



GRACE NOTES

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, 46 WOODLAND STREET, HARTFORD, CT 06105 860-527-7792

Building Fund Campaign to be launched January 10

An important time of stewardship emphasis takes place this winter as Grace raises funds to complete repair the steeple, make other urgently needed repairs, provide a more stable economic base for future mission and expand the effectiveness of our ministries.

The Rev. Michael Meier will be here as our special guest on Sunday, January 10 to help us launch into our "Build Us Up, Lord" program. (Please see his letter on page 3) Pastor Meier is a Stewardship Key Leader of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He is a specially-trained pastor, not a professional fundraiser.

Pastor Meier served twelve years as Campus Pastor at Oregon State

University, was Program Director of an outdoor ministry program for two years, served as Pastor for ten years at Sitka Lutheran Church, Sitka,



Alaska, served seven years as Stewardship Specialist for congregations in Oregon, Washington,

Idaho and Alaska and spent seven years at the Churchwide office in Chicago supervising stewardship staff throughout the country and two more years as ELCA Coordinator for Mission Support. He is semi-retired and he and his wife Toni live in northern Wisconsin where he grew up.

He will be celebrating with us the incredible trust we have received from our Lord and the exciting invitation we have to share God's mission in the world.

January 10 will be an inspirational, exhilarating day for every one of us, and very important days in the life of our congregation.

LET'S ALL MAKE IT A POINT TO BE PRESENT!

January

Volume 2010

Issue 1

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Signs of glory

Note from Pastor

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. John 2:11

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Do you ever think about how nice it must have been for Jesus' disciples to see signs first hand from Jesus? Those signs that revealed his glory? I would have been a great disciple if I had been around to see something so dramatic as turning water into wine. Or the heavens opening and the Spirit of God descending in bodily form like a dove. When we read about these in worship this month, part of me might say, "Well, it sure would help if the heavens opened up around here once in a while!"

But then, maybe there are signs. We just don't always recognize them. I got to thinking about that as I reviewed the past few weeks at Grace and in Hartford. First, our stewardship campaign. Several families at Grace are either looking for work or are concerned about their financial situations. Yet in spite of this, a number of households increased their pledges, and some new ones also came in. Such commitment to the Lord's work is especially important in these difficult economic

times, when people need the witness of the Gospel more than ever. A response like this looks to me a lot like a sign of our Savior's glory.

Notice all the thank-you notes in the "People of Grace" section of this edition. In fact they fall way short of a complete list of all who answered the call to serve in one way or another at Grace. Committees met and planned for the future. People brought twice as many socks, gloves, and hats - and the gift bags to put them in - for homeless people as were requested. All kinds of good cooks brought delicious dishes to yet another of Grace's Famous Potlucks. Visits were made. Prayers were offered. The sanctuary and chancel became increasingly beautiful as Advent led into Christmas. Voices were raised in joyous song. All signs of God's glory.

Then there was the emergency shelter for homeless people that did not happen at Grace after all. But what did happen? First, the responses from everyone at Grace I spoke with, when we just

began to consider thinking about the possibility, were astonishing in their graciousness, generosity, and commitment to hospitality. Hard questions were raised in the spirit of willingness to respond to God's call to welcome strangers and care for the poor. Signs of God's glory. I'm happy to report that a shelter was found in an appropriate state-owned building. We give thanks that people in direst need will be cared for this winter. Another sign.

And finally, there is the building fund campaign, *Lift Us Up, Lord*. There will be a lot to say about that exciting project in the coming weeks. Let me just say here that the willingness of this congregation to take such a step of faith is a sure sign of the glory of God in our midst. Thank you - and thanks be to God!

May the spirit of God's love continue to transform us, that we may always find life together in him, Jesus Christ our Lord!

