

Acts of Grace

Grace Lutheran Church & School

Pentecost Tide

June-August 2020



REGULAR SERVICES

- Saturday Evening 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday New Song 8:30 a.m.
- Traditional Divine Service 11:00 a.m.

Full calendar at: <http://www.grace-lutheran.com/grace-monthly-calendar>



Our Vision: Connecting people to Christ by connecting people to people.

4301 16th Street North St. Petersburg, FL 33703

Church: (727) 527-1168 School: (727) 527-6213 Ext Care: (727) 526-8212

Church: www.grace-lutheran.com School: www.glsfl.org



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Grace Lutheran Church & School - St. Petersburg, FL

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."-Isaiah 55:8

I recently watched a very interesting little video produced by the BBC entitled, "Can being humble make you smarter?" and then subtitled, "Intellectual humility could be key to gaining knowledge." It is a six-minute watch and I'd highly recommend that you look it up and watch it, especially as we continue to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and then move into the final phase of the presidential election, already deeply disturbed and divided as a people.

The main points of the video square with what the Scriptures teach about us. First, all people, no matter how intellectually gifted or developed, are fallible. There is no one who knows everything about everything, so invariably he or she will be wrong at some point. Not only that, but we each have an intellectual blind spot that makes us think that we are right when we are not.

Second, while each person is born with a certain amount of intellectual capability, it can always be enhanced or expanded by something called a growth mindset. I'm happy to say that Mrs. Clifton and Dr. Allen have worked diligently on developing a growth mindset in our staff and the scholars whom they serve. I hear them talking about it all the time. Someone with a growth mindset is far more concerned with how his or her actions are impacting a situation than trying to find ways to blame someone else.

In fact, those who are intellectually humble will seek out the opinions of other people because they are aware that they don't know everything about everything, and others may have something important to add on any given topic. They are able to hear differing points of view and recognize that there may be a kernel of truth in an opposing point of view. So, in the case of a political debate, rather than being black and white, someone who is intellectually humble will recognize that each party or candidate has points of agreement and points of disagreement.

Further still, and most importantly for us, it is important to recognize that neither political party squares totally with God's will, so for we Christians it's always a decision as to who might come closest or at least who is most likely to preserve our right to gather, worship, and speak God's truths as the Constitution of our nation currently guarantees.

In regards to the COVID-19 crises and trying to get back to normal, someone who is intellectually humble will recognize that leaders have access to better data and experts, and that the situation is unfolding constantly. The time for judging actions will not be in the middle of the crises, but rather later, and primarily for the purpose of developing a better template for action should something like this occur in the future. Additionally, all of us must recognize that people will come to differing conclusions as to what is the best course of action for their families at this time. Should I stay home or go to church? What's your health status? Do you feel safe? Would you be putting others at risk? Only you know the answer to those questions and others might reasonably do differently from you given their life situations.

Finally, it is also important for us to recognize that as we develop intellectual humility, the Lord Jesus calls upon us to be that way. After all, He was the One who, "although He was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

During this time, as always, humility with respect for others is the best way to go forward. I look forward to seeing more and more of you in the coming weeks and months as you become comfortable coming to the Divine Services here or having me out to your home for Holy Communion. I most certainly am praying that you stay healthy and stay safe.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Loughran

FROM OUR DEACONESS

The last newsletter that we had was for March-May. Basically it covered the time that we have had to be away from each other. Things that were put into that newsletter didn't happen, or they did, but they didn't happen in their normal manner.

I never expected to try and teach religion classes by posting assignments and videos online and then answer questions in chat rooms or by video calls. I never expected to have half-hour youth group sessions where I saw the youth attending in little boxes on my computer. I never expected to record church services out of order that would later be uploaded to YouTube and that's how the congregation would get church that week. I never thought that Sunday School would become a series of YouTube videos where I drew stick figures and had no children asking me questions or interrupting for other reasons. I'm sure Pastor Loughran never expected his ministry to ever look like this, nor did Vicar Kyle.

My heart goes out to those who have lost their jobs permanently or even temporarily because the government forced them to shut down. You are in my thoughts and prayers, and please reach out to me if you need anything at all. My heart goes out to those who have lost loved ones to the virus or something else that happened during this time. Again, reach out if you need anything.

