

Spirit of Grace

The official newsletter of Grace Lutheran Church West Springfield

Mission of Hope: Strong tradition takes root at Grace

Grace Lutheran Church West Springfield is proud to continue its support of the Mission of Hope once again this year.

The Mission of Hope project began in 2005 with the awareness of a need brought back from the ELCA Global Mission Event. Rev. Dr. Laurie Anderson, our pastor at the time, along with her husband had attended the event. While there in one of the workshops they met Rev. Elieshi Mungure from Tanzania. Rev. Mungure was in Wisconsin studying for her doctorate. They became aware of the need of education for children in Rev. Mungure's home village. Many of the children were either

orphaned, living with relatives, or from single parent homes. The average annual income at the time was under \$300.00, which was the cost of one year of secondary education. Most of the village relied on small garden plots to provide food for families without any actual monetary income. With



many of the families, education was out of the question; there just wasn't enough money to send a child to even primary level school at a cost of \$160.00. The church's

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Women's bible study underway

Grace has started a special Women's Bible Study program. The group meets Tuesday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The year-long study will focus on 52 women in the bible, beginning with Eve in Genesis and ending with Priscilla from the book of Acts.

Below is the schedule for February:

Feb. 2: Rebekah

Feb. 9: Rachel

Feb. 16: Leah

Feb. 23: Tamar

All are welcome to attend, so bring a friend! Extra bibles available. For more information contact Carol: carolalmb@comcast.net or 733-7645.

Next book club: Feb. 21

The next book discussion will take place in the church parlor Sunday, Feb. 21, 2010 at 11:00 a.m. The book to be discussed will be "The Space Between Us" by Thirty Umrigar.

Set in modern-day India and witnessed through two compelling and achingly real women, "The Space Between Us" shows how the lives of the rich and the poor are intrinsically connected yet vastly removed from each other, and vividly captures how the bonds of womanhood are pitted against the division of class and culture.

All are welcome to read the book and participate in the discussion.

From the Pastor: Reinventing the Lenten tradition

Feb. 17, 2010, Ash Wednesday, marks the beginning of our Lenten journey this year in the Christian calendar. So many people have an image of Lent as being "down" or "depressing," a time of low energy, a time of fasting and giving things up. People often ask, "So what did you give up this year?" It's a curious perception really.

I have a friend who fasts every year during Lent, usually for a period of 10 days or so with absolutely no solid food whatsoever. When she described it to me, she said that for the first 3-4 days she would turn into a complete monster with hunger pains and the struggle to "stay with it" causing her to be a bit shorter tempered than

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normal. But once that had passed, she said that she came to a place of complete peace in her being, feeling a sense of calm and focus that she couldn't quite explain, but she was exhilarated by it! She said that every year she comes close to eating a cheeseburger on day 3 and that every year, she holds out because she knows that the sense of peace and focus, that sense of exhilaration is just around the corner.

What my friend experienced is

what I have come to know and experience myself when one engages with the liturgical season of Lent with an open mind. Lent is a time that is traditionally used within the church to get back to the basics, to re-engage in some spiritual practices that perhaps we've lost sight of in the busyness of our daily lives, a time to reflect on our walk with Jesus as his disciples and how we are living

out that call to a life of discipleship. Soup suppers — simple meals shared together as a community -- are one way that churches

have engaged in that tradition.

This year, Grace will, once again, hold its traditional Wednesday Lenten Suppers followed by the Holden Evening Prayer worship service. Each week -- in keeping with the theme of "back to the basics" embodied in Lent -- I will offer a brief reflection on some of the

basics of our faith tradition. For this year, I've encouraged the groups putting on the meals to plan them perhaps a bit more simplistically than we've done in the past: perhaps just a bowl of soup, and a piece of bread or a sandwich. Perhaps in the return to basics, and in the simplicity called for in lent, we will find some sense of the abundance of God's grace in the midst of our busy lives.

I also encourage you to revisit past spiritual practices or disciplines that you may have engaged in, or try a new one such as fasting or meditation.



on. We may grumble a bit as we adjust to it, desiring that cheeseburger on day 3 like my friend, but maybe, just maybe, if we hold out, we will experience the abundance of God's love in our lives in a way that will change our lives! That is, after all the promise of God's love!

