Rickert |
| 6/6 | Cathy Muraco | 6/19 | Kathryn Vollmer
William Youse |
| 6/7 | Sean Allewelt
Sarah Easton
Joan Harman
David Latsha | 6/20 | William Blair
Darlene Cline |
| 6/9 | Scott Barlup
Penelope Brosius
Charles Buchanan
Debbie McNamara
Virginia Myers
Richard Storey
Addison Weber | 6/21 | Lauren Hyde |
| 6/10 | Marti Bert | 6/22 | Derek Behney
Jennifer Caron
Janet Utter |
| 6/11 | Gregory Saggars | 6/23 | Richard Keen
Chloe Meador
Craig Robbins
Sasha Shenck |
| 6/12 | Henry Angus, III | 6/24 | Connie Flook
Nolan Stopfel |
| 6/14 | Sarah Allewelt
Daniel Ehresman
Isabella Weber
Kim Yoffee | 6/25 | Denise Ozimok |
| | | 6/26 | Matthew Lebo
Louis Stapf |
| | | 6/27 | Cooper Miller
Madison Snyder |
| | | 6/29 | Mary Bernstein
Thomas Gribb
Kenneth Miller |

6/30 Kyle Flook
Kim Hyser

Let's Celebrate a Monumental Birthday!

Joan Harman turns 95 years old on June 7; **David Latsha** turns 93 on June 7; and **Louis Stapf** turns 90 on June 26.

Take a moment to wish them a happy birthday with a telephone call or mail a card to:

Joan Harman
824 Lisburn Road
Room 314
Camp Hill, PA 17011

David Latsha
85 Greenwood Circle
Wormleysburg, PA 17043

Louis Stapf
19 Paddock Lane
Camp Hill, PA 17011

Let them know you are thinking of them on this very special occasion.

The Community Meal at Grace



2nd & 4th Wednesday of the Month

The Community Meal
2nd & 4th Wednesday each month from
5:30 - 6:30pm in the Social Hall.

June 12
&
June 26

More information at
<https://www.gracecamphill.org/service>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunset Music & Movie Series

Fridays | June 7 - 23, 2024 | Fort Hunter Park - 5300 N. Front Street, Harrisburg

Dauphin County Parks & Recreation is excited to offer a summer of fun events for the whole family with the Sunset Music & Movie Series. This 12-week series will highlight local performing arts organizations and a summer movie series. Pack a picnic basket (or purchase from the food concessions), bring your blankest & lawn chairs, and enjoy an evening of family fun! These events are all FREE for everyone to attend.

Friday, June 7 at 8:30pm*
The Wizard of Oz (G rated)
7pm Movie snacks available

Friday, June 14 at 7:00pm*
Open Stage presents "An Evening of Song from Broadway and Beyond"
6-8pm Food Trucks

Friday, June 21 at 8:30pm*
Wonka (PG rated)
7pm Movie snacks available

Friday, June 28 at 7:00pm*
Central PA Music Hall of Fame presents Elly Cooke
6-8pm Food Trucks

**Note: In the event of inclement weather, we decide on whether or not to postpone the event on Friday afternoon around 1pm. Typically, the rain date will be on Sunday of the same weekend. Any updates due to weather can be found on the [Dauphin County Parks & Recreation Facebook](#) page.*

Jubilee Day

June 20, 2024 | Main Street from York Street to Walnut Street and on Market Street from Simpson Street to Strawberry Avenue in Mechanicsburg, PA

This is the largest, longest-running one-day street fair on the East Coast, attracting up to 70,000 attendees. Kick off the summer with this annual event, which takes place along the streets of downtown Mechanicsburg. It features more than 325 vendors, offering food, games, arts & crafts, business information, retail products and more. There is a Children's Area with activities for the very young and live entertainment on two stages.

Good News from Grace articles are due by **12 noon on the 15th of the month** for the next month's newsletter. Grace Notes information is due by **12 noon on Tuesdays**.
Email to ddeppen@gracecamphill.org

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

1610 Carlisle Road
Camp Hill, PA 17011
717-737-0439
office@gracecamphill.org

Visit us on Facebook at Grace Lutheran Church or on the web at: www.gracecamphill.org

Choose the Path of Life – of Unity

Grace, peace and mercy to you from God in heaven and Jesus, who lovingly prays for us. Amen.



My call to serve congregations during times of transition from one long-term pastor to the next has some challenging phases. One of my favorite phases of transitional ministry is connecting with a congregation at the beginning – meeting the people, hearing their stories of the times when the congregation flourished and grew, and sadly, the stories of conflict and fear for the future, and working together to determine the best direction for health. Another favorite part of interim ministry is to reach the milestone of unity – that is, when the congregation sees that they can, in fact, work together to achieve long sought after goals. Things like division, disagreement, competing wants, arrogance and other undesirable attributes blocked the congregation from seeing and hearing God’s goal to follow a constructive path toward a new future. My least favorite part of interim ministry is leaving. However, as we emphasize in the training for intentional interim ministry, entering and leaving are vital to the success of the interim period, to prepare the congregation for the start of the newly called long-term pastor.

With some tongue in cheek humor, I don’t have an evangelist like John to write an eloquent prayer before I leave the interim setting. This prayer of chapter 17, offered by Jesus before he goes to his death on the cross, is known as Jesus’ high priestly prayer. The prayer begins by focusing on Jesus’ glorification [1-5]. Then, he prays for his disciples [6-19] which is the section that we read today. The prayer concludes with Jesus’ request for his disciples’ unity and mutual love [20-26], and extends to the present day – to us, the recipients of the testimony of the first disciples. Immediately following the prayer, Jesus and his disciples go across the Kidron Valley to the garden where Judas will betray him.

