



*A reflection for this
 year month of
 July, 2023*

A Letter From The Pastor

BY TOM BRODBECK

July marks the conclusion of my 4th year as the Senior Pastor of this wonderful congregation. What a fascinating four years it has been!

Just seven months into my term, we had to discontinue our worship services due to the coronavirus. I remember joking that it takes most pastors longer than seven months to close the church. Unfortunately, many churches did not survive and became COVID victims organizationally. My heart is filled with sadness.

We came back into the building eight weeks later with countless restrictions and modifications to what we did, where we sat, and how we related to one another. Remember how you were asked to leave the building immediately after the end of the worship service? Today I watch with great joy the lingering conversations that happen in the narthex long after the conclusion of the service. My heart is filled with joy.

Fast forward four years. In that span of time, we have witnessed God at work in many ways. He has provided more-than-abundant resources to eliminate our indebtedness and to accomplish three major and expensive maintenance issues using resources already on hand. He has guided us through several staff changes, allowing us to add five new members to our team in 2023 alone. He has worked many miracles of healing, provided countless jobs and walked with congregation members as they have processed their grief. Today we are experiencing unprecedented growth. Attendance is finally at pre-pandemic levels. There is a resurgence in our children's ministry. We have added 30 new members this year alone. My heart is filled with gratitude.

The Psalmist invites us to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). Indeed He is.

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Stewardship Article for July 2023

More Than Enough

Romans 15:13

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Worry is a human emotion we all experience throughout our lives. We may worry when we don't know the outcome of a problem or situation. We want to be in control of our circumstances but there are events and experiences that are out of our control. When we think about everything that can go wrong in the future, we're missing out on the joy in life. You may be going through circumstances right now that are out of your control, but I encourage you to place your trust in our God of this universe and release your worries and allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with hope, joy and peace. As we face the heavy burdens of this life, may we be reminded that our God is more than enough.

Beth Szekacs

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Outreach Breakfast Break Sunday July 9th during the Sunday School hours:

Please plan to attend our Breakfast Break featuring Aaron Earlywine from CarePortal and Tami Carter our local CarePortal/Streamline Initiative Director at The Nehemiah Foundation. CarePortal connects local families in need with local churches to help meet urgent needs they have and is especially designed to keep kids out of foster care. Members will receive email notifications about needs we receive from local schools or agencies and can decide if they are able to help meet that need. It could include donating a mattress, funding car repairs or rent/utilities, donating hygiene supplies or groceries/meals, delivering items we collect or being part of the team that follows up with the family to see how they are doing. Come and learn more about all they have been able to do and how to be a part of this wonderful ministry. See Sandy Thompson for more information.



Springfield Soup Kitchen needs more supplies. During the month of July we will be collecting these much needed items which include **travel size** hygiene products such as soap (liquid or bar), deodorant, disposable razors (bulk style), shaving cream, toothpaste, toothbrush, women's menstrual products, wash cloths, and hand towels. Also needed are food items such as breakfast bars, protein/granola bars, meat sticks, apples, oranges, peanut butter and/or cheese crackers, **ready to eat non refrigerated items only please.** Please see the narthex display or Larry Cisler for more information.

Seeds of Grace *****



Grace's Charity Auction

December 2, 2023
9:00 a.m. - Noon



Featuring: handmade items from members of Grace's congregation.



Charity we are supporting
<https://www.seedsofgraceministries.org/>

Grace Card Ministry...connecting people with the Heart of Jesus.

"I'm a little pencil in the Hand of a writing God, who is sending a love letter to the world." Mother Teresa

We are celebrating our 8th year of melding together to express the love that flows from God's heart into our lives to brighten someone's day. Cards and notes have been written, along with personal prayers said, sending them to be received by others suffering difficult times or enjoying happy occasions.

We thank God for using our hands in this ministry to embrace the needs of others, allowing them to see the loving and caring heart of our church family. He has enabled us to touch people's lives throughout the United States, sharing the Good News of Jesus's Love for them.

"I can't express enough how kind your cards and caring messages are. I've read them over several times. I believe our Lord will always be near..." Bev from Kansas City, Mo.

Love in Christ, Deb O'Neal

On seven Sundays from July 16 to August 27, the adult Sunday School class will view and discuss the Right Now Media video series: In Pursuit of Paul. The series is hosted by New Testament scholar and seminary professor Con Campbell. From the series description:



Apart from Jesus, no one had a greater influence in founding Christianity than the apostle Paul. Journey with host Con Campbell as he uncovers Paul's remarkable life and his voyages from Jerusalem across the Mediterranean world to Rome, where he was martyred. In these class sessions, we will get to know the apostle Paul better and see many of the locations where Paul traveled to bring the message of Christ to the world. **Kristin Cline**

Adult Education Opportunities

The Adult Education ministries here at Grace are more than just classes on Sundays, or Adult Bible studies on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings. Much more.

At the core of our faith formation ministry you will find Life to Life groups, small clusters of 4-5 people, who covenant together for a specific period of time to study a mutually agreed on passage of Scripture. These groups remain intentionally small to allow each member an opportunity to participate in the conversation around the passage.

There is no right way to study the passage, but we suggest you consider using the "Swedish Method." This is a simple and proven tool, requiring no advance preparation.

As your Life to Life group gathers, you have a word of prayer, asking God to make Himself known to you as you study. Then you read aloud the passage chosen for that day (e.g., Philippians chapter 1). Next, group members work silently for a few minutes, re-reading the passages and looking for three elements.

You want to find a "lightbulb," something in the passage that stands out to you (as if a light were shining on it). It might be something you don't recall reading before or even something old that really hits you in that moment.

You next have to find the "question mark." These are items that are difficult to understand. It might be a word you don't know, a teaching that doesn't make sense or a person you've never heard of. Finally find the "arrow." Arrows are application points, answered with application questions: "How does this passage speak to me today? What do I need to do, think or believe differently?"

The group then discusses these three elements (everyone shares), you pray and go your way. Gather some friends together and get started!

Our Children's Ministry Is Growing!

I am so excited to announce that we will have three classrooms this year for our Children Sunday School! They will be combined as 1st and 2nd, 3rd and 4th and 5th and 6th grades. We are also bringing back our Faith Journey program and the Rites and supplemental activities that go along with each group. To do so, I am seeking individuals who are interested in teaching or being an assistant in any of the classes. The 1st and 2nd graders will study the "Church Year" at the appropriate time throughout the year, and Bible Stories. The 3rd and 4th graders will study the Bible (September to mid-October) and Bible Stories the rest of the year; 5th and 6th graders will study "Prayer, Confession & Holy Communion (January-May). All the lessons and supplies will be prepared for you. In the past, teachers have taught for one semester (September-December or January-May). We can do that again or discuss other options. Please contact Leslie McKinney if you are interested.