



GRACE TO YOU

June 2024

**Grace United
Protestant Church**

**266 Somonauk St.
Park Forest, IL 60466
Phone: 708-748-4567**

JOIN US FOR CELEBRATING GRACE U.P. CHURCH'S 70TH ANNIVERSARY!!!

Sunday, October 27th, 2024

Please save the date of Sunday, October 27th, 2024, for a great celebration of our many years as a church.

A planning committee has met to form ideas and make arrangements for the special day and events leading up to the celebration. Anyone is welcomed to join us!

We need names, addresses, and email addresses of former Grace members or people that have moved away so that we can invite them! Please send all information to Valerie Nicholson. Please do this no later than July, so that we have ample time to get the message out.

A questionnaire is on page 11 of this GTY. Please fill it out and return to the church by July.

Start gathering pictures or items from the past to share and display.

There will be a meal after church on Sunday, October 27th.

There is also a concert series and other special events being planned leading up to the celebration. **Do you have any other ideas? Please share them!**

IT'S COMING!

Our new website is almost ready to publish! Our web designer, Kate Curran, has been working diligently on creating a beautiful website for Grace Church with a new website address!

Check out the site at the end of the month!

graceupc.org

Mission Statement of Our Reconciling Ministries:

Through God's grace and as apprentices of Christ's living example, we stand united in our commitment to welcome and embrace the diversity of all children of God, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, and wish to reach out to those underserved to provide a safe space for spiritual growth. We strive to create an inclusive fellowship welcoming of the LGBTQ+ community, their families, and support networks, and to foster fairness, justice, peace, love, and understanding among all as is reflected in our name—Grace United Protestant Church.



.....
*A spiritual home for worship
and service.*

UPCOMING CALENDAR

**PLEASE CHECK OUT THE
CALENDAR PAGE ON PAGE
12.**

**CALENDAR CAN BE
PRINTED AND POSTED
FOR REMINDERS!**



THE PASTOR'S PAGE

June 2024

Love Wins

The long-awaited UMC General Conference took place in Charlotte, North Carolina, from April 23 – May 3, 2024. The conference was postponed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2016 General Conference was a great challenge to UMC because the vote against the removal of the "offensive" statement concerning marriage nearly factionalized the Church. The wisdom of the Bishop's Council averted the division. However, there were many meetings and proposals to maintain unity and pave the way for the churches that wanted to disaffiliate from UMC by December 2023. 2023 witnessed the departure of many churches from UMC. It was indeed a significant relief that the General Conference was able to convene and took a giant leap of faith in major decisions that will shape the future of the Church. In fact, after the Conference, **Love triumphed!** The journey may be long, but it ended bittersweetly. These decisions include:

1. The divisive language from the Book of Discipline was removed and replaced with a more inclusive definition of marriage "as a sacred, lifelong covenant that brings two people of faith [adult man and adult woman of consenting age or two adult persons of consenting age] into a union of one another and into a deeper relationship with God and the religious community."
 2. Removal of the ban on the ordination of gay clergy
 3. Approval of pastors' rights not to be compelled to perform any marriage, union, or blessings of any couple, including same-sex couples.
 4. Approval of regionalization, where regional conferences have the same authority to adapt the Book of Discipline for greater missional effectiveness.
 5. Sacramental authority was granted to deacons. Deacons can now administer baptism and Holy Communion without obtaining special permission.
 6. Passing a petition to welcome "with a spirit of grace" churches that have disaffiliated or withdrawn from The United Methodist Church and wish to return.
 7. Approval of a resolution condemning racial-ethnic discrimination.
 8. Reduced the portion of Church giving requested to fund the general-church budget.
- Approved a new retirement plan for U.S. clergy called Compass, starting January 1, 2026 (See *Comprehensive Brief Summary on another page*)

Duane Larson, our Lay Leader to the Annual Conference, transitioned to eternity on May 2, 2024. We celebrated his life at Church on May 10, 2024. We will continue to uphold his family in our prayers for comfort and strength.

We rejoice with the Class of 2024 graduates and their families. We pray to God to continue to be with them in their next endeavors! We congratulate this month's birthday and wedding anniversary celebrants. May you continue to enjoy God's blessings and good health.



We will celebrate our Fathers on June 16, 2024. Please invite your families and friends to join us in honoring these pillars of our faith.

My prayers are with all those traveling during this season for safe trips. Wherever you are, be rest assured of God's presence!

Yours by His Grace, Pastor Amos Oladipo.

