

NOVEMBER 2020

THE GOOD NEWS

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Pastor's Corner

November is finally here, and with it one of the most contentious elections in recent memory. Not the most contentious ever, to be sure. That honor would go to 1860, when Abraham Lincoln was elected and the southern states promptly seceded, beginning the Civil War. I don't think we're quite that divided these days, but we are certainly more politically and culturally polarized at the moment that we have been since at least the late 1960s, which I don't remember very well since I was quite young.

Most of us are looking forward to having the election behind us, and hoping that things just might settle down and get back to normal after that. As much as I would like for that to be the case, and as much as I will pray for calmer, less tumultuous days ahead, I am under no illusion that November 3 will be the end of all our problems, no matter which candidate wins the presidency and which parties take control of the House and Senate. We will still be a divided nation on November 4, or whenever the results of the election are finally known.

Not only will we still be a divided nation, but we will also still be living in a world plagued by a global pandemic that has surged considerably in recent weeks in this country, and not only here. But this is not the worst pandemic in the history of the world, or of this country. Our death toll so far is still only a third of influenza pandemic of 1918 in absolute numbers, and much lower by percentage of population, though that could yet change. Even worse pandemics struck Europe 700 centuries ago, killing one third to one half of the population. Less than two centuries later smallpox killed an estimated 90% of the native American population.

The pandemic we are living through will not be anywhere near as deadly. And there are signs of vaccines right around the corner, which if true, will still take a good deal of time to be made available to the whole population. Even then, even the best vaccine will not be 100% effective, and many of our fellow citizens who distrust science or our government (or both), will refuse to be vaccinated.

(Continued on next page)

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 -

Show us your Grace!
Saint Andrew's Update
A Note from Andy Bruhn

- 3 -

Food Pantry Updates
Crop Walk
Open Council Positions

- 4 -

Open Council Positions
Virtual Nativity Walk

-5-

Adult Sunday School
Fall Clean Up

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So, these are difficult times. The road ahead with regard to national unity and national health will likely be significantly longer than we expect or hope. These are not the kinds of time we would choose to have to live in. Yet here we are. And I think that Mordecai's words to Queen Esther (Esther 4:14) could be applied to each of us: "Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." We are none of us queens, of course. But each of us find ourselves in a situation in which we can influence the lives of others, and through our baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we are called to be a good influence, embodying the patience, love, and goodness of God even in difficult circumstances – especially in difficult circumstances.

As the year of Matthew draws to its close toward the end of this month, I want to continue to remind you of the final words of Jesus spoken to his disciples as he sends them out into a world no less troubled than our own: "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." However hard things get for you in the days and weeks and months to come, that's a promise to hold on to.

+ Pastor Repp

Show us your Grace!

Do you have some pictures to share of your experience at Grace? We are looking for pictures and personal stories of the ministries and activities that go on at Grace. Over the last year, the newsletter has showcased different parts of Grace as part of the cover, but we would like to get more input from members. Pictures would be used for the newsletter, and also possibly on social media. If you have pictures and stories to share, please send them to Caitlyn at gracelife@glccu.org

Saint Andrew's Update

Dear partners in our ministry,

We are eager to announce that UIUC has thus far been able to contain the spread of COVID-19 and stay open this fall. This means we too have been able to hold a few in-person gatherings: worship in our yard, bring-your-own picnics, and bonfires with plenty of marshmallows for roasting. We've been able to serve our neighbor through card writing to COVID shut-ins, raising funds for the annual CROP Walk and for other organizations, and some outdoor work days at local community gardens that provide food for the hungry. We've set

up a meditation station in our sanctuary and safe study stations inside our building for cooped-up students who'd like to attend their online classes in different space or to study and pray outside their dorm. We continue our online Bible studies and book discussions. In spite of our limitations this fall, we have some new students join us for worship and other activities. God remains faithful!

We continue to work on creating good gathering space in our yard. The new deck is complete and becomes our chancel area for worship, and we are still exploring ways to provide shelter. We hope to install an electrical outlet on the outside of the building for string lights and sound equipment for worship. Even post-pandemic, we believe we will continue to use our outdoor space for worship and fellowship.

Thank you for thinking of us during this pandemic. We are so grateful.

Grace and Peace in Christ,
Pr Amy Thoren

A Note from Director of Music

Dear Friends,

I know some of you (myself included!) participated in the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) O Day Full of Grace virtual Pentecost recording this past spring. Well, the Christmas edition is now here! [Here](#) is a link to the information! The Pentecost one brought together over 1,000 people! If you're interested the due date is November 8!

I was so pleased to see and hear the Reformation virtual choir of Martin Luther's Morning Prayer by Carl Schalk. [Here](#) is a link if you haven't seen it. There is something honest about seeing each other in our homes that acknowledges this time of exile we find ourselves in; however, beauty can transcend a computer screen! It has been an encouragement to hear how that video has blessed others--even beyond our congregation. I would love to see *new* people participate in the November virtual choir! If you would like to give it a try, please reach out to me and I'll guide you through!

