



GRACE NOTES

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

Synod Assembly coming up

Grace will be represented by **Barbara Ruhe, Vera Kaljob, and Pastor Steege** as voting members at this year's New England Synod Assembly, which will be held June 3-5 at the Sturbridge Host Inn at Sturbridge, MA. It happens Grace will have plenty of visibility as a small congregation there, because **Lloyd Smith** will also be present in his role as a member of the Synod Council, and **Ted Steege** will be representing the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia as the New England director for development.

The keynoter this year is **The Rev. Susan R. Briehl**, theologian, author and hymn writer, who has served in parish, campus and retreat center settings. Briehl is project associate with the Valparaiso Project on Education

and Formation of People in Faith, whose purpose is to develop resources to help contemporary people live in the Christian faith with vitality and integrity in changing times. She is also Distinguished Professor of the Art of Ministry at Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa. A Lutheran pastor for 25 years, she also has served as director of Holden Village, campus pastor at Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Wash., and pastor of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Bellingham, Wash. Her writings include "Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People" (with Dorothy Bass); "Come, Lord Jesus: Devotions for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany"; "Holden Prayer around the Cross: A

Guide to the Liturgy" (with Tom Witt); "Turn My Heart: A Sacred Journey from Brokenness to Healing" (with Marty Haugen), and several liturgical and hymn texts.

Visitors who would like to hear Pastor Briehl are welcome. The fee for visitors is \$10; advance registration must be made online. Go to http://www.nesynod.org/events/synod_assembly.php to register and also to see the full schedule.

Visitors are also welcome (at no fee, of course!) to the Festival Eucharist Friday evening, June 4, at 7:30 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church in Worcester. **Bishop Margaret Payne** will preach. Singing at worship with a huge church full of Lutherans is itself worth the trip!

May

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Inside this issue:

<i>Synod Assembly</i>	1
<i>Note from Pastor</i>	2
<i>Worship in May</i>	3
<i>Concerts in May</i>	3
<i>Building Fund Update</i>	4
<i>Mediation Skills Institute at Grace</i>	4
<i>Concordia Choir to sing in Middletown</i>	5
<i>LSS needs you!!</i>	5
<i>Parish Life Committee</i>	6
<i>Grace 'mugs'</i>	6
<i>Lauren Stroschin update</i>	7
<i>Zacchaeus</i>	8
<i>Visioning Steering Group Update</i>	9



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Amazed and astonished

Note from Pastor

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Sometimes when I read the story of how the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples still huddled in the upper room, and how there was a rushing wind, and how something like tongues of flame appeared over the heads of each of them, and how they began speaking in all kinds of foreign languages, and how the people who saw them were "amazed and astonished," as it says in the second chapter of Acts, I get to feeling just a little bit of envy. I would love to have been there!

When were you last amazed and astonished? Especially by something wonderful? It seems, in our 21st-century world, it takes quite a lot to amaze and astonish us. We've been there, done that. Or, if something is a little surprising, we figure there's probably a scientific explanation for it. Technical inventions, especially around communications, come at us so fast, it's nothing more than numbing.

Negative things can still amaze and astonish us, of course. In April there were a number of media programs recalling the Holocaust, and remembering and revealing other genocides as well. We learned again how capable human beings are of amazing and astonishing evil. The

mindless vitriol that surrounded the recent passage of the health care bill was amazing and astonishing, especially when there were perfectly legitimate concerns that could have been voiced in a reasonable way to enable productive conversation and compromise.

To be capable of *blessed* amazement and astonishment, maybe, is harder. We need the Holy Spirit to open us up. That might just be one of the first gifts of the Holy Spirit. Christ shows up when we're not expecting him - Mary thought he was a gardener. The pilgrims on their way to Emmaus never imagined they were seeing anyone more than a stranger. The apostles, into whose locked room the risen Christ had already appeared, wounds and all, went from there - to the Sea of Galilee to go fishing! But a man on the beach called to them. "You haven't caught many fish, have you?" The Holy Spirit opened their eyes, and they were astonished and amazed. It was Jesus!

Members of the Visioning Steering Group have been going out into the Asylum Hill neighborhood to various meetings and gatherings to get to know who is here and what the issues are and how

we can partner with our neighbors in mission and ministry. At a recent meeting of the group back at Grace, it was mentioned that the most amazing and astonishing thing about the process - the thing that is so easy to forget - is the possibility of meeting Christ in every stranger that becomes a friend.

