

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH – MISSOURI SYNOD

3700 WASHINGTON AVENUE – RACINE, WISCONSIN 53405-2999

PHONE (262) 633-4831; www.gracelutheranracine.net

REV. BRIAN T. CRANE, PASTOR

(608) 567-9029 (MOBILE); (262) 583-2575 (HOME); revbriancrane@yahoo.com

October & November 2020

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28–30 ESV)

Dear Friends in Christ:

These past six months as we have lived through the COVID-19 pandemic have been anything but restful. Stressful, scary, frustrating, and exhausting are all better words to describe them. While I am hopeful that the worst of the pandemic will soon be behind us, I know that we are not out of the woods yet. And even when the time comes when we will no longer have to deal with this virus, how long will the “ghost” of COVID-19 remain with us? For example, how long will it be before we are comfortable going to restaurants, parties, weddings, ballgames, and even church services again? How long before masks are a thing of the past? How long before we can shake someone’s hand or give them a hug without the thought of COVID-19 going through our mind? How long before we can visit loved ones in nursing homes, hospitals, or even in our own home? How long will it be before life returns to normal again? Will it ever return to normal?

These are difficult questions. And because we do not yet have answers to them—and, worse, we do not know when those answers might come—that only adds to the stress, worry, and frustration we already feel. Indeed, to borrow from the words of Thomas Paine, “these are the times that try men’s souls.”

Whenever we face uncertain times, it is natural to focus our attention and energy on trying to bring a measure of safety and certainty back into our lives. However, one thing these past six months has taught us is that we will not find peace and security in the things of this world. For example, I think of the people of California where my parents live. Californians have endured more stringent restrictions than we have in Wisconsin to try to mitigate the spread of the virus. And yet sadly, many of them have lost their homes, and some their lives, not because of COVID-19, but because of the terrible wildfires that are now ravaging their state. No, we will not find peace by looking to the things of this world for safety. Rather, the Bible tells us that we should fix our eyes on “Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

My friends, in the midst of these trying and uncertain times, you can find certainty, security, and peace only in Jesus. He promises never to leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). He comes to you by means of His Word and Sacraments to forgive, bless, and strengthen you. He welcomes you into His presence to find and receive rest for your weary souls—rest that is yours both now and for eternity.

Yes, these are the times that try men’s souls. But our times, our lives, and our souls are in the nail-scarred hands of the One who suffered, died, and rose again so that we would be with Him forever. Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:27–28).

So, fix your eyes on Jesus, my friends. Come to Jesus, and He will give you rest. Jesus promises to give you that peace of God that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7). He is your rock and salvation in the midst of the storms and chaos that surround us. Not even COVID-19, nor the devil himself, is more powerful than He is. Jesus will lead you through the darkness and difficulties of this broken and dying world into the light of His glorious presence forever.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Brian Crane

FROM THE BOARD OF ELDERS

Timing is everything, and the calendar turning over to October makes me think how blessed we were to have the events of recent Octobers not happen in 2020.

I have a hard time trying to imagine what “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” and the other sturdy hymns of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation that we celebrated in 2017 would have sounded like muffled under masks and without choral accompaniment.

I struggle to think what last year’s 100th anniversary of our church would have felt like this year. Talking with brothers and sisters in Christ from past and present in Grace’s history and enjoying a wonderful lunch seem incongruent with the reality of social distancing we live in today.

It’s safe to say the celebrations of God’s blessings in all forms are a little muted right now.

For example, the joy of a new birth isn’t something that the whole family can come to the hospital and enjoy with the new parents right now. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the remembrance of God’s blessings and thankfulness for a new life in heaven that our funerals are can only be joined by a limited amount of people. Many families are making the difficult choice to postpone funerals until a later time, with the hope that more people will be able to attend in the near future.

Even if how we traditionally celebrate events has been radically changed, it doesn’t mean we are at a lack of things to be thankful for.