Somehow, in the midst of a global pandemic where this is all happening, I'm certain something good has happened. Some things that I have seen are churches pumping out more truth on the internet than ever before. We have services and Sunday School and frequent devotions that we had never put up before. My parents' church has added stuff five days a week such as Bible studies, pastor conversations, and a pastor's vlog.

I've reconnected with an old friend from the seminary who has been doing a noontime and evening devotion pretty much every day. People have reconnected with their families as they've been able to be together at home more often. My guess is some have found more time to be in God's Word or have taken up a hobby they always wanted to take up. Maybe you can think of more things that are personal to you or that you've seen in friends or family members.

I have to say though, even with the good I've seen and experienced, I'm still looking forward to this being over, because I'd really like to see you all in church and worship in person and not see signs that tell me to keep out of rooms on campus. (That was creepy the first time I walked around campus after I got back from Georgia.) I want to see people who have been out of work be able to go back. I want to see people no longer living in fear and boarding themselves up in their homes.

It's been a strange time, but no matter how strange, or how bad, or how good, or how normal things are, we know that we can always bring those things to a God that is over it all. He is watching over us. We have a God who cares so much that He came down and died for us and because of that, all who believe in Him will go to heaven where viruses, lockdowns, lost jobs, creepy signs, and masks will no longer be.

Praise God for His love! Praise God that this is almost over! Praise God that He cares for us!

God's blessings!

Deaconess Margaret

VOICE OF THE VICAR

What Is the Point? Why Am I Here?

Over the past few weeks, many of the distractions that I personally placed in my life were taken away. Things like sports, going bowling, and eating at my favorite restaurant were taken away. I live in a senior living apartment, Lutheran Apartments, in downtown St. Pete. Over the past weeks and still today, I have not been allowed any guests and must stay in my room. So, I watched a lot of TV. I found that I got bored with this fairly quickly. I think I have seen all of the documentaries ever produced and a ton of movies. I might have even complained or whined a little.

While sitting in my living room, I asked myself, "What is the point?" and "Why am I here?" and "Why am I alive?" And I was thinking, if I were to die today, what would my whole life have been for? I was affected by so many people. My parents cared for me. I learned math, English, chemistry, physics, history, how to read and write. Even how to speak. I worked for many years as a process chemist. The resources I received because of this work helped me to provide the same for my children, so that they could basically do the same thing. Again, I thought to myself, if I were to die today, would my life be in any way different than the life of my old hunting dog, Neo? In other words, the life of a beast.

My thoughts then changed. I realized that most of the people that affected my life were Christians. They were all baptized. God had intervened in their lives. God had brought the Holy Spirit into their lives. They were being changed by the Spirit and because they were changed, they were affecting me in a God-like way. I had also been baptized, so I had affected those around me in a God-like way. The love of God was shared in the world, because of me.

Wow! My life hasn't just been this: born, work, and die. There has been a purpose. I learned things like English, math, reading, and writing that are in the world, so that the love of God, through my service to Him, might come to others.

Jesus told us how we should live our day-to-day lives:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and you shall love your neighbors as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

My friends in Christ, we are made more Christ-like as we go through our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit. We are being sanctified. We will be made perfect when Christ returns.

While the good works we perform don't save us from our sins and they don't get us to heaven, they are what make our lives meaningful.

Here is what King Solomon said:


"The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by the one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."


In Christ Jesus,


Vicar Kyle


MUSIC MINISTRY "NOTES"


 **THANK YOU for all of your prayers, love, and support!!!** These are strange times for all of us, but for the Tippett family it has truly been difficult. While we remain COVID-19 free, trying to figure out school online (both the kids and I) and then a cancer diagnosis made it even more difficult for us. Like many of you, we made the best of it, but the kids and I were very strictly quarantined as I was preparing for and then recovering from surgery. Jerry is working, but part of the time at home and part of the time in his office at PPPD. He also had to do (and still does as I write this) ALL of the grocery shopping and essential errands. The day of my surgery, he could only drop me off and pick me up the next day! But even though I was all alone at Moffitt Cancer Center, I knew God was with me and all your prayers were being heard, and I felt calm because of that assurance that I really wasn't alone. So, THANK YOU again, Grace family! I received so many supportive messages, cards, and even food from some of you! The Tippett family loves you all and we can't wait to worship with you again soon (I hope and pray)!

