



GRACE
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

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Inside This Issue...

- 2... Celebrations, Office closure
- 3... Vicar's Voice, Martha/Lydia Circle, Little Free Pantry
- 4... Medical Debt Relief Campaign Follow-up
- 5... Backpack Blessing, Finance report
- 6... LSI Update, Bunny Dillard Ordination
- 7... Centering Prayer
- 8... Anniversary Brunch Invitation, Spiritual Direction, Fall 2024 dates
- 9... Grace Garden, Mission Action Fund
- 10... Pastoral Visits, Community Prayers, Online Worship Access

Sunday Schedule

9:00 a.m. Worship, in-person and Online
10:00 a.m. Fellowship & Coffee

Morning Prayer Tues & Fridays at 9:30 a.m.
@Gracelutherandm

Office & Open Building Hours
9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Monday – Thursday
Office closed Tuesday, August 6

Wonder

As I think about the approaching change to August, I find myself thinking about the movie "Wonder." The main character is named August but goes by the name Auggie. He is a boy who deals with the realities of Treacher Collins syndrome. Because of the impact on his appearance, he has struggled to fit in. For much of his life, he lived in avoidance of the world, choosing to be homeschooled and wearing an astronaut helmet while in public.

The story then follows Auggie as he starts to go to school. I do not want to give away too many details. The movie, or novel, are really worth your time. What I will share is that the journey involves all the characters facing fears and the discovering that there is life on the other side. It is not an easy journey for any of the characters. They all deal with difficulties. The best way through the challenge is to be true to yourself. Trying to be something or someone else does not.

This is a great lesson to learn. We all try to find ourselves. We try to fit in. Authenticity is what will carry you through. This is true for individuals. It is also true of a community. Congregations have to find themselves sometimes too. There is pressure to fit in or to be relevant. There are pressures because of unspoken expectations. There is incredible gravity to recreate what once worked. There is pressure to try to be more like other communities of faith and replicate what has worked for others.

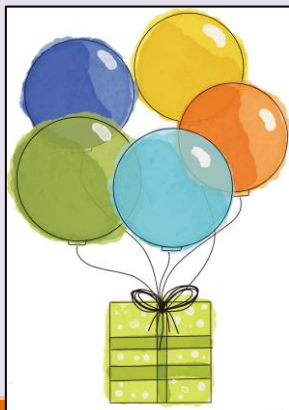
I feel like we have been on a great journey as a community of faith during recent years. I think of Auggie's growth throughout "Wonder." He learned to be himself. I believe that we are finding the same, how to be ourselves. Things look and feel different than they used to, and that is okay. It doesn't feel like we are trying to be something or someone else. We have learned to simply be, to be present with one another, and to be ourselves.

It is such a blessing to be on this journey with all of you.

In Christ,
Pastor Mike

Happy August Birthday

- 2 - Kevin Drury
Deborah Helt
- 4 - Matthew Trickle
- 5 - Rev. Ro Zimany
Donald Swanson
Joshua Appenzeller
Jolee Feeney
Kayleigh Medhurst
- 6 - Carla Peterman
Riannon Brown
- 7 - Layne Weber
- 8 - Teri Koch
- 9 - Ross Lewis
Katherine Lenhart
- 11 - Linda Ulrick
- 12 - Brian Gerling
- 13 - Josefina Ruiz
- 15 - Adam Dostalík
- 16 - Cheryl Weatherington
- 18 - Jeanne Drury
Beverly Russell
Michael Best
- 20 - Patrick Thompson
Brent Ridnour
Cooper Mortenson
- 21 - Tom McCleary
- 23 - Jason Galle
Janice Nordeen
- 24 - Grace Schroeder
Janet Trentmann
Linda Gronert
Brady Bogue
Cris Hidalgo
- 25 - Scott Honsey
- 27 - Tim Nelson
- 28 - Philip Snyder
Brandon Niemuth
- 29 - Joan Fumetti
Todd Prescott
- 30 - Leonard Ringgenberg
- 31 - Eleanor Carlson
Gary Nehmer



Prayers and Sympathies

We hold the families and loved ones of Gene Krauss in our hearts and prayers.

Happy August Anniversary

- 1 - Stuart and Martha Mitchell
- 4 - Paul and Melissa Kallenbach
Howard and Alice Kulzer
- 11 - Donald and Bonnie Jo Swanson
- 12 - John and Sharon Schwemler
- 13 - Gary and Marion Nehmer
- 14 - Lathrop and Sally Preston
Ralf and Inga Hoifeldt
- 19 - Kenneth and Eleanor Carlson
- 21 - Ernest and Cheryl Weatherington
- 25 - Bruce Mumm and Christie Rosheim
Scott and Julie Honsey
- 26 - Jerry and Diane Westercamp
- 29 - Norman and Lenora Iverson
- 31 - Martin and Kari Dostalík
Kurt and Kathy Bowermaster



70th Anniversaries!

