



Harbinger

www.graceevanston.org • churchoffice@graceevanston.org

Spring 2018

**Affirming,
Courageous, Caring**

**Grace Lutheran
Church of Evanston
1430 South Blvd.
847.475.2211**

**Grace Is An Open
And Affirming RIC
Congregation**

OUR MISSION:

To courageously live out our faith by sharing grace with each other and the communities we serve.

OUR VISION:

All God's people will feel accepted, challenged, and cared for by Grace Church.

SUNDAY:

**10am Summer Worship
June, July & August**

**Rev. Daniel Tallon Ruen
Pastor
pd@graceevanston.org**

**Mark Bowman
Music Director**

**The Rev. Carmelo Alvarez,
The Rev. Erik Christensen,
The Rev. Abner Cunningham
The Rev. Eldon DeWeerth,
The Rev. Betty Landis,
The Rev. Elizabeth Palmer,
The Rev. Kaari Reiersen,
The Rev. Raquel Rodríguez,
and The Rev. Gordon Straw,
*Colleagues in Ministry***

**Liz Laughlin, Youth and
Family Coordinator,**

**Marie O'Brien,
Parish Administrator**

**Jackson DeLeon Lopez and
Paola Galicia, Sextons**

Why A Poor People's Campaign?

I've seen the limits of targeting one piece of legislation, or influencing a small number of elected officials, as an issue-based, activist/disciple. There are bills and agreements I worked on for years that were quickly swept away, or not enforced, once a new administration was elected.

Like The Rev. Dr. William Barber and The Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, co-chairs of the Poor People's Campaign, I believe we need a massive, grass roots movement of Americans to demand a 'people and planet first' focus for our country. The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, is a rare opportunity to build such a nationwide coalition.

What we're calling for is analogous to what some Scandinavian countries did in the 1930s. As an example, the population of Norway non-violently rose up against the elites of their country, the politicians and businessmen who were happy to keep income inequality as the status quo. The common people and workers created and supported political parties and unions that focused on families, workers, children, and protecting their natural resources. These countries are not utopias by any means, but they certainly treat their own citizens, and operate internationally, much closer to the teachings of Jesus Christ than we do.

What we're seeing in West Virginia, Arizona, and Oklahoma (with regard to the teachers' strikes) as well as the youth movement (with regard to gun violence) are examples of such widespread, moral movements, erupting in our own nation.

The PPC seeks to continue the dream of Dr. King with regard to a new vision of the U.S. that includes everyone, including poor white people, whom Rev. Barber believes are being conned by the elites and President Trump to support policies that help destroy their own communities.



The more we paint a picture of a society that is good for all people, using art, music, inspirational words, compassion, and courage, the more we might move the political culture away from money-and-power politics toward a political culture of equality, freedom, and opportunity for all.

The Poor People's Campaign is generating a lot of energy. We have organized in 39 states plus the District of Columbia. More than 1700 people have signed on to the campaign in Illinois, with more than 700 people signed up to participate in some sort of nonviolent, civil resistance to address the four pillars of the campaign: racism, poverty, the war economy, and environmental degradation. The campaign is also fully LGBTQ+ affirming.

I am part of the Illinois coordinating committee and also a leader of the PPC faith outreach team. Since March our North/Lake County Cluster held three amazing rallies to sign up more and more people for the campaign. We now have more than 160 people to organize in our cluster. Pastor Betty Landis and I have led overview trainings to prepare ourselves for 40 Days of Action. Beginning on Mother's Day, May 13th, we will highlight the four pillars through protests, music, dance, voter registration drives, marches, and targeting specific pieces of legislation. This all culminates with a mass rally in Washington, D.C. on Saturday, June 23rd. I hope many of you will consider joining the campaign and also coming to D.C. The mass rally is billed as the 'kickoff' of the PPC.

We are being trained for a multi-year campaign to transform the moral foundation of our country, to create a political and theological culture that puts people and the planet first. I am energized and thrilled to be part of this national movement, led in the name of people like Marian Wright Edelman, Bobby Kennedy, and The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For more info, and to sign up to receive national and state action alerts, please go to poorpeoplescampaign.org

Pastor Daniel

**Starting June 3, we will return to our
10 a.m. cooperative services in the sanctuary.**

The Little Free Pantry

I am Claire Van Nice, one of the youth in the Generations class working on a service project together - the *Little Free Pantry*. For the past couple of months the youth in Generations and some really dedicated adults/parents have been putting together and organizing a pantry that will be set up outside of church. This will be open to anybody in the public who needs its services.



