

STORIES OF GRACE

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, MANKATO



THROUGH GOD'S ABUNDANT LOVE

A Letter from Pastor John

That's not
in the Bible!
A Summer Sermon Series at
Grace Lutheran Church



Friends of Grace, before we dive into our next programming year and beyond, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on our summer together, and more of what has gotten us this far and shaped our direction as we plan for the year to come.

Over the Summer, we have spent time looking at those things that are given a lot of weight in our culture, faith traditions, and more, even though they do not find their roots in scripture. Titled, "That's Not in the Bible!" our summer series has explored topics from what we wear to church, to who it is that God favors most. Some of my favorites were our Christmas in July service where we explored whether or not the wise men were there for the first Christmas celebration, and whether or not that is of the utmost importance, and also when we explored the role our buildings play at our outdoor worship service. It turns out, that while our sanctuary does not follow the pattern of the early church, it sure would have been nice to be inside during the rain.

My goal for the series was not to break down those parts of our faith that are helpful, even if they are not entirely based on scripture, but to help us know the difference. I hope that you found the topics engaging and are ready to jump into a new year of looking at exactly what the Bible does say, together!

Once again, we will follow the Narrative Lectionary, which works through scripture in chronological order.

I find it helpful to work through the stories in order, seeing how they are interconnected, and I hope you do too.

Over the Summer we have also had a few wonderful things happening at Grace that are worth recognizing. Thank you to all who donated school supplies to the drive we held in the narthex. Those supplies have now been packed into backpacks and distributed to kids in our community who will use them to have a fresh start in these next few weeks.

Some of those kids were using the services of MY Place, an organization that provides after school and summer programming for young people in Mankato. They serve kids who are otherwise underserved, providing much needed structure and support for them. Because of your generosity, we also had the privilege to host their programs over the summer months at Grace, giving them a temporary place to serve our community through our building. Without your willingness to open the doors of our building this summer, many of these young people would have had nowhere else to go all summer. Thank you again.

Now we begin our Wednesday Night programming once more on September 13th, and I am excited to get back into the rhythm of the school year again. I hope you will join us for a meal, time to connect, and a more relaxed worship service each week starting at 5:15.

As we look ahead there is still much to do, finishing a strategic plan, growing our opportunities to serve our neighbors, and a sabbatical for me next year in the works. All good things, and so much to be excited about as we continue to grow together.

Thank you for your continued partnership in all that we do to serve God by loving our neighbors.

-Pastor John

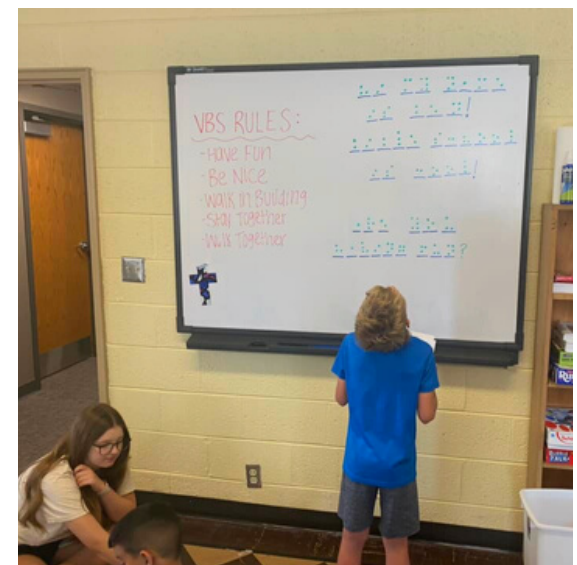
A Letter from Director of Spiritual Growth

It's hard to believe that the school year is fast approaching. I know as I write this some have already started back to school. I take this time and reflect on what a summer it has been. There have been so many great things that have happened throughout these last few months. Having MY Place in the building this summer has brought quite the energy around the building. So sit in my office and here the noise of young people making it's way through the staircase upstairs has been a real joy. Some may find the noise distracting but I find it fun to hear them. Then when I have something to do in the kitchen and they say hi it brightens me day. Some kids even have learned my name.

