

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

200 N. Catherine Avenue
La Grange, IL 60525
www.gracelutheran-lg.org



Mission Statement: Celebrating in Community,
God's gifts through worship and education;
inspiring us to be the heart, hands, feet, and voice
of Christ in the world.

ANNUAL MEETING JANUARY 29, 2012

*Grace Lutheran's life is rooted in the Gospel and is lived as a joyful
celebration of faithfulness in service which is committed to
discipleship.*

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF LA GRANGE, ILLINOIS
One Hundred and Twenty Fourth Annual Meeting
January, 2012

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Note: The annual report has been printed as simply as possible to reduce cost of production. If you would like an electronic copy, please contact the church office.

Minutes of 2011 Annual Meeting

One Hundred Twenty-Third Annual Meeting
Grace Lutheran Church of La Grange, IL
January 30, 2011

- I. **Devotion** - Pastor Saïd Ailabouni led the opening prayer.
- II. **Call to Order** - Congregation Council President Sara Harris called the meeting to order at 9:50 a.m. and reviewed the agenda for the meeting.
- III. **Pastor's Report** - Pastor Saïd presented his report to the congregation. He reviewed feedback received during the Church Chats in 2007, discussed accomplishments of the church since that time and areas that need to be addressed further and announced another round of Church Chats will be held in the Spring and Summer of 2011.
- IV. **Meeting Procedures** - Congregation Council Secretary Chad Fuller reviewed procedures for holding the Annual Meeting and calling a pastor in accordance with the Bylaws of the Constitution of Grace Lutheran Church of La Grange.
 - a. In accordance with Bylaws of the Constitution, the meeting was held on the last Sunday in January and annual reports from staff, committees and organizations of the congregation were made available.
 - b. In accordance with Chapter 10.03 of the Constitution, proper notice and the stated purpose of the meeting had been given.
 - c. In accordance with Chapter 10.04 of the Constitution, the required number of fifty voting members to constitute a quorum was present.
 - d. In accordance with Chapter 9.01 of the Constitution, authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting regularly called for that purpose.
- V. **Call of Pastor Gerow** - Mary Ann Mestemaker made the following motion:
 - a. **I move to extend to the Rev. Dr. Susan E. Gerow a two year, term call as a Part-time Associate Pastor ending February 28, 2013 as recommended by the Congregation Council, also acting as the Call Committee.**
 - b. The motion was seconded and the floor was opened for discussion.
 - c. Randy Hackbarth provided background information on Pastor Gerow and the role she plays at Grace.
 - d. Ballots were cast and counted, and the motion carried with 142 in favor and 1 opposed.
- VI. **Youth and Family Ministries Celebration** - Youth Ministry Coordinator, Alice Oscarson, and Pastoral Assistant for Youth Education and Worship, Tim Weisman, presented new youth and family programming highlights, including a video montage featuring the youth worshipping in the new Grace Café.

- VII. 125th Anniversary Celebration** - Congregation Council President Sara Harris previewed plans for the 125th Anniversary celebration, noting that the 125th anniversary of the church is April 14, 2012, but the celebration would begin in April 2011 and continue for 24 months.
- VIII. Recognition of outgoing Council members** - Congregation Council President Sara Harris thanked outgoing Council Members for their service. The outgoing members were: Susan Gersch, Mark James, Mary Ann Mestemaker, Sam Taylor and Lois Wagner.
- IX. Approval of 2010 Annual Meeting Minutes** - Mary Ann Mestemaker made the following motion:
- a. **I move to accept the minutes of the January 31, 2010 Annual Meeting as prepared and/or amended.**
 - b. The motion was seconded and carried by a voice vote.
- X. Approval of 2010 Special Congregational Meeting Minutes** - Mary Ann Mestemaker made the following motion:
- a. **I move to accept the minutes of the November 14, 2010 Special Congregational Meeting as prepared and/or amended.**
 - b. The motion was seconded and carried by a voice vote.
- XI. Report of the Nominating Committee** – Klaus Bloecks, Chair of the Nominating Committee
- a. Congregational Council - Klaus Bloecks presented nominees for the Congregational Council
 - i. Suzanne Bernard – 3 year term
 - ii. Sara Harris – 3 year term
 - iii. Emily Kunkle – 1 year term
 - iv. Deborah Moline – 3 year term
 - v. Michael Schiferl – 3 year term
 - vi. Meribeth Tooke – 3 year term
 - b. The floor was opened for additional nominees, but there were none.
 - c. Mary Ann Mestemaker made the following motion:
I move to approve the slate of candidates for the Congregation Council as presented by the Nominating Committee.
 - d. The motion was seconded and carried by a voice vote.
 - e. Nominating Committee - Klaus Bloecks presented nominees for the Nominating Committee (all 1 year terms)
 - i. Brian Brown
 - ii. Susan Gersch
 - iii. Dave Johnson
 - iv. Mary Klonowski
 - v. Dave Kopp
 - f. The floor was opened for additional nominees, but there were none.
 - g. Mary Ann Mestemaker made the following motion:
I move to approve the slate of candidates for the 2011 Nominating Committee as presented by the 2010 Nominating Committee.
 - h. The motion was seconded and carried by a voice vote.

- i. Audit Committee - Klaus Bloecks presented nominees for the Audit Committee (all 2 year terms)
 - i. Casey Brown
 - ii. David Oscarson
 - iii. David Schwartz
 - iv. Matthew Osegard
- j. The floor was opened for additional nominees, but there were none.
- k. Mary Ann Mestemaker made the following motion:
 - I move to approve the slate of candidates for the Audit Committee as presented by the Nominating Committee.**
- l. The motion was seconded and carried by a voice vote.
- m. Synod Assembly - Klaus Bloecks presented nominees to be delegates at the Synod Assembly
 - i. Art Grundke
 - ii. Sara Harris
 - iii. Todd Melby
- n. The floor was opened for additional nominees, but there were none.
- o. Mary Ann Mestemaker made the following motion:
 - I move to approve the slate of candidates to represent Grace Lutheran Church of La Grange at the 2011 Metro Chicago Synod Assembly as presented by the Nominating Committee.**
- p. The motion was seconded and carried by a voice vote.

XII. Approval of the Audit Committee Report - Scott Jensen presented the Report of the Audit Committee. The books and records were found to be materially accurate in all respects.

- a. Mary Ann Mestemaker made the following motion:
 - I move to accept the 2010 Audit Committee's report as submitted.**
- b. The motion was seconded and carried by a voice vote.

XIII. Approval of 2010 Budget - Treasurer Gary Hill reviewed the highlights of the 2011 proposed budget, which was included in the annual report. He noted that the proposed budget included a \$22,000 transfer from various funds including the Reserve Fund to the Operating Fund. No special appeal is budgeted.

- a. Mary Ann Mestemaker made the following motion:
 - I move to approve the 2011 Operating Fund Budget of \$914,000 as recommended by the Congregation Council.**
- b. The motion was seconded and carried by a voice vote.

XIV. Old Business – None

XV. New Business – None

XVI. Closing Prayer and Adjournment – Sara Harris led the closing prayer and a motion to adjourn was made from the floor. The motion was seconded and approved by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Chad Fuller.

Report of the Senior Pastor

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The reports that follow will give you a good glimpse of how God worked among us in 2011 through the ministry of the members and staff of this congregation. It is truly amazing and miraculous what God can accomplish through us. We are indeed privileged to be the heart, hands, feet, and voice of Christ in our community and the world. Thank you for your contributions to the greater good.

Pastoral Resignation: We were challenged this past year by the unexpected resignation of Pastor Flessen in September, which led to a deep grieving process within the congregation. All the stages of grief were part of our experience including anger and guilt. We continue to recover and heal. It is not easy to deal with the loss of a beloved pastor, no matter what the circumstances. His love and care for members of this congregation will always be treasured by you and me. As staff, we worked as one team combining the unique gifts of each one of us to produce the desired outcomes. We all worked for God's glory, not ours. And, we found great joy in doing ministry together.

Our comfort and strength during this time comes from God's promises. Chapter 8 in Romans, for example, is an excellent chapter to read. In Romans 8:26f., we are told that God's Spirit is interceding on our behalf while we are too weak to know even how to pray:

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

And then the next verse concludes with a promise:

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

The challenge for us now is to trust in God's promises and to move forward in faith, knowing that God will not abandon any of us as we go through hard times.

125th Anniversary: On April 10, 2011, we initiated a two year long celebration of our upcoming 125th anniversary (April 14, 2012). What impressed me the most about the history of our congregation over the years was its commitment to local and global outreach. **Local outreach** included the support of many local organizations as well as the expansion of our church building and ministries in order to be faithful in the spread of the gospel in our immediate communities. **Global outreach** included helping start new congregations close by (e.g in Downers Grove and Naperville) and support of missionaries and mission projects far away. That same vision for mission continues to guide us to this day, and I hope into the future.

The new members who join our congregation are ever grateful for what this congregation offers them and their families. Our members who have been here for years believe that the God who guided this congregation's work in the last 125 years will continue to guide us into the future. As

long-time member Bill Olson told me in an email on August 24, 2011: "**Make No Small Plans**" for the future of Grace Lutheran Church. Bill then went on to share his dreams for Grace. Bill's family joined the congregation in 1940 and had seen a lot of changes since becoming members 72 years ago. Allow me to quote a bit from his email:

I am writing to you regarding Vision 2020 for Grace Lutheran Church in La Grange. My sister, Eudora O. Swanson, and myself, Oscar William Olson, Jr., who is better known as Bill, were born and raised in Oak Park, Illinois. Our family moved to La Grange Park in 1939 and joined Grace Church on Easter Sunday 1940, the year after Dr. O. V. Anderson came to Grace Church. I was in his first Confirmation class which was confirmed on October 20, 1940. During the past 70 years we have been privileged to observe and be part of the many improvements and additions to the Church property.

As part of the Vision 2020 program we have been asked to submit suggestions as to what can be done to improve the building and grounds of Grace Church. In considering this subject..."Make No Small Plans." Perhaps Grace Church might consider this slogan as its theme for 2020 Vision.

Bill went on to make extensive suggestions for change, as many of you have done as well. These suggestions have been gathered together into a 2020 Vision. We will work hard in the coming years to accomplish, with God's help and guidance, the plans that God has in mind for us. We will all be challenged to participate as God has blessed us in order to leave a legacy behind, as previous generations had done, always "*Soli Deo Gloria*", for God's glory alone, not for our own.

2020 Vision

My deepest thanks go to the leaders, to the staff, and to the members of our congregation who have worked so hard this past year to help us put together a vision of what Grace Lutheran Church could look like by 2020. Several surveys, church chats, consultations took place in 2011 that led to the "Grace Lutheran Church 2020 Vision". A master plan was developed to help us envision what the church building could look like to better serve the mission that God has given us.

A vision is a picture of what our congregation could look like, and what others would experience at Grace eight years from now. Now the hard work will continue as we strategize ways and means to build on all the good ministries we presently have in order to make the vision a reality by the year 2020. The hundreds of members who participated in this visioning process collectively concluded the following:

Grace Lutheran Church 2020 Vision

Grace will become a more vibrant, growing, thriving congregation
committed to growing faithful disciples
and deeply embedded in our community and in our world.

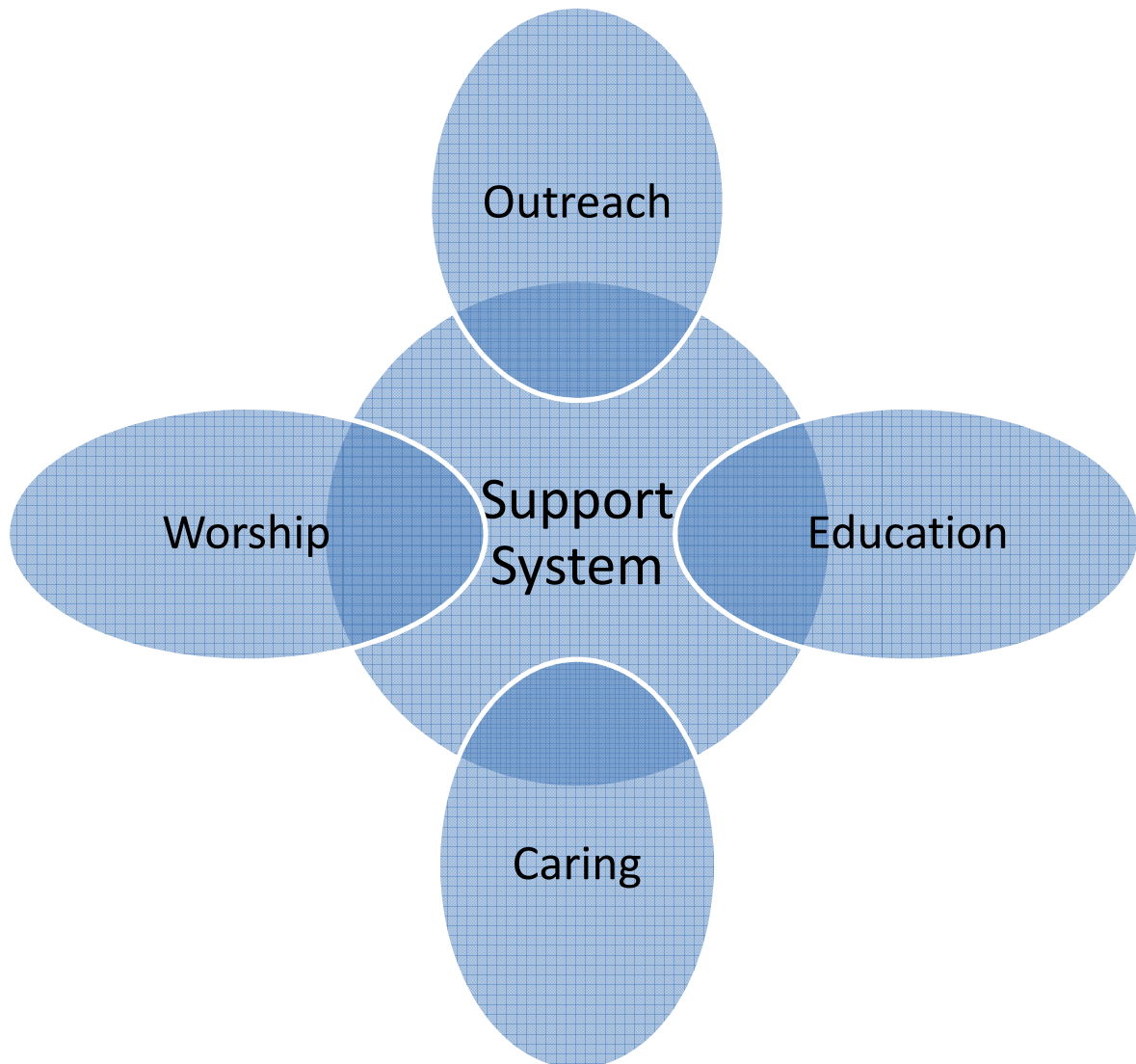
This can be accomplished if:

- We develop a greater impact presence in our community through partnerships with community organizations and other churches, have a greater stake in community ministries (perhaps finding a niche need that Grace could develop), and generally have an outward focus for our ministry.