The Little Free Pantry pilot program began in May of 2016. This pantry is special because many food pantries require application before use, they have only a set number of hours for operation and require volunteers. This pantry is always open and doesn't need people there at all times to hand out food and make sure it is running correctly. This pantry is like the *Little Free Library* which you might have seen in neighborhoods in Evanston. But in this case we'll have food instead of books. The pantry has different levels of dependability based on its location. If it is in a high poverty area it is for people who cannot meet everyday food and personal needs. But in middle class neighborhoods it could be used as an after school snack or maybe the missing ingredient of a batch of cookies.

The Little Free Pantry at Grace will be located on the east side (Wesley Street). Grace's pantry will be stocked with boxed and canned food. There will be a sign on the pantry that says *"Take what you need, give what you can"*. This will encourage people to give if they would like to. The Generations group will be working on raising money to buy food to stock the pantry, as well as painting and decorating the structure. Members of the congregation are invited to donate food as well.

We have Daniel Laurence to thank for helping to build it. Daniel used all harvested items to make the pantry. For example, he used discarded tv projector screens to make the windows. We are super excited to share this new venture with the community and we hope it helps make Evanston a better place to live.

The Queen Secretly Visits Presbyterian Homes!

Recently, a Presbyterian Home resident gave a timely presentation on Royal Weddings. Before the lecture started there was a photo opportunity with a very good likeness of the Queen!



Marilyn (right) & Friends have Tea with the Queen

Worship Notes for Summer 2018

Starting June 3rd, we will return to our 10 a.m. cooperative services in the sanctuary. We will have outdoor services every third week of the summer. The month of June will be full with Youth Sunday, June 10th, Racial Reconciliation Sunday, and PRIDE Sunday. See you soon!

June 3 - Choir Sunday

June 10 - Youth Sunday

June 17 - Reconciliation Sunday and Outdoor Worship

June 24 - RIC/Pride Sunday

Reformation 500 and Beyond!

Last October, nine Catholic and Lutheran Evanston churches celebrated the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation. We signed a covenant to work toward better unity in representing God's people and God's work in our community. Grace is one of the founding members of this group.

It's now time for the Beyond part to begin. A steering committee has been working to put into place actions to support the pledges made in October. Activities will include social events, theological study, and service projects.

The proposed calendar for the 2018-2019 year include

- Prayer for Christian Unity Service
- Hymns and Hops
- God's Work Our Hands event
- Fourth of July parade
- Lenten Study—Theology of the Cross
- Informational Fair on Activities in Social Justice
- Conflict Resolution session re responding based on faith
- St. Nick's Good Friday procession



Grace Youth Ministry

Grace Youth Ministry will be working to include youth from other congregations in their activities. This is especially important since some congregations have very few young people, who as a result, are often overlooked in the ministry of the church.

In January of 2018, the group backed a Unity Prayer service in support of Immigrants, Refugees, and DACA persons. The service was held at St. Nick's and was attended by 150 plus people from a variety of churches in the Evanston area. Events scheduled for June include:

- June 13th Sr. Simone Campbell of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice and NETWORK's Nuns on the Bus Campaign speaks at Old St Pat's Luncheon Series www.icdichicago.org
- June 27th Invitation to participate in the Post Detention Accompaniment effort of ICDI at St Nick's Music Room, 7 pm, contact Bob Heineman 847 682-1056.

To check for updates on *Reformation 500 and Beyond* see: <https://evanstonreformation500andbeyond.wordpress.com/>

Or on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EvanstonReformation-500andBeyond/>



Interfaith tour of Israel/Palestine

Dear Grace Community,

We have been offered a special invitation to join with Beth Emet Synagogue and Second Baptist Church for an interfaith tour of Israel/Palestine this coming November of 2018!

The trip will be led by Rabbi Andrea London and Pastor Michael Nabors. I also plan to attend. The cost is steep, but if you are interested, please email me at pd@graceevanston.org and we can talk about a group fundraising effort.