In this 101st year of Grace Lutheran Church, I’m thankful to have a church where the Gospel is preached faithfully every week.

On the 503rd anniversary of the Reformation, I’m thankful to be joyfully Lutheran and know that I am saved by grace alone, faith alone, and Scripture alone. And a great opportunity to learn more about our Lutheran beliefs is the Sunday morning Bible study that compares other Christian denominations to our own.

And in this Pastor Appreciation month, I’m thankful for the work of Pastor Crane in navigating through this incredibly challenging time in history to provide for the spiritual needs of this congregation in the most caring and responsible way possible.

We can’t celebrate things like we normally would at this time, but it doesn’t mean we have nothing worth celebrating.

God’s Blessings,
Matthew Olson

FROM THE BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

We celebrate the Reformation at the end of each October. The Reformation began on All Saints' Eve in 1517, which was when Martin Luther posted the 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. So, let's hear from Luther himself on the topic of giving and stewardship.

In the Small Catechism under the Table of Duties, Martin Luther gives specific Bible passages to help Christians know their duty in their various vocations as members of their family, society at large, and in God's family, the Church. Under the heading "What Hearers Owe Their Pastors," Luther lists five passages from the Bible, three of which have to do with giving to your local congregation. They are these:

- "The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:14)
- "Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." (Galatians 6:6–7)
- "The elders [presbyters, i.e., pastors] who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'" (1 Timothy 5:17–18)

Luther comments on these passages in his 1535 Lectures on Galatians. He wrote:

"When Paul says 'all good things,' this is not to be taken to mean that everyone should share all his possessions with his preacher. No, it means that he should provide for him liberally, giving him as much as is needed to support his life in comfort. ... The apostle is so serious in advocating this topic of support for preachers that he adds a threat to his denunciation and exhortation, saying: 'God is not mocked.' ... All this pertains to the topic of support for ministers. I do not like to interpret such passages; for they seem to commend us, as in fact they do. In addition, it gives the appearance of greed if one emphasizes these things diligently to one's hearers. Nevertheless, people should be taught also about this matter, in order that they may know that they owe both respect and support to their preachers. Christ teaches the same thing in Luke 10:7: 'Eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages'; and Paul says elsewhere (1 Corinthians 9:13–14): 'Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the Gospel should get their living by the Gospel.' It is important for us who are in the ministry to know this, so that we do not have a bad conscience about accepting for our work wages ... it happens when those who proclaim the glory of God and faithfully instruct the youth derive their livelihood from them. It is impossible that one man should be devoted to household duties day and night for his support and at the same time pay attention to the study of Sacred Scripture, as the teaching ministry requires. Since God has commanded and instituted this, we should know that we may with a good conscience enjoy what is provided for the comfortable support of our lives from church properties to enable us to devote ourselves to our office." (LW 27:125–126)

FROM THE PETERS FAMILY

September 12, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ:

We pray that this letter finds you doing well. It is hard to believe that summer is almost gone and that fall is creeping in. We will miss the warm weather, but with the coming of fall, the excitement of a new school year returns!

This summer was academically a little lower key than the last two. I did not have a summer language bootcamp like the previous two summers (Greek and Hebrew). However, I did get the chance to take a history intensive at the beginning of the summer. It was a class dealing with the events that led to and culminated in the controversies in the Synod during the early 1970's that came to a head with the *walk-out* and *Seminex*. It was a great class. It was a helpful reminder to know the great lengths and sacrifices that previous generations made to proclaim that the Bible is indeed God's Word! The only disappointing part was that it was an online class because of the concerns related to Coronavirus. Thankfully, the online chapter of my seminary experience appears to be behind me now, as classes resumed this last week with in-person classes. Of course, we are all wearing masks and practicing social distancing whenever reasonable. I welcome those minor inconveniences to have the chance to meet in person again, both in class and chapel!