The summer kicked off with a great Vacation Bible School. We played games, did crafts, learned about how hunger is handled in different parts of the world and ate a lot of freeze pops. I love starting out the summer with VBS. It just seems to be a great way to start things off. While feeding the VBS kids lunch it was a great way to welcome the MY Place kids that started that week too as we got to have lunch together. Feeding the MY Place kids wasn't the only way we worked on feeding kids this summer.

For the second year in a row we assisted with the STOMP program through Feeding our Community Partners (FOCP). STOMP stands for Summer Time Outreach Meal Program and it provides meals everyday of the work week to kids in need of a meal. Volunteers from Grace delivered these meals every Monday throughout the summer to 3 locations in Mankato. These locations were carefully picked by FOCP as they are areas with many kids that don't have easy access to a nearby school to get a free lunch. This will be an ongoing program in the future and if this is something you want to possibly get involved with let me know. I'd love to get you on the schedule for next summer.

This summer along with delivering meals in partnership with FOCP we still got to be a location that fed people each week. Shelter Church concluded it's time here as a place of worship Sunday night but there was still a gap identified with food. Barb Heller and Penny Bandwart worked together alongside volunteers from other ELCA churches in town to provide dinner to those hungry in our community. It also provided a cool place to sit and relax on some of those warm summer days.



—A Letter from Director of Spiritual Growth

We have even gotten a chance to continue feeding people at the connections office all summer long as well. With the help from some of the older MY Place kids we were able to assemble 160 chicken and bean burritos that were frozen and have been taken to the freezer at connections.


As folks have stopped by the office for assistance the burritos have been an easy thing for them to grab heat up and go. I'm so excited that our feeding ministries continue to be strong at Grace and I'm excited to see them continue to grow in the future. As the summer continued to heat up, so did the things happening. At the end of July we had our Youth Boundary Waters trip. A few youth from Grace along with Liz Drake (a fantastic adult leader) went up the Gunflint trail and spent a few days in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. We were able to invite along another group from St Pauls in Meridian and Zion in Ellendale to join us. We had a great time enjoying sunshine as we relaxed, ate some great food, jumped in the refreshing waters and enjoyed time in some of God's beautiful nature. I reflect back on that time in the BWCA with the group we took from Grace and I'm very thankful for those that went along. Next summer we'll be having our Adult Boundary Waters trip. More information about that trip will be released in the coming months. Next summer our big youth trip will be heading down to New Orleans for the National Youth Gathering. I'm excited for this trip as it's been almost 6 years since the last Youth Gathering.

We were able to gather together at ISG field this summer as part of Faith Night with the Mankato Moondogs. This was one of our Out with Grace events. 26 of us sat together and cheered on the Moondogs as we enjoyed hotdogs, chips and soda that was provided with our game ticket. We didn't get to see the Moondogs that night but it was a perfect evening for baseball and I know there were some great conversations in the stands. Our next Out with Grace event will be held September 8th at the Pleasant Grove Pizza Farm near Waseca. We hope you can join us for this event as it'll be a great way to kick on the school year.

As we get closer to the school year we know there are many kids in the community that struggle with getting the things they need for school each year. We had the opportunity and pleasure to partner with Schools for a pack to school drive through the month of July. Scheels had over 150 backpacks that they wanted to fill with school supplies.



OUT WITH GRACE
THE PLEASANT GROVE
PIZZA FARM
IN WASECA
Friday September 8th 4:00-8:00
COME OUT AND ENJOY SOME WOOD FIRED PIZZA
AND FELLOWSHIP WITH FRIENDS
FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO
GRACEMANKATO.ORG/PIZZAFARM
WEATHER BACK UP DATE
SEPTEMBER 10TH 4:00-7:00



— A Letter from Director of Spiritual Growth

Grace along with Messiah and the Pickle barn were drop off points to collect supplies. Our shopping cart was overflowing with supplies by the end. My wife Betsy thought they'd be able to lift the cart into the Scheels van. She was very wrong; it was way too heavy. The backpacks got filled and then got distributed to kids in need at MY Place and FOCP held a distribution event where all the backpacks were gone in less than an hour. What an amazing way to step up and care for our neighbors.