Pastor Steege

Build Us Up, Lord! Building Fund Campaign

By Pastor Michael Meier, Stewardship Key Leader

Just as Grace Lutheran Church has begun a long-term visioning process to discover what your future ministry will be, God has blessed you by using the need to repair your steeple as an opportunity to get a “jump start” on the next phase of your mission on Asylum Hill and beyond. The **Build Us Up, Lord!** program is the result of your awareness that you need to do a number of things to improve your building in order to answer God’s call to that ministry. Nearly 60 years since the laying of your cornerstone you have discovered that the steeple needed significant repair. (You have already started that part of the project.) I understand that in addition you really need to pave your parking lot, repair your pipe organ and put in place some conservation measures that would improve your lighting and water heating. I am also told that because people come in from the parking lot through the back entrance, it would be good to improve the safety, signage and appearance of that entry. There may be more that needs to be done—especially long-term planning for the future maintenance and repair of your building. God has blessed you as you now are embarking on a program to raise funds for improving the building and expanding God’s ministry in this place.

The Planning Weekend for this campaign will be January 9-10, 2010. A Leadership Team for the effort has been formed. Dale Eberhardt is the Chairperson of the Leadership Team. The Team will meet for training on Saturday afternoon, January 9. At that meeting I will provide information and guidance for this program and I will be preaching on Planning Weekend Sunday, January 10 and on Commitment Sunday, February 21. I am one of several ELCA staff persons working with the Stewardship Key Leader program. We have a strong history of helping congregations grow spiritually and helping them raise necessary funds for ministry.

The theme of the campaign here at Grace Lutheran Church is **“Build Us Up, Lord!”** The goal of the campaign will be spiritual growth within the congregation and within the lives of individual members and friends. The financial goal will be to provide funds for the modifications that will make your church building more visible and effective. You will hear a lot more about the details of the financial goal in the weeks ahead.

During the six-week campaign you will hear several brief talks in worship by lay leaders. “Ten Days of Prayer” will be an important component, along with a Prayer Vigil just before Commitment Sunday. There will also be informational mailings and Question and Answer sessions.

When we gather on February 21 for Commitment Sunday for **“Build Us Up, Lord!”** we will pray that your generosity will overflow to accomplish the financial goals for this congregation. I am really looking forward to working with you these next several weeks and I am so glad that I will be able to be with you on Planning Weekend and Commitment Sunday.

Now, as **“Build Us Up, Lord!”** gets underway you may be thinking ahead and asking, “How can I give more for this important work?” The simple answer is that many Grace members will give to **“Build Us Up, Lord!”** out of regular income. They will add a significant amount to their regular giving.

(continued on page 4)

Build Us Up, Lord! Building Fund Campaign (con't.)

Many will also give out of accumulated assets. Those who give from both regular income and accumulated assets will make much larger gifts – heartwarming gifts - that will allow us to reach and even surpass the financial goal.

Some possibilities you might consider are:

1. Gifts of Life Insurance

You may have a paid-up or partially paid-up policy that is no longer needed to protect your family. Giving this policy to the church may provide you with significant tax advantages.

2. Gifts of Stocks and Bonds

Stocks and bonds, purchased or inherited, can be given. If the stock is now worth more than when acquired, you can avoid capital gains taxes on the increased value, and, if you itemize deductions, you can deduct the value of the gift up to 30% of your adjusted gross income with a five-year carry-over for any excess.. It is vital that you give the stocks or bonds to the church, rather than selling them first and giving the proceeds to the church. If the stock is now worth less than when acquired, you should sell the stock and give the proceeds to the church. U. S. Savings Bonds cannot be given during the lifetime of the owner.

3. Gifts from an Individual Retirement Account

The tax code for 2009 allows for persons over age 70 ½ to transfer up to \$100,000 directly from their IRA to the church without this amount being considered income.

It is very important that this gift follow the prescribed process. More information is available at www.elca.org/irarollover. (You also may wish to check this web site regarding the tax code for 2010.)

4. Gifts of Real Estate

Real estate, including mineral rights, can be given to the church. Consider a “split sale” deeding an undivided percentage interest to the church prior to the sale, thus avoiding capital gains taxes on that portion. You may also receive a charitable deduction for up to 30% of adjusted gross income with a five-year carry-over for any excess.