The trip in Israel/Palestine is very close to \$3,000, including all hotels and tour sites, but the airfare is separate, so it's probably close to a \$4000+ commitment, per person.

Read all about it here: <http://www.mejditours.com/open-tour/go-forth-to-the-land-that-i-will-show-you-genesis-12-an-interfaith-dual-narrative-journey-of-discovery-and-learning-to-israel-and-the-west-bank/>

Go Forth to the Land that I will Show You (Genesis 12): An Interfaith, Dual-Narrative Journey of Discovery and Learning to Israel and the West Bank

November 18 to November 30, 2018

On this unique trip, Second Baptist Church and Beth Emet Synagogue will travel together to Israel and the West Bank with Palestinian and Jewish guides who will introduce us to the complex narratives and present-day realities of a land that is a home to each of our faith traditions. We will visit sites holy to Christians, Jews, and Muslims, learn about the modern history of the region, and spend time with Palestinians and Jews to gain greater understanding of the complex realities of the region and greater empathy for all its people.

Pastor Betty Landis, recently returned from a trip to the Holy Land with the same tour guide as the November trip, will be sharing her experiences with the congregation. Please keep an eye out for that event. **Pastor Daniel**

Gordon Straw

Gordon Straw, Associate Professor and Cornelsen Chair for Spiritual Formation at Lutheran School of Theology of Chicago, will be receiving an honorary doctorate on Sunday, May 20th, at Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa during their commencement ceremony that day. Join us in congratulating Gordon on this great honor.

Breakfast, The Most Important Meal of the Day

Nutrition experts tell us getting a good start to the day should include breakfast.

But what if you have no way to fix breakfast? That's the dilemma of 35-50 people who use the Interfaith Hospitality Center each day.

You can help by bringing an item or two of food or contributing cash to buy perishables.

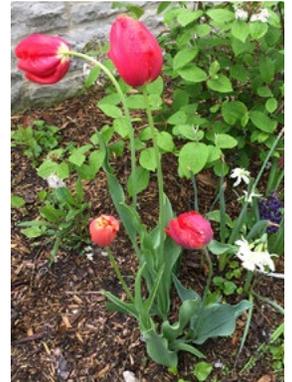
Food items include:

- 1/2 gallon of juice (not OJ),
- a bottle of syrup,
- a can of coffee, a box of tea, hot cocoa mix (kind that uses water),
- a large container of jam or jelly,
- a bag of sugar,
- a container of creamer,
- a box of crackers (soda or graham) or a box of instant oatmeal.

Grace Gardeners Report for 2017

In 2017 the very able Grace Gardening team:

- Spread many wheelbarrows of our own compost on the raised beds.
- Planted kale, chard, lemon grass, leeks, potatoes, and cherry tomatoes. The kale, chard, and tomatoes went very well; the leeks and potatoes did not thrive so we will try something else this year.
- Bags of greens and pints of tomatoes were donated to Curt's café and the Reba Place food pantry.
- We also planted blueberry bushes and wild strawberries. We will see what happens with them this year.
- The new Grace sign was landscaped with bushes donated by Dorothy and Fred Nagelbach, bulbs, and additional perennials.
- Plantings of bushes, grasses, and perennials were added on the north side of Grace.
- In October, 100+ donated tulip, daffodil, crocus, and hyacinth bulbs were planted by the front entrance and the Grace sign. Whatever bulbs escaped the squirrels bloomed beautifully.
- At Christmas, lights were added to one of the stone planters and on the tree by the sliding door entrance.
- Our gardeners included Ginny Ayers, Jan and Bill Blackburn, Dee Johnson, Chloe Martinez, Holly O'Connor, Nancy Starkman, and Clare Tallon Ruen. Many others helped by watering and working during Grace Spring and Fall cleanup days.



