

# Grace Messenger

March 2022



## **DRAW NEAR DURING LENT**

"Draw Near" will serve as our theme for the 2022 Lenten Season. It is inspired by these two verses of Scripture:

*Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.* (James 4:8)

(Jesus speaking) *"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."* (John 12:32)

The refrain in one of the old hymns of the church echoes these verses when it says:

*Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer Blessed Lord to Thy precious, bleeding side.*

And so, we shall make every effort to draw near.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 2. We will worship at noon and 7 p.m. that day. Each service will feature the imposition of ashes and the celebration of Holy Communion. The sermon that day will introduce our theme and invite all to "Draw Near" to God during the Lenten season.

Sunday mornings during Lent will center on the assigned Gospel text. In those texts you will be invited to "Draw Near" to the cross where you will experience (whatever the text for that day describes).

Our midweek services will be on Thursdays at 7 p.m., starting on March 10. Our sermons on these Thursday evenings will introduce you to the people who would meet as you "Draw Near," people like Simon the Cyrene who carried the cross for Jesus, the Roman centurion and the two thieves who were also crucified that day. Holy Communion will be served each evening. Those services will be preceded by a simple Soup Supper served at 6 p.m.

Be sure to keep Maundy Thursday (April 14) and Good Friday (April 15) in your worship plans as well. These services always set the tone for our Easter morning celebration. Worship will be at noon and 7 p.m. on both days. During the evening service on Maundy Thursday, we will serve first communion to those Grace young people who have prepared to do so.

The Lenten season is designed to soften our hearts so that we can fully appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus. Expect the services during these weeks to be a bit more somber than normal, and then, be prepared to burst forth with joy on Easter Sunday (April 17) as we proclaim "Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed."

We will use the devotional prepared by "The Lutheran Hour" radio network. It is a very well-done booklet, as you know, if you followed along with the Advent devotional a few weeks ago. Those will be available starting Ash Wednesday.

We will also invite you to carry a nail with you through this Lenten season to remind you that your sins nailed Jesus to the cross. To emphasize that point even further, you will be given the opportunity to hammer that nail into a cross during the Good Friday services. The cross we will use was built by our own Dean Settles and will be displayed in the chancel throughout Lent.

Please plan to attend as many of these services as you possibly can. And begin now to pray about who you might invite to attend them with you.

## PASTOR'S REFLECTION

My family and I recently walked through the Franklin County Conservatory and Botanical Gardens. It is one of my grandson's favorite places, and he wanted to share it with us. During these winter days there wasn't a lot of color among the plants, but Gabriel kept repeating "when we come back this summer."

As we walked and I listened, I was reminded of this verse of Scripture:

For as the soil makes the sprout come up  
and a garden causes seeds to grow,  
so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness  
and praise spring up before all nations.  
(Isaiah 61:11)

Even when it appears that nothing is happening – as it does when I look out my window now – the soil is preparing for the sprouts of spring. And likewise, our God is working too. He will produce a wonderful harvest in the days that come.

If you are discouraged right now, take heart! If you are wondering what God is up to as you pray that same prayer once again, be encouraged! Spring is coming, both chronologically and spiritually.

## SAVE THE DATE

### CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, March 20, 2022 at 9:15 a.m.

Annual Report available online February 20, 2022.

## NEW CALL COMMITTEE

At its February 15 meeting, the Grace Congregation Council formally appointed a 10-person call committee and charged them with the responsibility to search for an associate pastor to join Pastor Brodbeck in the spiritual leadership of this congregation. This team will work with our parent denomination, the North American Lutheran Church, in that process. They will also keep the Grace congregation informed of their progress in the search.

Over the next few weeks this committee will complete a multi-page "Parish Profile" which will then be distributed to every pastor in the denomination, including those who are currently serving other congregations. Interested pastors will submit their own profile documents for consideration.

The members of this team are: Elaine Bucey, Lori Fain, Leah Fraker (representing the youth), Mark Grimes, Stacey Laux, Eric Leeth, Su-Ann Newport, Mike Ray and Matt Rugh (representing the staff). Representing the Congregation Council is Steve Garrett, Council President, who serves in an ex officio capacity with voice but without vote.

Please support this team in your prayers as they undertake this important task.

## A LAST OPPORTUNITY TO DISCIPLE

It may be a result of growing older, or being retired, or having a bit more 'morning-time' than I used to, or still performing a funeral once in a while (for people w/o a church or pastor), or all of the above. Nonetheless, I find myself often reading the Obituaries in our local newspaper. I have noticed several changes in the content over the years, but I am now writing about only one.

In a Sunday paper this past January, there were a total of 23 obituaries, two full pages, with words and photos. None of them, I give God praise, were Grace members. To confirm or correct what I believe to be a difference in obituary content, I read each of these 23 carefully. My observation, sadly, was confirmed. Only 2 of the 23 obituaries included any mention of church membership and/or church involvement.

Now, either this particular grouping of obituaries represented a highly-unchurched group of people, or some of the authors of these obituaries simply forgot to mention the person's church involvement. I believe it is the latter. So, what's my point?

Our personal Obituary is what I'm calling '*a last opportunity to disciple.*' As many of you know, over our years together, I often and persistently encouraged Grace members to write out their own funeral plans/obituary, giving a copy to your next of kin, your funeral director, and to Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church. That remains my encouragement. As, or if, you take the opportunity to provide this priceless gift to your surviving loved ones, make sure your obituary mentions this congregation we have all come to love and value. This might be just what it takes to bring another into 'the body of Christ!'