That's the Holy Spirit at work. The Holy Spirit opens us up to rejoice in the explosion of spring, to be amazed at beauty of a favorite hymn, to be awed by new life, to be astonished to meet Christ in a stranger.

A few weeks ago my daughter Kate's husband, Jamie sent us an e-mail. "We weren't expecting this," he wrote, "but I guess we're expecting!" Scroll down, scroll down, and there was the picture - how do they do this? - of a tiny, tiny new life. I was amazed and astonished. I pray that that little one will be, too, some day.

May the Holy Spirit amaze and astonish you at least once a day this beautiful month of May.

Pastor Steege

Worship in May

As the days get warmer, flowers seem to blossom overnight, and the first early plantings in gardens begin to peek through – the rabbits will be enjoying their first Spring salad – it is truly a time to rejoice in the world that God has made.

May is the beautiful month when we hear again the story of Jesus being lifted into heaven, having promised to send us an Advocate. And indeed, the Holy Spirit comes with a rush of wind on Pentecost.

Here are some highlights of the worship services coming up in May.

The service of Holy Communion on **Sunday, May 2**, will include prayers and the laying on of hands for healing, as we do on the first Sunday of every month.

Two special treats on May 9

Sunday, May 9, we will be treated to a sermon by **Dorothea Glatte**, as we continue to examine the dramatic story of the beginnings of the Christian Church. At the end of the service, a group of singers from the **Hartford Conservatory** will bring us a closing song. And then, following the Blessing, worshipers are invited to remain in the sanctuary while the group presents a half-hour program of their beautiful music.

Thursday, May 13, the Ascension of Our Lord will be celebrated with Holy Communion at Concordia Lutheran Church, Manchester, at 7:30 p.m. A guest preacher from the Lutheran Theological

Seminary at Philadelphia will provide the sermon.

Sunday, May 16, worship will center on the 'High Priestly' prayer of Jesus, praying with passion that our lives will be characterized by an intimate unity of identity with God, sharing in God's mission to proclaim the word that will bring others into this same unity.

Sunday, May 23 is the Day of Pentecost. On this day we will hear the scriptures read in several languages as we welcome the Holy Spirit into our hearts and lives.

And finally on **May 30, the Sunday of The Holy Trinity**, we will sing grand old hymn together with the choirs of angels and all the saints: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord, God Almighty!"

Landmark concert - May 2nd

On **Sunday, May 2**, the combined forces of **The Hartt School** orchestra and choruses, together with the **Hartford Chorale**, will present a rare performance of **Benjamin Britten's "War Requiem."**

The performance, which will feature more than 400 musicians, will be given at 5:00 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford.

Advance reservations (strongly recommended) are

\$25 – \$50 for premium patron seating – and are available by calling the University Hartford box office at **860-768-4228**.

Please plan to attend this once in a generation musical event.

Special Music - May 9th

The **Hartford Conservatory Vocal Ensemble** will be performing for us under the direction of John DeNicola on Sunday morning immediately after worship. They will be

singing several selections including - Andrew Lloyd Webber Love Trio, You Raise Me Up, Pie Jesu, The Water is Wide, and Flying Free. The performance will be in the

Sanctuary, but we'll give you a few minutes to stretch your legs and maybe grab a cup of coffee. Please plan to stay for this delightful gift!

Build Us Up, Lord!

Following the congregation's amazing response on Commitment Sunday of pledges of over \$89,000, new pledges have come in for a total of \$102,576.80 as of mid-April. These pledges, which are being made over a five-year period, are already turning into cash gifts. By this writing, \$16,414.00 has been received, and more is coming in every week.

If you have made a weekly or monthly pledges, now is the

time to begin to fulfill them, since the construction ladder is due to come off the steeple very soon! The office has special envelopes for your convenience. (They also serve as handy reminders!) Envelopes may be found in the pew racks, or the office will be glad to send you a supply upon request.

All readers - friends and former members of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church - are invited to participate in

this exciting program. The success of the program will enable Grace to proclaim the Gospel and serve the total community more effectively than ever in the years to come.



Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders to be held at Grace

Over fifty church leaders from the Northeast region have registered for a mediation skills training institute to be presented May 3-7, 2010 at Grace Lutheran Church. Presented by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, the institute is designed to equip church leaders with the skills necessary to deal effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict. It also

includes a component on congregational intervention and consultation, placed within the context of family systems theory.