WCA NEWS

WCA Board monthly meetings are held on the first **Thursday** of each month at 10:00 AM. **June is the last meeting before the summer break. Our next meeting will be on Thursday, September 5th.** All women are invited to attend any of the meetings. We welcome new input and vitality!

REBEKAH CIRCLE

The June meeting will be on June 10th at 7:00 PM at the home of Leslie Langmeyer. The mission is paper goods for the Food Pantry.

The August meeting of the Rebekah Circle has been **changed to Monday, August 19th**. Please make a note of it. Alice Wasney is the hostess for the meeting.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

The WCA Fall Field Trip — On Saturday, September 21st, all women and men are invited to join us at the Portiuncula Center for Prayer in Frankfort. The address is 9263 W. St. Francis Road, Frankfort. Please plan to meet at the Port at 10:30 AM. This is a wonderful time of meditation and self-reflection. A short program follows your time in the labyrinth. After our time at the Port, we will join together for a self-paid lunch at Jameson's Pub at 9545 W. St. Francis Road.

Please plan to join us for the very meaningful day.

A NOTE FROM BRANDI

Mr. Bruce and Grace United. Love Always!

Thank you all so much for investing in me. I will do you holy proud with the help of God. You all have been a blessing to me.

Until we see each other again, Be in good health.

Brandi (Andrews)

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

The Sunday school class will meet on 5/26 and 6/2 in order to finish our God and Family study. Then 6/9 is the beginning of our summer break.

We will stay in worship with an award ceremony followed by fellowship time to recognize the student accomplishments.

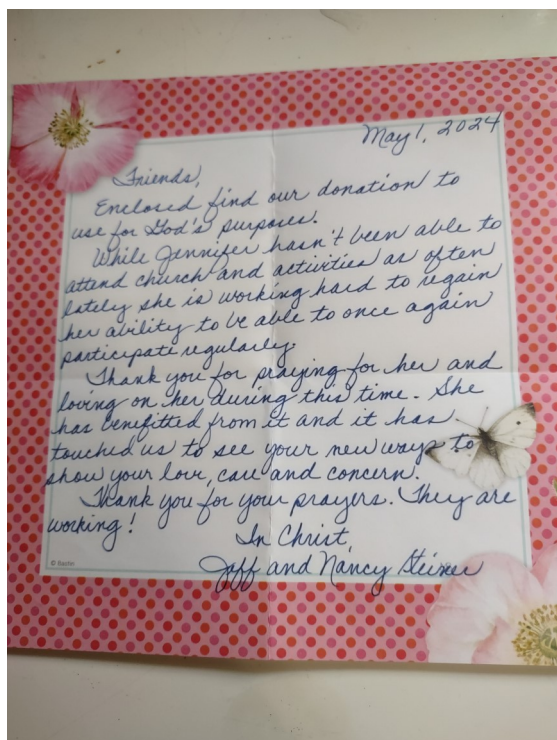
New materials and books will be available in the library for use during summer worship.

Class will resume on September 8th.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The dates for VBS are July 9th—12th
6:30-8:30 PM

Each night will be something different for the whole family! Check it out!





CELEBRATIONS FOR JUNE

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

Allan Smith—9th
 Dave Rogers—14th
 Jamal Botchway—16th
 Niki Juarez-Cummings—18th
 Kristasia Whitson—25th
 Semaj Whitson—30th



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

Allan and Kitty Smith—7th
 Bruce and Margaret Neel—20th



We love celebrating your birthday with you! There are many people whose birthdays I don't have and would like to include in the celebration list! If you haven't seen your name in the last year, **please** just jot me a quick email with your date (anniversary, too) so I can add it to the incomplete list that I have. Thank you!
 Leslie Langmeyer: llangmeyer@aol.com

PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS:

We thank God for many answered prayers as we continue to pray for:

The Members of our church, near and far, Our Veterans, our Troops, and our Country
 World Peace, that the hungry can be fed, and the end of violence



Nandy (Ferdinand) Barras

Nan Beard

Lynne Boyer

Nick Boyer

Jonah Burns

Jackie Ceres

Bea Chachakis

Gabe Chachakis

Daniel Christain

David Garlick

Officer Tim Jones

Niki Juarez Cummings

The family of Duane Larson

Brian Long

Pat MacInnes

Marge Neel

Lee Nelson

Wylladene Nelson

Kyla Jo Purvenas

Allan Smith

Jennifer Steiner

Lance Taskey

Alma White

The Victims of Gun Violence

The People of Israel and Gaza

The People of Ukraine

GRACE TO YOU
INSPIRATION PAGE

Although I find devotions from my daily readings that I like to share, it's always from the same sources. I would love some other contributions to this page! Please share your devotions, readings, and inspirations that are special to you so that others can be inspired, too. I hope that this will be a page that everyone will enjoy and contribute to. Please email me with your contributions at llangmeyer@aol.com. Thank you!