**Please join us this spring as we continue our gardening!
There are always things to do. Contact Clare Tallon Ruen or
Holly O'Connor if you have gardening and landscape ideas,
suggestions, or just want to be part of the fun!**

New Members At Grace

The Cunninghams – Abner and Kathie

From Abner



I retired from full-time work after 8 years as a medical social worker with the Jesse Brown VA Hospital on the Home Based Primary Care Team, 17 years almost entirely at Thresholds, a previous 6 years at Catholic Charities and some more multiple or single years scattered in social work agencies around drop-in centers for homeless for Traveler's Aid (precursor to Heartland Alliance). I also worked as a social worker at group mental health homes and activities with Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, a stint first as director and board chair of Chicago House in 1985-86, our city's first residence for homeless people with HIV-AIDS, then a period of palliative care at Stroger or "County" Hospital, and several years full-time at Catholic Charities when first back home in Illinois in 1977 (and later part-time at Catholic Charities again as well at an employee assistance program for union postal and railroad workers). I obtained my MSW in 1982 from Loyola University of Chicago, and added an ACSW, LCSW and CADC in the next decade.

I was first married when I was in my last semester of Earth Science at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. My ex-wife is a widow, alive and well in Park Ridge, Illinois, a former speech and hearing teacher. We divorced in 1979 because we didn't get along, but had great children together. My "ex" referred to me as "a good pastor for bad people" and we got along well when she was not around my work directly, as was the case after leaving Brooklyn and Bedford-Stuyvesant.

I began seminary at Augustana, and by that time the Augustana Synod had already segued into the Lutheran Church of America. I completed seminary in the first graduating class at the Lutheran School of Theology in 1968. Initially I was in the LCA, which then merged with other little ethnic Lutheran assemblies to form the ELCA, of which Grace is a member congregation. I'm a convert to Lutheran stuff since the seminary, where I dropped serious Hebrew that last year at the new seminary (LSTC) in order to play more flag football, to give you an idea of my scholarly impact on the Lutheran ethos. In fact, our then class quarterback, Jim Sbertoli, one of the few other non-Swedes when I started at Augustana College and Seminary besides four guys from Tanzania, got me to return to school by sending me plays that had me running out of the "I" formation; I don't think he knows that. We'll see each other at this month's 50th reunion, Class of '68.

My first pastoral call was in the Metropolitan New York synod, in two communities within black Brooklyn for a few years, then upstate in Woodstock, then finally in rural Ohio for a "two-point" parish as they were then called. In the summer of '66 I was in the same Student Interracial Ministry organization as Pastor Ruen's dad, but sent to Brooklyn whereas he went down South.

I think of all the things I prayed to experience in my working life, most has come true: I got to be outside a lot as a pastor and as a social worker, on the streets of a city or around Chicago's south side in older

veteran's homes, or biking around county roads to a farm house, or under bridges and viaducts or railroad yards where homeless folk tend to live outside of shelters.

Secondly, I have not been bored and thus am still working part-time, and for the first time I can remember, currently working in a suburb doing general social work just 20 hours a week. I love the 20-hour Work Week, and politically have always believed we should celebrate all the nation's presidents with a three-day holiday! I bet you're with me on that one....

I grew up in a mix of east Rogers Park and Edison Park parts of Chicago. I'm very proud of my parents who came up during the Great Migration from Missouri during the Great Depression of the early '30s, and left behind them for the most part the bad aspects of our mostly southern white and hillbilly tribes, to become downtown professionals in the Police Department and the courts as a reporter. I tell people my mom's side, originally from the same Kentucky county that Lincoln was born in, was part Indian, same nation as Elizabeth Warren, based on oral history of people here since the 1700s who piddled around with everyone else from wherever. Someone with my same exact name once owned slaves in Missouri; that's on my dad's side.

Kathie and I have six children who all attended public schools. A couple of children attended school in the suburbs with my ex-wife. My ex-wife and I have 3 children who include Aaron, born in 1967 while I was on seminary third year internship; he now is a police officer who lives with his wife, a Korean-American, nearby and is working in police intelligence at headquarters, a highly decorated patrolman with an "outside" business training police in other countries.

Our second son Colin, born in 1968, is a statistician for Intel in Portland, Oregon, with four children who are like little "Renaissance" boys and girls, interested in science, sports and music. Two grandchildren are in Asheville, North Carolina, with Carl, our son born in 1976, who is teaching behaviorally compromised teens in high school. Those grandchildren too are active in many things, including tree climbing for the ten-year-old boy, Calvin.