We want to note two special August anniversaries!

**Ralf and Inga Hoifeldt
and
Norm and Lenora Iverson**



Both couples were married in August, 1954.

Happy Anniversary!



Office Closure/Staff Retreat

The church office will be closed and the building locked on Tuesday, August 6.

Staff will be meeting and working offsite, as we prepare for the coming year!

Vicar's Voice

Friends,

It is hard to believe I have already been at Grace for a month! I want to express my gratitude to everyone who has made me feel so welcome already. One of my favorite things so far has been hearing such wonderful stories from the people in this congregation about what Grace means to them, memories that have been made here, and the ways that this church has been meaningful in their lives. These stories have shown me a glimpse into the incredible work that is being done here and I am glad to be a part of it. If we have not yet connected, I look forward to doing so!

It is wonderful to celebrate the opening of the Being New Spirituality Center at Grace Lutheran Church. Our world can be a busy and chaotic place that continually demands more and more of us. What a gift to have a space to just be fully present and to remember that we are enough, exactly as we are--there is nothing we can do (or not do!) that would take us further away from God. I was further reminded of this in Bible study a few weeks ago when we spent time talking about Psalm 23. This is a psalm that is very familiar for many, but for me it will never lose its message of comfort, as the psalmist reminds us to trust in God's presence, wherever we are. However this summer is treating you so far--whether life feels like the best it has ever been, or if you are making your way through a dark valley--I pray that you feel God's presence near.

Peace & Blessings,
Vicar Jesse



Martha/Lydia Circle

We meet on Thursday, August 22nd at 9:30 and hope to do a project for Moore Elementary teachers.

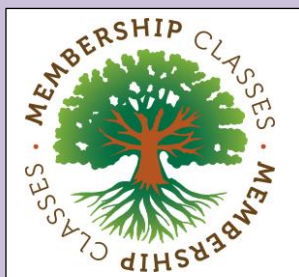
Also, don't forget an item for the Little Free Food Pantry.



August Little Free Pantry Request of the Month:

Schools start up later this month, so we will collect school supply donations this month: spiral wide-lined notebooks, #2 pencils, markers, dry erase markers, pencil box, etc. You may also give to the Little Free Pantry through the [GIVE](#) page where funds will be used to purchase items to stock the pantry.

There is an [Amazon Grace Wish List](#) available if you prefer to shop this way. Items will be shipped directly to the church.



New Member Classes with Pastor Mike and Vicar Jesse

If you are interested in becoming a member of Grace or are simply curious what that would look like, the first Fall class will be held on Sunday, September 29 after worship. When the October and November classes are scheduled, we will publish them in the enews, Sunday announcements, and on the website calendar.

You are always welcome to meet with Pastor Mike at a different time if you would like to start the conversation/ask questions before the next class. Please reach out to the office or Pastor Mike directly at Mike@gracedm.org or 515/276-6873.

Medical Debt reduction follow-up

Our Medical Debt Reduction Campaign has successfully abolished a total of \$2,054,555.96 in debt for 1,710 people in Iowa! Those individuals and families have received letters from Undue/RIP informing them that their medical debt has been fully forgiven, TAX FREE, thanks to a gift from Grace Lutheran Church, Des Moines.

Since UnDue Medical Debt is typically able to forgive \$100 for every \$1 donated, we were thrilled thinking the funds we raised would forgive 1.5 Million of medical debt. However, not only was THEE Alliance able to find debt local to Polk County so we could make a difference here in our community, they were able to find much older debt which had been discounted even further, allowing the money you donated to stretch farther. This means more families will be able to build better credit, use their earnings for basic needs and to get ahead without worrying about how debt beyond their control can affect their choices of food, housing, education, and future medical care.

Medical Debt does more than harm credit scores.

- People skip medical care to avoid addition debt, this in turn can lead to more serious (and expensive) medical issues.
- Mental and emotional feelings of failure and stress affect all areas of life, taking away enjoyment, the ability to be present, and often, causing conflict. Debtors are three times more likely to struggle with anxiety and depression.
- Needing to pay off debt means families make hard choices between food and medicine, proper clothing – which can affect how they are perceived at work and in their communities, which can hold them back from higher earnings. It's a vicious cycle.