- Members give greater priority to being more invitational, welcoming, hospitable, inclusive, diverse, and open in order to include new people in our growing ministry
- Our facilities are re-imagined, upgraded and renovated to serve and support our ministry, giving attention to areas which enhance hospitality and welcome like our entrances and narthex areas, restrooms, and all areas handicapped accessible (elevator, etc); sanctuary upgrades, kitchen, staff offices; infrastructure issues resulting from deferred maintenance (HVAC, mechanical, etc).
- We build on strengths like excellent worship and our preschool, multiplying their outreach by expanding what we are offering (e.g. Variety of worship styles and growing our preschool).
- We grow targeted ministries and call staff to lead in these areas of desired growth; perhaps to attract young families, to grow disciples through faith formation/education, to lead a small group ministry that connects members and grows disciples, to grow community outreach, to enhance communication, to develop contemporary worship, to grow older adult ministries, etc.
- We purchase adjacent property in order to have land space to create additional parking and/or to consider building a large fellowship/multipurpose/gym area.
- Grace leaders explore and implement “best practices” of growing congregations with over 350 at worship, especially relating to leadership styles and governance structures
- We develop an Endowment Fund over the years that may support a variety of ministries.

Implementation of 2020 Vision: We have already begun to work towards implementing the vision, but it will take us eight years to get there. In 2012, for example, we will spend a year studying how we can have a greater impact presence in our community. Through the help of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, we will go through a deliberate process to figure out what we may want to do. We will spend a year gathering the evidence needed to guide us in making decisions about community engagement. By the end of 2012 or early 2013, we should have a better idea of what we may want to do. All who are interested in this process will be invited to participate in a year-long study, which will begin in March, 2012. A Sunday Forum will be presented on February 19 to explain the process. A similar evidence-based decision-making process will be utilized for the other seven items described in the 2020 Vision.

Core Values: The simple schematic design on the next page shows the main core values that drive our mission work as a congregation. **Worship, Education, Caring, and Outreach** are at the core of what we do in ministry at Grace. We serve people **from birth to age 105** and beyond. In all of our ministries to these age groups, we are always asking: "How are we helping people from birth to age 105 worship God? What are we doing to provide the best Christian education? How well are we caring for each other and for those whom we encounter in our church and on the streets of our communities? How can we improve our local and global outreach, so that more people may see and experience the love of God in Jesus Christ through us and the ministries we support?"



The following reports by staff and lay leaders will give you a glimpse of what was done in 2011. You can be sure, however, that we are continually asking: "How can we do better?" The "Grace 2020 Vision" will guide us to do better, **to become a more vibrant, growing, thriving congregation committed to growing faithful disciples and deeply embedded in our community and in our world.**

Support System: As many of you know, the Council and staff continue to experiment with the most effective ways to organize and govern our congregation to best accomplish God's mission. Most members, for example, prefer serving on mission projects to help others in need or to get things done at church and in the community, rather than on committees that spend quite a bit of time planning what has to get done. In order to continue to grow, we have to try different ways to lead, govern, and organize our congregation. We have been asking questions about the role of staff and lay "volunteers" (I prefer to call them "lay ministers") in every area of ministry, including property management, youth ministry, family ministry, education, social ministry, outreach, etc. Are "committees" the best way to organize or "teams" consisting of staff and lay

ministers? What will be the most effective and productive way to accomplish our mission? We have not arrived yet to a perfect solution. Thank you for your patience and feedback as we keep experimenting with various options. Hopefully, within a year or two, we will have enough evidence to make recommendations for changes to the congregation. For now, we are simply trying different options until we see what works best.

A Big "Thank You"

I am always surprised by your generosity and deeply grateful. The church cannot survive without your participation. Thousands of volunteer hours were contributed by members last year. Many have committed to increased monetary giving in both 2011 and 2012 to assure the continued growth of ministries at Grace. Thank you for your amazing generosity. As individuals we may not have enough, but together we always have more than enough. When we put together our resources as a community, resources of time, talents and treasures we experience the miracle of God's abundance. Thank you for your willingness to be part of this miracle.

I wish to thank God for our lay leaders and staff who have had to work extra hard this past year, under difficult circumstances, to move us forward in mission. I am especially grateful that Pastor Diane Casey could come to our aid last fall, and invest so much of her time with us, free of charge. She did so with deep joy and gratitude. Her spirit (or, better, God's Spirit in her) is contagious. I am deeply grateful for all of our staff who put in extra hours to assure the continued success of all ministries. It is a joy to serve with such gifted colleagues.

I am also deeply grateful for the dedication and commitment of the president of the congregation, Sara Harris, who worked extremely hard in the last four years to fulfill our congregation's mission. Her faith in Jesus leads her to believe in moving mountains, and that is exactly what she did with God's help. It could have easily taken us ten or more year to get to where we are now. Her leadership and passion for action will remain an example for me as we continue planning for the future. She kept reminding me that God deserves the best from us, which is exactly what she offered, no matter the cost. She will be missed on the Council.

Sara worked with an exceptional group of Council members who included the following leaders on the Executive Committee: Sharon Deavens, Chad Fuller, Randy Hackbarth, Gary Hill, and Kurt Nelson, and the following Council members: Barb Barrett, Suzanne Bernard, Scott Eggerding, Vicki Jensen, Emily Kunkle, Debbie Moline, Michael Schiferl, and Meribeth Tooke. These leaders worked together to lead the Vision 2020 process and handle many unexpected issues that arose in the past year. Our deepest thanks go to each and every one of them for their dedication and faithfulness.

Immediately after this report, you will find the anniversary hymn that has been sponsored by one of our members on the occasion of our 125th anniversary. Note the anniversary theme "***Remembering, Rejoicing, Reaching Out***" as the backbone of the hymn as well as our mission statement:

**"Celebrating in Community, God's gifts through worship and education;
inspiring us to be the heart, hands, feet and voice of Christ in the World."**

Thank you for the privilege of serving you.

Pastor Saïd Ailabouni

BY GRACE, WE GATHER

(125th Anniversary Hymn)

By grace, we gather-
people remembering
Christ in the body,
Christ in the blood.
We are reminded
of saints before us,
as we give thanks for
all that is good.

We look around us.
We are rejoicing,
seeing compassion
in what is here.
Music and mission,
feeding the hungry,
caring for strangers:
Grace far and near.

We will be one heart
beating together.
We become Christ's hands
reaching to all.
We shall walk boldly
with feet of Jesus,
blest to be voices
sharing God's call.

(c) Rusty Edwards

Suggested tunes: BUNESSAN (ELW 556) or BOZEMAN (ELW 572)

Grace Lutheran Church LaGrange has perpetual permission to reprint this text for worship and other congregational publications.

Report of the President

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With great anticipation of our Congregation's 125th anniversary, together we started our journey to "Remember, Rejoice and Reach Out" as we strove to serve Christ through our mission in the La Grange community and beyond during 2011.

The year was filled with changes, challenges and reflection for Grace. Most notably, together we shaped our 2020 Vision which leads us to become a more vibrant, growing, thriving congregation committed to growing faithful disciples and be more deeply embedded in our community and in the world.

We moved further along into the process started in 2008 of exploring how our aging facilities might be re-imagined, updated and renovated to serve and support our ministry. Throughout the year, Grace enhanced opportunities for education and fellowship, including programs targeting young families, parents of teens, singles and married couples without kids, older adults and our multi-generational LOGOS program.

Our educational offerings grew exponentially in 2011, including our many Bible study groups, special Anniversary Lecture Series, and unique visits and presentations from special guests to Grace such as The Rt. Rev. Dr. Munib Younan, bishop of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and president of the worldwide Lutheran World Federation, and Rev. John Nunes, president and CEO of Lutheran World Relief, which garnered interest and participation from members and non-members alike.

Grace continued its outreach in our communities near and far through youth-led mission trip; enhanced outreach with our brothers and sisters at Bethel New Life on Chicago's West Side; passionate support of a new refugee family; committed love and artistry of Grace quilt makers; volunteer efforts to send first aid and family care packages to those in need worldwide; and, exploration of various faith traditions by our Confirmation students. Closer to home, our ongoing partnership with our neighbors in Christ at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church remains strong, including shared Taize worship services, community food pantry support, Back Door Theatre, vacation church school and an exchange of pulpits from both parishes' senior pastors.

We faced a major challenge in 2011 through the resignation of Associate Pastor Soren Flessen. Despite this painful and challenging time, Grace staff and member volunteers redoubled efforts to be sure our Congregation's many programs and ministries were addressed. We're thankful for those efforts, including the gifts of Rev. Diane Casey, a long-time Grace member who graciously offered her time and talents to us as a Pastoral Associate.

Throughout 2011, we turned to God for guidance, and continued to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord in all that we did, including worship, music and prayer. As we move into our 125th year, we'll celebrate much in the rich history of our church and work together charting the future through Grace's 2020 Vision.

I'm thankful for the gifts of faith, love, and grace as taught by Jesus Christ. I humbly pray that our work will glorify His name. I ask God for guidance, wisdom, patience and love so that Grace Lutheran Church can continue our mission to do His work.

In Christ,

Sara Harris
President, Congregation Council

Staff Roster

| | |
|--|---|
| Säid Ailabouni | Senior Pastor |
| Kurt Amolsch | Cantor – Liturgical Minister |
| Lynn Blatchley | Director – Preschool |
| Jane Cikanek, Virginia Franceschina, Vicki Michaels, Karen Niedermeyer, Carol Pardo, Bridgette Snyder, Dee Soukup, Laura Taylor, Suzy Weisshaar | Preschool Teachers/Staff |
| Diane Casey | Pastoral Associate |
| Darius Didzgalvis, Ralph Curry, Dennis Cole | Custodians |
| Kerry Forsythe | Family Ministry Coordinator |
| Susan Gerow | Associate Pastor, Pastoral Care & Outreach |
| Ann Gornik | Parish Nurse |
| Anne Hall | Financial Administrator |
| Natalie Johnson | Older Adult Ministry Coordinator |
| Janet Kings | Director of Music Ministries |
| Paul Moody | Pastoral Assistant for Youth Education |
| Karen Nelson | Financial Secretary |
| Lorrie Nicholaus | Parish Assistant |
| Alice Oscarson | Youth Ministry Coordinator |
| Sheila Reed | Church Administrator |
| Kelly Winters | Administrative Assistant |

MEMBERS RECEIVED:

Tommy & Lauren Asuma (Thomas)
Dave Beck
Kenneth Benson
Jerry & Margaret Berg (Austin, Grace, Martin)
Stacy Bianco
Geoffrey & Erin Fingerhut (Owen, Sophie)
Thomas & Kristin Frey (Amanda, Alyssa)
Carol Giles
Brad & Heidi Hanner (Margaret, Maureen)
Steve & Heather Holstad (Beck)
Anthony Jimenez
Douglas Kieso (Seth)
Matthew Ley
Dale Machacek
Marvin & Charmaine Machacek
Dave & Yvonne Palasz (Christopher)
Bob Quas
Daniel & Barbara Rank (Jenifer)
Harry & Sandra Sheridan
David & Myrrha Southwell (Luke, Mikayla, Nathan)
Chris & Anna Stansbury (Taylor, Adam, Jack, Samuel)
Lloyd & Denise Wilson (Leah, LJ)
Diane Thal

MEMBERS TRANSFERRED:

Janice, Francie and Leah Zaloudek

Report of Associate Pastor for Caring and Outreach Ministries

2011 was the first year of another two-year, half-time term call that extends through February of 2013. It has been a privilege and a blessing to continue my work at GLC as the pastor for caring and outreach ministries.

During my years here, we have been able to expand, enrich, and deepen our caring and outreach ministries by developing new opportunities, such as *Helping Hands and Hearts*, expanding on-going ministries including *Stephen Ministry*, organizing processes such as receiving new members, and providing more direct pastoral care with regular visitation to our homebound members.

My defined focus again this year was to lead our pastoral care ministries, including the coordination and promotion of *Stephen Ministry* and Stephen Ministers, *Helping Hands and Hearts*, pastors and our parish nurse, the chapel and telephone prayer ministers, and bereavement support. I spend over eighty percent of my time in pastoral care and coordination. In addition, I have worked with the pastors and Joyce Nemeč in the process of receiving almost sixty new members in 2011.

For the most part, this was a year of settling into already established ministries. No new programs were developed this past year.

