

# **Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church**

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH – MISSOURI SYNOD

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## **June & July 2020**

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**“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10 ESV)**

May 19, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ:

As you know, the Wisconsin Supreme Court overturned the statewide “Safer at Home” order on Wednesday, May 13. That same evening, the City of Racine Public Health Department issued its own “Safer at Home” order to replace it. It closely resembles the state’s order, except that it removes the previously imposed nine-person limit on attendance at church worship services. Under the city’s order, worship attendance is now limited to 25 percent of our seating capacity, and we must practice social distancing as much as possible. I confirmed this information with a representative of the city’s public health department on Friday, May 15.

On Friday and Saturday, May 15 and 16, I worked closely with our Head Elder, Matthew Olson, to draft interim guidelines that are in compliance with the city’s order to allow us to resume regular in-person worship services on Sunday, May 17. These interim guidelines are as follows:

- We can resume in-person worship services at 25 percent of our seating capacity.
  - Conservatively, our nave can hold about 300 people, so 25 percent of that is 75. Since we will be starting our summer worship schedule on Thursday, May 28 (Thursdays at 6:30 pm and Sundays at 9:00 am), I do not think we will exceed the 75-person limit at any one service.
- Social distancing (six-foot distance between people, except for members of the same family) will be followed as much as possible.
  - Please keep your distance as best you can from other people.
  - Some rows of pews will be blocked off.
- Masks may be worn in church, but they are not required.
- I will wash my hands and use hand sanitizer before distributing Holy Communion. Hand sanitizer will also be available on stands near the trays for the used Communion cups for those who wish to use it.
- For the time being, only individual cups of Communion wine will be offered. The cups will be spaced throughout the trays to reduce the risk of touching another cup besides your own.
- Please keep some distance from others while at the Communion rail (families can remain together). Also, please remain standing so as not to touch the rail and possibly contaminate it.
- The children will not come forward for Catechism Time.
- The offering plates will be located at the back of the nave.
- The Fellowship Pads will not be completed at this time.
- I will stand at the back of the church to greet people after the service; however, please try to follow social distancing as much as possible when leaving. We cannot congregate at the entrances or exits. If you want to bypass me and leave the church by another way, I will not be offended.

I do not intend all of these to become permanent measures or practices at church. We will make changes to them, as necessary. The city's order currently expires on Tuesday, May 26, and we do not yet know if it will be extended or how it might be changed. My hope is that as the situation with the coronavirus pandemic improves, we can return to our regular worship practices, including offering the common cup and kneeling for Holy Communion. These two customs are very important to me personally, and I have no intention of eliminating them permanently.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns. Thank you again for your prayers, understanding, and support of our congregation during this difficult time. I rejoice that we can resume our regular in-person worship services again, even as I pray for an end to this coronavirus pandemic. May God bless you and your families, and may He keep us all safe and healthy.

Finally, I want to leave you with these thoughts that I shared in my sermon on Sunday, May 17. As we leave our homes to gather in Christ's church to worship Him, especially at this time, we are giving a bold confession of our faith in Him to the world, to our neighbors, and to our children. Yes, we should and will take reasonable precautions to try to keep ourselves and others safer from the virus, including here at church. Yes, we should consider the advice of our leaders, doctors, and health care authorities when it comes to resuming a more normal life once again. Each of us will have to decide when we think it is safe enough to come to church, knowing that it will never be 100 percent safe. Life is always filled with risk. But, my friends, regardless of what you decide to do in the days and weeks ahead when it comes to church or anything else, please do not live in fear. For example, please do not allow watching worship services on Facebook to become a permanent substitute, unless you have no other choice, for gathering with your brothers and sisters in Christ to worship Him and to receive His life-giving body and blood in Holy Communion.

Quite simply, fear comes not from God, but from the devil. As the Bible says, "God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7 ESV). So, confess whatever fears you have to Him and live in the forgiveness and peace Jesus died fearlessly to give to you. Jesus says in Luke, "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6–7 ESV). Yes, my friends, you are of infinite value to God, for Jesus purchased you with the blood of His nail-scared hands. As He promises you in Isaiah, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10 ESV).

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Brian Crane

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#### **FROM THE BOARD OF ELDERS**

The past two months were unlike any in our lifetime. The spread of the Coronavirus kept us in our houses, away from church, and made us take precautions most of us have never dealt with.

It seems like the one thing that this experience gave us was time. Time to focus on our family. Time to get those tasks done around our house. Time to read that book we wanted to finish.

