

*February 2019*

# *Grace Gazette*

***Grace is a Christian Family Welcoming all people to actively live God's Word  
and strengthen their faith.***

Sunday School students spent January learning about the parable of the house built on rock or on sand, and what happens to each structure with its solid or shifting foundation. (See Matthew 7:24-27 or Luke 6:46-49) They've been doing all kinds of interesting projects as they learn about who provides a stable foundation for us. If you'd like to keep up with what they're learning, look for their Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/gracesundayschoolwr/>.

This story our children are learning is a good reminder for all of us, that Jesus is our rock, and when we build on that stable foundation, we can be confident in our ability to weather any storms that might come our way. Building on any other foundation, like wealth, beauty, power, success, or whatever else marketing media tells us we have to have, while it may make us feel good temporarily, it's a very shaky foundation and tends to slide out from under us.

I've noticed for myself, and for many of us here at Grace, anxiety over the past year about money, and the number of people at worship. These are common measurements of the health of a congregation, yet they're far from the only indicators of health, and may not even be very reliable. Yes, along with most Christian churches in North America, we don't have as many people present as we once did. Yes, financial gifts to Grace were down in 2018 compared to 2017.

Anxiety tends to make us turn inward, to adopt a protective stance, to focus on what if's and worse-case scenarios. It tends to limit creativity and willingness to try new things, and to distract us from why we're here and what God is asking us to do as a congregation. Anxiety is not a stable foundation upon which to build.

Thanks to some generous year-end gifts, offerings and other monetary donations, and careful attention to and limiting of our spending, Grace ended 2018 with a bit more money than we ended up spending. We ended the year and began 2019 on a solid financial foundation. God again provides for us generously, so that we can do the ministry to which God is calling us.

With this in mind, I pray that we are able to let go of our anxiety about money and numbers. While not being reckless with what God has given to us, let's celebrate what we have, trusting that it is enough to accomplish what we need and want to do, to impact our community with the love of Jesus, and support each other in being faithful in following Jesus.

Jesus is our rock; as we continue to build on him, we are assured of a stable foundation and future.

***Pastor Michelle***

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***Judy, Kendra and I would like to thank everyone from Grace who offered condolences. If you helped set up or take down, served or brought food, shared in the service in any way, it meant a lot to have your love and support surrounding us. Thank you to those that have prayed for us and continue to pray for us.***

***Love,***

***Team Cushman***

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### **From the Bishop ...**

*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh and lived among us and we have seen his glory (John 1:1,14).*

About a month ago I sent a message to the synod announcing that Ben Stepanek had begun working on the synod staff as our Communications Manager. Ben's job description has a long list of responsibilities that includes work with social media as well as printed material and a host of other duties. But the heart of the communications work is really "... to tell the story of the East Central Synod of Wisconsin."

What is the story that we have to tell? Some might say it is a story about things that are happening in the 123 congregations of the synod, perhaps a building addition or a mission trip or cooperative work in a local food pantry touching the lives of the homeless. But I think there is a bigger story yet. The story we have to tell is not merely a story about us, though there are some wonderful stories to be told about the people in our congregations and things they are doing. The story we have to tell is about God and how God is at work in our communities and neighborhoods, in the lives of our neighbors in need, and in the people of our congregations across East Central Wisconsin.

In Christmas services last month we heard the angel proclaim to the shepherds: *Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.* The angel was telling the story of what God was doing in the world. The angel told how God came interrupting the lives of Mary and Joseph and the shepherds and invited them to behold the life-giving presence of God in the Word made flesh. The angel announced God was on a mission to bring salvation to a broken and sinful world.

We are slowly learning the Church does not have a mission. It is more correct for us to say God has a mission. The Church has a calling, we are called to participate in God's mission of reconciling the world to God and to one another. So the story we have to tell is how we in this part of God's Church are being prodded and challenged, invited and encouraged to be part of God's mission of reconciling love in Jesus Christ. This means we are to listen to the stories of people in our neighborhoods and communities and congregations to discern where God is showing up and where God is calling us to witness and serve in the world today.

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## **Advance Funeral Planning – a Gift to Your Family**

While many people plan ahead as to which funeral home they prefer, few seem to consider the details that go into planning for their funeral or memorial worship service. Family members and friends are grieving, and may not be thinking clearly about favorite hymns, bible readings, and other details that help to create a meaningful funeral or memorial worship service for their loved one.