 **Remembering Lois Hannewald** - In early March, we lost our beloved Lois. Ironically, her memorial service was the last time the choir sang together before the "stay at home" orders. She was the embodiment of a Godly woman, servant, and church musician. As Vicar Kyle told me, she was the definition of an evangelist. He's right! How many of us became members of Grace and got involved in our church life because of Lois? I did, for sure! She called me up after I visited church with Jerry before we were married in 1997 and invited me to join choir. The rest is history...We love you, Lois! Sing with the angels and tell Norm that we miss him too!!


 **Congratulations to the Spirit Singers who participated in the FVA Solo & Ensemble MPA on February 21 & 22 at Gibbs HS!** The Spirit Singers earned an EXCELLENT rating for Large Ensemble. Congratulations to Addison Bigler, Lilianna Finocchi, Alora Gatesman, Thomas Guilford, Paloma Plouf, Aria Tibbetts, and Elise Tippett for their SUPERIOR ratings for Vocal Solo. Congratulations again to Alora Gatesman, Paloma Plouf, Aria Tibbetts, and Elise Tippett for their SUPERIOR ratings for Musical Theatre Solo and also to Addison Bigler and Thomas Guilford for their EXCELLENT ratings for Musical Theatre Solo! We had an awesome day! If you lost count, that is a total of 11 SUPERIORS and 3 EXCELLENTS for the event!!!

 **Congratulations to many of our music ensembles who participated in the Lutheran School Music Festival on Friday, February 28 at St. Luke's Lutheran School in Oviedo.** The Choristers and Spirit Singers earned SUPERIOR ratings, Wildcat Orchestra and Living Grace (Praise Team) earned EXCELLENT ratings, and Bells of Grace earned a GOOD rating. Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Tippett are very proud of all of our student musicians! Bravo!!!

 **Congratulations to the Spirit Singers who participated in their THIRD music festival, the Florida Vocal Association District 9 Choral Music Performance Assessment on Wednesday, March 4 at Trinity Presbyterian in Clearwater.** This four-day festival included all public Pinellas County middle schools and high schools as well as a few private schools in our county. This is the toughest of the festivals that we participate in, and we are very happy to announce that the Spirit Singers earned an EXCELLENT rating on stage and an EXCELLENT rating for their two-part sight reading session! Way to go, Wildcats!!!

 **COVID-19 Cancellations** - It is a blessing that we were able to attend all of our music festivals as mentioned previously, but with school being cancelled, some of the biggest music events for our school were cancelled, too. We missed Spring into the Arts/Family Night on May 6 and we couldn't perform our 20th annual school musical, Shrek Jr., on May 14 and 15. Unfortunately, we cannot make up our concert, but I am happy to report that we will be able to do Shrek Jr. next year, Lord willing. The cast already knows their roles (we will re-audition any vacant roles) and we have a lot of extra time to finish the set that we started to build. The other event that we missed was our awards ceremony to celebrate our music festival/MPA successes. We still ordered the awards and handed them out during the last day of school pick-up. We are looking forward to working with our student musicians again next year.

Since church was also cancelled, we couldn't present the beautiful Holy Week/Easter music that we were working on. However, I want to give a big shout out to Cory, Marilyn, Guy, and Bo for helping Pastor with recording music for all of our services during this time! Hearing their music and Pastor Loughran and Vicar Kyle's voices as they delivered God's Word to us made having to stay home and watch church services so much better! With the slow return of our church services, choirs are still not able to meet and sing or play for our beloved congregation. Since our season would have ended on June 7, we are on break until we return in the fall. We pray that by then we will be back to a regular routine and that this virus will be behind all of us! Luckily, Marilyn was able to start working with our New Song band recently, so that is a huge blessing! Please pray for them as they safely return to praise God with their music.

