

our Journey



A newsletter for members & friends
of Saving Grace Lutheran Church.



February 2021

*“Established in the Holy Scriptures, our mission is to make Jesus Christ known to all
as the one true Savior; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”*



Our theme this Lent is: “How God Speaks to Us Today”

We’d all like to forget last year and the interruption, hardship, anxiety, fear and loss that Covid-19 has brought on everyone. Does God still speak to us? Is He working in and around us in ways that we don’t see? How does He still speak to us today that we might have hope in the face of fear? During this Lent we will be focusing on how God still works in our lives today in so many amazing ways!

Ash Wednesday is February 17th. We will have a Parking Lot Service at 12:00 noon with Holy Communion. We will distribute ashes in plastic bags to vehicles so that those in your car can participate in the imposition of ashes. At 6:15 pm we will stream the Ash Wednesday Worship Service online.

Ashes will be available at the worship service in the Parking Lot, at the entrance to Saving Grace Lutheran Church, or you can make your own ashes at home (*see how on page 7 in the newsletter*).

We will continue our Lenten Wednesday Worship Services in two ways:

- 1) We will gather as a congregation in the Parking Lot at 12:00 noon on Wednesdays and**
- 2) at 6:15 pm we will Stream our contemplative Holden Evening Prayer Service.**

God never abandons us; He is teaching us to listen.

Come and join us this Lent as we prepare our hearts for Easter!



²⁸“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

God still speaks to us today.

*“My life is but a weaving between my Lord and me.
I cannot choose the colors, but He worketh steadily.
Often times he weaves sorrow and I in foolish pride
I forget He sees the upper and I the underside.
Not till the loom is silent and the shuttle ceases to fly
Shall God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why.”* (Anonymous)

It's only natural to wonder why we go through difficult times in life. To wonder if God is listening to your prayers and if He still answers them. My Aunt Lee Ann moved out to California. I was always envious of her. It was always about the same temperature every day. In Half Moon Bay, California, the day always begins with a cool fog, by noon it burns off and then you have a beautiful day in the 70's or 80's. Then in the evening as the sun is setting you can see the fog would roll in again. Whenever she'd call, she'd ask what the weather was like. It didn't matter what time of the year it was she wanted to hear it from us. We'd tell her it was 25 below zero and she'd say, "Oh I remember those days." No matter the weather her answer was always the same. "It's about the same in the 60's and 70's. I was surprised when I asked her what she missed most about the Midwest. She said, "I miss the change of the seasons. It's always the same here."

It dawned on me that during the difficult times, we often look forward to a time when the weather is more favorable, the sun is on our face and the wind is at our back. We look forward to when we will feel better and there's no fear about the future. I believe that when we feel, we are ***weary and are carrying heavy burdens, (Matthew 11:28)*** It's then we learn what it means to trust in the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. It's then that we have to rely on Jesus to find the rest for our souls He promises. Jesus said, ***“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:30)*** He's always there to lift us up and lighten the load as we walk with Him.

We still have to be careful, yet God still speaks to us today. This Lent we will be looking at the different ways God speaks to us during good times and during the difficult times in life. He always is there as our Good Shepherd to encourage us and lead us to green pastures. He is always faithful.

Join us during this Lenten Season on Wednesdays at 12 noon for the Parking Lot Service behind Saving Grace Lutheran Church or in the evenings at 6:15 pm for Holden Evening Prayer as we look to our Shepherd and "How God speaks to us today."

May God bless you as He guides you, for His yoke is easy and His burden light.

In Christ Jesus our Lord,

Pastor David Irgens



From Pastor Dan

“Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.’” – Genesis 12:1

New beginnings are still on my mind from last month. I had asked someone to read over last month’s newsletter because I wondered if I was coming across too harsh. I was making a point that new beginnings bring new challenges and just because a challenging time ends and a new season begins, it doesn’t mean that life will require any less faith to trust in what God is doing. We looked at the new beginning that took place for the people of Israel after their Exodus from Egypt. Now, as Jamie and I lead a Bible Study on Genesis, a similar lesson has been caught in my mind as I consider the Scripture.

In January, we were just starting Part Two of our bible study on Genesis. Genesis 12 begins with a new beginning for Abram (who is eventually named Abraham). Abram receives an amazing word of promise from our God. God tells Abram, “I will make of you a great nation,” (Gen. 12:2). God goes on to tell Abram that world history will revolve around this nation and its descendants. God says it this way, “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed,” (Gen 12:3). Abram has been brought into the plan of God through God’s word. He is living a life that is blessed by God! Isn’t this what we are all after? Before you answer, listen to how the story unfolds.