- With our wonderful Parish Nurse, Ann Gornik, I help to tend to our sick and homebound members. I routinely visit members and families at home, in hospitals, nursing homes, retirement places, and rehab facilities, spending a lot of time in face-to-face pastoral care and counseling.
- I led a grief group for GLC members during Lent based on Henri Nouwen's *Turn My Mourning into Dancing*. I designed and led a "Blue Christmas" worship service in December for those who find sadness during the holidays.
- I helped to lead the women's retreat at LOMC.
- I continued to relate to our *Helping Hands and Hearts* ministry.
- I worked closely with our *Stephen Ministry* leaders to publicize and promote *Stephen Ministry*, to supervise and provide continuing education to our current SMs, and to recruit SM trainees. We trained seven persons for this ministry in 2011. I taught training classes regularly and currently serve as the SM Referrals Coordinator. Along with welcoming Dan Hermes to the leadership team, this was easily a highlight of my ministry in 2011.
- I worked with the pastors and Joyce Nemeč to receive three classes of new members.
- A major recruitment effort for *Helping Hands and Hearts* resulted in over 90 volunteers to prepare and deliver meals, provide someone a ride to worship/church, or visit someone at home or hospital.
- I had the privilege of presiding at worship, weddings, and funerals. I preach occasionally at GLC as assigned by the Senior Pastor.
- I continued to share with the other pastors the celebration of Holy Communion at Plymouth Place (monthly) and Bethlehem Woods (at least quarterly).
- The sorrow surrounding the resignation of Pastor Flessen has been difficult for all of us. It has affected our caring ministries deeply.
- As a result of his resignation, there is additional pastoral care and worship leadership that I do and I have begun attending council meetings and participating in their processes. Working on developing our 2020 Vision has been enlightening.

As a *member* of GLC (not as its pastor), I again participated in a number of ministries this past year: Grace-ettes, Refugee Resettlement, Rebuilding Together, lectures by Dr. Hendel, and the CROP Walk. They remind me how richly blessed this congregation is and what a privilege it is to find ways to participate in God's work in this world through GLC.

Since I am still serving a term call at GLC that will expire in a year, I have not given up my other job. I continue to divide my time and also serve as the part-time chaplain at King-Bruwaert House in Burr Ridge, a continuing care retirement community.

I thank God for my husband, Bill, without whom it would not be possible to serve as a pastor. I thank God for the ministry to which I am called. It has been an honor to serve Christ in this place with and among you.

Pastor Susan Gerow

Report of Pastoral Associate

In late September I began my volunteer work as Pastoral Associate at Grace. I was asked to coordinate the Safe Church initiative which was scheduled for implementation in the fall of 2011. As Safe Church coordinator, I facilitated the Safe Church Committee consisting of Sharon Deavens, Kelly Winters, Kerry Forsythe, and Alice Oscarson. We scheduled and implemented Safe Church training for volunteers working with children and youth – church school teachers, LOGOS volunteers and workers with youth. The training sessions included reviewing the Safe Church Policy, completing the requisite volunteer forms, and discussing safe, confusing and unsafe touch. Completed volunteer forms were checked against national and Illinois sex offender registries and stored securely in the church office. Training will be scheduled regularly prior to the beginning of Church School, of LOGOS, of Vacation Bible School and any other programs involving volunteers working closely with children and youth. Additionally, the committee worked on expanding the Safe Church Policy completed in January 2010. Currently the focus of the policy is on protecting children and youth from sexual abuse during church activities. The new revisions seek to broaden the policy to “provide programs, facilities and a community for visitors, members, volunteers and staff that is a safe and secure environment free from boundary violations, as well as from any kind of discrimination, harassment, exploitation and intimidation.” Moreover, the committee is recommending the creation of a response team to handle reports of policy violations. The committee anticipates the revised policy being ready for approval and implementation in the summer of 2012.

During the fall I also helped manage student behavior in the Confirmation class on Sunday mornings. I met several times with Pastoral Assistant Paul Moody and teacher John Lorenzen to discuss strategies for keeping students engaged in class activities. It became apparent over the course of the fall that other volunteers in the Church School and LOGOS were facing similar challenges. Staff members and volunteer leaders working with children and youth gathered several times to discuss guidelines and possible training to help teachers and volunteers deal with these behavioral issues. A training session was planned for early January before Church School and LOGOS resumed.

Starting in late October I began helping with several pastoral responsibilities. On Sunday mornings I regularly assisted in leading worship at the 8:45 and 11:00 services. On November 20 I preached at all three services. In addition, I assisted with worship leadership on Thanksgiving and Christmas days, as well as at the Blue Christmas service and all three services on Christmas Eve. Also, I joined the pastoral care team and made visits to members who were in hospitals, in nursing homes, or home-bound.

In October my husband, Jim, and I were asked to edit the Grace Lutheran Church history manuscript researched and written by members of the Archives Committee. At that point the committee was seeking feedback on the manuscript from a number of members in the congregation. My husband and I reviewed the manuscript and discussed strengths and recommendations. Lyn Rains, chief writer, revised the manuscript based upon the feedback and recommendations. While the original plan was to complete the manuscript in early 2012, my husband and I could not accommodate that timeline. An alternate timeline for completion and publication was set for late in 2012.

In late summer I was invited to serve on the Campaign Leadership Team for Vision 2020. I facilitated team meetings as the group worked on preliminary projects while awaiting congregational approval for moving forward with the campaign.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Casey

Report of Pastoral Assistant for Youth Education

The second year of the role of Pastoral Assistant quickly took form as the program year began in September. My responsibilities have centered around the development of the confirmation program, and have also included leading Children's Church twice monthly, assisting with the Grace Café Youth Worship, and offering insight amidst the high school Recharge sessions.

The confirmation program was quickly re-envisioned in September in Pastor Flessen's absence. The first meeting of the Confirmands centered on a "Welcome to Baptism" rite, as they began to prepare to undergo the formal Affirmation of Baptism at the conclusion of their second year in the program. They made the sign of the cross over one another, signifying Christ's presence in all that they would see, say, hear, do, and experience in the coming months. As we began to delve into the curriculum, Lay leader John Lorenzen stepped up to help me craft lesson plans, lead Wednesday evening sessions, and think critically about the goals and expectations of the program. He has been an incredible gift to the 7th and 8th grade Confirmands, and to me as well. The confirmands have been learning the nuts and bolts of Christian history, Lutheran identity, and faith practice. There have been some behavioral issues that have developed, and it has been difficult to maintain a positive behavioral modification environment. In addition to the formal confirmation instruction, I have assisted the students in liturgical drama and music, with the leadership of Kurt Amolsch. Other lay leaders have been instrumental in bringing life to the confirmation program, and I deeply appreciate their contributions of time, patience, and their willingness to instill the historical values of this place in this young generation of faithful students.

My involvement with Children's Church has consisted of leading the younger participants in the 11am worship in song and activities during the sermon period. With the help of Janet Kings, I based the session on programmed material to lead the youngsters in a time of reflection and inclusion that was appropriate to their age group. This included reading Biblical stories from the Children's Bible, singing songs of welcome to one another, coloring, praying, and responding to simple questions about living as children of God. The children have been a joy to lead and are a constant reminder of the simplicity of our faith in Christ.

Grace Café Youth Worship has been less successful in crafting a compelling vision for youth-led, youth-centered worship. The students involved seem to appreciate the focused worship space, but there is still work to be done to enrich this monthly gathering of high schoolers.

As we launch into the new year, I reflect on what has been accomplished by God's grace in our midst thus far, and it is inspiring. The coalescing of leadership, vision, and practice has led to a rich experience of relationship building, educational reflection, and faith nurturing. The Spirit has blown through us as we have worked through our imperfections, and I am thrilled to see what is in store for the coming months.

In Christ's Peace,
Paul Moody
Pastoral Assistant for Youth Education

Report of Director of Music Ministries

Grace Lutheran Church is blessed by many saints who contribute their time and talents to music ministry. Opportunities exist for all ages, literally from infants to seniors. Examples include:

- Sanctuary Choir – led worship every Sunday through the school year and at special services; caroled to shut-ins in December.
- Celebration Singers – provided leadership for Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve worship and occasionally throughout the year.
- Grace-ettes – made monthly visits to area nursing homes to sing for and with residents and sang monthly in worship.
- Gaudeamus Ringers – enhanced worship frequently with bell compositions and hymn introductions.
- Grace Brass Ensemble (youth and adults) – enhanced worship on two occasions.
- Soloists, instrumentalists, pianists, ensembles – many, many members and friends provided prelude, offertory and anthem accompaniments often during the year.
- Musikgarten – engaged infants through preschoolers in faith development through music and movement.
- Grace Music Apprenticeship/Scholarship Program – recipients Eve Gallagher, Julia Machnyk and Thomas Scott finished their service in the spring of 2011; Sarah Schmitz and Kayla Von Drasek began their terms last fall.
- Children’s Church – offered weekly during 11:00 worship
- Grace Café Youth worship – offered monthly at 11:00
- LOGOS – taught youth in grades K-8 about worship and encouraged them to see themselves as worship leaders, providing a variety of opportunities to lead.

Monthly Taizé Prayer worship with St. Francis celebrated its 10th anniversary in October. This meditative ecumenical service continues to draw worshippers from both congregations and from the community.

Book study groups and the witness of Grace members in midweek worship centered around the Lenten theme, “You Turn My Mourning into Dancing.” Evening worship was led by LOGOS students who ushered, led singing, read scripture, danced, and wrote prayers.

Advent midweek worship included an Older Adult Meal and Worship on December 14 and a Blue Christmas service, a new offering, on December 21.

We are thankful for the gift of music and for our part in this ministry.

Janet Kings, Director of Music Ministries
Kurt Amolsch, Cantor

Report of Parish Nurse

As I write my 2011 Annual Report as your Parish Nurse of four years, I reflect back on how my life has been abundantly blessed with the kindness, graciousness, and love of the Grace Lutheran Church community. It is a privilege to serve our Lord and you as your Parish Nurse. Thank you for the treasured blessing you, Grace Lutheran Church, are in my life.

My Parish Nurse Ministry consists of nurturing the human spirit through health education, spiritual support and linking the needs of the whole person to resources within the congregation, community and the healthcare system. As the Parish Nurse for Grace Lutheran Church, I am privileged to facilitate the healing mission of the congregation by serving in the following roles developed by *Advocate Health Care*:

1. Integrator of Faith and Health

In all activities and interactions, as your Parish Nurse I seek to promote the understanding of the relationship between faith and health. My participation in the following programs has incorporated this connection:

- Healing Services
- Plymouth Place Communion Services
- Meditative Prayer/Guided Imagery
- Supporting TOPS (Taking Pounds Off Sensibly) weekly meetings
- Care Notes display
- Blue Christmas Service

2. Health Educator

In all activities and interactions, as your Parish Nurse I seek to promote an atmosphere where individuals of all ages, through a variety of educational activities, explore the relationship between values, attitudes, lifestyle, faith and health. I have provided education through one-to-one interactions and as facilitator or presenter of the following educational programs:

- Coordinated and facilitated “A Lenten Spiritual Retreat: A Lenten Journey with Prayer and Meditation” (32 participants)
- Presented “Compassion: Meditating on The Parable of the Good Samaritan” to Adult Vacation Bible Study
- Coordinated, facilitated and presented: “Finding Ways to a Healthier Lifestyle” series:
 - Sharing Your New Year Healthy Tip Resolution
 - Everyone’s Guide to A Healthy Heart by Jeff Harper Pharm D.
 - A Meditation and Guided Imagery: “Pond of Love” by Ann Gornik RN
 - Four Essentials of Health and Wellness and Ten Steps to Longevity by Dr. Gordon Firmete DO
 - Sharing Your Favorite Healthy Recipe
- Presented “Blessing of Hands Guided Imagery” for Young Families of Grace
- Presented “Proper Body Mechanics” to LOGOS kitchen crew
- Presented “Introduction to Meditation” to 7th and 8th graders

2. Health Educator (cont.)

- Co-sponsored an Adult Education Forum: “Day to Day Challenges for Someone with Dementia” presented by Pat Cohen from Advocate Health Care Alzheimer’s Support Center
- Pre-school presentations: “Taking Care of Your Heart” and “Keeping Your Bones Healthy”
- Sponsored “May is Mental Health Awareness Month.” Provided a reference table of brochures, pamphlets and community resources on mental illness
- Provided 12 monthly OPUS articles on health related topics and displays and resource materials on Health and Wellness Communication Center
- Parish Nurse Continuing Education: Earned Level 2 Healing Touch Certification, attended “Spirituality and End of Life Care” sponsored by Advocate Health Care and HFA, attended 25th Annual Westberg Parish Nurse Symposium. Attend monthly Advocate Health Care System meetings. Earned 31.5 CEUs in 2011.
- Preceptor for new Our Saviors Lutheran Advocate Parish Nurse and two Lewis University students in Parish Nurse Certification course

3. Personal Health Counselor

In all activities and interactions, as your Parish Nurse I seek to discuss health issues and concerns with individuals, making home, hospital and nursing home visits as needed. My scheduled part-time office hours are Monday, Wednesday and Thursdays plus two Sundays a month. I have nurtured the mind, body and spirit in the following ways:

- In the past year as Parish Nurse I have had over 750 individual member interactions either in the Parish Nurse office, the church, in three local hospitals, home, or nursing home visits, at Plymouth Place or over the phone or by email.
- Coordinated, sponsored and hosted the 20th Annual Health Screening Assessment Program, an Advocate Health Care Program jointly held with The First Congregational Church of Western Springs. Twenty-eight members participated in screenings. I provided follow-up consultation with each member to discuss lab values, lifestyle changes and physician referrals if necessary.
- Coordinated the Flu Shot Program. Maxim Health Services administered 56 flu shot vaccinations and 2 pneumonia vaccinations on October 5th and 9th.
- Coordinated a Heartland Blood drive in April. Collected 20 units. This partnership provides 32 area hospitals with a safe and adequate supply of blood and blood products.
- Coordinated and facilitated with RN members 4 Blood Pressure Screenings: 88 members participated.

4. Referral Agent and Liaison with Congregational and Community Resources

In all activities and interactions, as your Parish Nurse I seek to provide members of our congregation with referrals to health care professionals and other community resources. I assisted numerous members seeking home health care, extended care and retirement home placement information.

