

Grace Messenger

May 2023



PASTOR'S REFLECTION

I write these words just moments after surveying the setup for our temporary worship location in the Community Center. By the time you read them, we will have worshipped in that space at least once – maybe twice. Some of you will remember that right after we opened that space in October 2014, we held our contemporary service there for several months before returning it to the sanctuary. So being there isn't new.

But being there does cause me to think about the dozens of congregations who meet in spaces like that every Sunday, including many within our own denomination. Most of those churches are composed of individuals who made the painful choice to walk away from their former ELCA congregations. A few are church plants that have resulted in the intentional effort of "mother congregations" with a desire to see a new NALC church opened in an area where one has not previously existed. They meet in store fronts, schools, hotel conference rooms and even in local theaters and pizza parlors. For them setting up and tearing down is a weekly occurrence.

You will be introduced to some of these sister congregations during our own temporary relocation. My goal is to create in all of us a new appreciation for their circumstances and a deeper passion for the ministry they do. As we pray for them, we will pray for ourselves too. Could God use us to "mother" a new congregation somewhere? What plans does He have that are not even on our radar right now? Won't it be fun to discover what that may be?

Be blessed!

Pastor Tom

Affirmation of Baptism

Congratulations to our 10th graders who will be Affirming their Baptism on Sunday May 21, 2023.

Affirmation of Baptism, or Confirmation, is an important time in the life of a young person, as they claim for themselves the promises made at their baptisms. Not only is this a very important milestone but very big step in their faith journey.

The following young people will be confirming their baptism: Brandon Hanford, Zachary Hanford, Morgan Huffstetler, and Brooke Fraker.



Grace Easter Egg Hunt 2023



Our Easter Egg Hunt was a huge success! We had approximately 50 children and 1,800 eggs! There were many smiles and much laughter. Our Easter bunny did a wonderful job, welcoming children and spending time with them. Thank you to EVERYONE who helped provide snacks, work the registration table, snack table, face painting and tattoos.

First Communion

We had five children participate in their 1st Communion! Collin Farrell, Jordyn Wolfe, James Bevens, Shepard Rothgeb, and Hadley Bucey.

Congratulations on your first step in your Faith Journey! Leslie



The Joy Guild Shares their Joy



The Joy Guild donates to the Weekend Food/ Snack bag program for children at the New Carlisle Library. Maggie Bollar, Children's Librarian, distributes the weekend bags of food and snack items on Friday afternoons as a continuation of a program that began during the pandemic which had funding from the government. Even though the funding is no longer available, the need is still there. So, the donations from the Joy Guild are very much appreciated. Maggie Bollar also offers a Storytime activity for children during the same time on Friday afternoons and said, "the extra pandemic food benefit for families with children we're getting has either run out or will run out soon, so they really appreciate this."

Barbara Blackburn



Thrivent Members: Did you know that you can create an Action Team twice a year? You can apply for up to \$250 each time to help support a community or ministry project. Grace can help you with this process and you can help many of the ministries we support with your Action Team dollars. You can also designate through your Thrivent Choice dollars who Thrivent makes charitable contributions to each year. Would you consider Grace as your designation? This year we are able to use those dollars to help a Tanzanian Pastor and religious studies student bring his wife to the United States for his graduation. In the past we have also been able to fund our own Faithworks program supporting our very own members in need. If you are a Thrivent member, please let Sandy Thompson know so we can reach out to you to suggest ministries you may consider supporting and can help you through the paperwork too.

If you haven't already, please let Sandy Thompson know if you are a Thrivent member so we can reach out to you as needs arise.



On the afternoon of Sunday, May 7, Grace will offer a New Members' Class. This two-hour session will begin at 3 p.m. and conclude at 5 p.m. Following the class, a guided tour of the Grace facility will be offered to those interested. This is presented as a "seeker" session, with no obligation to join afterward. Those interested in becoming members will be received on **Sunday, May 21**, during either worship service.

To register for this class, please use the Grace app or call the Grace office at 399-6257.