From *The Upper Room*:

Jesus said, *"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."* —Matthew 25:40

Today's scripture reading means the world to me. This passage helped me to realize that Jesus wants us to be his hands and feet.

I have found different ways to honor Christ through acts of service. Some years back, I began visiting a 94-year-old woman in a local nursing home every Wednesday. I found joy in hearing her talk about cooking on a wood-burning stove and other memories from her younger days. She went to be with Jesus at 96. Now I help with our church's food ministry. We give food to those in need and also make coffee at the church on Sunday mornings. I enjoy smiling, hugging people, and simply saying, "Good morning!"

There is always a need that can be met. You might volunteer at the hospital, drive someone to a doctor's appointment, or send a birthday card to a church member. Even holding a door open for someone can be a way to serve Christ. We bless others with each act of service, and we are blessed as well when we honor Jesus with our hands and feet.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for allowing us to be your hands and feet. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen —Roxie Ewing

Thought for the day: Today I will allow Christ to love someone through me.

.....

From *Here I Am, Lord*

"I Meet You at Dawn"

Good morning, Lord. It's still dark outside. I pull myself out of bed, shuffle slippered feet to the kitchen, and brew a cup of tea. I want to meet with You at dawn. I step out the back door, steaming cup in hand. Ah, It's so wonderfully quiet—just You and me, Lord.

Dawn's silvery light silently pierces the darkness. I sense Your presence envelop me. Your whispers of love fill my soul. Turmoil and anxiousness leave. Your assurance and comfort take their place.

I love You with all my heart, dear Lord. I lift my praise and worship to You. Thank You for listening to my joys and concerns. I place them at Your feet and let them go. Now I fix my heart on You and Your wondrous ways.

Look at the sun working its way up through the clouds, Lord. Brilliant shades of orange fill the sky. It causes me to think of You, the glorious Son of God. I walk along the flower beds. The roses drip silvery drops of dew and cause me to think of the tears You lovingly shed for me in the Garden of Gethsemane. How I love you, Lord.

Hush, My child. Quiet your thoughts, and listen to Me. Breathe deeply the freshness of My holy presence.

Yes, Lord. Here I am.

TREASURER'S REPORT FROM BRUCE NEEL**OFFERING**

	<u>MONTH</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
	APRIL	APRIL 30, 2024
Amount Needed	\$ 10,586	\$ 52,217
Amount Received	\$ 18,103	\$ 61,590
Surplus / Deficit	\$ 7,317	\$ 9,373

Thank you for your contributions in April. It is the best month we have had all year.

~Bruce Neel, Treasurer

.....

MISSION NEWS

The number one goal of Church World Service is to build a world where there is enough for all. They work toward this goal through programs that tackle hunger, poverty, displacement, and disasters. When difficult times happen, a kind and loving responses can make all the difference. A blanket from the CWS blanket program can be first step of assistance to hurting communities.

Check out the blanket display in the narthex and the prayers on page xx of this newsletter. Our mission offering through June will go to CWS. Please give generously, as you are able — checks can be made out to Grace U.P with a note for Church World Service. A donation makes a great Father's Day or a memorial in honor for a loved one.

.....

THE LINK FOR THE SUNDAY VIRTUAL SERVICE

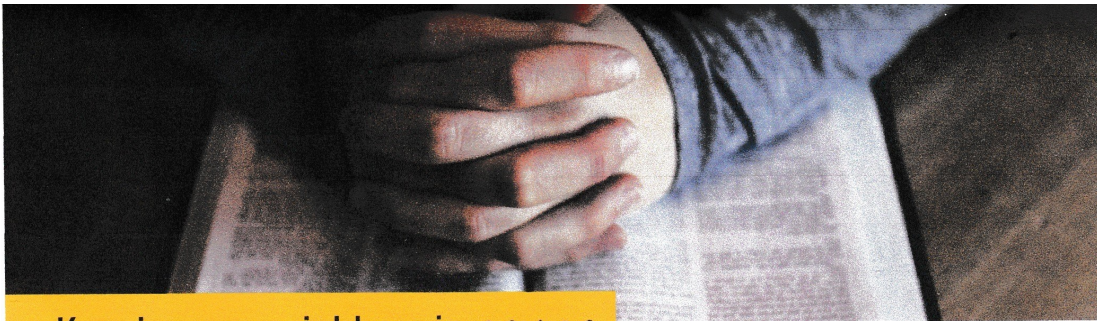
Each Sunday, the church service is available virtually on Zoom. The service is live. *The bulletin and the words to the songs are on your screen each week. If you join by phone and want the bulletin emailed to you, please let the church office know.*