- Attended Senior Life Expo: “Navigating Through the Years”
- Promoted “ A Journey Towards Wholeness: Grief Support, Hope and Healing” sponsored by Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital

5. Facilitator of Volunteers

In all activities and interactions, as your Parish Nurse I seek to provide education and resources for volunteers within the congregation to serve in various health ministries. I have facilitated volunteers in the following ways:

- Provided educational and community resources for Stephen Ministers
- Provided educational and community resources for Older Adult Ministry
- Presented: “Calming Your Spirit Guided Imagery” and “Tips When Visiting a Hospitalized Care Receiver” to Stephen Ministers
- Provided stamps and cards for Card Ministry: A very special thank you to June Gallagher for sending 62 Get Well, 6 Birth Congratulations, 9 Baptismal, 36 Easter, and 41 Thanksgiving cards. (Total numbers of cards sent: 154)
- Developed Emergency Action Plans for Vacation Bible School children with life threatening health concerns
- Provided list of homebound members to LOGOS for coordination of meal delivery

In all activities and interactions, as your Parish Nurse I seek to work with the client, faith community and primary health resources to provide whatever is in the best interest of the client from a holistic person perspective, listening and supporting the client’s voice.

May God’s blessings bring you peace, joy and hope in 2012.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Gornik, RN, MSN, FCN
Advocate Parish Nurse

Report of Family Ministry Coordinator

Family Ministry entered its third year of programming in 2011. It has continued to deepen its roots in the congregation, thrive and give life to new ministries.

The first new group that has been created under the Family Ministry umbrella in 2011 is toGather. It's both well-known and corroborated by research that people in their twenties and thirties are typically not fully connected to consistent worship and/or church life. This is due to a variety of sociological and cultural factors, but also due to a lack of initiative on many churches' parts to attract and engage such a demographic. It is incumbent upon churches to cast off the mindset that younger adults will "come back around" to the church when they have children or reach other milestones of middle adulthood. Current cultural shifts and attitudes are elucidating that such a return to church life may not occur, even if younger adults were brought up in Christian homes.

toGather ("2G") was created at Grace as a direct and intentional way to attract younger adults to our church, provide a sense of belonging, create consistent opportunities for spiritual growth and community service, as well as to connect younger adults to decision-making and leadership opportunities in the church. The name "toGather" was intentionally chosen to be broad. This avoidance of a narrow name and label arose out of the fact that men and women in their twenties and thirties embrace varied attitudes and lifestyles as their decision-making and life journeys unfold. 2G simply exists for participation and unity in the body of Christ that is Grace Lutheran Church. Participants have one thing in common: no children. Thus, participation in toGather is available to anyone beyond their thirties who feels a connection with the group.

toGather has been expressed on several planes since its inception by Kerry Forsythe and Pastor Soren Flessen in summer 2011. First, the group meets weekly for a Lectionary Bible Study in the Grace Café. A review of the readings for the day's worship that the church derives from the Revised Common Lectionary are read from Scripture during these 10:00 Educational Hour gatherings. This is followed by discussion and spiritual fellowship. toGather has also come together with YFG and TFG for Joint Sunday Mixers. Second, the group has attended community service events together such as Feed My Starving Children and the Bethel New Life Work Event. Finally, the group has held social gatherings including dinners out or hosted at people's homes, board game nights, outdoor seasonal events, as well as Halloween and Christmas parties. Group communication among toGather largely takes place via the toGather account on Google Groups.

The Splash Ministry has been added to Family Ministry, as well, in 2011. Conceptualized by Kerry Forsythe and Pastor Soren Flessen, Splash is a Mother-Child social and spiritual support group for women with children birth – age 3. Suburban communities such as La Grange are saturated with Play Groups. However, parish as well as mutual support for mothers from a within community of Christian women is a niche that Splash was created to fill. The name, "Splash", was inspired by the monthly newsletter series from Augsburg Fortress press that parents of young children receive each month via US mail. This series provides and discusses ideas for spiritual practices that parents can utilize in their homes in order to cultivate faith and love in Jesus while children are very young.

The first Splash gathering took place in June with a gathering on the Preschool Playground for mothers and children. With four inflatable baby pools, Christian children's music, snacks, drinks and the playground equipment, mothers interacted cheerfully against the backdrop of coos, cries and children's chatter. A scripture reading from Ruth 1:1-22 was

read by several women relating the tender story of love and commitment among women. Subsequent Splash gatherings included a Church Chat at the home of Mrs. Katie Pogue, a play outing to Little Monkey Bizness in Western Springs and speaker, Paula Brown, on the topic of maintaining marriage and self.

Young Families of Grace (YFG) and Teen Families of Grace (TFG) have continued to be successful ministries in 2011. YFG serves parents with children birth – age 10. TFG serves parents with children age 11 – high school. The central component of these ministries is the Sunday Mixer during the 10:00 Education Hour in the Bernard Lounge. TFG meets on the first and third Sundays of the month and YFG meets on the second and fourth Sundays. All Mixer topics on any Sunday are open to all in the congregation, as well as any neighbors, friends or visiting newcomers.

Joint YFG/TFG Mixers, as well as joint YFG/TFG/toGather Mixers have been introduced to Family Ministry Sunday programming. While it's very important for members to feel connection, identity and trust with a select group, it is also essential that church members experience fellowship, unity of Christian purpose and spiritual growth together as the body of Christ.

YFG and TFG Mixers continue in the monthly tandem of education via topical speakers along with fellowship via open discussion of targeted topics.

YFG Mixers in 2011 have included "Meditation and Spirituality" led by Parish Nurse, Ann Gornik, review and discussion of the book, The Self-Aware Parent, by member Alicia Duell, review and discussion of early chapters of the book, Death by Suburb (two separate Mixers) by Kerry Forsythe, outside speakers on the topics of "Interfaith Marriage", the book The Five Love Languages, "Are You Crippling Your Kids with Happiness?", as well as Open Forums inclusive of scripture reading and prayer.

TFG Mixers in 2011 have included review and discussion of the book, The Primal Teen, by member Nancy Long, outside speakers on the topics of "Teens of Technology" (two separate speakers), "Risky Behavior Among Teens", "Recognizing Anxiety and Depression in Teens", as well as Open Forums. With a strong background in teen/parent education, Barb Barrett facilitated several TFG Mixer discussions and hosted educational speakers.

Joint YFG/TFG Mixers were held on the topics of "Female Bullying" by member, Barb Barrett, and "Are You Parenting Like a Caveman?" by outside speakers. A Joint YFG/TFG/2G Mixer was held on the topic of "10 Trends to Watch for Churchgoers" by Kerry Forsythe.

Family Ministry introduced new family programming in 2011 entitled "Friday Night at the Movies". During the months of January, February and March, parents and children were invited to share a meal of pizza and salad followed by a new release family film and popcorn. Children were invited to come in their pajamas and bring sleeping bags. The films were the original "Toy Story", "How to Train Your Dragon" and Disney's "Robin Hood". A scriptural context for each film was selected by Pastor Soren Flessen and Kerry Forsythe ("Toy Story": Ephesians 4:1-6, "How to Train Your Dragon": Mark 12:30-31, Disney's "Robin Hood": Luke 12:33). The scripture reference was followed by a pastor-led discussion with the children before the film about the Christian "life points" of the film. The *Bring It!* program was associated with the movie series. Families were asked to bring an item correlating with the film's theme ("Toy Story": small toy, "How to Train Your Dragon": toothbrushes and toothpaste, Disney's "Robin Hood": school supplies).

YFG hosted the second annual *Easter Egg Hunt* on Easter Sunday. Held on the Preschool Playground and attended by approximately 50-60 children, this event was a rousing success and very joyful for Grace children. Easter eggs contained both candy and small gifts reminding our children of the spiritual joy and victory of Easter.

Family Ministry also introduced a joint event with the Grace Library in June 2011 where children ages 3-7 were invited to come to the Library from 10:00-10:45 each Sunday for Story Time with the Grace librarians. Children were also encouraged to participate in the *Grace Summer Reading Program* entitled “God’s World, Our Stories”. This title was a Christian “take-off” on the Chicago Public Library summer reading challenge entitled “One World, Many Stories”. The goal was for children to select Christian children’s books from the library to read or have their parents read to them. A Reading Log was provided for children to return on subsequent Sundays for reward stickers and selection of new books. During this program, Grace welcomed professional storyteller, Dot Kane, who delighted the children.

YFG also hosted the second annual *YFG Outdoor Family Movie Night* in June 2011 on the Preschool Playground. The movie “Tangled” was viewed on the inflatable movie screen on a beautiful evening. As a service component, a DVD Donation Drive was held during this event for children’s hospitals.

Family Ministry held its second *Big Bible Giveaway* (BBG) on Reformation Sunday in October. The *Zonderkidz Children’s Bible* was given away to children ages birth to seven or the *NIV Adventure Bible* for children ages eight to twelve. Many Grace children have these Bibles from baptism or First Communion, however, the purpose of the BBG is to ensure that EVERY Grace child has his or her own Bible. In addition, *The Lutheran Study Bible* was also given to adults who did not have a Bible of their own. In 2011, Family Ministry gave away more adult than children’s Bibles.

Intergenerational programming also continued in 2011. The OPUS/YFG Mother-Child Supper took place in May for a second year. YFG mothers and children enjoyed fellowship with OPUS women while OPUS men prepared and served the meal. Following a delightful dessert, both children and adults alike enjoyed storyteller, Sue Black.

A new joint Family Ministry/WELCA event entitled the “Lutheran World Relief Baby Shower” took place in October. Throughout the preceding summer and early fall, folks were asked to donate a variety of items necessary to be included in the Lutheran World Relief (LWR) Baby Care Kits that WELCA facilitates annually. At the LWR shower, Baby Care Kits were assembled and secured by women and children. Following that, light snacks were served while adult women viewed a short movie produced by the Women of the ELCA entitled, “Bold Women”.

Ladies’ Nights Out continued in 2011 with a Spa-type event at Luv Nails in La Grange, a Dinner Club event, and dinner at Prasino and Palmer’s restaurants. *Couples’ Night Out* trailed off in 2011, but may return in 2012.

Family Ministry introduced a new social-spiritual small group experience for Family Ministry women entitled the *Family Ministry Women’s Book Group*. Three books were read including Eve: A Novel, Praying for Strangers and Heaven Is For Real. These small group experiences were hosted by Mrs. Cari Melby, Mrs. Marcy McKay and Mrs. Kelly Winters, respectively. Enjoyable fellowship and thoughtful discussion was enjoyed at each event. The *Women’s Book Group* also welcomed guests to the book discussions as invited by Grace members.

Men of YFG and TFG gathered together in January – April 2011 for a monthly basketball group called *Hoop Dreams*. Conceived by Pastor Soren Flessen and Kerry Forsythe, *Hoop Dreams* took place on the second Sunday of the month at the La Grange Recreation Center. In addition, men also gathered during the summer months of 2011 for intergenerational monthly golf outings. These gatherings gave rise to the development of a Men’s Ministry at Grace under the direction of Pastor Flessen and Brian Brown.

Family Ministry's bi-weekly E-Newsletter serves to announce Mixers, Family Ministry, YFG, TFG and toGather events, as well as to offer spiritual resources and service opportunities for couples and parents. The YFG Facebook page continues in order to announce events and Mixers via that media vehicle. The Family Ministry page on the Grace Web Site has also been expanded in order to better serve the technologically savvy demographic that is Grace Family Ministry, as well as attract potential new families to the community of Grace Lutheran Church.

Family Ministry continues to humbly pray for God's light and blessing upon its endeavors.

Respectfully submitted in Christ,
Kerry Forsythe
Coordinator of Family Ministry

Christian Education Reports

Sunday Church School

Are you ready to Akaloo? Our Sunday Church School students and teachers are. This is the 5th year our Pre 3 – 6th grade classes have used the web based AKALOO curriculum and our teachers really appreciate the flexibility and ease of working with this program. One of the great advantages of working with this program is the many updates and additions with new lesson plans and activity ideas they have made over the last couple of years, all available to us without the additional fees of purchasing new materials. Janet Kings continues to lead the opening time in the sanctuary with 10 minutes of song and prayer. The children look forward to learning a new song each month or how the church season affects the sanctuary decorations. Each Sunday School class will participate in worship again this year, for example they may lead a song, a prayer or a reading. Average weekly attendance increased 6% to an average of 90 students per week in 2011. This year, our annual Good News of Great Joy Christmas program took place during the 11:00 service for the first time in almost 20 years. The children led program, telling of the birth of Jesus, was as touching as in years past and the change of time was very well received by both families and the congregation. We are truly thankful for the wisdom, love and enthusiasm our Sunday School Teachers share with our children each week. This year's teachers include: Michelle Denboer, Jill Abraham, Debbie Granger, Cecily Kittridge, LeAnn Yerian, Jennifer Tosch, Tatjana Brown, Linda Rick, Emily Mahn, Linda Bareis, Pam Butters, Sharon Bork, Linell Vitale, Tara Fuller, Karen Nelson, Rosanell Deptula and Victor Cruz. We also extend a big thank you to our own Grace Youth, acting as classroom aides and co-teachers; Meghan Duffy, Katelyn Duffy, Stephanie King, Marisa Pater, Andrea Vetrone, Andrea Rick, and Julia Machnyk.

Under the dynamic leadership of John Lorenzen and Pastor Paul Moody, with special guest teacher Al Polich, the 7th and 8th grade confirmation students are enjoying spirited lessons about the Bible, Lutheran Traditions, Worship Practices, Faith Heroes and Faith Implications for Everyday life. The 22 students enrolled in the Confirmation Studies meet as large groups for lessons and then break into smaller groups for discussion. This group is utilizing the Here We Stand curriculum again this year.

Finally, thanks to Karen Janik and Dorothy Johnson for their time and talents in organizing and supporting our Sunday Church School program.

Report submitted by Karen Janik

Vacation Bible School

2011 marked one of the most successful Vacation Bible Schools in recent years. Buoyed by a strong and intentional community outreach strategy, Grace welcomed 142 children during the week of July 18-22, 2011. Approximately 2/3 of the participants were from other western suburban churches. This was due, in part, to the efforts of several Grace members who recruited participants from their neighborhood communities. In addition, 67 participants were from neighboring St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church. This ecumenical

liaison has proven to augment the spirit and energy of the week's events, as well as strengthen our community bond over teaching Christ's love to our children year round. The 2011 Vacation Bible School theme was "Inside and Upside Down on Main Street". The main characters "Miss Heidi Claire", "Justin Time" and "Chef Pierre Mon Fr'ere" were appealing vehicles by which to deliver five daily messages of God's love during the week: *Gratitude* (Matthew 20:1-16), *Compassion* (Luke 10:25-37), *Forgiveness* (Matthew 18:21-35), *Grace* (Luke 15:11:32), and *Faithfulness* (Luke 19:12-26).