With the school year coming up it means we're gearing up for another year of Faith Night Wednesdays here at Grace. Our first Faith Night will be September 13th. Our first week we'll have pizza together starting at 5:15. Education will once again follow the meal this year beginning at 6:00. We'll end the evening with worship at 6:45. We hope all will consider joining us all on Wednesday nights or even just part of evenings together. This year we hope to add some great things to the evening to help support families where they're at and provide some more opportunities for all to make Wednesday Nights at Grace something everyone is excited to come and attend.

So many great things are going on at Grace all the time and I feel so honored to get to be a part of it with you all. I'm also so excited to see how we continue to grow as a church as we live and work together to serve others.

-Ben Geer

Need a Night Out?



On Thursday September 21st, the Welcome Team is hosting a fundraiser at Applebee's in Mankato. Just tell your server you are dining as guests of the Welcome Team and a percentage of your check will help our mission of welcoming refugees to our community. If you are ordering online for Carside to go, enter code DOINGOOD at checkout. Hope to see you there!

— Pictures from the Summer



Council Recap

by Council President Mark Hendrickson

There have been many exciting things that the church council and members of Grace Lutheran have been working on this year, and I would like to take the opportunity to give everyone an update.

As a church we have continued to grow our community outreach and the food recovery program. These programs provide the church an opportunity to give back to the community and help support people in need in our area. The church has also received a grant to purchase a van and trailer that will further support this program and various other activities at Grace.

Over the summer we also welcomed My-Place into our church. My-Place is a local charity dedicated to providing a safe place for kids to learn and grow. My-Place was in immediate need of a location at the beginning of this summer or risk having to turn away many of the kids and families they work with. We as a church were able to accommodate My-Place and their activities so they were able to continue their service to the community.

Reconciling in Christ (RIC) is another initiative we have started working on at Grace. RIC is a program for faith communities to see, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran Church.

Last, the church council has recognized the need for focused short-term and long-term planning. Covid changed how people attended worship, participated in activities, and affected how the church operates on a daily basis. The church council has been working on establishing a plan for our church moving forward. This has involved getting feedback from the congregation, identifying our strengths and weaknesses, finding ways to support our congregation and staff, and focusing our efforts to grow and strengthen our ministries.

I look forward to the upcoming months and am very excited to see what we have accomplished.

Thank you,
Mark Hendrickson

ReconcilingWorks
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



Meet your Council Members

Name: Mark Hendrickson- Council President

Years on Council: 4.5 years

Biography: I am originally from Albert Lea MN, and moved to Mankato in 1998 to attend college at MSU. I met my wife Sarah while attending college, and we have lived in the Mankato area ever since. I work as a Manufacturing Engineer in Lake Crystal MN and Sarah works as a dental hygienist in Mankato. We have two children, Parker and Lauren. Parker is 9 and enjoys playing baseball and hockey. Lauren is 13, enjoys dance, and plays the cello and piano. As a family we enjoy going to concerts, hockey games, and most outdoor activities. Sarah and I were married at Grace Lutheran in 2006 and both Lauren and Parker were baptized here as well. We have always enjoyed the ministry, welcoming environment, and people at Grace. I have served on church council for 4.5 years, am grateful for getting to be part of such an amazing church.



Name: Greg Stoffel- Treasurer

Highlights of Grace: The involvement and growth of our church in its efforts to be involved with and support the needs of this community. A sincere "Thank You " to all of the volunteers that support this church's activities within the church and our outreach to the community.