HEARTFELT THANKS

I would like to thank God for the opportunity to serve the Grace congregation for the last seven years as Ministry Assistant. It has been a joy and privilege to be a part of so many lives, thank you. May God continue to bless the Grace congregation, Cindy Witker

We'd like to give God the glory for getting to celebrate 92 years with Ellen. Ellen's health had declined with several falls because with leg immobility beginning in September of 2021. Thanks to everyone for their prayers, calls, texts and cards - this has truly been a blessing to us all! Hospice was wonderful to provide her with comfort care until April 20. Thanks to Pastor Tom and all of the Grace family for their prayers and support.

In Christ's Love,
Dave, Colleen and Ellen Whitaker

A BIG thank you to all the people who took the time to send me a beautiful card on my birthday. I received 24 cards from Grace and appreciated every one of them. Thank you again from the bottom of my heart! Lovingly, Betty Birch

OUTREACH CORNER



BLESSINGS IN A BOTTLE CAMPAIGN

Every year, the Pregnancy Resource Clinic organizes their Blessings in a Bottle campaign which provides a way for local churches, schools, and other organizations to support the ministry of the PRC. The Pregnancy Resource Clinic of Clark County is a Christ-centered organization that provides trusted care, support, and resources to all people regarding pregnancy and sexual health. They will be using a QR code again this year for their fund raising campaign. You can scan the code that will be available at Grace through the month of May to make an online donation, you can send a check to PRC directly, or pick up a baby bottle, fill with change and return by June 18th. For more information see Sandy Thompson.

St John's Food Pantry

May is another of our months to serve at St John's Food Pantry on Wednesday mornings. If you are interested in helping to distribute food please contact Judy Fredrich at 937-925-1177. St John's could also use bread and pastries, toiletries and soap. Place donations in the shopping cart in the Community Center.



Update from the Executive Director: Sandy Thompson

Update

There have been questions about my role as Executive Director and what my responsibilities include. While the job is in development and will be fluid based on what Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church's needs are, I can share with you what I have been doing so far.

My responsibilities include Staff Administration; from reviewing job descriptions, posting jobs, interviewing candidates, onboarding new staff, conducting staff reviews, staff development, and any daily needs that arise. The staff have been supportive in getting me up to speed. I have updated the Staff Handbook and am creating a Policy and Procedure Manual.

I am attending Council meetings and meet with Steve Garrett, our Council President, once a month. I am helping with the Nominating Committee and other projects staff and Council collaborate on, like the sanctuary refurbishing project and the NALC Today, Tomorrow, Forever Campaign.

I continue to coordinate our Outreach Ministry and have taken over the role of Point Person for CarePortal.

I am working with Pastor on an updated Pastoral Care Strategy and Leadership Development training. I'm assisting him with the new member invitations and classes. We are doing some vision planning and working on catechism here at Grace.

I am participating in a Christian Women Leaders small group and have started a coaching relationship with the Navigators. A key focus is developing relationships and growing spiritually to improve my work here at Grace.

“God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.” 1 Peter 4:10 NLT

Which Direction Are Your Spiritual Gifts Pointing?

The New Directions
Navigate
Engage
Serve
Worship



Grace is focusing this year on figuring out the directions our Spiritual Gifts are pointing us. The wooden compasses available for each of us to pick up on the Connections Table in our Narthex show directions for each of us to use as we try to determine what direction our spiritual gifts are directing us. Notice N, E, S and W on our new compass which represent: **Navigate, Engage, Serve and Worship.** That wooden compass is a tangible reminder of the direction in which our spiritual gifts are pointing us.

Serving on a ministry teams at Grace is a great way to live out your faith. In a world focused on personal gain, there is perhaps no greater way to show others what following Jesus is all about. But how do you know what direction your spiritual gifts are pointing you toward? Sometimes it's difficult for us to recognize our own spiritual gifts and others may see a gift in us long before we ourselves are aware of that gift.

