

May 2024

Grace Connections

Lutheran Church
Champaign, Illinois

What it Means to be Welcoming

“Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” (Romans 15:7)

At the congregational meeting in January, we voted to explore becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation. Being a Reconciling in Christ congregation means explicitly welcoming people who have long been excluded from Christian communities of faith, namely people whose sexual orientation and or identity falls outside what has been considered normal and socially acceptable. One very good question that came up in the discussion before the vote was why we need to be explicit in our welcome. Why should we go out of our way to welcome this specific subset of people when we are already a welcoming congregation and we already welcome all people, no matter who they are? After all, Grace had and continues to have members who are openly LGBTQ+.

I understand this question at a gut level because I have asked it myself in the past. I understand the feeling that this is some kind of “agenda” being forced upon us. But upon reflection, I have come to recognize that my gut reaction comes from a place of privilege, from my particular perspective on the world as one who fits the dominant cultural paradigm: Being heterosexual, in this paradigm, is “normal” and expected, in the way that being white is normal, or being a Protestant Christian is normal. Some of you remember what a big deal it was when we elected our first Roman Catholic president back in 1960. Being Catholic was not normal, and it was viewed by many as a threat. Sixty-four years later hardly anyone notices that our current president is the second Roman Catholic president. Among those who don’t like him, very few would cite his Catholicism as a reason.

LGBTQ+ folks, as well as people of color, experience our historical cultural norms from a very different place than many of us. They expect to be looked down on, rejected, and excluded by “normal” people. They do not assume that a group of middle-class white Protestant Christians will welcome them, except perhaps to change them into “normal” people (i.e., that we would want to “pray the gay away”). If we can empathize with this understandable assumption on their part, we might begin to understand why being explicit about our welcome is truly welcoming.

Paul wrote the above exhortation to welcome one another in the context of the earliest Jewish Christians in Rome welcoming Gentile Christians. This was the conclusion to his letter. He began his letter by showing that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (3:23) And because of this we are, all of us, Jews and Gentiles, “normal” and LGBTQ+, reconciled with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that’s something we also have to be explicit about – and are! – every Sunday. My God bless our welcoming journey!

+ Pastor Repp

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God Connections

Faith, Worship, Music, Study, Prayer

Ascension Day Service

Join Grace, Good Shepherd, and St. Matthew's at Grace for this special service on **Thursday, May 9 at 7 p.m.** There will be a combined choral anthem presented by the CU-ELCA choirs.

Grace Book Club Announcement

Inspired by Rachel Held Evans

The next book selection for the Grace Book Club is *Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again* by Rachel Held Evans.

Rachel has filled this book with stories from the Bible, which she has professed that she loves again. In the introduction she reminds the reader that "When you stop trying to force the Bible to be something it's not – static, perspicacious, certain, absolute – then you're free to revel in what it is: living, breathing, confounding, surprising, and yes, perhaps even magic." She believes that the Bible is both inspired and inspiring.

We will be meeting to discuss this inspiring book on Friday morning, **May 17**, at 10:00 at the Fleming home; 1805A Lakeside in Champaign.

Note: *Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans was published in 2018 by Nelson Books. This book can be purchased at any of your favorite bookstores and book sources (print and digital) including the Champaign Public Library.

We hope you will join us in reading *Inspired* and meeting with us in May for the discussion.

Janet Lepp and Jo Fleming

Faith Circle

Faith Circle meets on the third Tuesday evening of the month at 7 p.m. in the narthex. All are welcome. We begin the evening with refreshments (coffee and snacks provided by the hostess) and fellowship. The lesson leader presents the Bible study, beginning at approximately 7:30 p.m.

For our **May 21** meeting, Dorothy Townsend is our hostess, and Kathy Bowersox is our lesson leader. Plan to attend and invite a friend! Can't attend in person? Join us using the GLC's regular Zoom meeting link.

Greetings from the Music Ministry!