Biography: Hi Everyone! I have been a member of Grace for twenty years when we moved from Redwood Falls to Mankato. My membership on the church council spans three pastors, so approximately fifteen years. My background is in the education arena. I lived and taught in Redwood Falls for twenty-thirty years and then became an Assistant Elementary Principal in Willmar, MN for three years. Val and I built and owned a horse training facility near Redwood Falls and had twenty horses in training. Our family all enjoyed showing horses and we traveled throughout the country and Canada to regional and national Arabian horse competitions. We landed in Mankato as a result of securing a principalship at Kennedy Elementary School. After retiring once, I continued with the Mankato District as the ELL Coordinator for seven years. It has been my pleasure to be part of Grace's Church Council and I look forward to participate in the future of Grace.

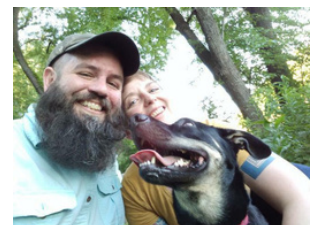
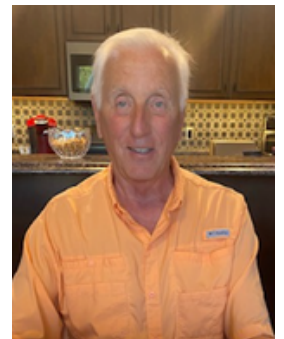


Name: Lee Drake

Name: Kara Ellison

Years on Council: February 2023

Biography: I started coming to Grace in November of 2021 and joined the council in February of 2023. Along with council, I serve on the RIC task force, sing in the choir, and have a plot in the community garden. I spend my professional time in human resources and my personal time in fiber art, gardening, and running. My husband, Luke, and I moved to Mankato from Minneapolis in December of 2020. We have a sweet dog named Beverly and a cute house near Sibley Park.



— Meet your Council Members

Name: Arvid Zenk

Years on Council: 8 years total

Highlights of Grace: Strong Pastoral Leaders, Friendly Members, Singing in the Choir, Wonderful Building Updates over the years.

Biography: Born and raised on a farm near Amboy, attended Gustavus Adolphus College, sang in the GAC Choir, received BA in Music 1968. Went to Air Force officer training in 1968 and became an ICBM operations officer. Worked for Taylor Corporation for 17 years in management as an officer manager, production manager, and plant president - retired in 2005. Enjoy working on our farm, singing with the Mankato Riverblenders, and singing in a quartet. Jane and I enjoy our 5 grandchildren and being with our friends - especially those who ride motorcycles.



Name: Annabella Simonson

Years on Council: 2 years

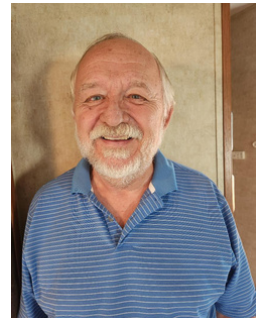
Biography: My favorite highlight at Grace has been helping the community through food ministry work. This year is my first year at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, but I'll still be around most Sundays!



Name: Steve Mork

Years on Council: 1 year

Biography: I am excited about creating a strategic plan to give the council a feel of where the congregation wants us to go in the future. I have agreed to head up the property committee. I was instrumental in getting an energy audit from our electric company and am looking forward to implementing some of their recommendations such as taking advantage of available rebates while converting to more LED lighting. Kathy and I joined Grace in the November 2020. Since joining I have been active in choir, food ministry, Bible study and Wednesday night services. I have also enjoyed participating in the BWCA canoe trip, baseball games and activities. In my work life I was an accountant. For the 15 years prior to retirement I was the Finance Director for the City of North Mankato. I have also been active with leadership at other churches that we attended, been on the board for BENCHS animal shelter, been on the board and in several productions with Merely Players Community Theater, volunteered at FOCP(Backpack food program) and spent 11 years working with the Mankato CityArt Walking Sculpture Tour.



Name: Dianne Osborne

Years on Council: 2 years

Biography: Dick, I and our three kids became members in December of 1979. I have been involved with a few things at Grace: GLCW, choir, book club, knit and chain and our food ministry. The things I enjoy outside the walls of Grace are: friends of Pathstone, Minnesota Valley Civets Club, and Sons of Norway. Grace is such a welcoming and giving community, I am so blessed to be a part of it.