I also had some preaching opportunities this summer (Texas, Chicago, and back home in Wisconsin)! It was interesting and encouraging to see how creative and determined congregations could be to continue gathering together for Word and Sacrament during these difficult days whenever they safely could. I hope this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but if not, I think many congregations have learned a lot about how to continue to minister to her members in difficult times like these, whether by video in a "pinch," or with smaller attendance numbers, masks, and social distancing if necessary.

This fall I am taking Gospels III, Theologia II – Preaching, The Ecumenical Horizons of the Lord's Supper, Sermons on the Song of Songs, and a Seminar on Luther Texts. It promises to be a good and busy quarter!

Meanwhile, Martha and the boys have gone back to school as well. They too are navigating the new normal that comes along with living with COVID-19 in our midst. So far—so good! Martha is teaching 2nd grade again this year and enjoying it immensely. Benjamin has started 1st grade and is loving it! He feels like such a big boy. Russell is in 5th grade, and Frederick is in 6th grade. Because some classes had to be combined this year, they are classmates. We will see how that plays out!?!

Frederick is also participating in a scaled-back Cross Country this year. Paul is now in 8th grade and enjoys being in the oldest cohort in school. He also remains active three nights a week with Marching Band sponsored through the local Lutheran High School.

Not a lot of down time, but that's a good thing! We are making a "go of it" with an ever-present sense that God has plans for us and that He will provide. Thanks to the support and prayers of all of you, I am able to continue with my studies and plans for serving in Christ's Church as a pastor!

Thank You and God Bless!
Seminarian Mark Peters and Family

CONNECTION CORNER

Bob and Barb Puder



Bob and I were officially welcomed into your church family in December of 2019.

For me it was a personal journey that began at Grace and after 60 years has returned me to this special place. My grandmother Edna Neubauer was a member of Grace in the 1940's, and my mother and father, John and Arlene Janosko, were married at Grace when he returned from WWII. By 1953 both my older sister and I had been baptized by Pastor Bartz. My mother taught Sunday School when I was very young, and she often told me that I would sit in my own classroom and cry until I was finally allowed to join Mom and the "big kids" to keep me quiet. By six, I had gained my confidence and sang a solo in the Christmas program. It is one of my fondest childhood memories, and I clearly remember singing to a full house. I recall the open Bible with the poinsettias—is that possible that our Christmas Bible decoration is that old? In my later youth, my parents joined Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, eventually an ELCA congregation, as it was within walking distance from our house. My sister and I were confirmed there, and Bob and I were married there in 1974.

Bob had been raised in Kenosha and attended Bethany Lutheran Church and School, a WELS congregation. He also spent his youngest school years with the "big kids" as he would have to take the school bus to school and stay in the older class until he was able to catch the bus later in the day to return home.

Bob took an active role at Redeemer, teaching Sunday School, auditing the books, then serving as Treasurer and Council President. I also served on the Church Council in Missions. After several pastoral changes at Redeemer and home changes for us, we joined Good Shepherd Lutheran Church...a small ELCA mission church. Again, Bob took an active role as Treasurer and served on the council. I co-chaired the Building Committee. This was a very small congregation and pastoral changes took its toll.

We moved on to Mt. Pleasant Lutheran Church (MPLC), a large ELCA congregation, the complete opposite from what we were used to. I enjoyed serving on the Aesthetics Committee during the renovation of the interior of the church, but we had decided to limit our involvement in the

administrative activities and focus on our faith. Within the last few years, we were really questioning the direction the ELCA was taking, and although we had developed strong friendships with the church family, we were feeling empty and at times angry by what we were being taught from the pulpit and during Bible study. We knew we had to start searching for a new church.

During our years at MPLC, Mom and Dad had found their way back to Grace and often asked us to join them, but we had resisted. Three years ago, we met Pastor Crane, who had recently been called to Grace. He had visited with my father but had not had the opportunity to meet my mother as she was already in Hospice Memory Care. He graciously performed her funeral shortly after his arrival at Grace. Three weeks later while sitting with us during my father's final hours, my sister and I had several conversations with him over issues that were troubling us. We so appreciated the time he spent with us and his compassion during this difficult time. I prayed to God to lead me through these dark days, and I believe that he led me back to Grace through my father and Pastor Crane.