Several important changes were instituted during the 2011 VBS to more positively affect the end-experience of the participants, as well as the volunteers. Instead of teachers delivering the daily message in the classroom, a Pastor-led Bible theater was held in the sanctuary with a team of adults and teens. This was extremely well-received by the children in terms of focus and attention as it delivered the daily message via upbeat, yet easy to understand skits. Class Leaders also felt less "pressure" to relate the daily message in the large group classroom setting. Snack Time, held in Fellowship Hall, was entitled "Brown Bag Bistro". Participants were served a snack by the Bistro Team that was related to the daily message while listening to a story by a team member "in character". Crafts were held in the classroom and facilitated by the Class Leaders and Leader Assistants. Music and Games were delivered in their usual high-spirited fashion headed by energetic and devoted Grace volunteer leaders. Finally, in order to maintain greater safety, as well as manage the substantial number of participants, VBS dismissal was held in student classrooms with written sign-out by parent or caregivers.

2011 VBS utilized over 80 volunteers and was facilitated by the Planning Team of Pastor Soren Flessen, Marcy McKay, Kerry Forsythe, Marilyn Campbell and Alice Oscarson. The Planning Team began its work in January and concluded in August. While planning the week-long event and recruiting volunteers was laborious and challenging, Grace Vacation Bible School continues to be an excellent, spirited way to open the doors of Grace Lutheran Church to the community in order to explore the Bible and life with Jesus.

Respectfully submitted in Christ,

Kerry Forsythe
Coordinator of Family Ministry

Grace Lutheran Preschool

Grace Lutheran Preschool continues to provide a high quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood education for children ages 3 to 5. We began our 44th year in the fall of 2011. Our play-based curriculum creates a learning place that is emotionally and physically safe and fun for all of our children. Our classrooms provide a haven for healthy play and learning. We are proud of the important "first step in education" that is offered at Grace Lutheran Preschool.

We have continued to feel the downturn of the economy in the enrollment at Grace this year. Although the morning preschool class offerings remain strong, we are very aware of budget constraints that accompany decreased enrollment. We continued the "Terrific Two's" parent/child class, now in its eleventh year and going strong. We offered one session this fall and had a full enrollment of 12 children. We anticipate a full enrollment for the six-

week spring session. The “Terrific Two’s” program offers an exciting and fun introduction to the preschool program at Grace for toddlers and parents alike.

We currently have 68 children enrolled in the program at Grace Lutheran Preschool: 30 three-year-olds, 26 four-year-olds, and 12 “Terrific Two’s.” Mail-in registration procedures are in process for the 2012-2013 school year, as approved by the Preschool Advisory Board at their September Board meeting. Registration for the 2012-2013 school year began January 1 and will continue until January 31. Registration for all classes will be processed on February 3 by random drawing, with priority given to Grace Lutheran Church members. We have had many inquiries regarding the preschool program at Grace for next year and anticipate a busy registration period.

We expanded the Parent’s Day Out program this year for children ages two through five (pre-kindergarten) from a three-month program held last year to a full school year program this year. Parent’s Day Out began in October and will continue through April on Fridays from 9:00 AM-1:00 PM. The lengthened schedule has been well-received by parents. In its third year, Parent’s Day Out continues to serve as an outreach program of Grace Lutheran Church. It provides children a warm, safe and nurturing atmosphere in which to explore, learn and grow in a group setting. The program is committed to meeting the needs of parents by offering quality child care in a Christian environment. We currently have approximately 10 children attending Parent’s Day Out on a weekly basis.

There are ten people on our preschool staff. Jane Cikanek and Lynne Blatchley continue to team-teach in the three-year-old program. Vicki Michaels and Laura Taylor returned this year to team-teach in the four’s program. Karen Niedermeyer joined the staff this year as a teacher in the four-year-old program. She team teaches with Susan Weisshaar. Virginia Franceschina returned as a Teaching Assistant Monday through Thursday mornings. There is flexibility in Virginia’s schedule which allows her to assist and substitute wherever and whenever she is needed. Bridgette Snyder teaches the “Terrific Two’s” program. Jane Cikanek and Bridgette Snyder team-teach in the Parent’s Day Out program. Dee Soukup provides care for siblings during the Terrific Two’s sessions. Carol Pardo returned as our preschool secretary on a part-time basis. Carol continues to strengthen the organization and administration of the preschool program. The enthusiasm and dedication of the preschool staff is a blessing to the students, parents, and to me, as director. It is through their combined efforts, along with the unfailing support of the congregation, the Preschool Advisory Board, and the preschool parents that we are able to look with confidence and excitement to the future at Grace Lutheran Preschool.

We are grateful for the many ways the congregation continues to support the preschool. Our curriculum and classrooms are enriched through the collections of Campbell product labels and General Mills box tops for education. Giving Tree and “love gifts” also benefited the preschool greatly. We thank you not only for the help you have given in all of the above, but also for the interest shown and willingness to participate with us in this important mission of the church.

We continue to update our preschool classrooms as a result of faithful tuition payments, prudent money management, and the generosity of the preschool community at large. We continue to enjoy the preschool playground. The warm fall days allowed us many opportunities to play outside on the playground. We look forward to the beauty that awaits us in the spring, as we watch the flowering of the tulip bulbs planted by the four-year-old classes last fall.

As can be seen by the numbers below, Grace Lutheran Preschool reaches out into the community, ministering to children from many church backgrounds and to some that have no

church affiliation. The entire staff is strengthened by your prayers as we go about the all-important task of Early Childhood Education.

Children enrolled in Grace Lutheran Preschool for the 2011-2012 school year come from the following communities and churches:

| | | | |
|-----------------|----|-----------------------|----|
| La Grange | 18 | GRACE | 10 |
| La Grange Park | 24 | Catholic | 32 |
| Brookfield | 7 | Lutheran | 3 |
| Westchester | 2 | Methodist | 1 |
| Western Springs | 2 | Congregational | 1 |
| Countryside | 1 | Christian Reformed | 1 |
| Riverside | 1 | Non-denominational | 3 |
| | | No church affiliation | 7 |

The members of the Preschool Advisory Board are as follows:

Pastor Saïd Ailabouni

Anne Hall – Church Financial Administrator

Susan Gersch – Church Council Representative

Art Grundke – Advisory Board Chairman/Church Representative-at-Large

Valerie Kaden – Advisory Board Secretary

Christina Nicholaus – 4's Parent Representative

Abbey Helmetag – 4's Parent Representative

Jill Abraham – 4's Parent Representative

Birgit Hillmer – 3's Parent Representative

Becky Rulich – 3's Parent Representative

Carol Pardo – Preschool Secretary

Lynne Blatchley – Preschool Director

Each year we have a new yearlong theme at Grace Lutheran Preschool. This helps us to focus our creative thinking while planning curriculum and enrichment for the children.

Our theme this year is "ABC's on Parade." We are recognizing letters and sounds as we explore the wonders of God's world. R.W. Emerson said, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." There is definitely enthusiasm at Grace Lutheran Preschool.

Report submitted by Lynne Blatchley, Grace Lutheran Preschool Director

Archives Committee

This has been an important year for Archives Committee members. We completed a 21-month preparation of the history of Grace's 125 years. For this project we were able to read the church's original Constitution, records and board minutes, which had recently been translated into English from Swedish.

We also reviewed the 20 "Legacies of Grace" videotaped interviews with long-time church members that had been recorded in the 1990s. Other parishioners and former members added their personal recollections for our work. Personal correspondence of pastors played another valuable addition to our research as did annual reports. Archives Committee

members also received help from the La Grange Historical Society and from the ELCA Archives in searching for any articles about Grace that were in their files.

"Did you know?" excerpts from Grace's rich history began appearing in the bulletins in April and are continuing through the anniversary. They also appear in Pastor Said's weekly e-mails to the congregation.

We again thank Kathryn Knops for being the heart and soul of this committee. Other members are Laurel Poe Gallagher, Ellen Glista, Betty Lundy, Grace Puls and Lyn Anderson Rains.

Report submitted by Lyn Anderson Rains

Church Library

The Grace Church Library is a branch of the Christian Education Committee and serves as a resource center for all members of the congregation.

We are currently a member of The National Church Library Association and the Chicagoland Chapter of the national organization. Our library benefits from these two organizations through promotional ideas, book reviews in the National quarterly journals and the semi-annual workshops of the local group.

Our Chicagoland Chapter holds two meetings (workshops) a year. Grace Puls, Natalie Johnson, Nancy Bringman and Rita Scanlan attended workshops this year.

The budget granted to the library was cut last year and we continue to have \$1000.00 of the budget to keep the collection up to date. Some 252 items were added this year and 154 of those were donations from congregation members. We were very fortunate to receive a very large collection of books from Carl Johnson. Most of them were good additions to the collection and those we could not use, we found a place. We are always happy to receive material, if it is current and appropriate. Last year DVD's were added to the collections. We added a few more this year. Our present collection of VHS videos will be weeded again this year. Any cassette not circulated in 10 years will be withdrawn since we need the shelf space; 72 were withdrawn this year.

The library sponsored reading program continues this year with 12 members participating. This program runs from October through May. A series of books are selected from the non-fiction, biography, and fiction collection. These are circulated through the group so that each group reads one of the 8 selections during the year.

The software for our computer was purchased back in the '90's. Resourcemat is the software we are currently using and the company (Jaywil Software Development Inc.) has told us they are discontinuing the support for the version we are using. To have support for our software we will have to upgrade to version 3.0 from the 2.0 we presently own. I hope this will be accomplished with some expenditure some time in 2012.

Unfortunately the circulation for 2011 went down again this year. Even circ of the CD's and videos are down. Our library is a rich source of spiritual enrichment but the congregation just hasn't realized what they are missing. We do have two book trucks placed in the two narthexes however I feel their presence is not large enough to draw attention. We have noticed that the books on these trucks tend to go missing. Please do continue to read the books on display but do check them out (Sign the book card and place the card in the pocket)!!!

It has been suggested that additional displays be placed around the church. Several books related to teens can be in the “Café” and for the Young Family group parenting titles can be placed in the Bernard Lounge. I will look for permission to put a display in both these places.

Natalie Johnson is working on a project that should help our Sunday school teachers. She is adding subject headings to all the Easy books in the card catalog that were never processed in that manner.

The staff schedule for Sundays was changed this summer. We have staff present from 9:00am to 11:00am. We do not have enough volunteers to cover the previous shifts and the number of patrons does not warrant the additional time.

The staff continues to contribute their time to our mission. The staff for 2011 was Nancy Bringman, Nancy Horacek, Dorothy Johnson, Natalie Johnson, Bernadine O’Connor, Lyn Rains, Rita Scanlan, Sue Tellinghuisen and Grace Puls. Bernadine O’Connor and Dorothy Johnson were able to retire from the library staff. We truly appreciate the time they gave to us over the years.

The staff is always willing to help church school teachers or any congregation member research a subject with materials in the library.

The library is open when the building is open and staffed with volunteers on Sundays from 9:00am to 11:00am and on Thursday mornings from 9:00am to 12 noon.

Submitted by Grace Puls

CIRCULATION STATISTICS 2011

| | ADULT BOOKS | | YOUTH BOOKS | | Easy Books |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| | Non-fiction | Fiction | Non-fiction | Fiction | |
| | Totals | | | | |
| 2010 | 316 | 146 | 46 | 37 | 188 |
| | 727 | | | | |
| 2011 | 273 | 127 | 20 | 0 | 142 |
| | 604 | | | | |
| | NON-BOOK MATERIAL | | | | |
| | Magazines & Pamphlets | | CD's | Audio Cass. | Videos & DVD's |
| | Totals | | | | |
| | | | | | Adult Youth |
| 2010 | 17 | | 47 | 6 | 75 41 |
| | 186 | | | | |
| 2011 | 15 | | 39 | 2 | 46 35 |
| | 137 | | | | |
| GRAND TOTAL | 741 | | | | |

BREAKDOWN OF THE COLLECTION

| BOOKS | 2010 | WITHDRAWN | ADDED | 2011 |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----------|-------|--------------|
| Non-fiction | 2114 | 185 | 142 | 2071 |
| Fiction | 438 | 9 | 28 | 422 |
| Youth Non-fiction | 220 | 8 | 12 | 236 |
| Youth Fiction | 436 | 9 | 7 | 434 |
| Easy | 511 | 73 | 28 | 466 |
| LARGE PRINT | | | | |
| Non-fiction | 32 | 0 | 0 | 32 |
| Fiction | 19 | 2 | 0 | 17 |
| TOTAL | 3,770 | | | 3,678 |
| NON-BOOK MATERIALS | | | | |
| CD's | 464 | 1 | 10 | 473 |
| Art | 44 | 0 | 0 | 44 |
| Audio-Oral | 60 | 0 | 2 | 60 |
| Video-VHD-Adult | 181 | 46 | 0 | 145 |
| Video-DVD-Adult | 62 | 0 | 3 | 65 |
| Video-VHS-Youth | 180 | 21 | 0 | 159 |
| Video-DVD-Youth | 42 | 0 | 17 | 59 |
| TOTAL | 1033 | | | 1005 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 4,683 | | | |

Evangelism/Fellowship Ministries

Our Evangelism/Fellowship ministries at Grace Lutheran Church seek to foster the efforts of GLC to proclaim the Good News of Christ's saving grace, invite people to grow in faith, and welcome all into the mission and ministries of GLC.

In fulfilling our mission, we look after our prayer teams, the reception of new members, *Dinner for 8 (or 9)*, Coffee Hour servers, the welcome tables, publicity, and devotional materials.

A prayer team continues to pray in the chapel every Sunday morning. Volunteers pray for those on our prayer list and support those who come into the chapel to pray. Also, there are those who will pray confidentially and immediately when notified via email.