The funds we raised allowed debt to be abolished in the following Counties:

Adams, Benton, Black Hawk, Boone, Buchanan, Buena Vista, Butler, Carroll, Cedar, Cerro Gordo, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Clinton, Crawford, Dallas, Delaware, Des Moines, Dubuque, Fayette, Floyd, Franklin, Greene, Grundy, Guthrie, Hancock, Henry, Howard, Ida, Iowa, Jasper, Johnson, Jones, Keokuk, Kossuth, Lee, Linn, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Mills, Monroe, Muscatine, Osceola, Page, Palo Alto, Plymouth, Pocahontas, Polk, Pottawattamie, Poweshiek, Scott, Shelby, Sioux, Story, Tama, Wapello, Warren, Webster, Winnebago, Winneshiek, Woodbury, Worth, Wright.

525 of those 1,710 recipients reside in Polk County, with a total of \$849,176.78 forgiven locally!

UnDue Medical Debt Relief

UnDue has been able to forgive debts for over 8.5 million.

They also work on influencing policy and rulemaking that affects medical debt, and have been championing the goal of taking medical debt OFF credit records, among other initiatives. They partner with the government, hospitals and local physicians to find local debt, They also partner with well a community nonprofit aimed at eliminating disparities and improving medical access.

Find out more about their goals and partners at unduemedicaldebt.org.

THEE Alliance Forgiving Medical Debt

Members of THEE Alliance are Minnesota and Upper Midwest faith communities who purchase local, discounted hospital medical debt through Undue Medical Debt for pennies on the dollar. Families are then notified their debt has been forgiven, tax free, thereby restoring their credit and ability to buy basics, which gives hope for their future.

Find out more at thealliance.org



Blessing of Backpacks

During worship on Sunday, August 25
Students of all ages, teachers, school employees, and parents: bring your backpacks with you - or just yourselves if you prefer - on Sunday, August 25 as we prepare to bless those headed off to a new school year.



Sunday Worship Volunteer Needs

- Greeter
- Lector
- Communion Assistant (or two, depending on the weekend)
- One or two people to make the coffee (directions in the Gathering Hall Kitchenette), set out the box of donut holes, napkins and cups for coffeetime and fellowship.

If you are interested, but new to these tasks, please call the office. We'll be happy to walk you through the details. Or ask someone on Sunday after worship! They'll be happy to show you how everything works <https://volunteersignup.org/3TKR7?classic>



Finance Report –June Results

Financial results for June YTD are as follows:

- Income – Actual \$212,938, Budget \$208,075, Prior Year \$186,691
- Expenses – Actual \$230,857, Budget \$208,000, Prior Year \$238,938
- Net activity – Actual (\$17,979), Budget \$75, Prior Year (\$52,246)

Activity last month was \$16K ahead of budget. This month, activity is \$17K behind budget. This \$30K swing was due entirely to extensive roof repair work that was recently completed. Excluding this one time expense, activity is in line with budget and much better than last year.

July Congregational Council Meeting Highlights

The July meeting highlights will be published in the September newsletter. A copy can always be requested from the council or office before publication.

2024 Congregational Council Members

Term ends 2025: Carter Woodruff, Mike Hilsabeck, Kevin Drury, Jenny Rehder

Term Ends 2026: Valerie Culp, Greg Boesch

Term Ends 2027: Tom McCleary, Linda Moravec, Brian Gerling, Stuart Mitchell

Exec Team:

President: Greg Boesch Vice President: Tom McCleary

Secretary: Jenny Rehder At-Large Member: Kevin Drury

August 2024 – Navigating Transitions: From Summer to Fall, from Struggle to Strength



Though the longer days of summer, BBQs, and running through sprinklers are coming to an end, cool evenings at the football stadium, beautiful color-changing leaves, and spending the school day with friends are upon us. As Iowans prepare for the multicolored season of autumn, LSI is here to help you navigate the changing of the seasons.

Transitions can be a difficult time for anyone, and LSI provides services to ease the process of change. Our Immigrant and Refugee Community Services help new arrivals to the U.S. resettle and start a life in Iowa. Our Host Homes program helps adults living with disabilities transition to greater independence through a mentor-mentee relationship. Our Early Childhood Services prepare parents expecting a child for a healthy birth and provide support as children transition from milestone to milestone. Our foster parents provide safe, loving homes for children moving through the foster system as they await adoption.

Whether we're helping someone through a difficult life transition in therapy or teaching former refugees English and cultural competency skills, at LSI we're there every step of the way. If you need support during a transition in your life, visit LSIowa.org to learn more about our services.