As we have a second home in Alabama, we are away from Grace five months of the year, so we are grateful that the new video streaming of our church service and Bible study allows us to stay connected to our new church family. We thank God daily for our health in our retirement that allows Bob to enjoy his hobbies of golfing, fishing, boating, reading, wood carving, and playing games with our friends. I enjoy most of these activities with him as well as painting.

We hope that this will help for you to get to know us better, and we look forward to getting acquainted with all of our fellow parishioners.

ELEVATOR FUND: As of Sunday, September 20th, we have raised **\$76,739** for the Elevator Fund. Thanks be to God!

WORSHIP SCHEDULE: At the Special Voters' Meeting held on Sunday, August 23rd, the voters decided that we will retain our current worship schedule (Sundays at 9:00 AM and Thursdays at 6:30 PM) through the end of the calendar year. The midweek Advent Vespers services will be moved from Wednesday to Thursday. The voters also decided that we will review the worship schedule again at a Special Voters' Meeting on Sunday, December 13th.

2020 FLOWER CHART HAS OPENINGS! The cost is **\$27.00** for two bouquets. To reserve a Sunday, please sign your name and occasion for which you are purchasing the flowers on the hanging poster in the narthex. Please make your checks payable to "Grace Lutheran Church" and place in the secretary's mailbox in the Communication Center. Thank you!

WORSHIP SERVICES: Our Sunday worship services can be viewed on Grace's Facebook page and on our YouTube channel, "Grace Lutheran Church, Racine, WI – LCMS."

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. Many thanks for your donations!

HARVEST OUTREACH: If you are available and would like to help out at Harvest Outreach, please let Connie Abrahamson know. Volunteers are needed for **Friday, October 2nd; Friday, October 9th; and Monday, November 30th**. Thank you!

PORTALS OF PRAYER: Quarterly daily devotional books for October – December are available in the narthex. Please help yourself! If you wish to donate to cover the \$5.00 cost per year, please place in the appropriate slot in the narthex. Thanks!

LOOKING FOR A UNIQUE CHRISTMAS GIFT? Grace Lutheran Church has 100th Year Anniversary cookbooks for sale for \$15 each. Be sure to ask for the Addendum that goes with it. A brief history of our church with pictures is included. The cookbook contains a lot of international and legacy recipes. Please contact Becky Saxena, Connie Abrahamson, or Becky Gardner for more information.