Abram obeys God and he travels to the land that God is leading him to. Here’s what happens next: “Now there was a famine in the land.” (Gen. 12:10). A famine!? What happened to the life of blessing and the promise of a nation? What happened to the family of Abraham being at the center of all of history and the deciding factor for how God deals out the rest of his blessings? But, that’s not the end of it. This famine leads Abram to lie about being married to his wife in the land of Egypt to save his own skin. The lie is found out and they are kicked out of Egypt. When they get back north to the place where they began when the famine hit, Abram experiences a family split with his nephew Lot. We might wonder... “is this promised nation falling apart?” Immediately following this split, a war breaks out in the land and Abram’s nephew Lot is taken as a captive. You can see it clearly. This new beginning did not go smoothly. There was famine, lies, family division, and war.

In other stories we might hear, read, or watch we usually have a hero. There’s someone who knows what needs to be done and figures out how to do it so that the conflict can be resolved. But our Bible isn’t made up of heroes. Abram is a person just like us. He has received a promise from God and he’s trying to wrestle through what it means for life and his relationships. He is not the one with all the answers. He is not the one who has it all figured out. The only hero in the Bible is God himself. The rest of us hope to be caught up in his work and his plan of salvation. Many of us try to fashion God’s word of blessing over us into a bunker that shields us from all of life’s woes. But we look at the life of Abram and our safety bunker washes away like a sand castle on the ocean shore.

Pastor Dan Contd. on page 4

Pastor Dan, contd.

Here's what we need to see, the blessed life of new beginnings is not one that is free from trouble. When we remember the story of Abram, we can see this clearly. But something was left out of that summary above. Through all the trials that Abram faced, God continued to speak to Abram. He spoke words of promise to Abram again and again. "Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.'" (Gen. 12:7). And after the famine and the family division, "The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are...for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever." (Gen. 13:14-15). Finally, after the war, a blessing comes through a priest, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth," (Gen. 14:19). Through all of the trials, success, and the failure, the word of blessing remained for Abram.

This is what life has in store for us as the children of God. Life has its troubles, sometimes brought about by our own shortcomings, but the word of God remains forever that has blessed us with a place in his kingdom. The blessing comes to us again and again in the times of trial and a new dimension of God's grace is revealed to us. As Abram followed God, he learned more and more what the promises meant for him and his family. As we follow Christ, the same happens for us. The significance of God's blessing grows when it is challenged by life's woes.

Every Blessing in the Lord,

Pastor Dan



Building Committee

New Church Home News!

Here's what's next:

- Work will continue on a survey of the land, an architect, a contractor, etc.
- Also, we are working on a counter-offer for the city-owned parcel of land attached and hope to have an update for you after the holidays.
- We will also be working on a sign to show off our future home.
- We'll have more information on next steps at our Annual Meeting. Be sure to attend!



PLEASE NOTE: We are asking you to please wear a mask at all times if you are in the church building; including the Fellowship Hall, Vestibule, Sanctuary, Office and Kitchen. Thank you for helping to keep everyone safe!

Articles for the March newsletter are due to Julie Atkinson via email office@saving-gracechurch.com or "snail mail" by February 18, 2020.



Music "Notes" - by Beth Joosten, Music Director

"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him." Psalm 28:7

MONTHLY GRATITUDE REFLECTION: As 2021 progresses, I continue to focus on gratitude. We have so much to be thankful for. In the Psalm above, knowing that "The Lord is my strength and my shield" brings me much comfort in days that may not seem peaceful or when I feel challenged by a situation. By turning my focus to praising God for being my stronghold, my heart is moved in the direction of gratitude instead of despair. What a blessing His love is.... and for this, I am TRULY thankful!!

SPECIAL MUSIC FOR JANUARY:

A special thank you to those who provided special music in January. We sincerely appreciate their musical contribution to our worship services: Jan. 3 - Heidi and Beth Joosten; Jan. 10 - Pastor Dan Doran; Jan. 17 - Kiara Carlson; Jan. 24 - Dan Joosten

HOLDEN EVENING PRAYER:

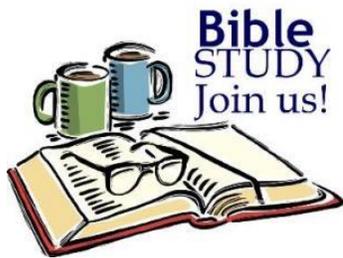
Beginning February 24, we will be using the Holden Evening Prayer for our midweek Lenten services. Please join Pastor David and Pastor Dan as they lead us in this beautiful service of music and the Word.