For more information, please contact Deb Whitford, LSI's Director of Philanthropy and Church Relations, at Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org or 563-676-2065.

Our Mission: Lutheran Services in Iowa responds to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service. LSI is an affiliated social ministry partner of the Iowa congregations of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and a member of LSA (Lutheran Services in America). We proudly serve people of all ages, abilities, religions, sexes, gender identities, national origins, ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations. Learn more at LSIowa.org and facebook.com/LSI.iowa.



Ordination of Bunny Dillard

By the Grace of God and the Call of the Church, Bunny Dillard will be ordained to the Ministry of Word & Sacrament in Christ's One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Ordination will take place:

August 17 at 3 p.m. at
Tree of Life Lutheran Church
3201 N. Loop 336 W
Conroe, Texas 77304

There will be a reception following the service. Find additional information and R.S.V.P. at

WITHJOY.COM/BUNNY

Bunny is called to Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Centering Prayer

As we learned in the April issue, Centering Prayer is a spiritual practice where we pray in silence. Most of us are comfortable with praying with words. Sometimes, the prayers are favorites, like the Lord's Prayer. Sometimes we pray to ask forgiveness for times when we have not acted the way we think God would like us to act. Sometimes we pray prayers of petition to ask God to bless the lives of those we love. Centering prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer, but it gives them a new light and depth of meaning. It is both a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship.



Centering prayer is a receptive method of silent prayer where in silence, we are learning how to listen, and in listening, we are learning how to hear. It is a loving attentiveness to God where we rest in God. The intention is to sustain our consent to God's presence and action at the depths of our being, both during the time of prayer and as we move about our day.

As we wait and listen, we are given a teachable spirit, and over time, we experience more and more an inward attentiveness to the Divine Whisper throughout all of life's motions – balancing the checkbook, vacuuming the floor, working in our jobs and caring for our families. As the practice becomes more of a habit, "the action of the Spirit's gifts of wisdom and understanding become more powerful and gradually take over our prayer, enabling us to rest habitually in the presence of God. This experience is not necessarily felt during prayer but is experienced in its effects in daily life." *Intimacy with God*, Thomas Keating.

The Guidelines for Centering Prayer are the following:

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
3. When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

Taken from Contemplative Outreach: <https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/centering-prayer-method/> More information on Centering Prayer is available at this link. Another great resource is the book *Open Mind, Open Heart*, by Thomas Keating. A Centering Prayer session is normally 20 minutes long and it is recommended that it be practiced twice a day. You can start with smaller periods of time and build up to 20 minutes!

In addition to Centering Prayer on your own, you can practice Centering Prayer in a group.

Local groups: Grace has been home to a vibrant Centering Prayer group for many years, meeting Tuesdays from 10:30-11:30 on Zoom. Contact Julie Honsey (honsey.julie@gmail.com) for the link. There are a number of other local Centering Prayer groups, some virtual, others in person (<https://www.centeriowa.org/index.php/en/prayer-groups/meeting-times>). These groups include both 20 minutes of silence, as well as discussion.

For any questions on Centering Prayer or additional resources, please contact any member of the Being New team.

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual Direction (or spiritual *accompaniment, guidance, or friendship*) is a way to embrace a deeper relationship with God through an ongoing conversation with a listening companion. Spiritual direction is for anyone and everyone who seeks meaningful connection with God, and deeper understanding of and engagement with life.

There is no rigid structure to spiritual direction. It is always adaptable to the needs of the individuals involved. Since spirituality impacts all of a person's life, the conversation is wide ranging and touches on a variety of matters.

A spiritual director is essentially a co-listener, helping to listen with you for the movement of God's spirit in your everyday life—through movements of soul, and feelings and experiences. It is especially valuable during times of questioning, confusion, grief, and transition. Everything shared in spiritual direction is held in strict confidence.



You are Invited!

Norm and Lenora Iverson will be celebrating their 70th Anniversary in August, and there will be a brunch here at Grace to celebrate!

When: Sunday, August 25, after worship

Where: Grace Hall

Who: Everyone - no RSVP required.

Cards only, no gifts please.



Fall Schedule Start Dates 2024!

Mark Your Calendars, we'll be sharing details about these and other events in the coming weeks!

Backpack Blessing in Worship – Sunday, August 25

God's Work Our Hands – Sunday, September 8.