Becoming a Reconciling in Christ Congregation

Since our last newsletter, the Reconciling in Christ Team (Kara Ellison, Becky Glaser, Marcia Gustafson, Kathy Mork and Pastor John) has been working together to plan our journey to becoming an RIC congregation. As a first step, we will be sponsoring forums based on ELCA's "Dialogues on Sexuality." Sessions will be held in the fellowship hall beginning at 11:15 am on the following Sundays. Each session includes brief videos and opportunities for discussion led by Pastor John.

September 10 *Pink Capes and Zip Up Boots* Language around sexuality. How could God set people up to fail? If God is love, then God must be present in all expressions of love.

What Does It Mean To Be Transgender? We say we want kids to be themselves, but our culture says certain things are off limits for girls or boys. It's not easy to be told that you are not who you believe you are. Transgender is an umbrella term. Is it possible that this diverse experience is also part of God's plan?

September 17 *Are All Welcome?* Loading people up with burdens, setting them up to fail with our religious baggage is against the teaching of Jesus. Inclusion is the way of holiness. Becoming inclusive is not a church growth model, but from this work we get a sense of integrity, knowing that we can come here believing that Christ is for EVERYONE. *Building an*

Ethic of Sexual Wholeness - We need everyone to be able to bring their whole self to the table. We all have unique gifts, together we can survive and thrive. Can you imagine what a church that was truly inclusive might accomplish when it affirms the unique gifts of all people?

The series will be repeated on Wednesday nights. Dates to be announced later.

Don't you love a parade?

Grace, featuring Pastor John's truck, will be participating in the Jessica Flatequal Pride Parade on September 9. The parade begins at 11:15am on Riverfront Drive.

If you are interested in being part of the parade, please sign up either at church or online. We have a limited number of Grace Lutheran t-shirts available or wear your favorite Pride shirt.

Check our webpage for more information:

<https://www.gracemankato.com/reconciling-in-christ.html>



Financial Report

Giving			Expenses		
January	\$20,270	\$32,057	January	\$39,772	\$40,789
February	\$43,486	\$43,228	February	\$35,745	\$33,580
March	\$17,825	\$43,802	March	\$32,769	\$35,399
April	\$14,048	\$15,196	April	\$38,650	\$33,695
May	\$53,673	\$33,646	May	\$30,712	\$32,766
June	\$14,869	\$19,374	June	\$35,704	\$32,617
July	\$29,076	\$21,862	July	\$31,556	\$30,390
Designated Giving	\$10,288	-\$583	Total	\$244,908	\$239,236
Misc Income	\$17,836	\$15,182			
Total	\$221,371	\$223,764			

Grace continues to have generous support from our members and friends. Designated Giving are gifts that were given to a specific program at Grace, such as the Food Ministry, free will offerings for meals, radio broadcast, etc. A change was made in how we record these gifts and related expenses in 2023 making it hard to do a true comparison of giving in this area. Miscellaneous includes gratuities for use of the building, reimbursements from Redeemer and other small miscellaneous items. The increase in expenses is primarily due to increased costs in many of requires expenses.

Building Renovation Fund

Building Renovation Fund: As of Aug 1, 2023, we have paid off \$159,283 of our renovation loan: of that, \$137,020 was through contributions to the capital campaign. The remaining balance on the loan is \$229,917. We've reduced the final payment date by about 11 ½ years. The interest rate on the loan will be adjusted on May 31, 2024. I anticipate that our interest rate will increase at that time. If you have pledged to the capital campaign, please consider completing your pledge before that date.

Thanks to those who have generously donated to this special project!

New Members

It's been a while since Grace has had an official installation of new members. We'd like to fix that. If you began worshipping with us after January 1, 2020, and consider yourself a member of Grace, please let Morgan know or fill out a pew card with your contact information and desire to become a member. If you are currently a member of another ELCA congregation, please contact them and ask that your membership be transferred to Grace.