The link for the service is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81653139195?pwd=SDNiRy9VY0pDcEtYRIQ4OFpHUFkdz09>

If you are joining by phone, please call 312-626-6799; ID# 816-5313-9195; password 740463 when prompted.

A gentle reminder: It's wonderful to be able to socialize before and after the service, but with the new virtual system in place, we need to mute our own computers during the service. As a courtesy to others, please remember to mute during the service.



Keeping our neighbors in *prayer*

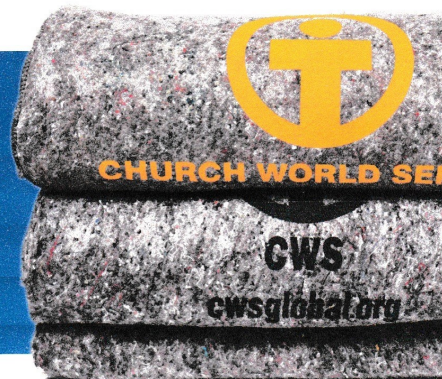
Imagining what's possible through your compassion doesn't stop when neighbors receive a warm blanket. The possibilities are endless and includes prayer too!

Here are three ways you can keep our most vulnerable neighbors in your prayers:

- *God of promises, you remind us that you are present with all your people, including those who call the outdoors home or people who are living in a temporary shelter.*
- *God of warmth, you are with our neighbors who are cold and need comfort.*
- *God of hope and promises, the blankets and kits we offer today represent our compassion for our neighbors, acknowledging that we first received this love from God. We pray by sending these blankets and kits that God's grace will spread far and wide.*

"When I donate to the CWS Blanket offering at my church each year, I am joining other caring people to provide warmth and comfort to our neighbors who could use some extra love."

— MARCIE D. SYRACUSE, NY



PEOPLE YOU SHOULD KNOW

Each of these articles have been written by the person featured. I have loved learning more about our wonderful church family and hope you have, too! Thank you to all the members who have so graciously shared with us so far!

~ Leslie

Janet R. Whitson Markus

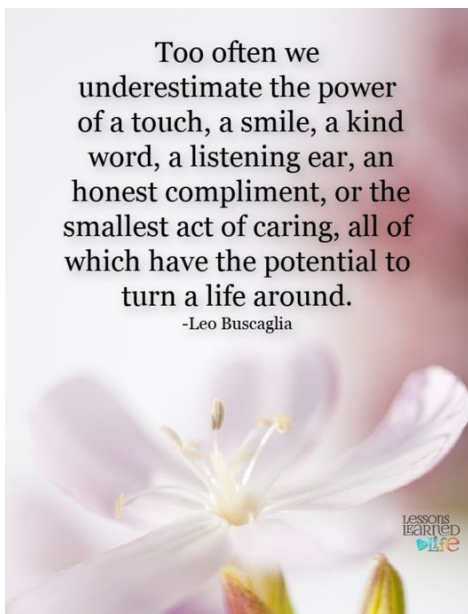


I was born on July 15, 1954 to my parents, Martha and Harry Nicholson, who were charter members of Grace U.P. Church. I grew up here in Park Forest where my parents were original owners of their home. I am the oldest of 5 children. I went to Mohawk School, Blackhawk Junior High School, and Rich East High School. I got an Associate's degree in elementary education from Prairie State College, a Bachelor's degree in Business from Governor's State University, and a paralegal certificate from Roosevelt University. I have worked as a paralegal for nearly 30 years after being an at home mom for 20 years. I married Bill Whitson in 1972 and had 5 children. I then married Frank Markus in 2006 until his passing in 2012. I have 6 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. Most of us live right here in Park Forest. I have fond memories of growing up in the church from worship services at Rich East High

School and Sunday School at Mohawk School. My mom taught Sunday School and was active in the WCA and Marimates. My dad sang in the choir and was very active in fundraising for the church. I remember the huge potlucks and wonderful programs. I've been active in the WCA, teaching Sunday School, choir, and The Sociables (adult activities group). Now I serve as liturgist, counter, zoom assistant, choir, and bell choir member. While my kids were growing up, I was active in Cub Scouts serving as a den mother and a Boys and Girls Club leader. I took piano lessons for 20 years, played tenor saxophone in high school, and sung in choirs in high school. I enjoy bicycle riding, walking, dancing, music and travelling.