5. Gifts of Personal Property

Antiques, paintings, jewelry, livestock, automobiles are just a few examples. Various tax benefits apply.

Persons considering giving either real estate or personal property should consult with the congregation to verify that the congregation desires the gift. Congregations can receive helpful advice from the ELCA Foundation on this matter. It is very important that you consult with your attorney or financial advisor before making gifts from accumulated assets.

These are suggestions for you to consider. Please be aware that there will be many opportunities to discuss the goals and details of this campaign in the weeks ahead.

I am honored to have this opportunity to work with you during this campaign, “**Build Us Up, Lord!**” and I look forward to being in your midst on January 9-10.

Sincerely,

Pastor Michael Meier
Stewardship Key Leader



Angels of Grace

Edith and Guenther Mamet were honored as the 2009 Angels of Grace at a special ceremony during worship on the First Sunday of Advent, November 29th.

The Mamets have been active members and leaders at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church since the 1950's and were married here on January 30, 1960. Their citation noted that since their arrival they have made it their particular ministry to visit members of Grace, as well as visitors to Grace, with special care and attention to those who are sick, in hospitals, or at home, and have invited new members to their home. They have been active in the worship and music life of the congregation, including the Recorder Group, the Choir, and continue with the Handbell Choir and the Altar Guild.

Guenther served faithfully on the previous Stewardship Committee, including bringing boxes to the homes of people who were unable to

pledge, so that they could make contributions as they were able. He also has served for many years, and continues to serve, on the Property Committee. He is still the one to call when any kind of property emergency arises.

Edith was in charge of the Kindergarten and Sunday School for many years, and has also served on the Congregation Council.

Together the Mamets have served our congregation in

many other capacities, as well as participating in numerous Bible Studies over the years, and are faithful in their daily devotion. As stated on their citation, "Their constant and faithful prayers, together and individually, have had a deep and far-reaching impact on the life of Grace and the members of Grace for over fifty years."

We give thanks to God for our beloved sister and brother in Christ.



Thank You Letter from the Christian Activities Council

Grace Lutheran Church was one of the two primary sites for the Adventures in the City 2009 program. This was the third summer the program has been held at Grace.

Dear Friends;

Despite financial challenges, Adventures in the City 2009 continued to serve over 300 children in its basic program. This year we served a total of 442 children, increasing reading and math skills while enriching their experience through trips, research projects and creative programming in the arts. Under the theme "Celebrating Cultural Diversity- Caribbean Connections: Dominican Republic, Jamaica & Puerto Rico," children explored Caribbean heritage and created songs, artwork, and reports on Caribbean island cultures. We thank God for your faithful generosity through which the children of Hartford once again received this much needed education and enrichment program.

Here are some of the highlights:

- Served a diverse group of 302 children in our basic program, 130 in special programs and 10 youth as counselors in training (CIT)
- Provided two separate sessions, one from June 19 to July 24 [at Grace] and another from July 20 to August 14, in order to collaborate with the Hartford Public Schools revised schedule.
- African American, Hispanic, Caribbean, Asian and Caucasian children participated.
- Raised math scores by an average of 7 months and reading scores an average of 1 year.
- Provided an extended day program for 36 children of working parents at Grace Lutheran and North United Methodist. (Program from 7 am to 5pm)
- Facilitated CIT leadership/team building training for 10 seventh grade students at Milner and Clark Schools.
- Engaged Compassion Camp middle schools youth from First and East Woodstock Congregational Churches for the second year, the group donated books, read with children, and provided a bookmark making workshop.
- Engaged two young adults from Rocky Hill Congregational Church as teachers.

Our children, parents, staff and community are very grateful for your support. Your congregation made a difference in the lives of these precious children; without it we would have not been able to provide such a rich experience!