But we also had no time for many parts of our life. We had no time to visit our families that lived away from us. We had no time for the vacations and trips we planned. We had no time to get together to celebrate graduations and birthdays. We had no time to even say goodbye to loved ones who died, outside of very small gatherings. And we had no time to be able to worship in our church with a full body of our fellow believers.

God promises us many things, but time here on Earth is not one of them. James 4:14 says, “Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.” Ecclesiastes chapter three memorably states that there is “a time for every matter under heaven,” ranging from a time to laugh to a time to die.

This isn’t a call for us to fear what the next day brings. It’s a reminder to make the most of the time we do have.

The last two months have reminded us how quickly life can change and how suddenly basic functions of our daily lives can go away.

Don’t let a day pass without giving thanks to God for what we do have. Don’t miss an opportunity to enjoy the gifts of family and friends that God has given us. And don’t miss out on being able to worship the Lord in His house, because we don’t know when we might again not be able to do so.

None of us knows how much time we have, but we have today. Let’s make what we can of that, in the name of God, and go from there.

God bless you all,  
Matthew Olson

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### **FROM THE BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP**

The sin of the world is paid for. God’s Law has been kept perfectly on our behalf. The prophecies have all been fulfilled. Jesus Christ has finished it all! And that, dear Christians, should fill us with complete confidence in our salvation. Since Jesus has finished all these things in His self-sacrifice, we can be fully certain our sins are forgiven, and we have everlasting life!

St. Paul wrote: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Rom. 12:1)

We hear the same teaching in 1 Peter. “As you come to him, a living stone, rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:4-5)

It’s the very thing Malachi foretold of the Lord, that He would come and purify His priestly people, that they may offer to Him an offering in righteousness. (Mal. 3:3)

So, what does this mean? In view of God’s mercies – that is, because Jesus sacrificed Himself to make us pure, giving His entire self into death – Paul said that we are to sacrifice ourselves entirely to God, offering Him our whole lives. For our Savior did not give Himself for us in part. So, we do not give back to Him in part.

We don’t offer ourselves to God just on Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings, for example. Rather, we give Him our whole selves, all the time. We understand that offering ourselves to God as living sacrifices involves the giving of our time. It requires us to be faithful stewards of the time He has given us. Yes, it means we devote to our Savior all our time. Otherwise we are not sacrificing our whole lives.

You see, God both teaches us, and has graciously qualified us, to present ourselves to Him as living sacrifices – to live as His holy priests, who offer Him acceptable sacrifices through Jesus Christ, all day, every day, in our various callings.

In the passages from Romans and 1 Peter, we hear several examples of Christian self-sacrifice: serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, showing mercy, living peaceably with others, submitting to governing authorities and those over us in the workplace, wives submitting to husbands, husbands honoring wives, showing compassion, and suffering patiently in doing good.

In all these things, and in all our other everyday activities, we sacrifice ourselves by using our time, not just for our own benefit, but also and especially for the well-being of others. Work time, school time, exercise time, study time, mealtime, chore time, recreation, and relaxation time, even sleep time – it's all God's gift to us to use for purposes that please and honor Him.

This challenges us to think about the way we spend our time, how we utilize our talents, and the way we spend our treasures. Whatever it is I'm doing, am I doing it "for the Lord"? (Col. 3:23) Am I presenting God a living sacrifice? Am I conducting myself as a holy priest, whose sacrifice is acceptable to God?

Because our Lord sacrificed Himself wholly for us, we offer ourselves wholly to Him as living sacrifices. This is following Jesus in self-sacrifice. By His saving mercy, yes, our sacrifice is acceptable to God. For the sake of Jesus' finished work, God is pleased with us.

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### **FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE BOARD OF YOUTH**

#### ***Splash Canyon Vacation Bible School***

Kids...Plunge in to VBS 2020! At *Splash Canyon* VBS, your children learn God keeps His promises on life's wild ride! They'll look into the Bible, God's Holy Word, and explore five Bible accounts where our faithful God keeps His promises to be with us and gives us life and hope through Jesus, our Savior. Registration is open for all children three years old through sixth grade. The dates for VBS are August 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 AM – Noon. Come along with us as we sing fun songs, do crazy crafts, eat yummy snacks, play awesome games, and more. Most importantly, we will learn that all God's promises are Yes in Jesus! We can't wait to see you there! To register, fill out the registration form included with this newsletter or sign up online at [vbsmate.com/GraceLutheranRacine](http://vbsmate.com/GraceLutheranRacine). To help with planning, please sign up by July 13<sup>th</sup>.