This year has been exciting for the growth of our ministry! Over the last year, we sang wonderful music and deepened the spiritual growth of Grace Lutheran Church. The handbell choir welcomed two new members into the ensemble from outside of our church. We are delighted to have welcomed them this year. Additionally, we have made connections across the ELCA community in the Champaign-Urbana. Our most successful event of the year 2023-2024 year was the combined ELCA Advent cantata hosted at St. Matthew Lutheran Church had over 30 performers and over 120 people in the audience. Together, the combined choirs sang Britten's Rejoice in The Lamb and other anthems to celebrate the season of Advent. Plans are in the works for another Advent program!

Throughout the year, we have been privileged to work with Lauren Flaten, our hired soprano section leader. She has provided great support to the choir and played beautiful flute offerings over the course of the year. In August, Lauren will be moving to New York, where she will pursue a master's in orchestral conducting at Bard Conservatory. We wish her well as she begins this new adventure in her life!

It has been such a pleasure directing the music ministry this year! I look forward to the continued growth and renewal of faith in the coming year! If you would like to join the choir or handbell ensemble in August, please do not hesitate to contact me. All are welcome!

Nick Pierle
Director of Music Ministry
music@glccu.org

Sunday Scripture Readings

Sixth Sunday of Easter, 5: *Acts 10:44-48, Psalm 98, 1 John 5:1-6, John 15:9-17*

Seventh Sunday of Easter, May 12: *Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19*

Sunday of Pentecost, May 19: *Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; Romans 8:22-27; John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15*

Trinity Sunday, May 26: *Isaiah 6:1-8, Psalm 29, Romans 8:12-27, John 3:1-7*

Community Connections

Fellowship, Fun, Congregation News, Intercessory Prayer

Straw Poll: Rental House

Grace owns only one rental house now: the 910 W. Springfield Ave. house, kindly known as the stone house. It was the first property that we bought and it is currently rented until the end of August 2024 and managed by Fairlawn rental company.

We sold one house in late 2022 and two houses in 2023. There are varying opinions in the congregation about this last house. Instead of calling a Special Congregational meeting to sell it, Executive committee decided to take a Straw Poll to judge the opinions of our members.

On **Sunday, May 5**, a Straw Poll Ballot will be distributed during the Sunday morning service. At the end of service, the ballots will be collected in a basket in the narthex. We ask that only active members of Grace fill out a ballot. You will be asked to check either **SELL** or **KEEP** on the ballot. The ballots will be counted and the results reported back to the congregation.

If you do not attend the Sunday service in person, you can send an email to Alex in the office (office@glccu.org) with your vote in the body of the email message. If you have any questions, please contact Debbie Peterson.

Concert On May 7

Tuesday, May 7, at 7:30 p.m.: Concert by the choir from High Point University of North Carolina. Our music director, Nick, attended HPU for his undergrad. Join us for a fun night of music!

Blanket Sunday and Mother's Day, May 12

The Social Ministry Committee will again provide the opportunity to honor or remember your mother and other special women in your life with the gift of love and caring for the homeless, refugees, and those who have lost so much due to tornadoes and floods. Blankets can be purchased for \$10 on **May 5 and 12** in the Narthex. Call Helen Repp 618-713-0169 with any questions. Cards to send to honorees will be available.

Fifth Feast Fellowship

Save the date! Our next "Fifth Feast Fellowship" dinner outing will be the evening of **Sunday, June 30**. Please mark your calendars and plan to participate. Details will be in the June newsletter.

WELCA Brunch at Good Shepherd

The Women of the ELCA (WELCA) group at Good Shepherd is having its annual spring brunch on **Saturday, May 11**. We would like to extend an invitation to the women at your church to join us for that event. We are also inviting women from St. Matthew's in Urbana. We thought it would be a good time for fellowship for women from our three churches.

The brunch will be from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall at Good Shepherd (2101 S. Prospect Ave. in Champaign). We will be serving breakfast casseroles, fruit salad, and various pastries/baked goods. There is no cost. Please contact me, Nancy Holm, at nlholm@comcast.net if you would like to attend or if you have any questions.

Also, after the brunch we will be putting together Lutheran World Relief personal care kits that we have collected supplies for if you would like to stay to assist us with that. Hope to see you on May 11!