Pastor Steege and Sue Carey, co-chair of Grace's Visioning Steering Group, will be guests of the institute in exchange for the use of the building and for assisting as hosts throughout the week. Many thanks to **Mavis Smith**, who has

gathered a task group to arrange for and serve snacks and two lunches during the week (funded by the institute); to **Barbara Ruhe and the Property Committee** who are arranging 'break-out' rooms for the training in every corner of the building, and to **Dale Eberhardt** who is in charge of setting up the sound system and training the presenters in its use.

Please remember, worship begins at 9:30am each and every Sunday. The psalmist says, "I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'" Join us for worship each Sunday.

Concordia Choir to sing in Middletown

The renowned Concordia College-New York Tour Choir will be singing in concert on Tuesday, May 4, 2010 at 7:00 PM at St. Paul Lutheran Church, 76 High St., Middletown, CT. Please contact the church office at (860) 346-9107 or e-mail stpaulchurch@sbcglobal.net for more information. There is no charge for the concert; however, a free will offering will be collected.

Concordia College-New York is a college of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod located in Bronxville, New York just 30 minutes north of New York City. The Tour Choir has been touring the eastern United States for more than 50 years. This year's tour will encompass nearly every state in the Northeast US plus Quebec and Ontario, from May 4 - 17, 2010. This tour program will feature a wide variety of music from the

Lutheran choral tradition to gospel, folk and new music. The Choir is accompanied by piano, handbells, and a variety of student musicians. The choir is directed by Dr. Jason Thoms.

A dinner will be held prior to the concert in the church hall at 5:00 PM. The hall is located at 47 Oak St., Middletown. The cost of the dinner is \$9.00 for adults, \$7.00 for children and no cost for children under the age of 5.

LSS Needs YOU!

Several years ago, when the first Lutheran Social Services of New England in-gathering for the Synod Assembly was announced, the staff was stunned and grateful by your response. LSS program managers have come to count on the outpouring of whatever items they've requested for their clients. These in-kind donations of the ordinary items of daily life are a demonstration of your commitment to LSS and your willingness to help! Here's a reminder for 2010:

LSS In-Gathering for 2010 Synod Assembly

- *Alarm clocks*
- *Flatware*
- *New shower curtains & rings*
- *New sheets & pillow cases (twin & full)*
- *Liquid soap (bath and dish)*
- *Toothbrushes & toothpaste*

Bring these items to Grace any time before the Synod Assembly, which begins June 3, and Barbara Ruhe, Vera Kaljob, and Pastor Steege will bring them to the Assembly.

*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.*

Parish Life Committee

The Parish life Committee has gone into hibernation for a time. **Nancy Urban**, who has been chair for several years, has resigned that position because she is away for several months each year. Since no other chair

replacement has been found, the committee decided to disband for now. **Rebecca Lewis** continues to coordinate the hospitality following worship, **AnnaMarie Potter** orders Fair Trade products for church use and for sale, and

Marty Holmeen will continue to record our parish life through his photo displays. It is hoped that other committees or one-time task groups will carry on some of the activities that had been assigned to Parish Life as the need arises.

Do You Have a “mug” at Grace?

If not—Sunday May 2 is the day for you to get hooked! Bring your mug (or use one available at church) we will label it and find a hook for you to hang it.

Several years ago, in an effort to use fewer disposable products as we care for God’s earth, the “Bring Your Mug to Grace” program was

established. People of Grace can have their own mug on a hook in the fellowship hall for their use when having refreshments. We also have “Guest Mugs” for visitors or those members who don’t have a personal mug. AND we also want to get your “Mug Shot”, a picture to place by your mug. This really helps

newer members and visitors to match a face with names.

Help Grace become more GREEN by using your own mug and thereby reducing the amount of garbage that we produce. Nancy Urban will be available in the fellowship hall following worship on Sunday, May 2 to assist you in this process.



*Students from the University of Hartford’s Hartt School of Music and from the Hartford Conservatory continue to present their recitals at Grace. Cellist **Karl Ronnevik**, a Lutheran from Fergus Falls, MN, played during worship on March 21 and gave his recital the following Saturday.*

Lauren Stroschin update

*In our prayer list every week we remember **Lauren Stroschin**, a niece of **Mark and Cindy Jones**. Lauren is employed by Air Serv International, a not for profit humanitarian aviation service. She is stationed in Abeche, Chad. Often she is assigned to fly for the well-known international agency, Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières). From time to time she sends out a friendly report about what she is up to, along with some wonderful pictures. Here is a sample of her report, along with a photograph of her in Kenya. If you would like to see the rest of her outstanding albums, send a note to Mark and Cindy, and they will forward them to you. Meanwhile, here's an excerpt from her note.*

Hi Everyone -

I think this is a record, it only took me two weeks to get photos posted and email sent out! In two weeks I took over 1500 photos, I got them down to 275 and then broke that into 4 albums so it would not too overwhelming.