The date for installation and welcome of new (and not so new) members has not been finalized. More information will be coming soon.

— A Note from our Parish Admin

New Church Management Software

Morgan and I are really excited to introduce you to the new software we are using. It's called Breeze, and allows us to keep track of all our members and friends, their contact information, important life and church events, and donations. We are able to send emails and texts to better communicate electronically. And most exciting, every member will have access to the contact information for other members through an app on your phone or tablet or the Breeze website. You will also be able to update any information in your own account, like a new address, cell phone or email address. Awesome!



We're still in the process of cleaning up some data that was transferred from our prior system, but when that is completed, all members will receive information on how to access the system. And we'll be able to print a directory with the contact information for all of our members. In the future, we plan to incorporate photos!

If you have any questions or would like to see what the software can do, please let me know. I'd be happy to give you a demonstration. Kathy Mork parish@gracemankato.org 507-345-4248.



Thrivent Action Teams

Thrivent, a fraternal benefit organization, gives every member access to two \$250 grants each year to fund service or educational programs in their community. Grace has used two of these grants this summer.

In July, an Action Team grant was used to purchase 24 complete sets of school supplies for the backpacks provided by Scheels. When added to the generous donations made by the members and friends of Grace, we were able to provide a portion of the backpacks given to the kids at MYPlace.

In August, yarn for making prayer shawls was purchased through another Action Team grant. Our Knit and Chain group will be able to create 9 new prayer shawls because of this grant. All knitters and crocheters are invited to join us. Knit and Chain generally meets the first Monday of the month at 1pm in the Ramp Room. Next meeting will be Sept. 11 due to Labor Day.

If you have insurance, a trust or mutual fund account with Thrivent, you may be eligible to request an Action Team grant. Check with Kathy Mork at parish@gracemankato.org for more information or help applying for a grant.



— Activities around Grace

Ladies Night Out - Fellowship Events

At the beginning of summer, Ladies Night Out began with Happy Hour at Grace. Our plan was to provide an opportunity for all women of the congregation to have a chance to get to know each other better through a fun activity. Events are typically held in the evening or weekend.



In July, we attended a Mankato Community Band Concert. It was a beautiful summer evening, with great music and good company.

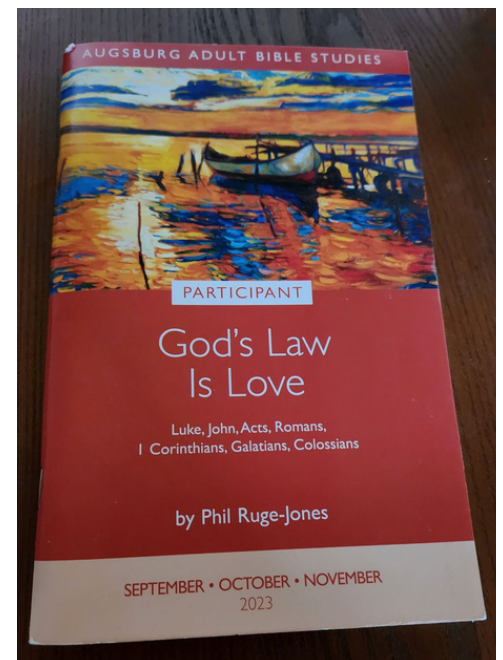
August began with Camping Night at Minneopa organized by Molly Yunkers and Becky Glaser. Whether you came for the evening or stayed through breakfast, this was a great event. This one is likely to be repeated next year! A Trivia Night held later in August was also a hit. It's amazing the amount of trivial information we can remember!



The next Ladies "Night" Out will be Saturday, September 16. We will meet in the church parking lot at 10:00am to carpool to Gustavus. There we will meet Steve Hogberg for a tour of the sculptures around campus. Tour is expected to take about an hour, but doesn't have a lot of walking. We'll finish with lunch at 3rd Street Tavern in St. Peter. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Jane at jzenk68@gmail.com so she can make lunch reservations.