Best regards, Nancy Holm

Sola Gratia Plant Sale

Our Spring Plant Sale will run **May 10-19** from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Include us in your garden planning, and come support our largest fundraiser of the year! We'll have a huge variety of vegetable starts, flowers from Country Arbors, and more! Address: 2200 Philo Rd., Urbana



Treasurer's Report

Monthly Report	CURRENT MONTH	YEAR-TO-DATE
INCOME	\$22,537.15	\$60,718.92
EXPENSES	\$22,143.43	\$73,083.48
NET	\$393.72	-\$12,364.56

March income was less than budgeted, but interest income of over \$3,000 helped reduce the shortfall in giving. (Monthly budgeted income should be \$24,000.) March expenses were less than budgeted. (Monthly budgeted expenses should be \$25,271.30) NET income less expenses was \$393.72.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Peterson, Treasurer

Prayer Requests

We have two formal ways of praying for one another at Grace. One is in the Sunday morning worship service, where we pray for people by name in the Prayers of Intercession. The other is being listing in GraceNotes and the monthly newsletter. Please send prayer requests to Alex at office@glccu.org.

In Our Prayers

An Asterisk () in the list indicates a Grace Lutheran Church affiliation. Immediate Prayer Concerns and Ongoing Prayer Concerns: A name stays on the Immediate Prayer Concerns for up to four weeks. These are the names that will be spoken aloud during the prayers of intercession. After four weeks, the name will be removed from the Prayer List unless the requester advises otherwise. The requester may ask that the name stay on Immediate Prayer Concerns for another four weeks or move to Ongoing Prayer Concerns, which is for long-term issues that need continuing prayers.*

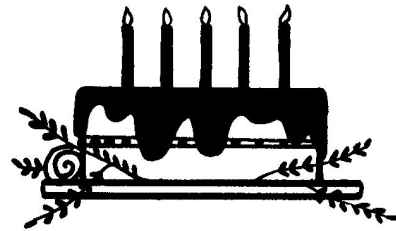
Prayers for those with Immediate Concerns:

- **Lori**, family friend of Dee Ehler*, with health concerns
- **Russell**, family friend of Dee Ehler*, for recovery from serious injury
- **Ja'Net Miller***, recovering from surgery
- **Stella Gerdemann**, niece of Susan Monte*, with health concerns
- **Royce Wilken***, with health concerns
- **Carol Shupp***, with health concerns
- **Neil Thackeray***, with health concerns
- **Elizabeth Mazurak***, with health concerns

- **Allison**, granddaughter of Karen and Doug Krusa*, with health concerns
- **Karen Krusa***, with health concerns
- **Leon Rocker***, recovering from a broken hip

Prayers for healing for those with Ongoing Concerns:

- **Bill**, Nancy Marshall's* cousin's husband, with eye cancer
- **Martha Alwes***, with health concerns
- **Jane Queller***, recovering from back surgery
- **Craig Rohwedder**, son of Anita Rohwedder* with Multiple Myeloma
- **Lucille Meseke**, cousin of Richard Stillwell* in nursing home
- **Danielle Blanke***
- **Roger Yarbrough***



May Birthdays

- Eva Frayne (1)
- Ozzie Dorsey (6)
- Silvia Grigorescu (9)
- Steven Blanke (20)
- Jack Wilkie (20)
- Dale Herrstrom (22)
- Dan Lepp (23)
- Susan Martinis (24)
- George Ringler (25)
- Chris Repp (29)
- Jim Fleming (30)
- Deborah Leckband (30)
- Michael Miller (30)
- Gail Hug (31)
- Janet Lepp (31)

May Anniversaries

- Chris & Stephanie Skaar (9)
- Ken & Juanita Loschen (20)
- Susan Monte & Glenn Gerdemann (21)