Nancy Long leads a team to organize *Dinner for 8(or 9)*. Members and friends gather at GLC member homes for fellowship and community.

Ellen Glista and Marilyn Campbell coordinate the coffee hour teams, which provide coffee, cookies, and other treats in the fellowship hall during the Sunday ten o'clock hour. This ministry of hospitality is part of the welcoming atmosphere of our church.

Diane Merrion maintains our supply of our colorful, engaging brochure to introduce visitors to GLC. Please distribute these booklets to all guests.

A major focus of the E/F Team is to receive and shepherd new members. Almost sixty new members joined the congregation in 2011 in four separate classes. Joyce Nemece and her team assisted the pastoral staff in conducting new member classes, assigning shepherds, and organizing and hosting new member celebrations.

Submitted by Pastor Susan Gerow

Health and Wellness Ministry

The Grace Lutheran Health and Wellness Program mission is to minister to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of their members. It is in recognizing the interface of these needs that all Health and Wellness programming will be based. The Parish Nurse interacts with and advises the volunteers.

Thank you to the following volunteers: Barbara Barrett RN, Susan Busse RN, Sheila Cusack RN, Kathryn Knops, Leah Lowery RN, Deon Schoenheider RN, Susan Tellinghuisen RN, Cathy Thoss and Meribeth Tooke. Thank you to Charles Bareis MD and Glen Glista MD for their professional consultations and contributions.

Programs and opportunities provided by the Health and Wellness Program in 2011 included:

- Adult Education Forum: "Day to Day Challenges for Someone with Dementia"
- A Lenten Spiritual Retreat: "A Lenten Journey with Prayer and Meditation"
- Four Blood Pressure Screenings: 88 blood pressures taken
- April Blood Drive: 20 units donated
- Finding Ways to a Healthier Lifestyle Series:
 - Sharing Your New Year Healthy Tip Resolution
 - Everyone's Guide to A Healthy Heart
 - Mediation and Guided Imagery Presentation

- Four Essentials of Health and Wellness and Ten Steps to Longevity
- Sharing Your Favorite Healthy Recipe
- Hosted Health Screening Assessment Program an Advocate Health Care Program jointly held with The First Congregational Church of Western Springs: 28 Grace Lutheran participants and 25 First Congregational participants
- Mental Health Awareness Week:
 - Organized a resource table providing literature, pamphlets, brochures and community resources on mental health.
 - Coordinated special prayers at worship service expressing the concern about mental health issues that touch lives of our families, friends and loved ones.
- TOPS (Taking Pounds Off Sensibly) weekly meetings
- Two influenza immunization clinics: 58 immunizations provided

Our goals for 2012 will be to continue to nurture the mind, body and spirit through sponsoring programming with the Adult Education Committee and “Finding Ways to A Healthier Lifestyle” series, providing blood pressure screenings, an annual blood drive, an annual health screening assessment program, two influenza clinics and weekly TOPS meetings.

Report submitted by: Ann Gornik, RN, MSN, FCN Advocate Parish Nurse

Stephen Ministry

Jesus said, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” Stephen Ministers faithfully obey this commandment. They are members of our congregation who are good listeners, full of faith, trustworthy, compassionate, and agents of Christ. They are trained to listen, support, and pray with people who are going through trying times. Stephen Ministers give and receive the love of God by means of one-on-one caring relationships that are kept confidential.

Seven new Stephen Ministers were trained in the past year. They are Sue Bloecks, Linda Bornhoeft, Dan Hermes, Dorothy Johnson, Jeff McKay, Rebecca Stigge, and Susan Walton. Afterwards, Dan Hermes went on to receive additional training as a Stephen Ministry Leader.

Members who received training in past years and who served in 2011 are Marilyn Campbell, Debbie Granger, Art Grundke, Anne Hall, Greg Held, Nancy Jarrick, Natalie Johnson, Missy Kopp, Denise Krell, Gene Naucas, Joyce Nemece, Lorrie Nicholaus, Deon Schoenhider, and Gladys Schroeder. The Stephen Leaders have been Mary Vann, Marian Lynch, Dan Hermes, and Dave Johnson with publicity help from Bob Resch. Pastor Gerow provides pastoral support and guidance.

It is with thankfulness and also some regret that we announce that Mary Vann has retired as a Stephen Ministry Leader this year. She had served for over twenty years in that capacity. We miss her leadership and dedication to this program of one-on-one Christian caring.

Stephen Ministers meet monthly for supervision and continuing education. Some of the continuing education presentations in 2011 were Ann Gornik leading a guided meditation; Betty Chaggaris leading a conversation about welcoming those with mental illness; Kerry Forsythe filling us in on YFG ministries; and Pastor Susan presenting a session on boundaries as a Stephen Minister.

Please keep the Stephen Ministry program in your prayers as we move into our twenty-second year. If you or someone you know is in need of a Stephen Minister, please talk to one of the leaders or one of the pastors.

Report submitted by Dave Johnson

Helping Hands and Hearts of Grace

HHH has continued as an outreach ministry of Grace focused on helping members with short term needs as requested. We were happy to provide over a dozen meals and several rides to individuals who were experiencing health situations or personal losses. During late summer/early fall, we asked the congregation to volunteer to provide a meal or service just once or twice per year and we were pleased to see the large response by members. We now have a longer list of over 95 individuals who are willing to help those who have needs within our church family with a meal, with a ride to church, with a visit to home or hospital, and feel more prepared to handle requests as they arise. As new families join Grace, we hope to include them in both our volunteer base and our outreach efforts.

Report submitted by Diane Merrion

Older Adult Committee

Our Mission: To work with our older adult population in the areas of spiritual life, worship, education, recreation, exercise, health needs, and transportation.

The Older Adult Program continues to be a vital part of the life of Grace Lutheran Church. Thanks to the many people who served on the committee to help make the program possible. The committee included: Klaus Bloecks, Art Grundke, Al Mungai, Bob Resch, Meribeth Tooke, and Cindy Nissen. Gladys Schroeder and Grace Puls served on the luncheon committee. Thanks, too, to the many who always pitched in and helped where needed.

We held the following Older Adult (OPUS) luncheons this year. We averaged about thirty to fifty people at each luncheon.

- January 12 was our annual soup luncheon. Heather Broudakis sang songs of Rosemary Clooney.
- February 9 was a Valentine party. Megan Wells Skunk enthralled us with love stories.
- March 9 luncheon was held following the Ash Wednesday service. Only a simple lunch was served. There was no program.
- April 13 followed the Lenten service. The program was given by Cindy Nissen, RN on “Chocolate? Nuts? Coffee? Wine? ...Good for You?”
- May 11 featured beef paprika and dirt pudding. Bob Resch, master gardener, presented a program on “Wicked Plants”.
- June 8 featured a “surprise luncheon”. Bert Kettinger, Bass/Baritone sang.
- July 13 we once again celebrated Christmas in July. A festive luncheon was prepared despite a black out. Gifts were given to each participant.

- August 10 we held our first annual cookout. Jane Reeder shared Mandala artistry with us.
- September 14 we had do-t-yourself sandwiches. Liz Mlcoch presented a program of lifelong fitness.
- October 12 we feasted on Bill's roasted chicken. Larry Bernach regaled us with laughter as he presented "The Funniest Comedians of the 40's and 50's."
- November 9 we had another surprise luncheon. Jackie Raschke from the Birches presented the program, "Memory Matters".
- December 14 we had our special Christmas luncheon with Janet Kings leading the Advent Service and carol singing. We also made Christmas ornaments for the Fellowship Hall Christmas tree.

As you can see, we have a variety of meals and programs. Come and join us.

We once again held two COD classes at Grace. We held the class *Victorian Paradox* in the spring and *Before 1776* in the fall. The classes were again about fifty-fifty Grace members to community members.

This year, on the last Sunday in May, we once again celebrated *The Gift of Years* Sunday lifting up our Older Adults. Natalie Johnson, Al Mungai, Betty Garapolo, Margie Teslenko, and Lilly Schaber shared their faith journey stories with the congregation. We invited our Older Adults with personal invitations and offered rides to attend the service.

Our Older Adults continued as prayer partners with the eighth grade confirmation students. Several of our Older Adult prayer partners were guests at the confirmation dinner in September. We were also saddened by the deaths of four of our prayer partners: Bill Dobias, Bill Maxwell, Einar Cannelin, and Dirk Wesselius. We also were secret pals to those members of the Mission Trip. We held a luncheon on August 6 and heard about the Mission Trip.

The Adult Vacation Bible School was held the week of July 18-21 from six-thirty to eight-thirty p.m. This year we focused on the parables of Jesus. The first session was held at the St. Francis food pantry. Each of our pastors plus Ann Gornik led a session. An average of twenty adults attended.

Our biggest new venture this year was the birth of the OPUS newsletter under the direction of Bob Resch. It featured information about happenings at Grace, plus columns by Pastor Said, Ann Gornik, Grace Puls, Klaus Bloecks, WELCA and others and included bits of entertaining interest. It was mailed to all those members 60 and over and was an instant success. Thanks to all who helped make this possible.

Klaus Bloecks continues to tape most events at Grace. All the DVDs and tapes may be checked out. We continue to keep in touch with our Older Adults through cards, phone calls and visits. Please continue to keep our ministry in your prayers as we reach out to the older members of our Grace community and beyond.

Providing recordings of worship and other key events at Grace continued to improve through the year, for shut-ins and anyone unable to attend. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the large team participating in the various tasks involved: Soundboard monitors, Ushers, Bill Gerow, the extended Scanlan family, and of course Joe O'Connor. This year we have worked most of the bugs out of the system, and only one sermon was missed because of technical problems. Beyond posting audio recordings of sermons on the Church's web site, so members can listen in anywhere in the world that offers access to the Internet. This past year we have added video recordings as well. All of the 125th Anniversary Lecture Series presentations are

available for those who missed them, or would just like to view them again. The December 11, 2011, Lessons and Carols was our first video recording of a worship service posted on Grace's Web site. Expect more of this in the future, as logistics are much simpler than producing and distributing DVD's, especially for our "snowbirds" and vacationers.

Until further notice, however, all worship and other recordings will still be produced to DVD, and made available in the bookcase outside the Parish Nurse Office. Congregation input for improvement, and volunteers for expansion of our efforts are always welcome.

Our youth ministry will sell DVD's that include both a video recording of the SCS Christmas Pageant, (Dec 8, '11) and also a slide show of some of the wonderful pictures taken by Matt Osegard, at that event. Funds received will be used to help support the youth group.

This coming Fall will mark the 5th anniversary of Older Adults coordination of DVD recordings at Grace. Thanks again to all who made this possible.

Natalie Johnson, Older Adult Coordinator (OPUS)

Retiree Outings in 2011

January 27 – Trip to the Domes in Milwaukee for a light/glass music show

February 16 – Drury Lane for lunch and play “Spamalot”

March 8 – Trip to Flower Show at Navy Pier with lunch at Berghoffs

April 7 – Trip to Andover, IL, the birthplace of the Swedish Lutheran Church in America with lunch at the Andover Café, housed in the Historical Inn

May 18 – Trip to “Opera in Focus” cancelled due to flooding of the theater

June 28 – Trip to Milwaukee Art Museum to see the Emperor’s Private Paradise treasure with lunch at Mader’s

August 3 – Ball Seed Experimental Gardens with lunch at Pal Joy’s

September 8 – Tinker Museum and Gardens in Rockford with Smorgasbord at Stockholm Inn. Made a quick stop at Emmanuel Lutheran Church

October 14 – Trip to Noble Horse Theater cancelled due to lack of horsemen

November 15 – Lunch at Triton College

December 9 – Trip to Holy Trinity Cathedral with lunch at Old L’Viv

Property Report

2011 was a demanding and productive year for the property team. Early in the year, the group met to review property management activities and needs. After leading this group for many years, John Westberg encouraged members to consider a new team model and offered his insight and guidance as needed for the future. Members Meribeth Tooke and Ed Campbell worked together to produce an inventory of furnishings and equipment and a task list for next steps. All members worked together to make steady progress on regular maintenance and special projects both large and small. In addition to master site plan collaboration, some of the 2011 property highlights were:

Asbestos remediation for basement pipes to enable sump repairs: This basement area project involved a repair for sump pump fixing drainage concern that could not be under-taken without remediation of asbestos. This small remediation and repair was

completed successfully, although a significant area of asbestos remains in the area and will need to be removed in future years.

Attic access stairway repaired: One of the many repair projects that Al Scanlan and George Bringman completed this year was to repair a long-term problem with a motorized cable-drive attic stair. After assessing the problem they realized that a faulty installation many years before was the problem. Their structural modifications and cable replacements will assure many more years of operation.

Building use reimbursement process implemented.

With input from Grace Treasurer, Gary Hill, a method was developed to seek reimbursement for building use costs from by outside groups that require regular use of the Facility. A new group, Spirito Singers, now contributes \$1510.00 annually. Agape Ringers, a long-time user of the facility, contributed \$1550.00 for 2011. Future groups will be advised of this reimbursement requirement as appropriate.

Electronic Facility Schedule fully implemented. The new schedule can be viewed online with meeting space and resources requests via www.gracelutheran-lg.org. The schedule gives clear daily guidance regarding church events and is a now key resource for custodial and office staff to support the use of the Grace facility by members and outside groups.

Landscape and exterior improvements: Staff and members worked together to maintain gardens, remove old bushes and weeds. New bushes, many donated or propagated perennials and sod were installed. Parking lot blocks re-installed and secured in place with sealcoat and re-stripe planned for 2012. Roofs and gutters inspected and repaired and all wooden entrance doors were refurbished.

Kensington Avenue Parsonage House: A variety of much-needed repairs were made this year. Leaks to the first floor were fixed, plumbing-water and sewer line repairs were completed and rotted floor/window removal in the 2nd floor bathroom required repairs that were funded by the use of emergency funds. Bathroom fixtures were not replaced, but new ventilation, complete retiling, upgraded electrical, and complete outside wall insulation and stucco were done. Plaster/repaint to affected walls and new sump pump were required.