Kathie and I have 3 children together. Our oldest daughter, Emily, born in 1982, works for The Paper Source. Caitlin, born in 1983, just earned her MS in Landscape Architecture, and our youngest son, born in 1985, is a CPA who decided to serve as a Chicago police officer. Kathie keeps busy now caring for Emily's 3-year-old daughter and 11-month-old son 2 days a week in Berwyn; the best job she ever had! She also tutors at Family Matters in Chicago and volunteers at Connections on Tuesday mornings.

The "kids" all have related well to one another and don't think of one another as "half" brother or sister. They all have minimally a college degree and most a bit more. None are religious but all are "givers" to their communities. My wife Kathie is a saint and the world's greatest grandmother. That's all I need to say about her. She sleeps well, I think, because she's not as complicated as her husband.

I have found the best expression of church and its good theology at Grace that I've been privileged to participate in since being a young student in that 1966 S.I.M., Student Interracial Ministry, civil rights summer experience at a church called Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church, right near the projects in East New York! I am active and

Children: three daughters, Jennifer, Deborah, and Rebecca (deceased in 2001). Jennifer lives in Clinton, near Utica, NY with husband Steve and sons Zach (16) and Mesafint (14). Deborah lives in Matthews, NC near Charlotte with husband John and sons Evan (16) and Sam (13).

Most recently, my life has opened new doors as the dark days and the grief were supplanted when I met my new partner, Barbara McGary, on a river Danube cruise in 2016. I now live with her in Highland Park, IL. Barbara happens to be, and has been for many years, a member of St. Nicholas Parish in Evanston. And together we have already been involved in ministries in both parishes, and will continue to work in the areas of immigration, sanctuary, and the Poor People's Campaign.

Personal Interests:

Speaking, teaching, team-building, group dynamics, parish management, a long time Cubs and Minnesota Twins fan over the years. Family, soccer, and other sports my grandchildren are involved in, vacations, travel, politics, and social action.

I am continually aware that all of these experiences, places, relationships, and events have enabled me to grow and serve in many different ways. My most recent stories that confirm my connection to the world as well as to my own interests and experiences have to do with the 75 years I have lived in the last two centuries.

This story begins when Mary and I started to date in sophomore year at Bradford High School. I became friends with her family and discovered that she was a strong Cubs fan because of her grandfather. He would take her out of grade school during the winter and spring several times and fly her to Tucson, AZ where the Cubs held their spring training for many years. She and her friends loved to play baseball in the fields behind her house. She knew about baseball and began to teach me why I should love the Cubs before we were ever married. Not only did we love the Cubs during our years of marriage, but we supported the Minnesota Twins and were season ticket holders.

I recall that each year we would talk together about what's going to happen with the Cubs "next year" when the new season started, and then we would live the disappointment when they would never seem to make it to the playoffs and World Series. Mary never had the chance to know my final connection to the Cubs because of her passing. I certainly never would have believed that my 75th birthday would be celebrated by millions of people and that day would be unlike my birth and my baptism, filled with clouds of uncertainty, but instead filled with great joy. My 75th birthday ended not with a "wait until next year," but "Cubs win!!!" It was after 108 years and more than three generations for Mary's and my family, that on my 75th birthday, Nov. 2nd 2016, "Cubs Win!!!" I am sure that Mary celebrated that day as well.

Let me thank all of you as members of Grace for the warm welcome and the opportunity to share in the mission and ministries of this community of faith. It also gave me a chance to reconnect with Pastor Dan's father, whom I came to know and work with in St. Peters, Bronx, NY back in the late sixties (which is another big story). Until next episode...thank you again.

News from Bill Eyring

To our Grace Church Family from Judy Bond and Bill Eyring

We want to share good news about our latest adventure. We are now in Edenton, North Carolina, a historic town on Albemarle Sound about 40 miles from the coast. We are here so we can act as foster parents to our grandson, Noe, who needs us while he rejoins the public school system and becomes part of our family again. We will be here until about September when we will move back so he can enroll in Evanston High School. We live about 2 miles out of town in a small rental house with minimal furniture. We have a creek in the back and, like most of the county population, we are well within the 100-year floodplain. (See our yard in the attached photo.) It's a 6-month gamble. Our Skokie house is being watched over by friends and family.