Our Musician Spotlight ...

Rachel Balestreiri



Hi there! My name is Rachel Balistrieri and I am the children's music leader here at Saving Grace. I have loved getting to make music with the awesome kiddos in this community! I am originally from Grafton, WI but have been living in this area for the past five years to go to school at UW-Eau Claire. Music has always been an important and fulfilling part of my life. I grew up around a musical family, singing in choir, and playing piano. Since high school, I knew I wanted to be a music teacher. I have recently completed my Bachelor of Music Education--General and Choral K-12. In the coming months, I plan to search for a position teaching either middle or high school choir. Outside of teaching, I enjoy cooking, spending time (or talking over the phone because of the Pandemic) with friends and family, and relaxing with a good movie or show. If this Pandemic has taught me anything, it's been to be thankful for the blessings in my life and to slow down and relax every once in a while. I'm trying to adopt these mentalities as I move forward in my career and life! Thanks for reading, and I hope you all stay safe as we navigate this unprecedented time in the world!



Did you know we have several Bible Study/Small Groups meeting or forming right now?

Bible Study on Genesis | Led by Jamie Gilbertson and Pastor Dan

Jamie and I have been leading a small group together since before the pandemic. We transitioned to Zoom at the beginning of the shut-down studying the book of Ephesians and studying themes that run through the Bible. Just before the end of the year, we began a study on the book of Genesis! The initial plan was to study from creation up to the narrative of Abraham and his family (Genesis 1-11). Our group enjoyed the study so much that we decided to continue our study and get through the whole book of Genesis! We've just set out on this second journey through Genesis and it's a great time to join us over zoom. We will look at the life of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Esau, and the story of Joseph. Please contact myself, Pastor Dan, if you would like to be added to the email list. (pastordansglc@gmail.com)

Donna's Bible Study | Led by Donna Switzer

Donna's Bible Study has been a staple at Saving Grace Lutheran Church. They have been faithfully meeting as a Sunday Class since well before the Pandemic. As they had to make changes due to the COVID pandemic, they now meet at the home of Bobbi and Rolly Larson on Sundays at 10:00 am. They recently finished up a study on the gospel of Luke just before the new year and they have now started a study on the book of Revelation. They are using *The Book of Revelation Made Clear* by Douglas Connelly to help shed light on some of the complex imagery and metaphors found in Revelation. Donna has been impressed by the book as it has reshaped her view of Revelation from a book of gloom and doom to a book of unshakable hope for the Christian. Attendees of the Bible study have been so thankful for the community and I hear so much from its members that it's the most they laugh all week. It's a group that has cherished being together during this time. If you would like to know more, please reach out to Donna Switzer!

Making Friends and Setting Goals | Led by Tim Owen

Tim has just started a small group this past month that will focus on personal goals and fostering friendships. At one point, Tim was in an accountability relationship with a previous minister of Saving Grace, Pastor Ralph. Tim knows that relationships, accountability, and camaraderie make all the difference when trying to make a change in life for the better. They meet at 6:30 pm on Tuesday evenings. The group spends time catching up with one another, discussing their goals, and praying for one another by the end of the hour. If you would like to have access to the zoom meeting or ask questions about the group, reach out to Tim Owen at tim.owen@edwardjones.com.

Bible Study at Briarwood Cottages | Led by Jeri Thronson

Jeri Thronson had been elected by the popular demand of her friends to lead a study at the Briarwood Cottages here in town. It was a group that met once a month and had about 10 people in attendance. At the end of each gathering, they would pick a topic to consider the following month. They would choose a topic, a scripture, or a favorite hymn to focus on for the next month. They enjoyed the open-ended discussion this format brought about. For a season they were blessed to have Moira Kneer speak to their group on a regular basis while she was a chaplain at a nearby hospital. The driving force behind these get togethers can be summed up in Jeri's own words, "I think we need to show each other and tell each other about our faith!" Now, the pandemic has affected these gatherings, but Jeri and a couple of other women still get together on a regular basis to discuss matters of faith and pray for one another. Although the group has grown smaller in size, their appreciation for faithful Christian companions has only grown.



Help us document our journey!