 **Grace Conservatory of Fine Arts** - We have almost completed our seventh year - sort of! It has been an exciting opportunity that has been open to all of our students and families at Grace as well as our local community. Private music lessons will be available again next year for children and adults. However, our annual recital is cancelled for this year due to the pandemic. Please keep us in your prayers as we continue this journey!

As another school year and church music season winds down and as strange as it has been, the real work is about to begin as we start to plan for another exciting year to come. We pray for normalcy for all of us so we can follow through with all these plans! Although Marilyn, Cory, and I will enjoy some vacation time (hopefully away from home!), we will be recharging our batteries to come back from the summer rejuvenated and inspired!

As we reflect, we remember the highlights and abundant blessings of this year in spite of the Coronavirus... an incredible school fall concert, church and school performing together at Holiday in the Park, beautiful Christmas services, a successful school music festival season, a celebration for the life of our beloved Lois Hannewald, the blessings go on and on...even if things were cut short and music was left to still be sung and played - we are all blessed!

Please continue to pray for all our musicians and that we can return to make joyful noises together again this fall! We also pray that some of you will consider joining our thriving Music Ministry here at Grace, whether it is by playing an instrument, singing in our choir, filing music, or running the sound board. If you love music, we have a place for you in our ministry!

Jennifer Tippett & Marilyn Hall

STEPHEN MINISTRY

“HOPE HELP HEALING”

Stephen Ministry provides physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual care to an individual who is going through a crisis or challenge in life. This probably describes most of us, if not all of us today. Our lives won't be the same as we know it.

There is a sense of grief due to the fact that there is loss. Even though your loss may be different in some ways, many have much in common; the loss of a friend, family member, job, formal graduation, business, or just life as we knew it and expect it to be.

There is hope that things will safely improve, but it could take a while and/or be different. I recently read something I felt meaningful to share at this time:

“I learned to trust that through God's Grace something beautiful and new would emerge even when faced with weakness, tears, loss, pain, and hopelessness.”

God has put us on this earth to help one another by phone, email, or card, and soon we will be able to do this face to face again. Please know if you are having difficulties or challenges, you can call Pastor Loughran, Vicar Kyle, or Debbie Burchick.

Be safe and God's blessings to all.

*Remember Stephen Ministry is always looking for individuals who wish to give compassionate care and love to those in need. Could this be you?

*Our active Stephen Ministers at this time are: Audrey Stull, Guy Spann, Mary Profeta, and Keith Hand.



FAITH COMMUNITY NURSE

Stress and Coping

The outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

Things You Can Do to Support Yourself

1. Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
2. Take care of your body: Take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
3. Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy. Knit or crochet, read a book, do puzzles, arts and crafts, play music, pray, read Scripture.
4. Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling. Call those who have been practicing social distancing, or parents who have been home with their children for weeks due to school cancellations. Start an online Bible study or prayer group.
5. Reduce stress in yourself and others by only sharing facts about COVID-19 from reputable sources. Understanding the actual risk to yourself and people you care about can make an outbreak less stressful.

***Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.**

“But now thus says the Lord, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are Mine.’” - Isaiah 43:1

Learn more: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>



Introducing Grace Folks:

Erin Murphy



Erin Murphy is our new Church Administrative Assistant, following the resignation of Karen Faircloth, who has relocated to North Carolina. We welcome Erin to the Grace family.

A native Floridian, Erin was born in Seminole, Florida. She is one of three children. She has an older brother, who lives in Texas, and a younger sister, who works at Stetson University College of Law and shares a home with Erin.

Erin graduated from the University of South Florida St. Petersburg campus and majored in journalism. She stayed at the beautiful campus to work in the marketing department.

Some of Erin's interests include music, hiking, and writing. She loves playing the guitar and is excited to be employed where she can be around music, children, and a family Christian atmosphere.

We are eager to welcome Erin to our Grace family and look forward to many happy years of collaboration.

NOTES FROM THE OFFICE

Vicar Kyle's Ordination — Vicar Kyle will be ordained on June 28 at 4 p.m. Be on the look-out for news about a reception celebrating this achievement, to be held sometime this fall.

Karen Faircloth — Grace's former Church Administrative Assistant, Karen Faircloth, has moved! Send snail mail to Karen at 422 Contentment Drive, Locust, NC 28097. Her phone number has not changed.