Vendor agreements clarified: Agreements for HVAC, Fire Safety and snow removal were modified to improve service, pricing or discounts.

Also during 2011, the property group met with Pr. Said and the council president Sara Harris to consider how best to serve together with the new church administrator. The goal was to form a team of members who are keenly interested in property issues, allowing them to help define property management categories and priorities, and to support annual budgeting. In this new model, property team will recruit and lead other church member volunteers to contribute relevant skills for specific projects or categories of activity. We hope this structure will allow us to engage many more church members for property initiatives and encourage more of you to offer insight about property projects that need attention.

The 2011 property team: Meribeth Tooke, George Bringman, Ed Campbell, Al Ewert, Al Scanlan, Jim Granger, Sheila Reed.

Submitted by Sheila Reed, Grace Administrator

Social Ministry Committee

“For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

Rebuilding Together Metro Chicago

Once again Grace Lutheran Church took part in a successful National Rebuilding Day campaign in April. With your help, we were able to donate \$2,100.00 to sponsor the rehabilitation of Ms. Lisa Tyree’s home in Bellwood. Twenty-two volunteers from Grace Lutheran Church painted, replaced appliances, installed new light fixtures, washed windows, installed hand rails, and built a wheelchair ramp. Lisa was very pleased with the work we did. Thank you for contributing to and volunteering in this year’s Rebuilding Together Metro Chicago project.

World Hunger Crop Walk

In early October, a Church World Services sponsored CROP Walk was held in the LaGrange/Western Springs area. Several hundred persons from our community walked and raised almost \$20,000 total. From Grace Lutheran Church, Elaine Hooven, Mary Klonowski, and Pastor Susan walked, raising \$1,233. Elaine accepted a special pin in recognition of funds raised. The money goes to several agencies working in partnership to eradicate hunger and poverty close to home and around the world.

Bethel New Life Christmas Sharing

Luke 3:11 “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none.” *Luke 3:11*
Grace Lutheran Church participated in Bethel New Life Christmas Sharing. This year we had a total of 45 Grace families and friends of Grace families participate in the Bethel Christmas Sharing Program. In excess of 240 gifts were donated for adults and children, as well as 7 gifts for seniors. Additional Grace families provided gift cards, gift wrap, and other gift items, as well as their time to help load and deliver the gifts and work in the Christmas store. A total of 26 Grace volunteers worked in the Bethel Christmas Store, and again we had to turn away several volunteers because they had more help than needed. Overall, Grace helped to contribute to a successful program where 3200 people in total were blessed through the help of 420 volunteers, 5,918 gifts, and 22 bicycles.

Below is the thank you note from Sara Spoonheim, Senior Director of External Relations, Bethel New Life:

This week, God’s love became incarnate at Bethel in winter coats and baby dolls, in crock pots and basketballs, in shoppers and in volunteers. This is Christmas at its best. We are overwhelmed with gratitude to each of you for being part of it.

Want to hear a few of my favorite stories from our second Christmas Store?

A volunteer gift wrapper asked each parent, Do you want the gift tag to say it's from Santa or from you? Over and over, the parents said, "Write Mom" or "Write Mom & Dad". They were so proud to choose each gift and they wanted their kids to know it.

One shopper had more gifts than she could buy so she put back a box of dishes. She was about to return a Lego set for her son when the shopper behind her offered to pay for it instead.

We let our shoppers know that every dollar they spent will underwrite a college tour for West Side students this spring. When we asked if they wanted to donate a dollar or two to the fund, more than half said yes. They had donated \$455.80 by late Saturday morning.

Seventeen hours, 420 volunteers, 5,918 gifts, 22 bicycles, 3,200 people blessed. But that last number doesn't even include each of us who were blessed to be part of the Christmas Store.

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

BEDS Plus

Grace Lutheran Church continued its volunteer effort in support of the BEDS Plus organization this year, which is committed to provide overnight shelter and assist homeless people in the LaGrange area to become self-sufficient. Grace members volunteer in hospitality capacity one evening a month at one of the BEDS Plus sites in the western suburbs. Some members volunteer from six thirty p.m. to eleven p.m. while others volunteer from eleven p.m. to three a.m. or later. Another group of Grace members volunteers by providing lunch for fifteen once a month at another Beds Plus site. A third group shops for food and then meets at church once a month to prepare and also deliver dinner to a BEDS Plus site. Other Grace members continue to volunteer in a variety of ways with the BEDS Plus organization.

Food Pantry

Grace continues to gather food and other items for donation to the St. Francis Church food pantry.

Bread for the World - Offering of Letters

The Social Ministry Committee was again pleased to host an Offering of Letters in June, urging reform of US foreign assistance so it is more efficient in reducing global hunger. This includes reform to portions of the Foreign Assistance Act which were written in 1961. One hundred forty-four letters were sent to Washington D.C. Bread for the World notes over the last decade people of faith have persuaded their elected officials to triple funding for our nation's foreign assistance programs. This has benefited the people of Haiti and Liberia for example. This offering was accomplished with support and education provided by our partner ministry, Bread for the World. Thank you to all for your advocacy on behalf of the hungry in this world.

Refugee Task Force

During 2011 the Task Force worked under the direction of RefugeeOne of Chicago to help the Cung family relocate to Chicago from a refugee settlement in Burma. The Cungs are a Burmese Christian family, 6 in all: husband, wife & 4 daughters ages 12, 9, 2, 1. They had lived in a refugee camp in Malaysia since late Oct 2007.

The Task Force's first project was a forum, held on January 2, 2011. Keynote speakers were Greg Wangerin, Executive Director of RefugeeOne, and Yadu, a refugee. Wangerin spoke about the services of RefugeeOne and the courage, resilience and renewed hope of the refugees served by the RefugeeOne organization. Yadu spoke about his personal experiences living in a refugee camp with his family, the process of coming to the United States with them and making the transition to live in Chicago. The Grace Youth Group attended the forum along with congregants. Both Mr. Crowley and Yadu made presentations about refugees to the children at the Children's Service.

An information table was staffed for the four weeks of January, where Refugee Task Force members answered questions and collected household items. During January, monetary donations for food, furniture and rent went directly into the offering plates. LOGOS also collected items during the collection period, and electronic notification about the project was sent directly to the Sunday School parents. Under the direction of the Grace Refugee Task Force and with the leadership of its pastor, Rev. Erin Clausen, St. James Lutheran Church of Western Springs also collected household items and monetary donations from its congregants during December 2011.

The committee thanks everyone for the donated household items and an amazing \$2,210 collected to help defray the cost of the family's four months. All the items requested were donated! A family receives monetary support before their independence after only 4 months in the States.

In March, two members of the Refugee Task Force attended the Annual Fundraiser for RefugeeOne. There they were delighted by the words of the inspirational speaker, Mawi Asgedom, a former refugee and Harvard and Kellogg graduate.

In May, when the Refugee Task Force learned that they would be sponsoring the Cung family, the task force organized a furniture drive and secured bedroom, living room and kitchen furniture for the two bedroom apartment in Chicago. During May and June, the Task Force delivered the household goods to the apartment, prepared the apartment for the new family by unpacking, organizing, putting furniture together, making beds, stocking shelves and pantries.

In June, members of the Task Force welcomed the Cung family when they arrived at Chicago O'Hare Airport and took them to their new home. In July a drive for infant items was conducted. Task Force members delivered the infant items to the Cung family and took them grocery shopping, which helped orient the family to their new neighborhood.

During the autumn, a very successful clothing and coat drive was held. Collected coats were delivered to RefugeeOne. Winter clothing and outerwear were taken directly to the delighted Cung family to prepare the Cungs for the cold Chicago winters.

The Refugee Ministry Task Force of Grace would like to thank you and our partners for making Grace's fourth refugee sponsorship ministry campaign a success.
(Refugee information submitted by Denise Krell)

Future Projects

The Social Ministry Committee is always open to exploring future projects that can be

spearheaded by the group.

Report submitted by Mary Ann Mestemaker

Stewardship Committee

During 2011, a recurring theme in the Stewardship Committee Meetings is recognition of how Grace Lutheran Church is blessed by how generously members and friends give of their talents, time and financial resources to sustain and grow its broad ministries.

- The amount pledged for 2011 exceeded the amount pledged in 2010 by 8.8%.

The Stewardship Committee focused on the following new and continuing projects in 2011:

- Time and Talents Survey - an online version of the Time and Talent Survey has been developed using the congregation's ACS computer system.
- Additional electronic communications on Stewardship topics including giving level updates and educating members about electronic options for giving and pledging.
- 125th Anniversary Gifts – The Stewardship Committee discussed its support for the Anniversary Committee's proposal that the congregation challenge itself to increase benevolence giving by raising \$125,000 over the two year anniversary celebration time period. This initiative was ultimately included as one of the components of the *Grace 2020 Vision* project proposed in early fall 2011.
- The Stewardship Committee members were invited to participate in meetings with potential fundraising consultants. The James Company and Kairos and Associates both made presentations to a group of congregational representatives in June and July. As a result, a decision was made to work with Kairos and Associates and the *Grace 2020 Vision* project was begun.
- The 2012 Annual Stewardship Campaign included some new components:
 - Grace Lutheran Church is... - Members were invited to complete questions about what Grace Lutheran Church means to them. Responses were posted in the Fellowship Hall during October and November.
 - A narrative budget was provided that described how budgeted funds are used to support Grace's missions and ministries.

Stewardship Committee members: Susan Gersch, Gary Hill, Sharon Katterman, Todd Melby, Rachel Settlage, and Pastor Saïd

Women of Grace Report

The Women of Grace (WELCA) is for all women of Grace Church to meet in fellowship and learning. In the wording of the constitution of WELCA, we are "a community of Women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit."

Thursday is generally the Women of Grace day at Grace. Gatherings are generally held on the first Thursday of the month. The following events were held in 2011 :

February 3 luncheon cancelled due to the snowstorm

March 3 Luncheon (Miriam Circle) and program: a video "From our Hearts With Love" about Lutheran World Relief

May 5 Mother/Child dinner prepared and served by the men's group with program by the story teller Sue Black

May 16-17 Grace Women's Retreat at LOMC with program and worship provided by Pastor Susan Gerow and Susan Walton

October 6 (Martha Circle) A tea and vintage fashion Show by the Gingham Tree resale shop of Good Samaritan Hospital

December 1 "A Taste of Christmas" Scandinavian Luncheon provided by Women of Grace Board with help from the circles; an entertaining musical program on piano and organ presented by Alan Tripp and Scott Griffin from Moody Bible Institute.

Board meetings were held on the second Thursday of the month. Many thanks to the officers who served in 2011!

Co-presidents: Gladys Schroeder and Debbie Granger

Recording secretary: Betty Lou Miller

Corresponding Secretary: position currently open

Treasurer: Joyce Nemeč

Program: Natalie Johnson

Fellowship: Elaine Albright*

Service: Debbie Granger

Prayer Shawl Ministries: Cathy Thoss

Church Women United representative: Sue Bloecks

Martha Circle representative: Lois Angstadt

*Funeral luncheons were organized by Elaine Albright and served by Women of Grace board members and other volunteers.

WELCA sponsored the SERRV crafts and Fair Trade sale on Saturday, November 4 and Sunday November 5, managed by Natalie Johnson with help from the WELCA board and circle members. (SERRV and Fair Trade are partners of Lutheran World Relief.) Sales totaled \$3,175. Grace WELCA received a small percentage for managing the sale. Many thanks to Natalie for all the time and energy she devoted to this activity.

Circles are small groups meeting once a month on the third Thursday for study, service and fellowship. All women of Grace are welcome to take an active part in any circle.

*Ruth meets in homes at 9:15 AM Gladys Schroeder, president

Miriam meets at church at 1:00 PM Grace Puls

Martha meets at church at 7:30 Lois Angstadt president

*Beginning in the fall Ruth Circle joined the afternoon circle meeting at church. At one or more meetings during the year the women's circles assembled LWR kits from items provided by circle members and items donated by members of the congregation.

The fourth Thursday is an opportunity for service. Projects DAY and PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRIES are the service arms of Women of Grace. There is no membership; all women (and interested men) are welcome to participate. New volunteers and visitors are always very welcome!

PROJECTS DAY meets the fourth Thursday of the month beginning at 9 AM and ending around 3 PM. Coffee and refreshments are provided.

In addition to the regularly scheduled Projects Days, the ladies added several extra sessions. During 2011 sixteen people attended Projects Day at least once. Many quilt tops, baby sweaters for layettes, school bags, receiving blankets, and kimonos were made at home.

Kits containing fabric and directions for quilts tops, tote bags and school bags are available at the stairwell next to the chapel. Yarn, needles and directions for knit items are also available.

On November 1 and 18 deliveries were made to the Lutheran World Relief collection site in Elgin, Illinois including:

- 73 quilts
- 117 school kits
- 124 health kits
- *126 layettes/baby care kits

*This is one more than our goal of 125 for our anniversary celebration. Thanks to all who donated Layette/Baby Care kit items and gave donations for the purchase of other items needed to complete the kits. Your generosity was amazing! Kits were put together at the church picnic as well as at a Baby shower. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thanks to all who made items at home as well as well to all those who faithfully came to Projects Days!

To help Lutheran World Relief with the cost of shipping quilts and kits to other countries, two lovely quilts made by Grace Pierson were sold in a silent auction. A total of \$425.00 was raised.

The following organizations also received collected items :

- Beds: toiletry items
- Dwight Women's Prison: greeting cards, devotional books and word puzzle books
- Grace Preschool: labels and box tops for education
- Lions International: used eye glasses

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), Department of Prison and Family Ministry received tote bags made by women of Grace and also knit or crocheted items including children's sweaters, scarves, hats, mittens, baby blankets, lap robes, slippers and bed socks.

In September the PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRIES group began its sixth year, meeting twice a month on the second and fourth Thursdays from 7:30-10 PM in the Kensington Rooms. A new day time group for those who prefer not to drive after dark was added this year with meetings on the second and fourth TUESDAY mornings from 10-11:30 AM. In June we also began making a limited number of child-size shawls. Another change this year has been in the leadership of Prayer Shawl Ministries. Cathy Thoss has agreed to take over the leadership of this ministry. A very special thank you to Cathy Thoss for keeping records so meticulously and facilitating this ministry!

