

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH – MISSOURI SYNOD

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“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” (1 Peter 5:1–4)

Dear Friends in Christ:

It's hard for me to believe, but I have been your pastor at Grace for more than eight months now. It seems as if I just arrived last September to take over for Pastor Poppe. I continue to give thanks to God for allowing me to follow in the footsteps of such a fine and caring pastor.

From my point of view, I believe the transition has gone well. Because I know that pastoral transitions can be difficult, I have tried to avoid making many major changes. The good news is that there has been relatively little I have wanted to change. I am very comfortable here. Grace feels like home.

But, I also know that some change is inevitable simply because I am the new pastor. Each pastor has his own way of doing things. And so, I thought it would be helpful for you to know my understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the Office of the Holy Ministry as you adjust to me as your new pastor.

A good place to start is by looking at my Self-Evaluation Tool (SET) for Pastors, which was included as part of the Call Process that brought me to Grace. In it, I wrote the following: “As a pastor, I am a shepherd to those whom God has placed under my care. By God’s grace and to the best of my ability, I seek to do this in all gentleness and humility, recognizing that this is not my flock, but the flock of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. I take these responsibilities seriously, desiring to do nothing that would cause one of Christ's little ones to leave His flock.” And then expanding on these thoughts, I also wrote, “The Office of the Holy Ministry is centered around and receives its life from God's holy Word and Sacraments. These are central to my work as a pastor. I desire to bring Christ to my people through the preaching of His Word and the administration of His Sacraments. Quite simply, I want to be a pastor, no more, no less. As important as church administration is, I do not want to be the CEO or Business Manager of the congregation.”

As your pastor, I fully understand and agree that my primary responsibility to you is Word and Sacrament ministry. That is what you called me to do, and that is what I want to do. I also rejoice that Grace is blessed with many capable and active lay leaders to manage the "business" side of the congregation. And so, I don't want to, nor do I feel the need to, infringe on the duties and responsibilities of our church officers and boards.

However, previous experience has taught me that oftentimes there is not a neat, clean divide between the "spiritual" and the "business." The one affects the other and vice versa. So, therefore, I believe it is necessary for me to be involved, at least somewhat, with the business affairs of the congregation, while not neglecting my primary responsibility of Word and Sacrament ministry.

Admittedly, I tend to be a "hands-on" pastor. When I see there is a problem or need, my inclination is to want to get involved. When people come to me for help, I am inclined to help them. As the pastor and because I am at church most every day, I probably have the most complete view of the various issues in the congregation. And, if I see that something needs to get done, I tend to get involved. I am mindful, though, that such a "hands-on" approach brings with it the danger of getting too involved and infringing on the proper responsibilities of others. It may also cause me to become so overwhelmed with work that can be handled by other people that I am unable to do the work of Word and Sacrament ministry that you called me to do.

Those are important and valid concerns. I continually ask myself if I am making the best use of the limited time I have. My friends, you have my solemn commitment that as I carry out my duties as your pastor I will do my best not to neglect my primary responsibilities—preaching and teaching God’s Word and visiting our people. And, I want you to hold me to account if I don’t.

However, in the Bible passage quoted above, St. Peter exhorts pastors to shepherd the flock of God that is among them. To be the shepherd is to be the leader of the flock. It means to be watchful over all things that may affect the health and wellbeing of the congregation—both “spiritual” and “business.” And so, I must not neglect my leadership duties and responsibilities either. If I see a problem or need at Grace, I will get involved, working with our outstanding lay leaders and boards to try to resolve the issue in a God-pleasing way.

Above all, as I carry out my duties here at Grace, I will do my utmost to serve you in the way of Christ, as St. Peter says, “not domineering over those in your charge, but being [an] example to the flock.” This is Christ’s church, not mine. Jesus purchased her with His own blood. He is the Chief Shepherd. Jesus laid down His life for you and took it back up again, so that you would be His forever. I rejoice that, though I am in no way deserving, Jesus made me a pastor and gave me the high privilege to preach and teach this Good News to you in this beautiful church we call home.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Crane

FROM THE BOARD OF ELDERS

Greetings fellow members of Grace!

The pace of change can be dizzying! Changes are occurring in our world, country, community, Church, and families. For Grace Lutheran Church we’re truly blessed with another gifted Pastor; we launch our current Head Elder Mark Peters and his family into the Ministry as he enrolls at the Seminary in Fort Wayne; we welcome Matthew Olson as new Head Elder; with the Congregation’s votes of approval, we will join together in a single Sunday worship time starting this summer; and we are excited to see the enhancement of our facility as we build the elevator at long last. With prayerful deliberation, we seek and follow God’s will. These are but a few events as we prepare to address the changing needs of our congregation and community.

For some, change can be dizzying, frightening, or overwhelming. Adam and Eve were frightened when they were discovered disobedient and naked; Moses was frightened by the sight of God and the burning bush; Gideon was doubtful of his role in God’s plan to defeat the Midianites; the disciples were frightened in the boat amid the storm on the Sea of Galilee as well as in the upper room after Jesus’ crucifixion. Fear, uncertainty, doubt, and change were powerful forces in those Biblical lives. These fears can distract us too...but neither were these Biblical persons nor are we ever, ever alone.

