



GRACE NOTES

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

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Good News for West Middle School

Hartford Mayor Pedro E. Segarra has applauded the Hartford Public School's Board of Education for unanimously approving plans to renovate West Middle Elementary School.

"This is a long overdue effort for this historic building complex that is almost 120 years old. Making it more spacious and more energy efficient is important to our students' learning environment and creating as many as 150 employment opportunities - with about one-third for Hartford residents - is crucial in these

economic times," said Mayor Segarra.

West Middle School, located on Asylum Avenue in the City's Asylum Hill neighborhood, serves students grades PreK-8. Enrollment is 689 students, but that is expected to increase to 750 once the renovations are complete. The renovations would increase the size of the school while maintaining its historic character. The school has a main entrance on Niles Street, about three blocks from Grace

Chet and Glenna Brodnicki have been

bringing contributions from Grace of non-perishable food to West Middle School for families that might otherwise go hungry on weekends. Meanwhile, members of the Visioning Steering Group have been attending meetings of the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association and its Subcommittee for Culture and Education, and through those affiliations have begun to build a warm relationship with school leadership in order to learn how we can serve children in our neighborhood.

People of Grace

Congratulations to **Lou Oliver**, who was chosen Teacher of the Year at the Simpson-Waverly School in

Hartford. Lou was also elected to the Congregation Council at its April

meeting to fill a vacancy and bring the Council back up to the full membership.

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www.graceistheplace.org

Hospitality

Note from Pastor

Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. 1 Peter 4:8-9

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I have theorized from time to time since I came to Hartford that one of the reasons the people of Grace are so gifted at hospitality is that there is a long tradition of welcoming refugees and strangers here.

It's hard to imagine any Christian congregation that doesn't think of itself as friendly. *Friendly* is easy – although some of us have encountered congregations whose friendliness skills are actually pretty far down the scale.

Hospitality is something different – it's a matter of the heart. In the same way we probably can't really forgive someone else until we have truly experienced God's forgiveness, it may be that we can't be truly hospitable until we have experienced what it means to be a stranger.

Grace has a very long history of welcoming strangers – people who have possibly tried "friendly" churches first and then come to Grace,

where hospitality is an art. And then, over and over again, these same strangers have turned into the welcomers, and taught one another through the generations how to do that with... grace!

During the season of Lent just past, I have contacted almost all of the member households of Grace and visited most of you. In a few cases – four, I think – we had to wait until after Easter because of incredibly busy schedules. It was an amazing experience just to make that many calls or e-mails and have everyone say "Yes! When can we meet?"

The visits were not surveys. I was not taking a poll. As a pastor, I just wanted to sit down with as many people as I could and listen to your hearts. Naturally Grace is in your hearts, so we did talk about that, and that was very helpful. But most of all you welcomed me and shared

with me your stories and your present hopes and dreams. That is true hospitality.

Sharing stories, hopes and dreams, come to think of it, is all that we mean by evangelism. This is what we do, first with one another, and then with friends who used to be strangers: tell the stories, hopes and dreams we have as followers of Christ. That's why our name is Grace *Evangelical* Lutheran Church.

I thank you all for your most wonderful hospitality. It was an honor and a privilege to be your guest.

As the writer of First Peter said to the exiles of the Dispersion – chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood:

May grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Pastor Steege

Note from Louisa

As I was wondering what I would write for Grace Notes, a message from the Franciscan friar and theologian, Richard Rohr popped into my inbox. I thought it could not be more appropriate for what am I doing here.

TRUE TRANSFORMATION

The psychologist Carl Jung said that deep transformation happens primarily in the presence of images. They alone can touch the unconscious—in one invasive and healing reconfiguration of the soul. It might also take the form of a biography, a song, a theater piece, a movie, a dream image, a sculpture, an inner vision, a piece of art. But after the encounter, you see things differently. One hundred sermons could never have moved you to this new place.

Ideas and concepts don't change people; they tend to keep us inside our dualistic thinking, judging back and forth whether we agree with the idea, the wording, who said it, or how he said it. One could say that the reason we have 30,000 Christian

denominations in the world now, is that they made it all depend on words. They should have known that "the Word became flesh."

But here am I, a supposedly Catholic boy, writing more and more words! None of them will "take" until they become an image inside you.

From On the Threshold of Transformation: Daily Meditations for Men, p. 282, day 273

I am preparing some more handouts for the neighborhood and hope to reach some people through the following ideas. They may still need a little refining. If you are interested in either one of these ideas, helping or participating please let me know.