The first link is for Rwanda. We spent four days meeting great people, laughing with the kids, and visiting the gorillas. It was good for me to be there and to begin again to try to understand events that lead to the genocide in the mid 90s. Many times I have started books about the genocide and not finished them. I think it was just too much to be living in Chad and then reading about such atrocities. But now that I am armed with the faces of hope and a positive future for Rwanda I can quell the sorrow and continue my learning.

The next three links are for our time in Kenya.... While in Kenya we were in Nairobi for two days and then to Lewa. In Nairobi we visited the Karen Blixen estate, the Rothschild Giraffe manor, and the elephant orphanage.

Then onto Lewa Conservation - I don't know how else to explain this place except it reaches my soul. Here you can feel the pulse of life and feel like you are a part of it. There is a rhythm here that I have never felt anywhere else in my travels. To my good fortune I was able to stay for two extra days and enjoy it both with the incredible group of people that I was traveling with and solo allowing for great one on one conversation with Nisa, a Silver level guide, and the two incredible managers.

Hope you enjoy the photos and I wish everyone the best!

Love and light, Lauren



Zacchaeus

One of my favorite Bible stories is about the tax collector, Zacchaeus, who lived in Jericho. (Luke 19:1-10) One day Jesus visited the city and people lined the streets to see him. Zacchaeus was too short to see over them so he climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus as he passed by. Now you know why I like this story so much. Zacchaeus was “short in stature.” All of us “short” people spend time at some point in our lives wishing we were one of those tall 6’9” basketball players we see on T.V.

According to the *Lutheran Study Bible*, Zacchaeus’ name means “pure, clean innocent.” (p. 1737) However, he was anything other than undefiled. Luke says that he was “the chief tax collector.” These individuals were seen as unclean by their countrymen because they collaborated with the Romans to collect the crushing amount of taxes laid on subjects. Tax collectors made money off tax collecting by garnering an excess of taxes or withholding funds from the Romans. Of course, the latter practice was dangerous. (Ever seen “Pulp Fiction?”) They also confiscated property of people who could not pay and sold it, often getting more at an auction than its real worth. Zacchaeus was the leading tax collector in Jericho so we may assume that others worked for him. Needless to say, there were numerous temptations to “skim” taxes off the top. Luke says that Zacchaeus was “rich.” His ruthless dishonesty was another mark against him. He would not have been part of the crowd at the anti-tax rallies held on April 15th.

Luke does not give many details. We assume that Zacchaeus knew about Jesus since he climbed a tree to see the “next great thing” pass by. Jesus stopped at the tree and called out his name. One again we encounter an incident in which Jesus’ “intelligence” about the places he visits is superb. Or, since he was the Son of God, did Jesus know who this well dressed short guy up in the sycamore was?

Jesus sought out the despised in society, the sinful, and those demonized by laws, gossip and public opinion, so it is not surprising that he stopped by the tree, called out Zacchaeus by his name, and told him to come down because he wanted to stay with him this very day.

Zacchaeus is overwhelmed and very repentant. He knows what his sins have been and understands why people hate him. Publicly Jesus honors him by saying that he shall stay in his home. Luke says that people in the crowd who heard Jesus’ invitation to Zacchaeus “grumble” that Jesus chose to stay with a sinner, but this does not deter Him.

Honor, respect, and love.

These ways of treating others often are enough for many to turn around their lives, and Zacchaeus knew what to do. In Luke 19:8, the chief tax collector states that he will give half of his wealth to the poor and to those he has cheated, he will give four times the original amount. Wow! Today some would wonder if Zacchaeus did this for the tax “write off,” but Jesus recognized the intentions

behind the tax collector’s promise. Jesus declares with joy, “Salvation has come to this house today.”

I am reminded of the story of Jesus and the rich young man. The young man leaves disappointed after he hears Jesus say that he must give away his possessions in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. In this story of Zacchaeus, giving away wealth gotten by dishonest means is also a way to salvation. It is the **intention** behind the promise that Jesus praised. Zacchaeus decides to treat others from the way in which he wanted to be treated. An article online at CNN.com states that studies have shown that “materialistic,” rich people are not as happy or liked as much as those who find the greatest satisfaction in giving to others.* Is this surprising to Christians? Jesus cares very much about how we look after our relationships and what our intentions are with those around us.