Adults...Be part of *Splash Canyon* VBS! Life is full of thrills and spills! We don't know what's around the bend, but God does! At *Splash Canyon* VBS, God's children of all ages learn the good news that God is with us and keeps His promises to us on life's wild ride! As a volunteer for *Splash Canyon* VBS, you have fun and share the *Splash Canyon* message with the kids! If you can help, we have many ways to be involved to suit your schedule and interests. For more information, please visit the VBS table by the coat room or contact Laura Olson (414-828-0710 or [LaoIson612@gmail.com](mailto:LaoIson612@gmail.com)). Plunge in for VBS fun at *Splash Canyon*!

We appreciate your support for *Splash Canyon*, our Vacation Bible School. Ask God to bring children to our program so they can know and grow in Jesus, our Savior! Ask God to provide leaders and helpers for this important mission. Consider donating some of the materials that are needed for the week. There is a list on the VBS table by the coatroom. If you are a Thrivent member, consider donating a Thrivent action card to help cover the cost of materials and other items needed for VBS.

## **Youth Group**

The next youth group meeting is Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup> (6:00 PM – 8:30 PM) here at church. We will be having pizza for dinner; however, if you would prefer to bring your own dinner to eat, that is fine. Hope to see you there!

Do you love brats (and hotdogs)? What about playing BINGO? As if those two things aren't amazing...you can do them with your fellow Grace members!!!! On Sunday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, at Noon, the Youth Group is hosting a **Brats & Bingo Luncheon**. The menu will be brats & hotdogs with condiments, baked beans, chips, vegetables & dip, dessert, and drinks. Tickets to the lunch will be sold on Sundays and Thursdays beginning Thursday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>. The cost of the tickets is \$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages four–twelve, and children three years old and younger are free. Included in the cost of the ticket is the meal and one Bingo card per game (we will be playing 15 games). If you would like to purchase additional Bingo cards, they will be sold in packs of 15 (one card per game) for \$3 or 2 packs for \$5. We ask that each person play no more than three cards at a time. Due to the fun and relaxed nature of this luncheon, there will be no cash prizes given out. The winners will receive their choice of a prize from an assortment of prizes.

The **Church Rummage Sale** that was planned for Friday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, and Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, at Grace has been cancelled. Due to the unknown restrictions and guidelines that are anticipated, we felt it would be best to not hold the sale at this time. We hope to reschedule it sometime in the future.

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**ELEVATOR FUND:** As of Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, we have raised **\$64,733** for the Elevator Fund. Thanks be to God! To make additional donations, you may use the specially marked white envelopes in the pew racks.

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**WORSHIP SERVICES:** Our worship services can be viewed on Grace's Facebook page and on our YouTube channel, "Grace Lutheran Church, Racine, WI – LCMS." Worship bulletins and announcements can be found on our website ([gracelutheranracine.net](http://gracelutheranracine.net)) under the Worship tab.

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**ELECTRONIC GIVING** is available at Grace. Questions can be answered by John Adams, Doug Alexander, or Steve Kanetzke. Enrollment forms are available in the Office Equipment Room. Completed forms should be returned in a sealed envelope and placed into John's or Doug's box outside the church office.

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**SUMMER WORSHIP TIMES:** For the summer months (Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend), we will have a Thursday evening worship service at **6:30 PM** in addition to our regular Sunday morning **9:00 AM** service. The Thursday service will be the same as the following Sunday's service.

**2020 FLOWER CHART** is still available for sign up in the narthex. The cost is **\$27.00** for two bouquets. Please make your checks payable to "Grace Lutheran Church" and place in the secretary's box in the Communication Center. To reserve a Sunday, please sign your name and the occasion. Thank you!

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**FOOD PANTRY:** If you would like to donate food pantry items, you can drop them off at Grace between **9:00 AM and 2:00 PM** Monday – Thursday. Please place items on the shelves in the pantry, which is up the steps from the elevator. Many thanks for your donations!

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**HARVEST OUTREACH:** If you are available and would like to help out at Harvest Outreach, please let Connie Abrahamson know at 262-909-8924. Volunteers are needed for **Friday, June 5; Friday, June 12; and Monday, June 29**. Thank you!