God clothed Adam and Eve. Even as He promised them a Savior, God kept Adam and Eve away from the Tree of Life lest they lived forever in sin and hell. God instructed and shielded Moses; He strengthened and equipped him to save His people Israel from the slavery of Egypt. Through the fleece once wet then once dry, God convinced Gideon to trust God rather than Gideon’s earthly wisdom or strength. And lastly, Jesus knew of His disciples’ fear and frailty. His words, “Peace be with you,” bestowed a solid assurance, His presence, His outstretched rescuing hand, His saving Grace, and life eternal through faith alone. Indeed, God gives us His shield, instruction, strength, time, treasure, and talents to do His will for His people. In Biblical times and now, God gives us the means to address the changes that He allows to cross our paths. As His people who faithfully receive His Word and Sacrament and prayerfully follow His will, we are poised to see God’s powerful work among us. We rest in His assurance that in His Church, we’re never ever alone. Indeed, despite the changes we are chosen to endure, God Himself does not change, either in essence or will.

We’re excited to watch as God’s plans are unveiled among us as He gives us His peace that passes all understanding.

Blessings to you,
Richard Pierce-Ruhland
member, Board of Elders

FROM THE BOARD OF MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM

May 2018 Missionary Update on McDermotts in Africa

Rev. Ryan McDermott and his family left Africa on February 1 for six months of home service here in the United States. They have been traveling around, visiting congregations and mission partners, and catching up with friends and family along the way.

The McDermott family visited Grace on March 4. He preached and presented their ministry in West Africa. Pray for their significant financial need for monthly support, especially having to replace their vehicle, which was totaled in a January accident in which Ryan's life was spared.

On Sunday, January 7th, Ryan was traveling alone from Togo to Ghana to renew the registration on their vehicle and try to get a new visa. In the dark on a rural road, he missed an unmarked deviation in the road, and ended up driving off a hill, crashing down, and ending up vertically sandwiched between the ground and a concrete bridge support.

Random strangers happened by, helped Ryan out of the truck, took him to the police station and then the hospital. Thank God for fellow missionaries who retrieved Ryan and helped him sort out police and immigration issues before bringing him home nearly two weeks later. Thank God for His mercy in sparing Ryan's life. The truck was a total loss, but Ryan walked away with only scrapes and bruises.

Rev. Ryan & Emily McDermott with their children Rhys, Evangeline, Joshua, and Kaj are based out of Togo, West Africa, where Ryan is the Regional Deaf Ministry Facilitator for West and Central Africa. He works with partner churches throughout the region to recognize and develop opportunities to reach the deaf with the Gospel. He also identifies and trains leaders, both pastors and laypeople, for working in deaf ministry. As needed, Ryan teaches courses in deaf ministry and theology at The Centre Luthérien d'Etudes Théologiques (CLET), or Lutheran Center for Theological Studies, in Dapaong, Togo.

It has been difficult for them to put together a newsletter while on the road, so follow their travels and doings on their Facebook page! <https://www.facebook.com/mcdermottsinafrica/>

Give praise for:

Safety in times of danger
Safe travels
Fellow missionaries in Africa
Safe arrival in the US, and no lost luggage
New partners joining their network
The work of the CLET

Pray for:

Re-adjustment to life in the US
Health and safety as they travel
Students, colleagues, and friends in Africa
The success of their home service labors, so that they can continue serving

Wedding Anniversary: Aug. 4

Birthdays:

- Ryan - March 2
- Emily - July 29
- Rhys - July 13
- Evangeline - Dec. 20
- Joshua - Oct. 10
- Kaj - May 26

Newsletters from the McDermotts can be found at <https://mcdermottsinafrica.wordpress.com>.

FROM THE BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

*By Rev. Jason Braaten
Immanuel Lutheran Church – Tuscola, Ill.*

“There are three conversions necessary to every man: the head, the heart, and the purse.” Attributed to Luther, though yet to be located in his vast writings, this statement echoes what Jesus taught about hearts and treasures. He said, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34).

But which conversion comes first? I submit that the order is this: first the head, then the purse, then the heart. Let me explain.

Our Lord Jesus Christ dwelt among us to save us. He took on our flesh, fulfilled the demands of the law in our place, became sin for us, and suffered torture and death on our behalf, in order that we would be free from sin, death, and hell. He gives us what He accomplished through Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper.

And so, He doesn’t just do it for us but gives it to us, makes what He did ours by making us His. Thus, we are called by His name: Christians. We have a new life in Him.

Through the preaching of Law and Gospel, God grants us repentance, a changing of our minds. It is a conversion of the mind. We are called to turn away from our sins and turn toward Him for forgiveness, life, and salvation. For when God calls us away from something, He is, at the same time, calling us to something.

And thus, He calls us to a new life, with new deeds. This is the conversion of the purse. Jesus said that “it is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:24). “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Notice that our hearts follow our treasures, not the other way around. As Christians, God calls us to invest our treasures in His Kingdom to ensure that the gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered. He calls us to share all good things with the one who teaches us the doctrines of Christ. He calls us to be generous in giving to the church, for it is more blessed to give than to receive.