Sincerely,

Rev. Nancy E. Allen
Program Administrator
Christian Activities Council

2009-2010 Congregation Council installed

Officers elected

The new **Congregation Council** was formally installed during worship on November 29th, the First Sunday of Advent and also the first Sunday of the liturgical year. The current Council Members are:

Rebecca Lewis
Gail Lindstrom
Barbara Ruhe
Mavis Smith
Barbara Van Fleet
Bruce Klotz
Brian Phelan
Wendy Colbert
Pr. Eva Steege *ex officio*

At their meeting December 12, 2009, the Council elected its officers for the new one-year term: President, **Mavis Smith**; Vice President, **Emma Coleman Carr**; Secretary, **Bruce Klotz**; and Treasurer; **Gertrude Kanwischer**. **Barbara Calogero** continues to serve as Assistant Treasurer.

Grace Lutheran Church is indeed blessed to have such gifted and faithful leadership.

Pledge Report for 2010

The numbers for our 2010 Pledge Drive are now determined and we can compare them with last year's numbers. Last year \$120,403.00 was pledged; the pledges for 2010 total \$110,540.00, a difference of -\$9,863.00 or 8%. This is great news considering the financial stress so many of us are now feeling. Some who pledged last year were understandably reluctant to make a pledge for 2010 when they did know what their job situation would be. The plate giving for 2009 was \$28,365.08.

It's obvious that a lot of thought and prayer went into our decision. I thank you all. And remember, we are still doing a great job with our stewardship efforts. We donated more than 40 bags each containing a hat, mittens and gloves. Our cookie sale was wonderful. The cookies were better than ever and Loaves & Fishes was helped by the donation of the proceeds from the sale.

I wish you all a blessed Christmas, and a healthy and happy New Year.

Barbara Van Fleet,
Chair, Stewardship

People of Grace

Mayor Eddie A. Perez congratulated the students and staff at four Hartford schools, including the University High School of Science and Engineering for being ranked among the best high schools in America by U.S. News and World Report. **Aaron Colbert**, now a student at Wesleyan University, is an alumnus of University High, and **Tyler and Austin Colbert** are currently students there.

Our condolences to **Glenna Brodnicki** on the death in December of her mother, Marjorie (Marnie) Snell. We pray that God will keep us in communion with all the saints until that day when all tears will be wiped away and sorrow will be no more.

A big thank-you to **Barbara Van Fleet** and the **Stewardship Committee** for

their fine work on our 2009 Stewardship Campaign and the Celebration Meal. The campaign was remarkably successful (see report), especially in very difficult times. Thank you also to Parish Administrator **Cathy Tomlinson** and Financial Assistant **Marilyn Flaherty** for their hard work organizing and handling multiple mailings and up-to-date reporting. And thank you to everyone who responded!

A big thank-you also to **Nancy Urban** for chairing the hugely successful Advent Workshop and Cookie Sale December 6th. Her note to the **Parish Life Committee** and all those who helped that day is in these pages, but Nancy herself deserves our very hearty thanks.

Speaking of the Advent Workshop, over forty bags containing warm socks, gloves, and hats were put together that day. More have been coming in ever since. They were gathered for delivery to Trinity Episcopal Church for December 21 Memorial Service for homeless people, and meal following. Thank you to volunteers from Grace that day: **Sue Carey, Gail Lindstrom, Annelies Koenig, and Nancy and Darrell Urban**.

And finally, a sincere thank-you to **Gail Lindstrom** and the **Christian Education Committee** for presenting our annual children's Christmas Pageant. The whole congregation looks forward to this delightful and inspiring event every year, and we are never disappointed!

Advent Workshop a Success!

A Big Thank You to All Who Made the Advent Workshop a Happening!

To all who donated and purchased cookies, you helped to raise almost \$200 for the Loaves and Fishes Program. (**Nancy Urban, AnnaMarie Potter and Rebecca Lewis** who did the set up)

To **Chad and Phyllis Thompson** and all the helpers who created greeting cards.

The cards were sent to members who are home bound and were also put into the gift bags for the homeless.