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**A HUGE THANK YOU** to my church family for all the cards and gifts they have given me. The encouragement has been great. God's blessings and love to all. Thanks! – Nancy Jensen

## Daily Lectionary Readings: June – July 2020

Monday, June 1:	Numbers 22:1-20 Luke 22:1-23	Wednesday, July 1:	Joshua 6:6-27 Acts 10:18-33
Tuesday, June 2:	Numbers 22:21-23:3 Luke 22:24-46	Thursday, July 2:	Joshua 7:1-26 Acts 10:34-48
Wednesday, June 3:	Numbers 23:4-28 Luke 22:47-71	Friday, July 3:	Joshua 8:1-28 Acts 11:1-18
Thursday, June 4:	Numbers 24:1-25 Luke 23:1-25	Saturday, July 4:	Joshua 10:1-25 Acts 11:19-30
Friday, June 5:	Numbers 27:12-23 Luke 23:26-56	Sunday, July 5:	Joshua 23:1-16 Acts 12:1-25
Saturday, June 6:	Numbers 32:1-6, 16-27 Luke 24:1-27	Monday, July 6:	Joshua 24:1-31 Acts 13:1-12
Sunday, June 7:	Numbers 35:9-30 Luke 24:28-53	Tuesday, July 7:	Judges 2:6-23 Acts 13:13-41
Monday, June 8:	Proverbs 5:1-23 John 12:20-36a	Wednesday, July 8:	Judges 3:7-31 Acts 13:42-52
Tuesday, June 9:	Proverbs 8:1-21 John 12:36b-50	Thursday, July 9:	Judges 4:1-24 Acts 14:1-18
Wednesday, June 10:	Proverbs 8:22-36 John 13:1-20	Friday, July 10:	Judges 6:1-24 Acts 14:19-15:5
Thursday, June 11:	Proverbs 9:1-18 John 13:21-38	Saturday, July 11:	Judges 6:25-40 Acts 15:6-21
Friday, June 12:	Proverbs 10:1-23 John 14:1-17	Sunday, July 12:	Judges 7:1-23 Galatians 1:1-24
Saturday, June 13:	Proverbs 13:1-25 John 14:18-31	Monday, July 13:	Judges 13:1-25 Galatians 2:1-21
Sunday, June 14:	Proverbs 14:1-27 John 15:1-11	Tuesday, July 14:	Judges 14:1-20 Galatians 3:1-22
Monday, June 15:	Proverbs 15:1-29 John 15:12-27	Wednesday, July 15:	Judges 15:1-16:3 Galatians 3:23-4:11
Tuesday, June 16:	Proverbs 16:1-24 John 16:1-16	Thursday, July 16:	Judges 16:4-30 Galatians 4:12-31
Wednesday, June 17:	Proverbs 17:1-28 John 16:17-33	Friday, July 17:	1 Samuel 1:1-20 Galatians 5:1-26
Thursday, June 18:	Proverbs 20:5-25 John 17:1-26	Saturday, July 18:	1 Samuel 1:21-2:17 Galatians 6:1-18
Friday, June 19:	Proverbs 22:1-21 John 18:1-14	Sunday, July 19:	1 Samuel 2:18-36 Acts 15:22-41
Saturday, June 20:	Proverbs 22:22-23:12 John 18:15-40	Monday, July 20:	1 Samuel 3:1-21 Acts 16:1-22
Sunday, June 21:	Proverbs 24:1-22 John 19:1-22	Tuesday, July 21:	1 Samuel 4:1-22 Acts 16:23-40
Monday, June 22:	Proverbs 25:1-22 John 19:23-42	Wednesday, July 22:	1 Samuel 5:1-6:3, 10-16 Acts 18:1-11, 23-28
Tuesday, June 23:	Proverbs 27:1-24 John 20:1-18	Thursday, July 23:	1 Samuel 6:19-7:17 Acts 19:1-22
Wednesday, June 24:	Proverbs 30:1-9, 18-33 John 20:19-31	Friday, July 24:	1 Samuel 8:1-22 Acts 21:15-36
Thursday, June 25:	Proverbs 31:10-31 John 21:1-25	Saturday, July 25:	1 Samuel 9:1-27 Acts 21:37-22:16
Friday, June 26:	Joshua 1:1-18 Acts 8:1-25	Sunday, July 26:	1 Samuel 10:1-27 Acts 22:17-29
Saturday, June 27:	Joshua 2:1-24 Acts 8:26-40	Monday, July 27:	1 Samuel 12:1-25 Acts 22:30-23:11
Sunday, June 28:	Joshua 3:1-17 Acts 9:1-22	Tuesday, July 28:	1 Samuel 13:1-18 Acts 23:12-35
Monday, June 29:	Joshua 4:1-24 Acts 9:23-43	Wednesday, July 29:	1 Samuel 14:47-15:9 Acts 24:1-23
Tuesday, June 30:	Joshua 5:1-6:5 Acts 10:1-17	Thursday, July 30:	1 Samuel 15:10-35 Acts 24:24-25:12
		Friday, July 31:	1 Samuel 16:1-23 Acts 25:13-27