Our church newsletter has a great name, “Our Journey”. It’s great because it is exactly what we are on- a journey. The past seven years have brought us a lot of changes- changes in where we worship, changes to our congregation, and more recently changes to how we worship. It’s been quite a journey and now the future of Saving Grace Lutheran church is even brighter. Our journey takes us to a beautiful piece of land that will one day contain something of our very own, our church! We are looking for someone (or multiple people) to help us take pictures and video of our land to document this stage in our journey- the building of our church. If you are interested in helping with this project please contact Melissa Corlett, savinggraceeducation@gmail.com.

Family in the Military

If you would like to have a picture of family serving in the military, any size will do, drop it off at church and I will put on the Thank You Wall in the Fellowship Hall. Please include name, rank and relation to you.

If you have any questions contact Chuck Hill havenfun6@yahoo.com or 715 833 2164.

Daily Devotions

You will find devotions prepared by your Pastors and church staff each day on our website (saving-gracechurch.com) and on our Facebook page.

How to Make your ashes for Ash Wednesday

Traditionally, we use dried Palm branches from Psalm Sunday when Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem as the King of the Jews. Within a week of that triumphal entry Jesus is crucified for our sins in our place. We enter into Lent through repentance. Ashes are a sign of our repentant hearts and we make the sign of the cross in ash on our foreheads as a sign of the resurrection through Christ’s death.

Instructions:

- 1) Take a few palm branches and burn them in a bowl outside, until the fire is out (can use wood ash)
- 2) Take the ashes and grind them into a powder.
- 3) Add olive oil to them.
- 4) Then pray: Almighty God, bless these ashes (make the sign of the cross) †† and all who are receive them, that we may remember in penitence that we are dust. Give us Your strength that we may faithfully keep the disciplines of Lent, and know the forgiveness of sins and the newness of life that comes to us through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who live and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen
- 5) Then as you make the sign of the cross on the other person’s forehead say, “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

****Saving Grace Lutheran Church Annual Meeting of the Congregation**
Sunday, February 7**

12:30 pm

We'll be passing a budget for 2021, discussing the process of building our new Church Home, voting on new leadership and a few resolutions. The meeting will take place – no matter the weather- in the Parking Lot behind the church after the Parking Lot Worship service. Be sure to plan on wearing a mask if you think you may get out of your car and/or speak to the attendees.

Treasurer Nominee

One of the leadership positions we'll be voting for on February 7th is a new Treasurer. Here's a "snapshot" of our nominee for Treasurer:

"I am **Jeff Wachter** and am an accountant and a partner in a management company in Eau Claire. My wife Blythe and I live in rural Eau Claire county by Cleghorn on a small hobby farm with 2 horses, a dog and a bunch of cats. We enjoy rural life and have a couple tractors and machinery to bale hay in the summer for our horses.

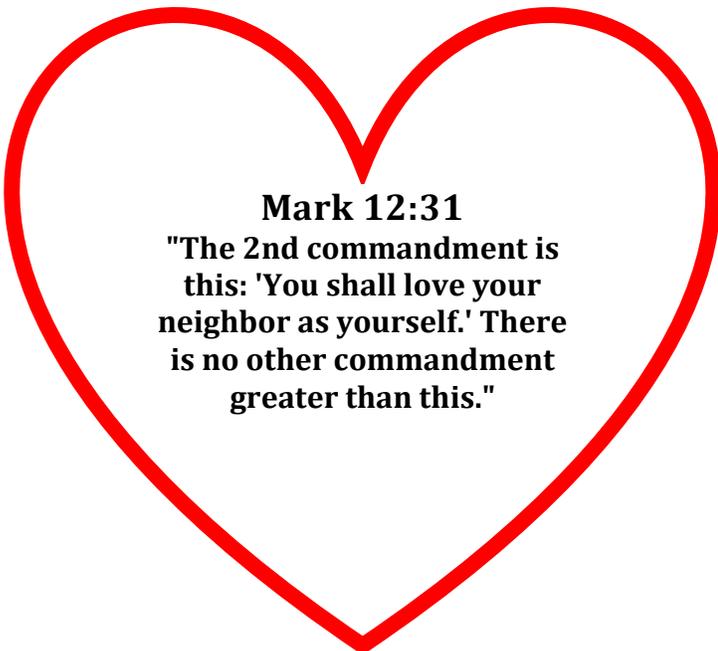
Our daughter Shaundra graduated from UW Stevens Point in 2019 and is currently a lab scientist in Baraboo WI.

I have been treasurer and management board member in the past and I am willing to take on the responsibilities of treasurer again."