To all who donated and helped put together gift bags of socks, mittens and hats. Over 40 bags were gathered for those in need.

To **Nina Kretschmer** who assisted many in creating a Christmon for their home enjoyment.

To **Marty Holmeen** who continues to enrich the Fellowship Kiosk with his photos of happenings at Grace.

And to all who participated. What a joy it is to have fellowship together while at the same time working together in service to others. Where two or three are gathered in His Name, there is Christ among us.

The Cost of Love

I was unable to contribute anything for the December Grace Notes, because I was completing a talk for a History Conference on the desegregation of the Connecticut National Guard. Well into the twentieth century, the U.S. Army reflected the racial prejudices of the civilian U. S. and admitted African Americans sparingly, not to serve alongside white soldiers in combat but to do manual labor in segregated, all-black Army units called "Pioneer Battalions." Segregation continued in the Army after World War II in spite of the Truman Administration's campaign to desegregate all of the Armed Forces and in the face of combat experiences of many whites veterans who saw their friends fighting and dying alongside so-called inferior people of color.

The segregationist policy also applied to the State National Guards, but Connecticut and New Jersey paved the way in 1949 for other states to desegregate their own Guards. For African Americans, it was a long and bitter fight for manhood and acknowledgement that they could share in defending their country. The Nazis and then the Soviets effectively used the argument that the U.S. was hypocritical, condemning oppression and tyranny in foreign places while allowing

segregation and lynching at home.

There are many rights to wrong in this world. Jesus knew the hypocrisy and oppression of his world and rightly condemned many in the Jewish religious hierarchy for their lack of compassion and love for their neighbors. His witness led to his death at the hands of a corrupt and brutal militarized empire run by the Romans. It is not strange over the centuries that the oppressed and persecuted have found a friend in Jesus.

After the horror of battle on the island of Iwo Jima, in March of 1945, United States troops buried the hundreds of Americans, including African Americans from a Pioneer Battalion, who died there into a temporary cemetery with white crosses. The living Marines knew many of them and were left with the gnawing question as to why they survived the slaughter.

The head chaplain for the 5th Division of Marines that went ashore asked Lt. Roland Gittelsohn, the Marine Corps' first Jewish chaplain, to say some words at a ceremony honoring the dead of the division. Unfortunately, given the tenor of the times, Christian chaplains objected so that on March 26th, Gittelsohn spoke at a special Jewish ceremony. This rabbi

had been a pacifist before the war but had joined the Navy believing that the war against Fascism and the Nazis was a "just war." He performed his duties well and won three battlefield ribbons for administering to the fallen of all faiths on the island.

He said, "Here lie officers and men, negroes and whites, rich men and poor-together. Here no man prefers another because of his faith or despises him because of his color. Here are no quotas of how many from each group are admitted or allowed. Among these men there is no discrimination. No prejudices. No hatred. There is the highest and purest democracy... Whoever of us lifts up his hand in hate against a brother, or thinks himself superior to those who happen to be in the minority, makes of this ceremony and of the sacrifice it commemorates, an empty, hollow mockery. To this, then, as our solemn, sacred duty, do we the living now dedicate ourselves: to the rights of Protestants, Catholics and Jews, of white men and negroes alike, to the enjoy democracy for which all of them have paid the price."

Moreover, "We shall not foolishly suppose, as did the last generation of America's fighting men, that the victory on the battlefield will automatically guarantee the

The Cost of Love *(con't. from page 9)*

triumph of democracy at home. This war, with all its frightful heartache and suffering, is but the beginning of our generation's struggle for democracy."

On one of the bloodiest battlefields of the Second World War, Lt. Gittelsohn's challenged all who heard to live for each other after they returned home as much as they had fought and their friends had died there. His eulogy was copied and spread throughout the world. He became famous for them and spoke at the dedication of the

memorial to the fallen of Iwo Jima at Arlington National Ceremony fifty years after the battle.