Tuesday Bible Study – September 10, 9 a.m., Grace Hall with Pastor Mike and Vicar Jesse

Thursday evening Bible Study – September 12, 6:30 pm. Room 102 with Pastor Mike and Vicar Jesse

Sunday School – Sunday, September 15, 10:15 a.m. after worship and fellowship.

New Member Class – Sunday, September 25

Grace Garden Harvests are in full swing!

The garden is doing very well this year! We have a great team, the weather has cut down on our need to water, and we've cut back on some of the high-maintenance plants while still prioritizing colorful nutrition.

Much of our harvest each week goes to one of the many Food Pantries in Des Moines and the surrounding communities. We also place some of our harvest in the Little Free pantry. Beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplant, and peppers hold up well and are quickly snapped up by visitors to the pantry. Beets, turnips, okra are also taken in smaller quantities. Often we will fill cleaned, clear clamshells - like the ones your salads and strawberries come in - with a variety of whatever we are harvesting, creating an easy to grab variety of vegetables.

If you have extra produce in your garden (zucchini anyone?) the Little Free pantry is a good way to share. If it's a super hot day think about placing it in the pantry in the early morning or evening.

If you would like to help harvest, we have a few weeks in August where we could use a little help watering. Reach out to Michelle in the office, or Tammy Denton, Loree Nelson, Rich Snyder, or Julie Honsey with questions! Pictured: a few recent harvests and the comfy bench in the garden.



Mission Action Fund

The Fund will also Accept Donations.

Fund Goal: The goal of the Mission Action Fund is to be able to respond quickly to needs in the immediate neighborhood and beyond (statewide, nationally, and internationally), and not to be used for the Congregational Budget. This fund is ideally meant to be used in instances where a Grace member is involved in direct or indirect service to others by being engaged in a community or service activity, OR in instances where a need exists outside of the Grace community. The intent here is to get Grace members actively involved in Grace's mission and to live a life differently through Christ.

Eligibility for Funds:

- Local service organizations. Grace members may or may not be directly active in the organization. Organizations that serve the Merle Hay neighborhood would be ideal but not restricted to this geography.
- Service organizations (statewide, nationally or internationally) that service/help others in times of need or crisis.

Process to Apply: Copy the following questions into an email, along with your answers and send to mike@gracedm.org. An application needs to be approved by a majority of the Quick Response Team to be funded. The Mission Action Fund Quick Response team consists of Aaron Brandsfield, Kristin Medhurst, Don Schouten, and Pastor Mike.

Grace Member Applicant Name, Member Mailing Address, Cell Phone or best way to contact you, Date of request, Funds Requested, Date Funds are Needed, Name of Organization: (if applicable), Project Name, Brief Description of Project or Need



Preparation for Worship – every Sunday morning!

We have begun offering a new prayerful opportunity for members of the congregation to center and prepare for worship.

When: Sunday mornings, 8:30 a.m.

Where: The Upper Room.

What to expect: A prayer, a short Centering-Prayer sit, and a reflective reading of the lyrics for one of the day's hymns. The practice will end with the chanting of a Psalm before heading down to the Sanctuary for worship.

Worship, online access, written materials, and other resources.

Sundays:

9:00 a.m. in-person worship - also livestreamed

10:00 a.m. coffeetime and fellowship in the Gathering Hall

10:15 a.m. Education Hour will return in fall after a summer break, with options for ages 5 and up!

You can also find us online:

- **On our website** [livestream page](#) every Sunday at 9.
 - From the home page at www.gracedm.org,
 - scroll to the "Welcome to Grace" section,
 - click on the red "Online Worship" button. If you see a player with our logo, know you are in the right place and worship will begin shortly.
- **Facebook:** Worship is uploaded to Facebook on Sunday after worship. Find us on Facebook @GraceLutherandm
- **Watch archived** worship services (uploaded after 24 hours) on the [Resources/Worship Videos page](#).

Worship materials are always posted on our website prior to worship. Find those and other communications at the following links.

[Worship Volunteer Signup](#)

[Weekly Announcements](#)

[Weekly Bulletins](#)

[Online Giving](#)

[Monthly Newsletters](#)

Pastoral Visits with Pastor Mike

Please call the office at 515-276-6873, or Pastor Mike directly (extension 203) to set up a time. You can also directly email mike@gracedm.org

Praying for one another is an important part of the life of a community of faith.

Share your prayer needs or update your personal contact information with us by using the white Prayer Cards in your pew. Place the folded card in the offering plate or the locked office mailbox. These cards will be placed in a private envelope for the pastor to go through on Monday mornings. You may also choose to simply call 515-276-6873, or email Pastor Mike mike@gracedm.org directly.