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.

-Leo Buscaglia



*May you begin
this day & every day*

with a smile on your face,
warm thoughts in your mind,
happiness in your soul and a heart
filled with lovingkindness for all.



Baby

Good morning

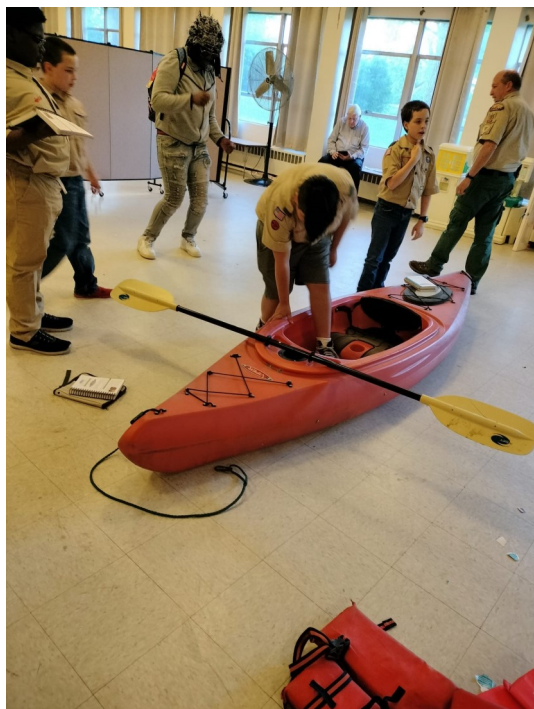


GRACE TO YOU **ABOUT** Scouts

Page 9

Grace Church sponsors Scouts BSA Troop 185B for boys and girls from 5th grade, or age 11, to age 18. We meet on Tuesday nights here at Grace Church from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. Please check us out and spread the word!

At the meeting on Tuesday, May 7th, the Scouts worked with water craft and checking out a new tent.



Putting up and taking down a new tent

2024 SPRING CAMPOREE





Nature's Lesson from Logjams: Teamwork

We rounded the trail's bend at Sawmill Creek and slammed on our bike brakes. Storms had swollen the gentle brook into a rushing torrent. The creek's low footbridge had blocked the floodwaters and now creaked under a heap of uprooted trees and slime.

That log-jammed footbridge was our only route home.

A few undeterred "brave hearts" began clambering over snagged branches and tree trunks. Upon reaching the bridge's other side, one yelled, "Send over a bike!" And so, a chain of women began passing bikes hand-over-tree-over-head the length of the bridge. When the last bike was across, we turned our efforts to passing our stranded friends ... some went more gracefully than others. That's when giggles turned to belly laughs. Twenty minutes later, in a celebration of fist-pumps and whoops, we all pedaled homeward.

We've all faced obstacles that block and discourage us. Yet, God can use those same logjams to unite and re-stoke us, so the team achieves what an individual never could.

Q. Are you part of a team?

"The body of Christ is a team. The body is not supported by one person, but by all of us. We are one ... strongest working together in unity. Teamwork is the key to living life in harmony, so that we can do God's will." ~1 Corinthians 12:14

Thank you to Sue Dukes for sharing all these wonderful inspirations from Carol "Scout" Ruhter & Marty "Acorn" Ramey, Trailbound Trips.

GRACE UNITED PROTESTANT CHURCH
Questionnaire

In preparation for our 70th anniversary celebration, we are compiling memories of current and former members and friends of the church. Even if you can't be at the church on October 27th, please complete this questionnaire and return it. We look forward to hearing from you. Please send completed forms to: Grace United Protestant Church, 266 Somonauk St., Park Forest, IL 60466

Thank you in advance!

Name:

Family Members who also attended Grace:

Were you baptized at Grace, if so when?

Were you confirmed at Grace, if so when?

Were you married at Grace, if so when?

Special Memories:

Choir Rehearsal
10:00 AM
Sunday Worship
11:00 AM