So where is your treasure? If it is not invested in the kingdom of God, then the only response is repentance—a conversion of the heart—and to begin doing just that. And as our Lord promised, where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

This is not to say that you earn your way into heaven. It is simply to say that as Christians, those who have been made to be temples of the Holy Spirit, who have been given a new life in Christ, who are dead to sin and now alive in Him, we are, actually, to live — think (conversion of the mind), do (conversion of the purse), and be (conversion of the heart) — a new life in Him.

And when you fail, know that God in Christ loves and forgives you and still calls you away from that and to Himself.

THANK YOU: A huge thank you to all our members who donated to the “Laundry Baskets of Love for a Place of Refuge.” We delivered an entire car load of items for the residents of Refuge House, which included 10 handcrafted quilts donated by the ladies who so tirelessly assemble these gorgeous quilts. A Place of Refuge relies totally on the generosity of congregations, businesses, groups, and individuals who wish to put their pro-life beliefs into action. We can continue to show our support in many ways, which include sending gift cards for Wal-Mart, Target, or K-Mart, as well as gas cards to help the moms transition out of Refuge House. Another suggestion is to have your group purchase and fill baby bottles with coins to be donated to the Refuge House. Gift cards can be mailed to A Place of Refuge, P.O. Box 240695, Milwaukee, WI 53224. You can also visit aplaceofrefuge.org for many more ideas of ways to donate. THANK YOU and may you prayerfully consider a future donation to this LCMS recognized ministry.

NEW WORSHIP TIME: At the Voters' Assembly on April 29th, the Voters decided that the new time for our Sunday morning worship service starting **Memorial Day weekend** will be **9:00 AM**. Bible Study will be at 10:30 AM after the service. This new time will begin Memorial Day weekend and continue throughout the rest of the year. For the summer months (Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend), we will also have a Thursday evening worship service at 6:30 PM. The Thursday service will be the same as the following Sunday's service. The Voters also decided to revisit the worship time at a Special Voters' Meeting on **October 7, 2018**.

FATHER'S DAY GIFT IDEA: Embroidered shirts with Grace Lutheran Church are available in the Office Equipment Room. Sizes (medium, large, & x-large) are available for \$30.00 each. Proceeds go to the elevator fund.

THE GRACE YOUTH GROUP INVITES ALL YOUTH 7TH – 12TH GRADE to join us for FUN!

We invite you to also join the Grace Youth Group Facebook page, which you can find at Grace Youth Group (Racine WI). If you have any questions, please contact Laura Olson by email at laura_b_612@yahoo.com, 414-828-0710, or on the youth Facebook page.



The Summer Schedule:

- **Friday, June 1st** – Youth Bowling at Castle Lanes from 6:00 to 8:30 PM
- **Tuesday, July 3rd – Friday, July 6th** ~ Higher Things Retreat in Northfield, MN
- **Sunday, July 22nd – Thursday, July 26th** ~ Vacation Bible School ~ 5:00 to 8:00 PM at church

CHURCH SECURITY: In this day and age, it is necessary to take measures to ensure the personal safety of the public. This includes the parishioners here at Grace. It was previously announced that the Northeast and Northwest doors will be locked about 15 minutes after the worship service begins. The entrances at Washington Avenue and at the corner of West Lawn and Washington will be unlocked and monitored by the ushers. Thank you for your understanding. – Church Security Team

VBS: Please check the Vacation Bible School table near the coat room for registration forms, information, and donation requests. This year's VBS runs from July 22-26.

NOTE FROM MARK PETERS: Dear Grace Family, After many years of prayerful consideration, I have decided to attend seminary. For some this will come as no surprise, to others...surprise! It is my prayer that Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, will help form me into a faithful servant of Christ, capable of sharing God's Word and Sacrament to His people! Unfortunately, to achieve this goal we have to move and leave Grace this summer. It will be hard for our family to leave. Grace has been our church home! Martha and I met and married here; the boys were all baptized here; we have been active members in the life of the congregation and formed many friendships. Please pray for our family as we venture out for this exciting opportunity of service! Blessings, Mark Peters

BOARD OF ELDERS: With Mark Peters leaving Grace to go to the seminary, he is also stepping down as our Head Elder. We thank Mark for his dedicated service to the board and to Grace. Thank you to Matthew Olson for his willingness to serve as Head Elder in Mark's place.

PICTURE OF THE WEEK: As we proceed with our elevator adventure with great anticipation, it might be fun to look back on the building of our beautiful church building! A progression in pictures of this past adventure will remind us all of how God was with our forefathers and that He will be with us as we add to our beautiful church. Look for a picture each week in the narthex and catch the "can-do attitude" from God and our forefathers!

DIVINE CALL: Our former Vicar, **Jacob Eichers**, received his call into the Office of the Holy Ministry on Wednesday, April 25th, at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN. He has been called to serve as Pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in La Crosse, Wisconsin. His ordination and installation service is Sunday, August 5th at 3:00 PM at Faith. If you wish to send greetings, the address for the church is 1407 Main St., La Crosse, WI 54601.