Grace and Peace,
Andy
music@glccu.org

Food Pantry News

HOW QUICKLY THINGS CHANGE...SOMETIMES!

As the October newsletter had “already gone to press,” you might remember that we believed the USDA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program had expired and would not be renewed. Well, very fortunately, it WAS renewed for the month of October. We are hopeful that it MIGHT be renewed again, but we do not know right now. What it means in the short term is that during the month of October we have been able to continue to provide our client families with meat and eggs, dairy, and fresh fruit and vegetables provided in these food boxes. We hope that this project will be renewed again, because we believe that people who have been struggling will continue to struggle as the pandemic continues. In whatever way this plays out, the Pantry Board is committed to being good stewards of the resources given to us, both by the USDA, and by the faithful, generous people of Grace Lutheran Church. We will share what we can with those in our community who are seeking support. With the holiday season fast approaching, we hope that we can continue to help provide nutritious food for those less fortunate in our midst.

Please continue to pray that we stay healthy so that we can continue to serve the community through this important ministry. We foresee the “no-contact drive-through” system of food delivery through the winter months. We will bundle up and do our best!

WE DO NOT NEED EGG CARTONS AT THIS TIME. PLEASE HOLD THEM.

Thank you for contributing your clean reusable plastic grocery bags. We use dozens of them each week. Please place them on the island in the south kitchen.

Is anyone sewing masks? We would like to continue to encourage our family clients to be diligent about wearing masks. Homemade washable masks are a very tangible reminder that we must all continue to protect ourselves and others. We would really appreciate being able to give one new mask to each of our client families. Blessed to be a blessing to others in Jesus’ name!

Your Pantry Board,

*Kathy Bowersox, Jim Fleming, Dale Herrstrom,
Karen Krusa, Royce Wilken*



Thank You for Crop Walk Support!

Thank you to all who have donated to the Champaign-Urbana Crop Walk! So far, the CU Crop Walk has raised over \$16,000 to help feed those in need. A big thank you also for all those who have participated in the virtual walk! Here are some pictures from our walkers, including the Loven family, Kathy Bowersox, Helen Repp, Janet Lepp, Jim Anderson, Izzy Sprouse, and Eileen Herrstrom.

Open Council Positions

Come join us! The Church Council is still in need of **THREE** at large members and **ONE** officer as president. Currently, Claire Vail is serving as vice president, but is willing to switch if someone is will to fill the vice president position. The only requirement is that you be a giving member of record.

Please contact Claire Vail or Pastor Repp (pastor@glccu.org) if you are willing to serve in any of these capacities.

Update from Council

November is the time of year the council turns its attention to financial matters. We ask committees to turn in a budget request for 2021 and then we begin the review process to present a budget to the congregation at the January Congregational meeting, which will be held by zoom on January 24 at 10:45 and a budget forum to be held January 17 at 10:45.

Please prayerfully consider how you will support Grace Church both with time and treasure for 2021.

Virtual Nativity Walk – December 6th, 2020

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church would like to invite your members to share their nativity sets virtually with the community this year. Simon Tiffin, a recent U of I grad and former Music Minister at St. Andrew's, will be putting together the Virtual Nativity Walk. Providing pictures and videos along with written or recorded short stories of your nativity sets will help create a compelling nativity show. Names and home churches will also be included during the virtual showing. We hope to provide families and individuals a relaxing opportunity to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ throughout this Christmas season.

If you have any questions, or want help submitting your photos or videos contact: Patty Hart or Michelle Rome from Good Shepherd or, Simon Tiffin

The form you will need can be found here:
<https://forms.gle/UwGFZyufY68vM5Ai8>

Coming Soon in Adult Sunday School

We will soon be beginning a discussion of racism and its connection to our understanding of sin and our life of faith. The resource for this discussion will be the book *White Fragility* by Robin Diangelo. New and used copies are available from various internet retailers.

Fall Clean Up – Help Needed!!

On the morning of Saturday, November 14 OR anytime between now and then, as your schedule allows: Please consider helping out this fall with winter prep tasks at Grace Lutheran Church. Select a time that works for your schedule. Anytime between now and on Saturday November 14:

Rake and Bag leaves: Grab yard waste bag and fill it up, and then carefully place the yard waste bag on the edge of the right-of-way along the Union Street curb. (A supply of yard waste bags will be located at the east entry. Bring your own rake.)

Or, if you are available on the morning of Saturday November 14, your help will be needed to: Rake and bag more leaves, Remove weeds and spent annuals, Put away hose reels inside, cover A/C Units for the winter and place the stored 5 gallon buckets that contain ice melt and sand at entrances. Thanks if you can help! Susan Monte

Reminder!

If you would like something to be included in the monthly newsletter, please send the information to Caitlyn at gracelife@glccu.org by the 20th of each month.

If you would like an announcement to be included in our weekly Grace Notes page, please contact Lyla at office@glccu.org by the Wednesday of that week.