Newsletter — You may notice that some of the columns that are usually included in the Acts of Grace newsletter are not present for this digital edition. The Grace team will update the newsletter with more information once we are able to return to running print copies.

Greetings from “The Purple Ladies” of the LWML (Lutheran Women's Missionary League).

Honestly, I'm in shock that we are halfway through 2020. Even with the "stay at home" order, time just flies by. I pray that all of you are safe and healthy. All the "Purple Ladies" were terribly disappointed that we couldn't have our Annual Tea Party because we know so many of you look forward to attending.

News for June and July:

Since we won't be meeting again until September, we will not be electing a new Vice President or Secretary. We may do it in September or just wait until May 2021. Hopefully the Officers will be able to meet before September to plan the upcoming year. At any rate, everyone will be contacted about the upcoming events. We will keep you informed through the Happenings and I will also call everyone.

We will not have our normal Mite Box Collections until the first full weekend in September, which is the fifth and sixth. We know that many people have been donating or assisting others in need during this pandemic instead of filling their Mite Boxes. We respect that decision and thank you all. However, we will accept any full boxes at any time. You can either drop them in the Mite Box that is in the enclosed area or give it to one of our members. As always, we thank you for your continual support through your donations and your prayers.

Notes from the LWML President, Trish Aamoth:

Our mission work continues because the grant recipients still need the funds that we pledged to them. Also, Mites are still needed to meet our biennial goals and expenses. The fiscal end of the 2018-2020 Biennium is just two months away and we are \$19,000 from making our goal of \$180,000. I would ask that if you are not able to give because of the pandemic, that you would increase your prayers for our district and national mission grants. For those of you who have not been affected financially, please consider increasing your donations.

LWML Mission Grants for June and July:

June: \$100,000 pledged to Women's Witness and Mercy Asia — Mission Central. Women in Mission realize that our grant brings God's Word to the Asian people. One missionary woman taught 242 students about Jesus in Taiwan. Another woman served for 10 years planting seeds of mercy and witnessing in Southeast Asia. This grant will support these women and many others in bringing God's Word to unbelievers.

July: \$100,000 pledged to Touching the Living Word — Lutheran Braille Workers (LBW). Lutheran Braille Workers have been bringing the Gospel to blind and visually-impaired people around the world since 1943. They have produced and distributed for free 14 million volumes of braille, large print, and audio material. Currently they are published in 11 languages and sent to over 130 countries. In the last 42 months, they have published 220,000 volumes due to the high demand. This grant money will help the LBW purchase more machines and technology needed to produce the zinc plates used to make more volumes of braille, large print, and audio material.

As always, THANK YOU for your continual donations and prayers.

TRUSTEES

Continuing Progress on Campus Care

Like all other Grace Lutheran boards, the work of the Trustees has continued digitally during this pandemic! Congregation members who are able to attend services will immediately notice the changes that are taking place; others may notice major changes/improvements from their car as they drive by.

The new roof is a work in progress. Summer Breeze, our roofing contractor, is waiting for the new metal roofing to be delivered on site. In the meantime, we are watertight, should there be rain! The metal roofing install will start in one week from May 15, and will take about three weeks to install, if we have good weather! Over 200 sheets of plywood were replaced at no additional cost to Grace. The new roofing will be very similar to the existing Sanctuary roof, and have a lifetime expectancy of 50 years!

Plant Ops are diligently working inside the building, painting and making repairs where necessary. Posted recently on social media was a video of painting taking place in the Fellowship Hall. We thank all the Plant Op staff for their efforts to make Grace into the beautiful campus we remember and for sanitizing it so that we may return!

At the same time as the inside is being beautified, the Trustees are taking bids from professional painting contractors to complete the work and paint the outside of the school and offices. We hope that very soon we will have these on hand; we currently have two of the required bids and are waiting on the third. Then we will vote to accept a bid. After the vote, we will pass our recommendations and request to the Board for Finance.

Just as many Grace members are spending time on projects around their homes, the Trustees continue to keep in mind our commitment to Grace Lutheran Church, its Sanctuary and campus. Thank you for supporting us in our endeavors.