I'm trying to be an attentive naturalist. We've seen lots of vultures, an occasional osprey, a pair of American Anhingas, Mockingbirds, turtles, bullfrogs, crayfish burrows, 6-inch lizards, and spiders. Been told a couple of times that we can expect an occasional water moccasin in the yard since we have swampland across Pembroke Creek (100 feet wide at our yard) and across the road. The Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is about 25 miles upstream of us and there are alligators there. I thought it was great that there are lots of "buzzards" but our grand nephew who manages chicken barns says they feed on the dead chicks that he and dozens of others throw out the windows.



Judy has lots of relatives here on her former husband's side. They have hosted and acted as guardian for Noe for the past two years. By coincidence, my nephew and his family are only a half hour away and we enjoyed being with them already. We look forward to enjoying the local culture and geography. Noe is great to be with and an eager traveler and gatherer of local lore. DC isn't far – not fun like it was in the Obama years but maybe we can help agitate some time. We can even travel to the Virginia coast where the Mitchell side of my family arrived in the early 1600s and I have been contacted by a distant cousin through Ancestry.Com.

This has been Noe's fourth week at the local high school. He has some catching up to do in the next 5 weeks, but he is amazingly capable. We are excited about having a very good spring and summer here.

We'll keep in touch. Hope your summer is as stimulating as ours.

Bill and Judy

773-960-5429 (Bill) and 847-370-7602 (Judy)

New Member Amanda Straw

Hello! My name is Amanda Straw. I am a 23-year-old multiracial, animal-loving, justice-driven, mermaid-obsessed, music-loving, tattoo-collecting nerd. I love puzzles and card games and binge-watching TV shows on Netflix and HBO. I believe that laughter is the best medicine – if you know me, you know I love to laugh. One of my favorite quotes is, “It’s all fun and games until someone gets hurt. Then it’s hilarious.” I also love books, so much so that I can never go into a bookstore without buying anything; I have three bookshelves in my bedroom because I own so many books. I primarily read sci-fi and fantasy fiction, though I also have a growing collection of classics and plays. My love for reading heavily inspired my decision on what to study in college.

I am a recent graduate of DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana, a small private liberal arts college (recent meaning May 2017). I received a Bachelor’s in English Writing with a minor in Theatre; I know that most of Grace knows me as a singer, and I sang extensively in college, though I never majored or minored in Music or Voice. I basically lived in our Performing Arts building – what I knew as the GCPA (Green Center for Performing Arts). I sang all four years with voice lessons, two and a half years in choir, two years in voice studio, and one year in an all-women a cappella group. I also did theatre during each of my four years at DePauw; I have experience in stage management, directing, acting, design (costume, sound, and set), costumes (quick changes and management), and stage crew. I also had the marvelous opportunity to be accepted into the New York Arts Program to participate in an internship at an off-off-Broadway theatre in New York City during the fall semester of my senior year. I lived in Chelsea and worked on 52nd St. for about four months; it was an amazing experience.

After my freshman and sophomore years in college, I worked as a camp counselor at Lutherdale Bible Camp in Elkhorn, WI – first as a cabin leader, and then as the camp store manager. Since then, I’ve been sticking to the ELCA churchwide office. I did two internships at the churchwide office before I started temping there. My two internships were with Mission Advancement as a writer for the Living Lutheran online publication and with the Office of the Presiding Bishop doing event planning and management for the Grace Gathering – a week-long event held in honor of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. My last temp job at the office was during the holiday season with Mission Advancement and the Call Center, where I helped answer the main ELCA phone line and took lots of Good Gifts donations, among other small projects. I cur-



Evelyn Soto Straw, Gordon Straw, and Amanda Straw

rently work as a freelance writer for Living Lutheran and I am temping with Colleges and Universities in the Domestic Mission unit doing administrative work and data entry.

I was born and raised in the ELCA and I am now a PK times two (pastor’s kid and professor’s kid) (my dad Gordon Straw is Associate Professor and Cornelsen Chair for Spiritual Formation at our local seminary, LSTC, though I’ve been a pastor’s kid my entire life. My dad’s both the Pastor and the Professor; my mom Evelyn Soto Straw works at the ELCA Churchwide Office as Director for Operations & Programs with the Domestic Mission Unit (she’s basically the COO of the unit and has been at Churchwide for 30 years). But when I went to college, I was living in an area of Indiana that is extremely conservative and there were no ELCA churches anywhere near me, so I stopped attending church services for about four years. When I came back home, I went to Grace with my parents a few times and constantly felt like Pastor Dan was speaking directly to me during his sermons. And I was so moved by how welcoming everyone was to me and how central and important activism is in our community that I had to join in on the fun!