Someday, or perhaps it has happened already, Jesus will see each one of us “up” in a sycamore tree trying to get a better view of Him. He shows all of us honor, respect and love. How irresistible!

Mark Jones

*[http://pagingdrgupta.blogs.cnn.com/2010/04/15/materialistic-people-less-happy-less-liked/...](http://pagingdrgupta.blogs.cnn.com/2010/04/15/materialistic-people-less-happy-less-liked/)

Visioning Steering Group Update

Grace members have been busy listening – and serving – in the Asylum Hill Neighborhood. In this article, we share what we've been learning about the neighborhood and the many ways we have a presence here.

Pastor and Sue Carey attend the monthly Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association (AHNA) meetings. In recent months, Franklin Darby has joined us. Franklin lives on Marshall Street and participates regularly at Sunday worship. Between these meetings and our attendance with Jody Wynn Rodiger and Ted Steege at the One City, One Plan meetings, we're gaining a deeper understanding of our Hartford neighborhood.

The 2000 census report revealed that at 9%, the Asylum Hill Neighborhood has the lowest rate of home ownership in the city. Results of the 2010 census are expected to be similar. This is a major concern of the AHNA since home ownership is linked with neighborhood stability and is a reflection of poverty, jobs, and public schools. Habitat for Humanity, the Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (NINA), and the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation are working to revive the neighborhood through restoration work and replacing abandoned apartment

buildings with one and two family homes. The AHNA Education Subcommittee, which meets on the third Tuesday each month at Grace, is focused on supporting West Middle School, located just a few blocks from the church. These two initiatives – housing and education – are directly linked. The strength of a neighborhood depends on the vitality of its neighborhood school.

The monthly AHNA meetings begin with a police report by the Community Service Officer, Jeff Morrison. With safety a major concern for city residents and visitors alike, it's been reassuring to hear how responsive the police are to residents' concerns. At the April meeting, CSO Morrison reported that 17 "part 1 crimes" (including murder, rape, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft) had been reported in the Asylum Hill neighborhood compared to an average of 45 or more in other areas of the city. The AHNA has an action plan to address "quality of life" crimes that include loitering, public drinking, drug dealing and prostitution.

At the February One City, One Plan meeting, it was reported that there were 680 homeless people in Hartford. Of these, 350 were counted as

Hartford residents and the balance represented 29 other Connecticut towns. Part of what makes Hartford attractive is the concentration of services available here.

In coming months, after Sunday worship during the 2nd Hour Hospitality and Christian Education, invited guests will share their view of the Asylum Hill neighborhood. Former model and actress Sally Toussaint, a resident of Niles Street, will talk about her experiences. NINA and the Hartford Preservation Alliance will give us a short walking tour around the neighborhood to teach us about the remarkable architecture and their preservation efforts. CSO Morrison will talk about neighborhood safety and our role. Dates for these guests will be announced in the weekly bulletin and we hope you will stay after church to warmly welcome them and get to know them.

Besides building partnerships at community meetings, Grace members serve in so many ways. Some recent activities include:

- Glenna Brodnicki serves at Loaves & Fishes two times a month.
- Chet and Glenna Brodnicki tutor at Rawson Elementary School and also bring bags of food contributed by members of

Visioning Steering Group Update (con't from pg. 9)

- Grace to the school every week
- Barbara Ruhe organized a team to work with the City and Knox Parks Foundation cleaning up our area of Niles Street.
 - Jody Wynn Rodiger is organizing a Grace team for the Foodshare Walk Against Hunger scheduled for May 2.
 - Mavis Smith and Gail Lindstrom compiled a list of household supplies available for donation in the event of a neighborhood fire or other misfortune. In collaboration with the
- Asylum Hill Congregational Church, we are working to publish this resource so we can respond quickly in times of need.
- Nancy Urban and Barbara Van Fleet attended a City Harvest meeting and collected ideas about how to support local markets with providing fresh fruits and vegetables.
 - Our repair work to the steeple and upcoming repairs to the front steps add to the aesthetic and healthy image of the neighborhood.
- Part of what makes this work exciting is recognizing the collective effect of our presence. We are more than the sum of our parts. If you have a special interest or are participating in a neighborhood project, share your Holy Listening story. Add to our understanding of the neighborhood, its gifts and needs. Contact any of the committee members:
- Sue Carey, Gail Lindstrom, Cephus Nolen, Lou Oliver, Jody Wynn Rodiger, Mavis Smith, Ted Steege, Mildred Unfried, Darrell Urban*



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PLEASE NOTE:

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

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