Want to help create a theatre troupe? All ages, youth welcome, Looking for Writers & Rappers; Musicians & Singers; Dancers & Actors, Props; Sets & Costume Designers; Graphic artists & Marketers; Some good-idea people. Attend a brainstorming session or come and we will explore your gifts together.

Variety on Tuesdays Start with a program of simple exercise and movement including laughter-yoga, zumba, and interpretive dance. We can use video projection to give us a leader. Jacqueline Funches, our office assistant, has agreed to teach liturgical dance if we have the interest. We can make some soup, have lunch and conversation. After lunch we can explore of various crafts maybe some of them can be developed into products for a farmers' market in the area or home based business, e.g. handmade soaps, cards, jewelry, sewn bags, skirts and other fashions, bring your ideas, your gifts, your skills, ...come for all or any individual activities, we will make group decisions, children welcome. Interested but not a good time? Give me a call.

I will be away at a family wedding in British Columbia from May 11 - 25.

Louisa Barton Duguay, Artist in Residence for Outreach

Healthy Congregations workshop planned

The Congregation Council, in thinking about its annual retreat, considered a recommendation from the New England Synod to host a "Healthy Congregations" workshop. They liked the idea enough to decide to postpone its usual January retreat time until early summer and widen the event to include everyone from Grace to participate, especially all leaders - present, past, and future.

The workshop will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church, Hartford, on Friday evening and Saturday, June 17 and 18. The Rev. Bob Matthias, a retired New England Synod pastor living in Rhode Island and also a trained facilitator with the nationwide Healthy Congregations organization, will lead the event.

The "Healthy Congregations" workshop is an energizing and enlightening experience for all who care and want to work on building and maintaining healthy congregational life.

Participants will gain understanding and skills for functioning together in ways that focus on accomplishing the church's mission, while maintaining positive relationships even in challenging times change.

"Healthy Congregations" is based on work on family systems by Ed Friedman and

his predecessor, Murray Bowen. This is an enlightened approach to working with groups, especially in terms of emotional family systems - a new and fresh way to think about our congregation and to assist leaders to be able to "hang tough" in moving ahead on established mission and goals - even when changes are occurring.

"It helps leaders realize the importance of using the frontal lobes of their brains," says Pastor Matthias, "and to avoid getting drawn too much into the anxieties that crop up from members - while at the same time keeping in touch as best as possible with everyone and letting them know you care."

The material has been organized into several workshops by the Rev Pete Steinke. In particular, the first two workshops - the ones Grace will host in June - give the basics of family systems theory and assist leaders to begin thinking about the larger picture in the congregation and how, in particular, to deal with the emotional nature of our human systems. This experience becomes a point of reference for ongoing conversations and application in the course of the group's life, well beyond the workshop dates.

The essential content for the sessions include the following:

- What is System Thinking?
- The "Anxious" Congregation and the "Responsible" congregation

- Healthy Congregations accept differences
- Healthy Congregation focus on Strength
- Leaders focus on Mission

- They respond to Anxiety
- They Manage Conflict
- They Respond to Change
- They Act Flexibly and Creatively
- They Plan for a Healthier Future

The Friday evening session will begin at 6:45 p.m. and end at 9:15 p.m. Saturday will begin at 8:30 a.m. with coffee, juice and rolls, and the session will run from 9 a.m. until 4:30, with a break for lunch. The cost of materials and supplies, including lunch, is \$12.00 per person; each person also receives additional reading material, handouts, etc.

If you would like to participate in this workshop, please mark your calendar now, and add your name to the list by calling the office at Grace, 860-527-7792, or e-mail officeatgrace@sbcglobal.net. Healthy Congregations is a 501(c)3 organization. For more information you can find them at www.healthycongregations.com.

Council Corner

The first order of business for the Congregation Council at its April 9 meeting was to elect **Lou Oliver** to fill the term vacated by **Wendy Colbert**. Wendy had found that pressures of work and teenagers made it difficult to attend meetings regularly. The Council also heard a report from **Nancy Urban** on the work of the Constitution Task Force, looking primarily at the duties of the offices of Treasurer and Financial Secretary. The Council will consider action on the report at its June meeting. The

Council also approved the membership list of the Outreach Committee: **Susan Carey, chair, Louisa Barton-Duguay, Jody Wynn Rodiger, Mavis Smith, Darrell Urban, and Pastor Steege, ex officio.**

Before hearing other committee reports, the Council gave the largest part of its agenda to the interrelated issues of finance and mission. Because the congregation passed a deficit budget, the Council has the responsibility of forming a three-plan to address the deficit. In addition, the

Council will be considering the care and status of our investment funds, the interest from which is important to our current budget. All of these financial issues are being addressed in the context of preparation for the future mission and ministry of Grace in response to God's call. The conversation will continue at the Council's next two meetings at least, with the goal of bringing some initial clarity and consensus to the Healthy Congregations workshop in June.