Wednesday Morning Zoom Bible Study

This Bible study group, using Augsburg Adult Bible Studies was started at the height of COVID through Christ Lutheran Church in Hilton Head. Members are from South Carolina, Wisconsin, Illinois and Minnesota. Our next study, "God's Law is Love" begins at 10:00am on Wednesday, Sept. 6. The early church struggled as it moved from primarily Jewish communities into the Gentile world. The Jews' relationship to the Law of Moses had to be rethought in light of the expansion of the good news among Gentiles. We would love to have you join us as we explore the role of God's law as it relates to our faith in Christ today. Study guides are available in the office. **Contact Kathy at parishegracemankato.com** for the Zoom link or if you have any questions.



Come and Join

- **Out With Grace at the Pleasant Grove Pizza Farm- September 8th 4pm - 8pm**

Pizza Farm address: 41142 160th St Waseca, MN 56093

Bring your own chair, table or blanket, plates, utensils and anything you need to enjoy some fantastic wood fired pizza. Buy your own Pizza. Leave with your garbage. No dogs allowed

- **Walk/Ride with us in the Mankato Pride Parade September 9th 11am-**

Sign up in the Narthex by Prayer Bowl and the Fair Trade Cart or online at: gracemankato.breezechms.com/form/ca9b1a
We have T-shirts to give you as a Thank you. Sizes are limited.

- **Dialogues on Sexuality September 10th- 11:15am**

Pink Capes and Zip Up Boots- Language around sexuality. How could God set people up to fail? If God is love, then God must be present in all expressions of love. What Does It Mean To Be Transgender?- We say we want kids to be themselves, but our culture says certain things are off limits for girls or boys. It's not easy to be told that you are not who you believe you are. Transgender is an umbrella term. Is it possible that this diverse experience is also part of God's plan?

- **Faith Night Begins September 13th**

Come and join us for a meal at 5:15pm, education at 6pm and a small worship at 6:45pm to kick off the new school year.

- **Dialogues on Sexuality September 17th- 11:15am**

Are All Welcome? Loading people up with burdens, setting them up to fail with our religious baggage is against the teaching of Jesus. Inclusion is the way of holiness. Becoming inclusive is not a church growth model, but from this work we get a sense of integrity, knowing that we can come here believing that Christ is for EVERYONE. Ethic of Sexual Wholeness - We need everyone to be able to bring their whole self to the table. We all have unique gifts, together we can survive and thrive. Can you imagine what a church that was truly inclusive might accomplish when it affirms the unique gifts of all people?

- **Strategic Planning Meeting September 20th at 6pm**

Come and join us for a meal and redefine a vision and path for where we want to go as a church. Create more structure to our ministry after COVID era and reestablish committees to focus on specific areas within the church.

Grow Together

Tuesdays

- We have a Zoom Bible Study- lead by Ben Geer. This starts at 7:00 pm online and you can find the topics discussed on our website at gracemankato.org/zoombiblestudy
- There is also a Prayer/Bible Study Group that meets in person here at Grace at 1:30 pm. All prayer request are kept confidential.

Wednesdays

- Wednesday Morning Zoom Bible Study - lead by Kathy Mork. This is online at 10:00 am, using the Augsburg Fortress Adult Bible Study book.
- Wednesday Faith Night - Faith Night is for everyone! Join our Wednesday Faith Formation discussion group for youth and adults. Make it an evening: come for supper at 5:15 pm, discussion at 6 pm and an inspiring worship experience at 6:45 pm.

Serving Others

We want to serve our neighbors and our community so people in the community knows that there is someone out there supporting them and wanting the best for them no matter what and here at Grace we have plenty of connections to help serve others!

A few other groups that we have a partnership with and are always looking for helpers is the South Central Minnesota Food Recovery, ECHO Food Shelf, and the Connections Shelter. These are a great way to get to know others in the community and help others as well.



Grace Lutheran Church
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STORIES TOLD SO GRACE

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