**Parking Lot Drive-up Worship Service
Sundays at 11:30 am**

To provide a safe option for those who would like to gather, we plan to continue to offer a social distanced Sunday Parking Lot Worship in the lot behind the church (across Fairfax next to CCF Bank) in February and beyond. In consideration of others, please come prepared to wear a mask if you have your car windows open or intend to walk around the lot. On Communion Sundays, bring your own grape juice and bread.



Scrip Sales

If you wish to purchase scrip, please preorder by contacting either Chet or Dale @

Chet's cell: 715-864-3125

or cberkey@centurytel.net

Dale's cell: 715-828-5542

or sfarley44@hotmail.com

Arrangements can be made with them to pick up in the parking lot on Mondays or Fridays from 8 -10 am.



First Communion classes begin Sunday, February 21st

First Communion classes are open to third graders (and older) and will consist of 5 online classes (Sundays, beginning February 21st from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm) with First Communion taken on Maundy Thursday. Detailed information has been emailed to third grade families. If you have a child who is in third grade or older, and did not receive an email, please let Melissa know right away so that information and materials can be delivered before classes start on February 21st.

confirmation

@home

Confirmation class is held via Zoom on Wednesdays beginning at 5pm. February classes: 3rd and 10th. Please note the change to the schedule- there is no Confirmation on February 17th! Confirmation is on break for Lent from February 17th through March 31st.

If you have any questions about Sunday School, Confirmation, or Illumin8 just email Melissa at savinggraceeducation@gmail.com.



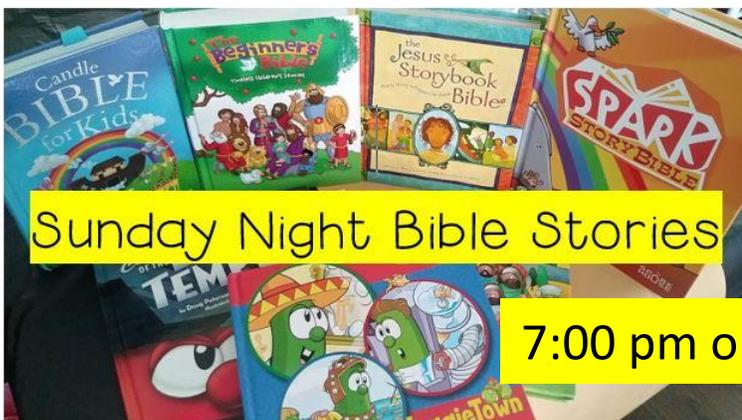
Catch the Wave 2021 is Saturday, March 6th!

Catch the Wave is a virtual event this year. The event starts at 12:30pm and will go until 10pm.

There is no individual registration fee this year, just a per church fee and this cost will be covered by the church with youth money raised from fundraisers.

One short sleeve t-shirt will be purchased for each youth who signs up to attend by February 5th. Additional apparel is available for purchase prior to the event- all orders must be placed no later than February 19, 2021. Shirts can be purchased from: <https://www.customink.com/fundraising/catch-the-wave-2021>

Information has been sent to all youth families with children in 6th through 12th grade. Please contact Melissa with any questions about the event.



Don't forget Family Devotions published on Facebook and our website each Wednesday!

If you missed one, go to the homepage of our website <http://saving-gracechurch.com/> and check out past devotions!



Thank You for Your Gifts

Donations made to the church in memory of or in honor of someone will be printed on a monthly basis in the newsletter. Your gifts in times of celebration or remembrance are always important and very much appreciated.

Christmas 2020

In Memory of parents Lester & Elfrieda Anderson and George & Trudy Johnson: Duane & Helen Anderson

General Operating Fund

In Memory of Janice Peterson: Peterson Family

In Memory of Adeline Hanson: Rod & Judy Alf, Allan & Ruth Hofland

Capital Campaign

In Memory of Adeline Hanson: Cindy Joy Fischer, Barb & Lee Mathson, Brenda Marlow

In Memory of Mike Wagner: Cindy Joy Fisher

Television Fund

In Memory of Adeline Hanson: John Kevin & Janet Johnson, Todd & Karen Nelson

In Memory of James Helstad: Kyoungme & Ron Helstad

Television Broadcast Sponsor

Our weekly Television Broadcast is an important part of our ministry and mission. Viewership has risen dramatically, and many of those viewers consider themselves “members” of our church – even if they’ve never visited us before! Of course, many of our “regular” members who may be homebound or not computer savvy have been watching too! Would you or your family like to sponsor an entire Television Broadcast? Send your donation, note “TV sponsorship” in the memo, and we’ll take care of the rest. Your sponsorship will be noted in the newsletter and announced on our broadcast. The cost of each broadcast is \$485. Thank you!