The adult forum on Sunday February 10<sup>th</sup> at 9:15 am in the worship space will focus on these things. Pastor Michelle will share information and assistance on planning for your funeral or memorial worship service, including a packet of information, and a form to help you think through the details involved.



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### ***From the Board of Finance...***

Budgeting and projecting giving for a church is challenging. By mid 2018 we were projecting a shortfall of around \$20,000 for the year. With budget cuts implemented for the second half of 2018, we ended November with a shortfall of approximately \$2,000. Then in December God provided through your generosity and we had giving of \$54,247 compared to an average monthly giving of \$30,220 through the first 11 months of 2018. \$29,000 of December's giving came as cash/plate donations between Dec 23 and Dec 31. This increase of \$24,000 over our average monthly giving brought us close to our projected and budgeted 2018 giving.

	Actual	Budgeted
Total Giving	\$378,459	\$378,874
Total Expenses	\$358,579	\$378,610
2018 Excess	\$19,880	

While we are optimistic about 2019, we know that some of the excess for 2018 was early contributions for 2019. We are still going to manage the approved budget through the first quarter of 2019. At that time we will take a careful look at our projections and make appropriate recommendations based on our financial situation with regard to our 2019 budget.

Thank you for you generosity.

### ***Board of Finance***

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### ***Stephen Ministry***

This month Grace will be starting its 6th year of Stephen Ministry. Over the past 5 years we have ministered to 17 individuals who were facing some kind of difficulty in their lives. Stephen Ministers are trained to provide one on one confidential Christian care to people in need. They also provide communion to those people that are unable to attend church. Please keep the Stephen Ministry in your prayers. If you are in need of confidential care and support, contact Pastor Michelle.



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## Lenten Suppers

While Lent doesn't start until March 6 this year, the Board of Fellowship has been busy planning for our Lenten Soup Suppers tradition. As we busied ourselves for this time of breaking bread together before our Wednesday Lenten services, we thought it might be time to switch things up a bit. So, this year, while we will still have Lenten Suppers, they will not always be Soup Suppers. Our Lenten Suppers will go like this:

March 6 = Traditional Soup Supper  
March 13 = Pizza  
March 20 = Sloppy Joes and Mac&Cheese  
March 27 = Spring Break. No Supper  
April 3 = Baked Potato Bar  
April 10 = Chili Dump

We will still need plenty of volunteers to help make these suppers happen. Please look for the sign-up sheets in the Welcome Center starting a bit later this February. We'd love to get your feedback on how you felt about the changes we made to our Lenten Suppers at the end of this Lenten season. Thanks for your help and your feedback.



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### 4 Ways for you to help fight hunger in South Wood County!

**1) Attend Empty Bowls on Saturday March 2, 2019 from 11am-2pm at First English Lutheran Church – 440 Garfield Street, WR** – for your

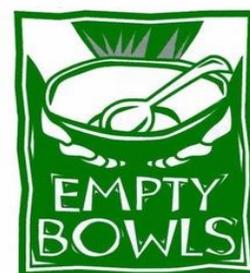
\$10 donation (age 3 and older), you will receive a meal of soup from a local restaurant, bread, beverage and homemade cookies. Take home a bowl handcrafted by one of our local potters as our thanks for your

support. All funds raised are donated to the local efforts of the Rapids Family Backpacks and Nekoosa Academy Backpacks for Kids food programs, as well as SWEPS, Family Center Food Pantry, The Neighborhood Table, WR Community Gardens, and St. Luke's Lutheran Church Community Thanksgiving Dinner.

**2) Volunteer your time the day of Empty bowls from 10:30am-3pm** – Stop at the Welcome Center and sign-up to help on March 2nd. Grace is partnering with First English, come and see how together we can make a dent in the hunger needs of our community by hosting this event.

**3) Bake Cookies!** Grace is planning to supply 85 dozen cookies and to date we have just 16 dozen in the freezer. You can either bake cookies anytime during the month of February and bring them to Grace to be frozen, or sign-up to bake cookies the week of empty bowls and deliver them to First English Lutheran Church on Friday, March 1st.

**4) Donate a basket or buy raffle tickets** – if you are unable to attend or volunteer on March 2nd, you can still support all of these valuable hunger organizations by donating a raffle basket. For those who do attend, make sure to buy raffle tickets so more money can go to this great cause!