Pastor Daniel M. Powell, Pastor Emeritus of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

## REVIVAL OF OHIO PRAYER MEETINGS

The churches of our community are beginning to meet together regularly to pray for a movement of God in our city - a revival that would result in lives that are changed for the Kingdom of God. These prayer meetings are open to everyone, pastors and laity alike.

We gather on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 7 p.m. and every Wednesday at 10 a.m. on the third floor of the 616 building (616 N. Limestone Street). This is the former location of the Wallace and Turner insurance company. This will serve as our meeting site until we outgrow the space provided.

If you are unable to attend in person, please consider praying wherever you might be at that time, and also please add this revival movement to your own personal prayer lists.

## CELEBRATING GRACE'S PEOPLE, GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

### & GRACE'S UNFOLDING STORY

As I sat down to write my thoughts about our Grace theme this year, "**Celebrate Grace**," a song came to mind, by the rock band, Three Dog Night, "*Celebrate, Celebrate - Dance to the Music...*" That melody and those words will be stuck in my head now. (I think that's called an ear worm.)

So, the first ideas that quickly popped into my mind to celebrate Grace included:

Strong Pastoral Leadership, Our Grace App  
Streaming Live Worship Service Each Sunday  
Our Contemporary Services, Our Youth  
Our Bible Studies that take us Deeper into God's Word  
Our Wonderful Grace Staff  
Our Beautiful Building and the Awesome Additions

But wait! After I wrote down my thought about the building, I stopped to reflect. I realized that we celebrated so much when our new building addition was started, and celebrated, again, when it was finished. Then we celebrated, again, when that addition was paid in full, **but** the church is not a building. Remember this song: "*The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is a people...*" (There's another ear worm for us.)

Ah, ha People! We need to celebrate "the people" of Grace. I have marveled, time and time again, as our Lord has blended the talents of individuals at Grace into our ministry teams and guilds which have become masterpieces of hope, peace, and joy for so many people. So, I'm celebrating and praising our Lord for His faithfulness and the unique way He has intersected our spirits and hearts at Grace through the work of our "people." So, let's celebrate our people and celebrate our Grace story that is still unfolding each day.

We are each endowed with talents to make a difference in the lives of others, and we have each been graced with gifts for us to fulfill our unique purpose. May we, at Grace, use our time and talents to love one another to the fullest and continue to be evidence of our Lord's ultimate love. Ask yourself "How do I fit into Grace's unfolding story?" As you think about that, may you be blessed in becoming all we were created to be. Take time to celebrate Grace, celebrate our people, celebrate God's faithfulness, and celebrate that our Grace story is still actively unfolding. Offer prayers of thanksgiving to our Lord for His faithfulness and the evidence of His ultimate love to advance the work of His Kingdom. Finally, sing a song to Celebrate Grace, the People of Grace, God's Faithfulness, and Grace's Unfolding Story.

Psalm 95:2 says *Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!*

Donna Stelzer, Hospitality Ministry Area Coordinator

## OUTREACH CORNER

Save the date, Sunday April 24. Betty Douglas will be coming to speak to us during our Breakfast Break. Come learn more about how they have had to adapt during the pandemic, and all the work they continue to do and need help with.

Also, for the month of March, we will be collecting items for a Welcome Home Kit that IHN provides to a family who is moving into permanent housing. Items needed will be posted in the Narthex but include things like Welcome Mat, dishes, silverware, glasses, cups, pans, bakeware, kitchen gadgets, cleaning supplies, bathroom towels, toiletries and bedding.

**Laurel Mission:** Mark your calendars! The week of October 23, we will have another opportunity to return to Laurel Mission in Big Laurel KY for another mission trip project. More details are to come, but please let Sandy Thompson know if you are interested in learning more: [spnrj@yahoo.com](mailto:spnrj@yahoo.com), 937-605-0416, or sign up through Sign-Up Central on the Grace App.

**Springfield Soup Kitchen:** Due to no longer being able to serve meals at the Central Community Kitchen, aka Rainbow Table, we would like to begin serving meals to our community at the Springfield Soup Kitchen. Fred Stegner and his crew serve on Mondays and Wednesdays from 5-6 pm. Please sign up if you are interested on our Sign-Up Central through the Grace App, or email Janet Rice or Sandy Thompson.

## HEARTFELT THANKS

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the Grace congregation for your prayers, cards and kind words during the recent death of Carol Vincent. We extend a special thanks to Pastor Brodbeck for officiating the service, to Bev Kaech for the music and for the refreshments provided. Mom was blessed to be surrounded by such a loving congregation. Sincerely, Carol Vincent family.

Hello! I want to convey my sincere thank you to the Grace Card Ministry. The cards I received have been so amazing. The words in the cards are so encouraging and uplifting. Thanks, and know I appreciate this team. God's love to you all, Dale Kissell.

"Thank you," just two words but it means so much from this heart of mine to you. Your "get well" wishes and "happy belated" birthday wishes helped to make my week of illness so much more bearable.

God Bless this ministry as it continues to bless those who need joy and reassurance in their lives. God bless each One of You! Humbly yours, Carol Carpenter.

Thank you, Grace members, for the many get well cards and words of encouragement for my recovery. Your thoughtfulness and prayers are appreciated. Gratefully, Sandy Kramer

# Elijah

## Women's Bible Study

**ELIJAH - FIRE & FAITH WITH PRICILLA SHIRER**

**Lead by Susan Russell**

**Monday evenings 6:00 – 8:00 pm**

**February 28—April 18, 2022**

Join Priscilla Shirer on this 8-session journey through the life and times of the prophet Elijah to discover how the fire on Mount Carmel was forged in the valley of famine. And how the emboldened, fiery faith you desire is being fashioned by God in your life right now.

CURRENT RESIDENT OR



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Evangelical Lutheran Church

Grace



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