As the Ministry Area Coordinator for Hospitality Ministries at Grace, I encourage our "First Impressions" Hospitality Ministries to help our guests feel welcome and ensure when those guests leave, they feel as if they have been in the company of friends. It's easy for us to see that in action each Sunday as our First Impressions teams are actively involved in **Engaging** and **Serving**. All attendees are greeted outdoors as the Parking Assistants open the door for them. **Parking assistants engage** in conversation with attendees and sometimes **serve** by parking and retrieving an attendee's car for them or helping an attendee carry larger items in for them. As attendees walk through the doors our assigned **greeters** warmly greet them and again engage them in conversation and answer any questions they may have. If they are guests, our greeters direct them to the Welcome Center where the **Welcome Center hosts engage** them in more conversation, answering questions and providing them with a gift bag that includes gifts and helpful information with more answers to their questions. During the passing of the peace in our service, one of our **Secret Greeters** shares the passing of peace with a guest, welcoming them, and later, following the service, **engages** them in conversation. Our **Secret Greeters** listen carefully as to **how they may be able to serve those in need of anything** (such as where the restrooms are located or where a particular Sunday School class is held). **Engage and serve, that's what our Hospitality Teams First Impressions Teams do!**

We have other Hospitality Teams that **Serve** by working a bit more behind the scenes by preparing and maintaining **activity bags filled with quiet activities for young children** to use during worship services, **Preparing gifts** to be **used at the Welcome Center**, or **Preparing gifts** for our **newest members**. However, if you watch closely on Sunday morning you can even see some of the ministry team members that typically work behind the scenes engaging and serving others. Here are two examples I've recently spotted in action at Grace: One member for children's activity bags took an activity bag to a child before the start of the service and explained to parents what it was and where it could be returned. Our New Member Recognition Team engages our newest members to orient them to Grace by answering questions and helping them understand activities and opportunities at Grace.

As you try to determine your spiritual gifts, remember **that you are endowed with talents to make a difference in the world and graced with gifts to fulfill your unique purpose.** May you be blessed in figuring out which direction your Spiritual Gifts are pointing you in so that you can become all you were created to be.

Donna Stelzer, Hospitality Ministry Area Coordinator

Memorial Day Parade

Come join us again at the annual Clark County Memorial Day Parade. We pull our veterans in the wagon and walk alongside passing out candy and Grace flyers to encourage residents to come and worship with us here at Grace.

It's always a fun time. If you would like to join us, meet us in the Grace parking lot at 7:30 am on Monday May 29, to avoid parking issues at the parade route line up in Veteran's Park.





More Than Enough...by Cathy Zernechel

Ezekiel 36: 26-27

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you ... I will place my spirit within you.

This speaks to me about turning to God in faith through Jesus.

A few months ago, I experienced driving through some winds from a tornado that tore through our area. It was unexpected and frightening. There was nowhere to go to be safe, so there was no choice but to drive through as best as I could. I remember reciting the Lord's prayer several times during the whole process of avoiding tree limbs and

someone's roof and thinking to myself that this is but a small taste of God's power. As I looked ahead, I saw clear skies as if I were driving through a tunnel. I was relieved to make it through. It seemed like it was slow motion at the time.

I think of that experience and it seems that our life is like that sometimes...very turbulent. All of us experience things like death of a loved one, serious illness, losing a job, losing a house, hunger....the list goes on. It seems our sorrow will never end. Yet, because of our faith in Jesus, we experience the power of the holy spirit that fills us with peace, joy, love, friendship....everything that allows us to be close to God and to share what it means to be a believer in Him.

God gave Jesus to us as the ultimate gift of love. To free us from our burdens and lift us out of darkness. Going through that storm that day allowed me to witness His power. I came through without a scratch on myself. No damage was done to the car. Whether I realized it or not, He was with me the whole time. Prayer and faith lifted me out that day as it has always done throughout my life. I give thanks to the Lord every day and ask him to guide me in ways that glorifies Him.

Jesus is more than enough.

CURRENT RESIDENT OR



www.grace-nalc.org 937.399.6257

Springfield, OH 45504

1801 St. Paris Pike

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