Sunday Worship Support

	May 5	May 12	May 19	May 26
Assisting Minister	Kathy Bowersox	Jo Fleming	Helen Repp	Eileen Herrstrom
Reader	Erika Bilger	Van Bowersox	Cindy Grigorescu	Nancy Marshall
Deacons	Gail Hug	Nancy Marshall	Kathy Bowersox	Susan Monte
Greeters				
Ushers	Grigorescu and Thackeray families	Dave and Carol Larson	Dave and Carol Larson	Dave and Carol Larson
Livestreamer	Dave Brown	Michael Miller	Kevin Vail	Jim Anderson
Coffee Hour	Alicia and Bruce Winter	Marlys Scarbrough and Leanne Wichus	Dan and Janet Lepp	Gail Hug and Mary Jo Erickson
Flowers	<i>Grace and William Schoedel</i>	<i>Lois and Royce Wilken</i>	<i>Allison and Dennis Archer</i>	<i>Bob Pearson</i>
Dedication	In memory of Bill's dad, the Reverend G. Walter Schoedel	In memory of our mothers	In memory of our son, Austin	In memory of June Pearson

Web Pages and Access

See your email for the list of webpages and how to access them.

Grace Meeting Zoom Link

See your email for the Grace Meeting Zoom link.

Using GLC Facilities

Our facilities are available for use by members and by outside groups. To use the space, please fill out a Facilities Use Request on the website and email it to office@glccu.org. Once the request is approved, it will be added to the calendar, and you can make arrangements to pick up a key if necessary.

May 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 <i>World Hunger Sunday</i> 9:30 a.m. Worship (Hybrid)- In Person & Live Stream 11 a.m. Adult Sunday School 12 p.m. Women's AA	29 6:30 p.m. Wood Carving Group 7 p.m. Bell Choir Rehearsal	30 6 p.m. Adult Children of Alcoholics 6:30 p.m. Sweet Adelines	1 7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal	2 10 a.m. Food Pantry	3	4
5 9:30 a.m. Worship (Hybrid)- In Person & Live Stream 11 a.m. Adult Sunday School 12 p.m. Women's AA	6 6:30 p.m. Wood Carving Group 7 p.m. Bell Choir Rehearsal	7 3 p.m. High Point University Choir arrives 4:30 p.m. Executive Committee 6 p.m. Adult Children of Alcoholics 7:30 p.m. HPU Concert	8 2 p.m. Hymn Selection Committee 3 p.m. Worship and Music Committee Meeting 7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal	9 10 a.m. Food Pantry 6 p.m. Community Choices	10	11
12 <i>Grace Food Pantry Sunday</i> 9:30 a.m. Worship (Hybrid)- In Person & Live Stream 11 a.m. Adult Sunday School 12 p.m. Women's AA 2:30 p.m. Conservatory of Central Illinois	13 10 a.m. Food for Seniors 6:30 p.m. Finance Committee Meeting 6:30 p.m. Wood Carving Group 7 p.m. Bell Choir Rehearsal	14 6 a.m. Food for Seniors 6 p.m. Adult Children of Alcoholics 6:30 p.m. Sweet Adelines 7 p.m. Council	15 7 a.m. Food Pantry Truck Delivery 10 a.m. Comrades of Art 7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal	16 10 a.m. Food Pantry 6 p.m. Parish Life Committee	17	18
19 9:30 a.m. Worship (Hybrid)- In Person & Live Stream 11 a.m. Annual Meeting 12 p.m. Women's AA	20 <i>Newsletter Copy Deadline</i> 6:30 p.m. Wood Carving Group 7 p.m. Bell Choir Rehearsal	21 6 p.m. Adult Children of Alcoholics 6:30 p.m. Sweet Adelines 7 p.m. Faith Circle	22 7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal	23 10 a.m. Food Pantry	24	25
26 <i>World Hunger Sunday</i> 9:30 a.m. Worship (Hybrid)- In Person & Live Stream 11 a.m. Adult Sunday School 12 p.m. Women's AA	27 10 a.m. Food for Seniors 6:30 p.m. Wood Carving Group	28 6 a.m. Food for Seniors 6 p.m. Adult Children of Alcoholics 6:30 p.m. Sweet Adelines	29	30 10 a.m. Food Pantry 5:15 p.m. Mutual Ministry	31	1