I mean to make no point about more than partisan politics. The Rabbi Chaplain's remarks stand as hope and a goal for those who lived. Some things take a long time to achieve and require sacrifice. Gittelsohn exhorted all to protect the civil rights of their neighbors, and the history of that movement in the fifties and sixties indeed required the sacrifice of many.

We stand after a year from Hell of tragedies, losses and the disruption of many lives. We are tired, scared and fearful of the future. I hope that Lt. Gittelsohn's words may inspire us to do the right things.

Mark Jones

See Rabbi Gittelsohn's complete eulogy on Iwo Jima at http://www.wv2gyrene.org/spotlight4_gittlesohn.htm.

New Energy Conservation Tools Enable Grace to Save Money while Caring for the Environment

After 15 hours of special training in energy conservation, members of Grace have acquired new information and tools that may enable the congregation to save energy and save money while providing a model for environmental stewardship at home.

The training, started October 19 with a 3-hour meeting at Grace, including a walk-through of the entire building by about 25 participants from five congregations, resulting in a list of measures designed to conserve energy at Grace – some at no cost and others that would pay for themselves over time. Each member of the

team came away with a detailed notebook including the charts and formulas needed to analyze each measure to determine costs and payback times to assist the Property Committee and the Congregation Council in setting priorities for which things to do and in what order. Grace's team included Judy Dudek, Lloyd Smith, Ted Steege, Chad Thompson, and Dwan Thompson.

In a two-page summary of the walk-through at Grace, Chad listed numerous possible actions to cut down on energy usage, thus reducing the congregation's "carbon footprint" and potentially

cutting operating expenses. Some actions would cost nothing – for example, keeping the narthex door closed when closing the sanctuary, and make sure the door has a good seal. Others have already been done – for example, replacing incandescent bulbs in Exit signs with LED bulbs, greatly reducing power usage. Other actions would require analysis of costs, precise estimates of energy savings, and payback time. Those with the greatest potential savings in the shortest payback time would be top priority. Examples for consideration include:

New Energy Conservation Tools *(con't. from page 10)*

1. Install ceiling fans in the nave, operating quietly at very low speed, to drive warm air down toward the floor where it will reduce the amount of time the thermostat calls for heat;
 2. Reduce heat loss through sanctuary windows by adding another layer of glass or plastic;
 3. Change all chandelier bulbs from incandescents to compact fluorescents (CFLs), reducing electricity consumption by 2/3;
 4. Arrange for annual comprehensive furnace maintenance, fixing the draft control and providing an air intake to overcome soot blow-back and improve efficiency, saving on oil consumption;
 5. Insulate all basement heat pipes, including the furnace room;
 6. Consider replacing aging water heater with on-demand units throughout the building;
 7. Set water temperature at 110 degrees, not higher.
- Carll Pallok, instructor for the course in Savings Through Energy Management (STEM), strongly recommended getting several bids for any major project – and asking each bidder to advise what solution would be best, rather than telling them specifically what to do. Inappropriate choice of solution or provider may result in costly and long-lasting errors.
- In Connecticut, STEM for This Old House of Worship is sponsored by the Connecticut Inter-Religious Eco-Justice Network (IREJN), which helps fund the program. The Greater Hartford course was also funded in part by Emanuel Lutheran Church, enabling smaller congregations to participate for a one-time fee of \$300 plus a \$100 membership in IREJN. Grace's Congregation Council provided the funds for the local team, which will meet early in 2010 to begin processing recommendations to the Property Committee and Council. Other participating congregations included Emanuel Manchester, Faith East Hartford, St. Mark Glastonbury, and Christ the King in Windsor.

*By the grace of God, we are a Lutheran congregation,
diverse in worship, Christ-centered in fellowship,
committed to prayer, deepening of faith,
and the stewardship of the gospel and God's world.*



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PLEASE NOTE:

The submission deadline for the February 2010 edition of Grace Notes is January 15th. Please forward information to Sally Nolen (sallynolen@live.com) by this date. Thank you.

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