Daily Lectionary Readings October – November 2020
--

Thursday, October 1: Deuteronomy 2:16-37
Matthew 6:16-34

Friday, October 2: Deuteronomy 3:1-29
Matthew 7:1-12

Saturday, October 3: Deuteronomy 4:1-20
Matthew 7:13-29

Sunday, October 4: Deuteronomy 4:21-40
Matthew 8:1-17

Monday, October 5: Deuteronomy 5:1-21
Matthew 8:18-34

Tuesday, October 6: Deuteronomy 5:22-6:9
Matthew 9:1-17

Wednesday, October 7: Deuteronomy 6:10-25
Matthew 9:18-38

Thursday, October 8: Deuteronomy 7:1-19
Matthew 10:1-23

Friday, October 9: Deuteronomy 8:1-20
Matthew 11:1-19

Saturday, October 10: Deuteronomy 9:1-22
Matthew 11:1-19

Sunday, October 11: Deuteronomy 9:23-10:22
Matthew 11:20-30

Monday, October 12: Deuteronomy 11:1-25
Matthew 12:1-21

Tuesday, October 13: Deuteronomy 11:26-12:12
Matthew 12:22-37

Wednesday, October 14: Deuteronomy 12:13-32
Matthew 12:38-50

Thursday, October 15: Deuteronomy 13:1-18
Matthew 13:1-23

Friday, October 16: Deut. 14:1-2, 22-23, 14:28-15:15
Matthew 13:24-43

Saturday, October 17: Deuteronomy 15:19-16:22
Matthew 13:44-58

Sunday, October 18: Deuteronomy 17:1-20
Matthew 14:1-21

Monday, October 19: Deuteronomy 18:1-22
Matthew 14:22-36

Tuesday, October 20: Deuteronomy 19:1-20
Matthew 15:1-20

Wednesday, October 21: Deuteronomy 20:1-20
Matthew 15:21-39

Thursday, October 22: Deuteronomy 21:1-23
Matthew 16:1-12

Friday, October 23: Deuteronomy 24:10-25:10
Matthew 16:13-28

Saturday, October 24: Deuteronomy 25:17-26:19
Matthew 17:1-13

Sunday, October 25: Deuteronomy 27:1-26
Matthew 17:14-27

Monday, October 26: Deuteronomy 28:1-22
Matthew 18:1-20

Tuesday, October 27: Deuteronomy 29:1-29
Matthew 18:21-35

Wednesday, October 28: Deuteronomy 30:1-20
Matthew 19:1-15

Thursday, October 29: Deuteronomy 31:1-29
Matthew 19:16-30

Friday, October 30: Deuteronomy 31:30-32:27
Matthew 20:1-16

Saturday, October 31: Deuteronomy 32:28-52
Matthew 20:17-34

Sunday, November 1: Deuteronomy 34:1-12
Matthew 20:17-34

Monday, November 2: Jeremiah 1:1-19
Matthew 21:23-46

Tuesday, November 3: Jeremiah 3:6-4:2
Matthew 22:1-22

Wednesday, November 4: Jeremiah 5:1-19
Matthew 22:23-46

Thursday, November 5: Jeremiah 7:1-29
Matthew 23:1-12

Friday, November 6: Jeremiah 8:18-9:12
Matthew 23:13-39

Saturday, November 7: Jeremiah 11:1-23
Matthew 24:1-28

Sunday, November 8: Jeremiah 20:1-18
Matthew 24:29-51

Monday, November 9: Jeremiah 22:1-23
Matthew 25:1-13

Tuesday, November 10: Jeremiah 23:1-20
Matthew 25:14-30

Wed., November 11: Jeremiah 23:21-40
Matthew 25:31-46

Thursday, November 12: Jeremiah 25:1-18
Matthew 26:1-19

Friday, November 13: Jeremiah 26:1-19
Matthew 26:20-35

Saturday, November 14: Jeremiah 29:1-19
Matthew 26:36-56

Sunday, November 15: Jeremiah 30:1-24
Matthew 26:57-75

Monday, November 16: Jeremiah 31:1-17, 23-24
Matthew 27:1-10

Tuesday, November 17: Jeremiah 33:1-22
Matthew 27:11-32

Wed., November 18: Jeremiah 37:1-21
Matthew 27:33-56

Thursday, November 19: Jeremiah 38:1-28
Matthew 27:57-66

Friday, November 20: Daniel 1:1-21
Matthew 28:1-20

Saturday, November 21: Daniel 2:1-23
Revelation 18:1-24

Sunday, November 22: Daniel 2:24-49
Revelation 19:1-21

Monday, November 23: Daniel 3:1-20
Revelation 20:1-15

Tuesday, November 24: Daniel 4:1-37
Revelation 21:1-8

Wed., November 25: Daniel 5:1-30
Revelation 21:9-27

Thursday, November 26: Daniel 6:1-28
Revelation 22:1-21

Friday, November 27: Isaiah 1:1-28
1 Peter 1:13-25

Saturday, November 28: Isaiah 2:1-22
1 Peter 1:13-25

Sunday, November 29: Isaiah 5:1-25
1 Peter 2:1-12

Monday, November 30: Isaiah 6:1-7:9
1 Peter 2:13-25