Report From The Worship Feedback Meeting, Jan 2018

The Worship Feedback Team met at the home of Rachel Stark Inch. For the first time, we took non-anonymous feedback, and it seemed to work very well. People were honest and constructive in their comments.

We began by reviewing Advent/Christmas and plans for Lent, and also reflecting on the challenges of creating intercultural worship. Some members gave feedback that the new liturgy used for Advent was not contemplative enough, and there was discussion about the theology of the Eucharist being a feast vs contemplative. PD and Mark will keep trying to balance the beginning of the service being more contemplative, and the Eucharist being more festive.

Overall, the vast majority of feedback comments were (as in the past) from older, Caucasian members who are more comfortable with traditional, contemplative, European classical settings, music, etc.

There was discussion about how to glean equal feedback from the ethnic diversity of Grace congregants. Next time, we will approach a mix of people directly with some one-on-one interview questions.

Regarding silence, we had included MORE silence in the past several months, due to feedback requesting it, but the consensus now was to try taking it out, or to use it when there are particularly fitting moments, moved by the Spirit, perhaps after the sermon.

- Discussion of robes and where pastor and assistant minister sit. PD explained his discomfort with wearing robes and sitting in the high seats behind the altar, due to this being a carryover from the 4th century basilica architecture and the robes as symbols of elite, priestly, male and military power. The high seat and robes are therefore antithetical to the message of Jesus, as PD understands it. If other servants want to wear the alb, that is certainly fine, and if requested to do so for special services, that request would be honored. Discussion ensued over whether all servants should vest during high holidays, but no agreement was reached.
- Regarding hymns: When we sing European classical hymns, feedback requests that they be the more familiar ones.
- Youth Participation: We all would like to see more youth as lectors, Assistant Minister, in the choir, etc., but there was no definitive plan

about how to make this participation more inspiring for the youth and whether we can include music that THEY connect with. Sally expressed an interest in working on this more, WITH the youth. Felipe offered good perspective for us, that community time for youth can be a way to share info and events.

- We had a rousing discussion of how to express awe/reverence/joy/the feast in intercultural ways. We will plan for more extensive discussion – one question: Is it possible to make a liturgical “feast” a solemn activity? Perhaps we have not achieved a sense of balance yet between one and the other for a critical mass of our members.
- One suggestion is to host more contemplative services at different times throughout the year. For example, Holden Evening Prayer could be offered once a month, or an additional service of healing and prayer, in addition to the annual “Blue Christmas” service.
- Raquel suggested that for our next meeting, we work with the congregation to intentionally discuss our spiritual needs through a more intercultural lens. Sample question idea: How do we understand each other’s spirituality? How can we speak and act in ways that bring greater sensitivity and understanding?
- Carmelo suggested that we don’t go into a panic with the fact that we are primarily an Anglo-liturgical culture. In follow-up to this, he elaborated: There is always a tension between the pastoral and prophetic (hopefully a creative one). Reclaiming a given cultural tradition means also a creative dialogue with other cultural traditions. The intercultural dialogue leads all of us to be open to a learning reciprocal process, as we worship together, and continue to struggle to become a faithful Christian community.

The next meeting will be in June. Sally agreed to become chair for the June meeting and the year after.

The Team wants to thank all of our community members who shared their feedback. We seriously listened to them and discussed their ideas.

Team members: Carmelo Alvarez, Mark Bowman, Christine Collins, Felipe Encarnacion, Susan Graef, Bonnie Gunzenhauser, Rachel Stark Inch, Kaari Reiersen, Soren Reiersen, Raquel Rodriguez, Daniel Ruen, and Sally Schleker



Grace members join others at the IL Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival group, up to Governor Rauner's office on Monday, May 21.



Bob Lamont at Poor People's Campaign



This is Pastor Daniel and Pastor Marilyn Pagan-Banks of A Just Harvest, preparing to lead the IL Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival group, up to Governor Rauner's office on Monday, May 21st. #PoorPeoplesCampaign

Grace

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