Calumet Memories

Did you work at Calumet in the 1980s? Fond memories of campfires, bug juice, the Outdoor Chapel and wide games? Then come to the 1980s staff reunion which is

happening on Labor Day Weekend 2011. Information can be found at www.calumet.org/80s-staff-reunion. There is also a link to help find those for whom

we do not have contact information. Click on that, you may find someone you know that would like to go! *Boom-chicka-boom!*

**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.**

Creation Care

Weight Loss Challenge!

Did you take the challenge? Did you turn in your number of pounds lost? If not there is still time. Either call in the number of pounds lost during Lent to 860 416-3336 or put it on a sticky note and place in the folder on the bulletin board located in the narthex? Deadline to earn money for Grace is May 8th.

Water, water, Everywhere? Or Not!

Many Grace members have been working to reduce our carbon footprint. During the Lenten Season we took another step and found more ways that we could be better caretakers of God's creation. We have changed to more efficient light bulbs, taken our reusable bags to the store, purchased organic and Fair Trade when possible, eaten less meat, switched our electric to clean energy sources, and the list goes on.

BUT did you ever consider that WATER and how we use/abuse it is also something to think about when we strive to live in a way that is just , fair and caring for all of creation? Here are some things to remember the next time you turn on the tap and receive that wonderful gift of clean, life-giving water.

- Worldwide, 4 out of 10 people have no access to clean water or they have to walk to retrieve it.
- Every day, 5,000 children die from lack of clean water.
- Each day, we in the U.S. use more water to flush our toilets than people in the United Kingdom and Canada use each day for all of their water needs.
- It takes 5 liters of water to produce 2 liters of soda.
- For the cost of a plastic bottle of water (99 cents), one could fill the bottle with tap water 1,740 times.
- In Africa, where the water supply is drying up, wars are now being fought over who gets the water.

Clean, accessible, life-giving water—let's not squander it, but use it as a precious gift of creation.



Save the Date!

June 12, Special Second Hour— "Cool Harvest": movie time, information, and yummy tasting. Presented by the Creation Care Task Group

*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.*

Agape Duo to return to Friday Night Gathering

By popular request, the *Agape* duo will return to Grace on Friday, May 20.

New England's favorite contemporary Christian duo, Veronica Craig, guitarist, and Daniel Petrozza, vocalist, perform contemporary Christian music as well as traditional hymns and spirituals.

Don't miss them when they come as our special guests on the 20th.

www.Grace is the Place.org
Grace Center for Community Ministry
Friday Evenings at 6 p.m.
46 Woodland Street—Corner of Niles, Hartford

- **Free supper, music, fellowship**
- **Come with your friends**
- **Come alone and find friends**
- **Children (with adult) welcome**
- **Bring instruments, poetry, rap, ideas, or just yourself**
- **Let's make a difference in this community**
- **Be our Facebook friend, ...**
- **See you there!**

Frank E. Lukach



We remember with thanksgiving Frank E. Lukach, 103, of West Hartford, husband of the late Astrid W. (Johnson) Lukach, who died at home Friday, March 25, 2011. Born in Hartford, he was a son of the late Frank and Helen (Eger) Lukach. He worked as a field

representative with Hartford Electric Light Company, retiring in 1972 after 50 years of service. Frank was a lifelong member of Grace Lutheran Church and had a leadership role in the acquisition of the property and the building of Grace on the corner of Woodland and Niles. He was a member of Wyllys-St. John Lodge No. 4, West Hartford for over 75 years, and was also active for many years in assisting immigrants from Poland. He is survived by his three sons, Robert Lukach and his wife Joan, of Farmington, John Lukach of West Hartford, and

Thomas Lukach and his wife Lynn, of Manchester; six grandchildren, and one great grandson. At the family's request, a private graveside service was held on 31st. Memorial contributions may be made to Grace Lutheran Church.





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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

PLEASE NOTE:

The submission deadline for the June 2011 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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