Jesus’ prayer includes four interrelated requests which are relevant for this final phase of interim ministry for us today. As explained by the commentary of the Rev. Dr. Veronice Miles of Wesley Seminary. “First, [Jesus] asks God to protect them from fragmentation so that they will remain one in heart, purpose and intent, and that they will come to know themselves as one body, one communion, one fellowship despite their many differences, nullifying the impulse

toward division and discord.”¹ I did not take the time to review my sermons over the past two years for a count, but I know that I have addressed the value of unity many times – that is, to remain focused on the same mission and vision for the sake of Jesus Christ – not for the sake of one individual or group over another. We know the pain and grief that division and conflicts cause. It certainly changes a congregation – both physically and spiritually. And sometimes, a lot of good comes from such division, allowing for a good pruning of the vine to grow in new directions. But such pruning is painful. I pray that you will take this part of Jesus’ prayer to heart and continue to strive for unity, abiding in the love of Jesus, keeping Jesus at the center of all that you say and do.

“Second, he prays that the joy [Greek *chará*] he has known will be made complete or full [Greek *plērōō*] in those who know him [17:13; see also 15:11].”² Jesus “desires that they will experience such delight and joy in doing the work of the ministry that it fills every hollow space, so that worldly enticements will no longer hold sway over them.” I have seen the many avenues of service that bring you joy. I have also heard the stories of worldly enticements that held you captive. Let your joy be complete so that the fears and lures of the world do not hold you captive. I encourage you to prayerfully find a niche that makes good use of your time and talents, to further the ministries of this congregation and of outreach organizations.

Third, in verse 15, “Jesus asks God to ‘protect them from the evil one.’” The evil one is the embodiment of all that is opposed to God. “Jesus is asking God to protect his disciples from all that opposes God.”³ The psalm for today (Psalm 1) captures this division by addressing two ways of living – the wicked way and the good way. This psalm is referred to as the “Two Ways” because it outlines two different paths that a person can follow throughout their life. Those who walk in the way of righteousness will flourish. In contrast, those who walk in the way of wickedness will flounder.

There is no doubt about it – people would much rather belong to a faith community that is uplifting, where there is mutual respect toward one another – including their pastor and lay leaders, that is walking the talk – the talk of the Lord that is, where they can find peace. No one wants to belong to a group that is

¹ www.workingpreacher.org. Commentary on John 17:6-19 by The Rev Dr. Veronica Miles, Mary Elizabeth McGehee Joyce Professor Preaching and Director of African American Church Studies, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C., for Easter 7, Year B, 2024.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

cranky, constantly grumbling, finding fault, picking on one another, and just being mean, plastering a smile on their faces as a hypocrite would do. No, folks want to belong to a congregation that radiates with joy, that is the model of unity, that gets along with one another, that reflects the agape form of love – the love that gives to others.

“Finally, Jesus prays, ‘Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth’ (17:17). Reiterating verse 8, Jesus asks God to set them apart (Greek *hagiázō*) for the work of the ministry, to embolden and empower them to bear witness to the word of truth they have received even as the world seeks to negate and inhibit their proclamation and practices of faith. For Jesus himself was set apart, or sanctified, for this ministry.”⁴

We are set apart to do the work of the Lord. You have accomplished great things during this interim time. You have discovered, once again, that you can do the Lord’s work by focusing on Jesus, not on yourselves and not allowing worldly issues to dominate your landscape. As we hear in Psalm 1, the righteous orient their life around the will of God. This doesn’t mean that a righteous person never sins or messes up. Instead, a righteous person is defined by the path that they are walking. The righteous are those who, when they stumble off the path, let God help them find their way again. They know that God’s way is the only way to life.

And that brings us to this beautiful image in the middle of the psalm. The righteous are “like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; everything they do shall prosper.” The pathway of righteousness is the only path to life.

Those of us who know Jesus today can take solace in verses 20–21, as they remind us that Jesus’ prayer extends into the present moment. We are recipients of those first disciples’ testimony. We also endeavor to keep Jesus’ ministerial vision alive. Therefore, we can take comfort in knowing that Jesus’ intercessory prayer from long ago remains effectual for our lives today. We are to live as righteous people, “like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; everything they do shall prosper.”

Jesus said, “You will know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16). The choice is ours – we choose which path to follow: the path that destroys life or the path that gives life and bears fruit. You have chosen the path of life.

⁴ Ibid.

A changed life, whether for an individual or for a faith community, is the gift of God's Spirit. Paul described this new life, the life for which we were made, as "the fruit of the Spirit;" not "the fruit of my good intentions." "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things" (Galatians 5:22).

Let the words of Jesus' high priestly prayer resonate with you. Read it for devotions before a meeting. Meditate on it. I rejoice that I am leaving a unified congregation, one that focuses on Jesus, one that stretches upward to be nourished by God, one that has deep roots for stability and growth. You are ready for your next phase – to receive a newly called pastor to build a new future. Do so with grace and let the wind of the Spirit take you into new ventures, of which you do not know the ending. Amen.

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May 12, 2024
Acts 1:15-17, 21-26
Psalm 1
1 John 5:9-13
John 17:6-19

Seventh Sunday of Easter
Matthias added to the apostles
The LORD knows the way of the righteous. (Ps. 1:6)
Life in the Son of God
Christ's prayer for his disciples