In 2011 eighteen ladies produced 92 shawls. Of these 87 have been presented to those who were ill, grieving, experiencing particularly challenging times or celebrating a special event in their lives. We try to get a shawl to each Grace member on the church prayer list. Grace members are encouraged to request a shawl for a family member, friend, or coworker, wherever or whenever a special blessing is needed.

The group is open to those who knit or crochet including those who want to learn. Newcomers are most welcome! The gatherings begin with prayer for those who will receive the shawls as well as those who have received shawls in the past. At the end of each session there is a prayer of blessing for the completed shawls asking that the shawls might provide warmth, comfort, security, a sense of God's loving presence and peace, and well-being for the recipients. If you would like to have an opportunity to make something that can provide comfort to someone who is ill or suffering a loss, we welcome you to join us. Attendance at our meetings is not mandatory. This is a come-when-you-can opportunity to get together with other Grace members. Some do their knitting or crocheting only at meetings, while others do most of their work at home. Some of our most productive knitters have not attended any

meetings. We do our best to insure that there is consistency in the prayer shawls. Yarn, knitting needles and instructions are provided to those who wish to use them. That way, other than the color, there is very little difference from shawl to shawl.

Thank you, thank you, thank you to all the ladies who worked on shawls and to those who have made donations to supply the yarn. Women of Grace organization, along with a few designated donations, has provided for the purchase of yarn for the shawls. Donations are always welcome!

Report submitted by Debbie Granger and Cathy Thoss

Worship and Music Committee

We at Grace Lutheran Church have again been especially blessed by spiritual leadership in the Lutheran tradition provided by Pastors Saïd, Flessen, and Gerow, as well as by Director of Music Janet Kings and Choir Director Kurt Amolsch during 2011. Those members and many of our young people who also graciously provide their time and effort to enable worship to take place at Grace as acolytes, Altar Guild, the many choirs, instrumentalists and communion assistants, greeters, lectors, head ushers Al Scanlan, Don Walter, Greg Gates, Al and Alice Ewert as well as the ushers continue to give members of Grace Lutheran Church much reason to continually be grateful. The professionalism that is shared and the many hours of time that are expended before and during worship benefit the entire congregation. Without the leadership and assistance of these many volunteers worship services as we know them could not take place.

The Worship and Music Committee continues to be committed to strengthening and extending the Lutheran Church's rich heritage of excellence in music and worship. It was **Kathryn Knop's** suggestion from a few years ago regarding the establishment of **The Grace Church Music Apprenticeship and Scholarship Program** that continues to allow our commitment to become a reality. We are very pleased with the preludes and other assistance including LOGOS and Celebration Singers, which Sarah Schultz and Kayla VonDrasek provided. We thank them for their interest and participation.

The Worship and Music Committee continued to be focused on enhancing and making worship more meaningful. *Through the Liturgical Arts Committee five (5) major efforts were again contributed to augment our journey through the changing seasons of the church year. The black veiling (1) envisioned by Joe O'Connor again covered the window above the altar during the dark days of Lent as we journeyed to the cross driven by our need for renewal in both mind and spirit. The subsequent symbolization of our exaltation of the resurrection by the "unveiling" again (2) of the very same window for Easter Sunday and for the 50 day season of Easter was the creation spearheaded by Joe O'Connor (3) Three white with red backdrop banners graced the sanctuary during Pentecost and Trinity Sunday. In November for All Saints day (4), again a banner with the name of each "Saint of Grace" embroidered in gold was created by Elaine Albright, Mary Lynn Van Dyken, Joe O'Connor, Margo Rife and Lois Wagner. Gold butterflies made the presentation more dramatically visual. The banner was processed at the beginning of each service and remained in the chancel through Christ the King Sunday. Their time, creativity, handwork, and patience are to be applauded. On November 26th the Advent Wreath (5) was again installed in the nave. As the primary symbol in Advent the wreath's form is indicative of the circular nature of Christ's coming (he came once and will come again): the evergreens reinforced the 'eternalness' of Christ; the candles indicated the approaching*

Christ, the light. The wreath was the result of Kurt Amolsch's vision, Chuck Urban's expertise and Steve Bauer's decorative ability. Special thanks to George Bringman, Greg Held, Scott Jensen, Bob Klonowski, Matt Ley, Ken Knops, Margo Rife, David Oscarson, Tom and Harrison Reeder, Mark Tubay and Lois and Paul Wagner who handled its installation and removal. Again the cave wonderfully designed and made by Wes Willard was placed in front of the altar and once again provided cover for the shepherds, wise men and the natal family during the Christmas season.

The beautiful baptismal banner which was 3 years in the making by **Elaine Albright, Margo Rife, and Mary Lynn VanDyken** continues to hang in the chancel on baptism Sundays. With a stream of blue water depicted in a stained glass window, the banner reminds us of baptism which as Martin Luther states in his Small Catechism "*with the word of God baptism is a grace-filled water of life and a "bath of the new birth in the Holy Spirit." as St. Paul says to Titus, "through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."*

We are again grateful for the devoted leadership given by **Debbie Tubay** beginning in 2009. She was joined by **Joanne Hill** in August of 2010. We especially thank Debbie and Joanne for their dedication, time and leadership as Co-chairs of Altar Guild. They worked to accommodate changes in communion preparation and communicated this information to the many members of Altar Guild, as well as, handling or arranging the training of all new members. We are also especially grateful and extend our sincere appreciation to the members who have answered Debbie's and Joanne's call to give an hour or so of their time twice a year to serve on Altar Guild.

A very special thank you is extended to Kurt Amolsch, Janet Kings, Kenneth Knops, Kurt Nelson, Debbie Tubay and Diane Casey who attended, participated in and contributed to committee meetings.

We look forward to new challenges next year and hope to continue to enhance worship in a similar manner.

Respectfully submitted by Lois K. Wagner

Youth Ministry Team

The Committee is organized on a "team" basis, with team leaders serving on the committee and also leading additional volunteers in carrying out programming for youth. John Hattle is the Committee Chairman.

Conceptually, the committee tackled three large projects in 2011. New Youth Fundraising Policy and Procedure Guidelines were written and implemented effective September 1, 2011. The committee discussed, revised and implemented the new Safe Church Policy and Adult Role Model/Shepherding Guidelines. And a comprehensive document titled "Grace Lutheran Church Youth Ministry: Mission, Vision, Guiding Principles, and Policies" is a work in progress.

Ongoing programming for youth includes LOGOS, 10:10, Grace Cafe Worship, and ReCharge. The annual Mission Trip was to Mescalero, NM; and planning is underway for a Mission Trip to Benton Harbor, MI, in summer 2012. We sponsored a church league, high school boys basketball team in 2010-2011 and again in 2011-2012. The youth hosted church-wide events such as Easter Breakfast, Spaghetti Dinner, and a Peder Eide Concert.

Market Day continues as a monthly fundraiser. In these, and all other activities involving youth, committee members and other adult volunteers continually strive to actively engage the youth and draw them into meaningful leadership roles.

Prayerfully submitted,

Susan Feely; Secretary
John Hattle; Chair
Alice Oscarson; Youth Ministry Coordinator
Jamie Campos; Education
Ellen Kunkle; Worship
Mary Lynn Van Dyken; Caring
Casey Brown; Treasurer

Finance Committee

Following is a discussion of the 2011 financial results of the various funds of Grace Lutheran Church as summarized on pages F-1 through F-8 of this annual report. Also included in a separate section below are highlights of the proposed 2012 Operating Budget that will be presented for approval at the Annual Congregational meeting on January 29, 2012.

Operating Fund results for 2011 are compared to the previous year 2010 and then to the Operating Budget for 2011. Following the Operating Fund section, 2011 financial results for other major funds are discussed.

Operating Fund -Compared to Last Year

Overall offerings and income, excluding contributions for focus benevolences in both years, were up slightly compared to 2010.

Regular weekly offerings (white envelope), which represent nearly 85% of total offerings, were essentially flat versus year-ago levels. The year ended on a high note, as exceptionally strong offerings in the month of December 2011 offset an otherwise disappointing fourth quarter. Benevolence giving (blue envelope) for local and global charities, which is about 8% of total offerings, was down about 6% versus 2010. Focus appeal offerings were below 2010's high level, when \$10,000 was raised for the Haitian earthquake victims in early 2010.

Overall expenses, other than benevolence payments were 1% lower than in 2010. Personnel expenses were 5% lower than the prior year, due primarily to the full year's effect of reductions in health benefit and pension costs following the mid-year staff restructuring in 2010. Program committee expenses were virtually unchanged from the prior year. Other operating costs in 2011 were 14% higher overall than in 2010, as maintenance and repair expenses were adversely affected by the dishwasher replacement. Further, office expenses were considerably higher due to a major replenishment of stationery and office supplies.

Benevolences paid to various charities from the Operating Fund were \$16,000 lower than the prior year, due entirely to the corresponding decreases in focus and special benevolence offerings. Total benevolences paid represented 15% of annual offerings, compared to 16% in 2010.

To balance the budget, total transfers of approximately \$19,000 (\$10,700 of which came from the Reserve Fund) were made into the Operating Fund in 2011. In 2010, the operating deficit was \$31,900, and was financed in part from the Reserve Fund (\$18,900), with the balance coming from other restricted funds.

Operating Fund -Compared to Budget

Total offerings, excluding giving for focus benevolences, were 2%, or \$16,000 below the amounts budgeted for 2011. The weekly offering component of income for the year 2011 was \$14,000, or 2% under the budgeted amount. Benevolence offerings were 8% below budget. Focus appeals were also somewhat below the budget.

Overall expenses, excluding benevolence payments, were \$15,000 under budgeted levels for 2011. Personnel costs, which represent over three-quarters of total expenses exclusive of benevolences, were 2% under budget due to the resignation of an Associate Pastor in September, together fewer part-time hours than budgeted.

Program expenses in total were nearly 20% below budget as most committees underspent their budgets and 125th Anniversary expenses were lower than anticipated. Facility operating expenses were over budget due to higher costs related to the dishwasher replacement. Total benevolences paid of nearly \$134,000 were 5% lower than budget, as a consequence of lower benevolence offerings.

As a result of significantly higher weekly and Christmas offerings received during December, the full year deficit was reduced somewhat at year end, finishing at \$18,700. The budgeted shortfall for 2011 was \$22,000.

Reserve Fund

Over the years, the Reserve Fund has been used mainly for capital improvements or major facility repair projects. It has been replenished through income on its investments and from the receipt of bequests.

In 2011, approximately \$28,000 was spent from the Reserve Fund for site improvement design work and for emergency repairs following authorizations granted at the 2010 Annual Congregational meeting. During 2010, approximately \$21,000 was used to remediate the flooring in the upstairs Kensington wing.

Also in 2011, approximately \$10,700 was moved out of the Reserve Fund to fund the Operating Fund budget gap, while \$19,000 was required for this purpose in 2010. At year-end 2011, the Reserve Fund balance was just over \$444,000.

In 2012, the Operating budget proposal includes an authorization for the potential transfer of up to \$11,000 from the Reserve Fund to fund an operating deficit.

Memorial Fund

In 2011, gifts to the Memorial Fund were \$23,000, compared to \$13,000 in the previous year. Approximately \$26,000 was expended from the Memorial Fund in 2011. In 2010, \$154,000 was disbursed, largely for facility and office remodeling and technology projects. The fund balance at year-end 2011 stood at nearly \$57,000.

The Memorial Committee continues to process requests for expenditures from this fund.

Preschool Fund

The fund balance for the preschool was down slightly at approximately \$31,000 at year-end 2011. Income in 2011 was lower than in the previous year due to lower student

enrollment, partially offset by higher tuition rates. Personnel expenses were correspondingly lower, with bottom-line results remaining at the breakeven level.

Education Fund

The specific objective of this fund is to provide scholarships to divinity students and for honorariums for theological presentations at Grace. In 2011, the fund supported three individuals with \$11,600 in scholarships, and \$4,000 mainly for the funding of Scholar-in-Residence programs. The fund balance at year-end 2011 was approximately \$102,000, down from \$116,000 at the prior year end.

2012 Operating Budget Proposal

The proposed Operating budget for 2012 will be presented in detail at the 2012 Annual meeting on Sunday, January 29, 2012. Following are some highlights.

In 2012, regular weekly envelope and benevolence offerings are budgeted to decline by \$24,000, or 3%, from the actual level in 2011. To date, amounts pledged for 2012 are 18% below prior year levels, representing the lowest level since 2007. The lower level of pledging makes the budget more dependent on offerings from members who haven't pledged, and thus the achievement of the budgeted results is even more uncertain than in previous years.

Personnel expenses are budgeted to be 3% below 2011 as an Associate Pastor position is assumed to be vacant until mid-year 2012. Programming expenses, including 125th Anniversary expenses, are budgeted to increase by \$5,000 over last year. Other operating expenses are projected to decrease by \$11,000, or 7%, on expected lower maintenance, repair and utility costs.

Benevolence payments to third-party charities are budgeted at \$134,000, representing 15% of total operating expenses, identical to the 2011 percentage. Unforeseen special and/or disaster relief contributions may increase this percentage as the year unfolds.

The 2012 Operating Fund budget deficit is projected to be \$17,000, which is a slight improvement over the \$19,000 deficit in 2011. It is hoped that weekly offerings will rebound more toward the full-year 2011 level, but in any event, the 2011 budget proposal authorizes transfers in from the Reserve Fund of up to \$11,000, as well as \$6,000 from another restricted fund to cover the deficit.

Other

I wish thank the members of the Finance Committee for their continued dedication, insight, diverse opinions and guidance. The perspective each member brings to our many meetings is truly invaluable, and vital in arriving at sound decisions that help support the overall success of the church.

Finance Committee members are Ed Campbell, Chad Fuller, Anne Hall, Dave Kopp, Joyce Nemecek, Tom Reeder, Rita Scanlan, Joe Walton and Kathy Westberg.

Report submitted by Gary Hill, Chair