Year-end balances will be available in the Annual Report at our Annual Meeting of the Congregation on Sunday, February 7.



**Current Capital Campaign Balance:
\$550,674.37**



Shopping on Amazon?

Support Saving Grace by going to smile.amazon.com and register for Saving Grace Lutheran Church. Same Amazon, same prices, same Prime (if you have it), but a small percentage of dollars you spend are donated directly to the church.



Do you have a prayer request?

Please email your request to office@saving-gracechurch.com and indicate if it is a confidential request, or you would like it included on the prayer chain and in the worship service.



Saving Grace Church Mission Outreach Committee

In January: Monthly gifts went to Ephrem and Starfish Kids.

Compassion International sent an update and picture of Ephrem. We have been sponsoring him since December 20, 2009. He is 10 years old now and learning Bible verses, reading Bible stories and learning the 10 Commandments!

Thank yous were received from the American Red Cross and Eau Claire School District for contributing to the "hot spots" with the message, "Thanks for thinking of our students". We received a Christmas card from Hope Gospel with a hand written thank you note. We also received a thank you letter on behalf of the 8-year-old from Osseo we helped. Her parents said when our church is open again they will attend a service as a family.

We will have the same schedule of weeks for **Beacon House** that we had last year in these months: April, June, August & October.

Kay delivered the gifts for "Spirit of Christmas".

Kay and Brenda went on a shopping trip to the Dollar Store for household and baby care supplies that they delivered to a family with 3 children.

We will support **The ARC Eau Claire** this month - The Arc promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.

The **St. Francis Food Pantry** has been having lines of people extending down the block outside, waiting for supplies. We are sending them a check.

We are gifting funds to **Agape World Outreach** (The name "Agape" is a Greek word which means "Sacrificial Love"), specifically directed to Pastor Chris and Esther Marere for their school and/or medical facility. We think with Covid, they probably need medical supplies. Pastor Marere spoke to the congregation in November 2019.

FOOD BANK DONATION TIPS

- Boxed Milk is a treasure. Kids need it for cereal which they get a lot of.
- Oil is a luxury needed for Rice a Roni which they get a lot of.
- Tea bags and coffee are caring gifts.
-

We are always open to ideas and suggestions for Mission from our congregation members. Call or email one of our Mission Committee members or office@saving-gracechurch.com and Julie will pass along your suggestions.

A reminder that our Answered Prayer Fund is set up for members only who have a special need. Contact Pastor David or Pastor Dan if you need help - they will keep everything confidential.



12 Ways to Connect

1. If you like talking, call someone. Hearing a cheerful voice brightens everyone's day.
2. If you like writing, send a note or email. Sharing kind words or your favorite quote is a blessing.
3. If you like texting, get those thumbs going. Sending happy emojis shares love - lots of love.
4. If you like social mediaing, post a positive message for friends. Caring and sharing happens here.
5. If you like Zooming, join us for a Bible Study or set up a face-to-face with a loved one. Dressing up is optional.
6. If you like inviting, welcome someone to join in worship. Visiting from home or the parking lot is comfortable.
7. If you like entertaining, set a place for Jesus at your table. Communing is a gift from Him.
8. If you like coloring, treat someone to new refrigerator art. Staying in the lines is not required.
9. If you like baking, warm up the oven. Dropping off goodies for a friend or a neighbor is sweet.
10. If you like creating, share your talents. Making celebrates beauty & uniqueness in this world.
11. If you like giving, find a charity and do what comes naturally. Gifting anonymously is magical.
12. If you like connecting anytime and anywhere with anyone, pray. Listening is God's superpower.

Annual Giving Statement

All Annual Giving statements were mailed last week, along with your notice of the Annual Meeting and your General Operating Pledge Request and Card for 2021. If you have any questions, please contact Julie Atkinson at office@saving-gracechurch.com or call 715-309-2819.

Invite someone to your "virtual" or Parking Lot church this week! And don't forget to "Like Us" on Facebook and share our posts!

Contact Information

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Julie Atkinson, Office Manager: office@saving-gracechurch.com

Melissa Corlett, Education Director: savinggraceeducation@gmail.com

Beth Joosten, Music Director: music@saving-gracechurch.com

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