## Discover Grace

Do you or someone you know want to learn more about becoming a member of Grace? If so, Discover Grace is for you! Join us Sunday, February 24th at 9:15 by the fireplace in the welcome area. This is a time to answer your questions and share information about joining the Grace family.



## Love Inc.

On Sunday, February 17th, between services, join us in the gathering area for a Love INC, fest. There will be entertainment by “Elvis” and “Michael Jackson”, heart treats and coffee and a free will donation to support Love INC. Love INC coordinates service – a relational response to callers which brings together Christian volunteers and resources. Please join us in having a good time and supporting Love In The Name of Christ of South Wood County.



Love INC  
Love In the Name of Christ

## SAVE THE DATE!

Warmer weather is coming before we know it...and so is ...

### VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL!

Save the date and tell your friends!

July 30, 31 and August 1



## Officer and Board Member Update:

\*Tim Engelen has accepted the Vice President role and we are glad to add his gifts and talents as the chair of the Board of Personnel.

\*Jen and Ron Leach are joining the Board of Youth, completing that team.

\*We are continuing to search for members to serve on the Board of Stewardship. This board needs creative people to help develop tools for educating the congregation on the role stewardship plays in our lives. Stewardship is a broad topic, from caring for creation and our bodies to the time, talent and money we give to fulfill God’s mission. This board gives us a chance to think about our gratitude for all God provides in our lives, and teaches us how to share it with others. Contact Joanne Wayne at [talksonphone@yahoo.com](mailto:talksonphone@yahoo.com) if you would like to be a part of this team.

## We Welcome Jerry and Susan Krofta to Grace

Jerry worked in finance for the National Guard and retired in 2007. He now devotes many hours to the American Legion – Post 9, where he is serving as the Post Commander for the 4th time. He enjoys supporting their Legion baseball league and working with the Badger Boys program which offers scholarships. Susan is also retired. She worked as a medical transcriptionist for many years, the last twenty for Riverview Hospital. She likes volunteering, especially helping the residents at the Atrium play bingo on Friday afternoons. She is a jigsaw puzzle addict and enjoys reading and cooking.



## Dinner Theater News



**Get Your Tickets!!**---Grace Dinner Theater tickets will be going on sale starting on Sunday 2/17/19. What a deal! You get a wonderful show and something to eat. Dessert and Dinner show dates are:

Dessert Shows - Thursday, 3/7/19 and Sunday, 3/10/19 **\$10**

Dinner Shows - Friday, 3/8/19 and Saturday, 3/9/19 **\$16**

It's another madcap comedy adventure from the Grace Players entitled *The One That Got Away* - see what happens when a group of women who are serious about fishing meet a group of men who are looking to pick up chicks at a fishing tournament.

**Dinner Theater Volunteers Needed!**—We are once again looking for volunteers to bake, prepare desserts and dinners, serve, and clean up (after the shows) at this year's Dinner Theater. We can't do it without you, and we REALLY appreciate all of your help!! Sign-up sheets will be available at church starting on Sunday, 2/17/19, or you can contact Linda Barrett, Johanna Prescher, or Christine Sullivan with any questions.



## Wanna learn the right way to throw stones at houses?

Grades 5-12 are invited to learn to curl on Sunday February 10th from 1:30 to 3:30 at the Tri-City Curling Club (131 Hurley St., WR.) Bring warm clothes, gloves, hat and clean shoes to wear on the ice. Warm up with hot chocolate and snacks in the clubhouse. RSVP to Kathy Bohman by Feb.



### Connecting with Grace

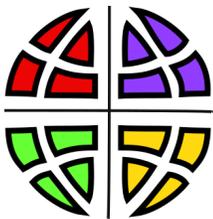
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Pastor Michelle Nickodemus

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Joanne Wayne: Ministry Coordinator

Email: [talksonphone@yahoo.com](mailto:talksonphone@yahoo.com)

Kevin Cushman: Youth Ministries

Email: [theyouthguy@yahoo.com](mailto:theyouthguy@yahoo.com)

Susan Jacobson: Administrative Assistant

Email: [glcwroffice@gmail.com](mailto:glcwroffice@gmail.com)



*Every week the Sunday service is recorded. The recording is available on the public access channel, Charter channel 985 (WRCM) and Solarus channel 3) and can be viewed on Saturday at 8:00 AM and continuing on Sunday at Noon. The service is also available on YouTube (go to YouTube.com and type in GLCWR on their search and select the date of the service you want to watch.) Contact the office for more information.*