In peace, Pastor Derek Harman

From the President: A new focus on stewardship

As many of you remember, we voted at the Congregational Meeting in December to begin a Capital Campaign in 2010 under the guidance of our consultant, Pastor Randy Wilburn. After discussing this idea further with Randy at the January Council meeting, we have decided to postpone the Capital Campaign until 2012 and instead to focus on strengthening our annual giving through fall stewardship campaigns in 2010 and 2011.

In Randy's experience, it is important to have a strong culture of stewardship and annual campaigns prior to launching a Capital Campaign. Thus, he will work with a stewardship committee of around 8 people to train them to run the 2010 fall campaign.

The skills gained by the committee members under Randy's tutelage should provide a wonderful future resource to our congregation, and the consulting fee will be \$6,000 in 2010, more than \$10,000 less than the quoted fee for a Capital Campaign.

A team of between 6-8 volunteers is needed for the new stewardship committee. This group will serve a vital role going forward, not only enabling Grace to sustain itself financially in the short term, but also preparing for the capital campaign that we hope will transform our church in new and amazing ways.

Please contact me at kshea@smith.edu to learn how you can participate.

-- Kevin Shea, Council President

Mission of Hope (continued from page 1)

Rev, Mungure was attending in Dekkorra, Wisconsin had begun a sponsorship program to help with this need.

When Pastor Laurie and her husband returned to West Springfield they shared this call for help with the congregation. A



group from the congregation decided to form its own Mission of Hope chapter, and Mission of Hope West Springfield was born. Rev. Mungure visited us a short time later and the group grew. Since that time 21 individuals and families at Grace Lutheran in West Springfield have come forward and became

involved an equal number children in Tanzania.

Every fall we collect the tuition money along with an extra 10.00.

The additional 10.00 is used for a Christmas gift. One year the gift provided uniforms, another time bibles in Swahili, this past year each family received oil lamps, which is important in a country where the electricity is sometimes cut off for weeks at a time. Along with the actual gift, the extra money provides an opportunity for Mission of Hope families in Tanzania get together for a Holiday meal. We receive an update on their school grades as well as letters and pictures from the children a couple of times a year.

In conjunction with the annual meeting this year, our summer children's program at Grace had a "Tanzanian experience". The children of Grace got to spend a condensed day in a Tanzanian

village. They met some of our Tanzanian children through pictures of them doing some of their daily tasks.

In turn our Grace children were able to experience things like the trek to the river for water, the long walk to a school that had only one desk, a few sheets of paper and pencils. They attended a church service in an open field, standing in a group singing, praying, and reading God's Word. They worked in a garden of poor soil, washed clothes in the river and hung them on bushes to dry.

While the financial cost of our sponsorship is small, the relationships we have gained with families half way around the world has given us a renewed sense of awareness of unity with God's children. It has also given our children a look at life in apart of the world, a life so different from their own.

-- Carol Goulet

'Habitat' team wraps up 2009 project

Grace Lutheran Church was proud once again this past year to partner with Thrivent Financial for Lutherans in renovating a house at 32 Sylvan St. in Springfield for Habitat for Humanity. The house, which was recently completed and dedicated, officially began in May.

Nearly every Saturday, crews of volunteers from Lutheran churches and other service organizations descend on the Sylvan St.

house eager to tackle whatever jobs the project manager has organized. On Saturday



, July 25 and Saturday, Sept. 12, Grace sent crews who joined other Lutherans from Holyoke, Wilbraham and Westfield. They divided into four teams: windows, upstairs walls, exterior painting and landscape. Peter Schott and Andrew Alexander worked tirelessly on landscape, uprooting old vines and bushes, taking down overgrown trees and hauling everything to the rubbish dump. Martha Sienkiewicz, Sue Gross and Dale Owen worked on painting, and along with a dozen others nearly got the entire house painted. Grace supplied morning coffee and devotions as part of the commitment (Holyoke brought the lunch).

Grace also pledged \$1,000 toward this project. The June rummage sale brought in \$500 and the other \$500 was raised in the October rummage sale. Be sure to participate in Grace's Habitat efforts in 2010!

Reminders:

- The **Congregational Care Committee** will meet Feb. 10 at 7:00 p.m. at Grace to discuss brainstorming and implementation from the Visioning process including visitation, a prayer ministry, welcome bags, establishing a group of people willing to provide rides to church and prepare meals to be delivered to members in need of help (i.e with illness or at the birth of a child). Your support is needed! If you are unable to make the meeting but still would like to be involved please let us know either by calling the church office or Carol Goulet at 733-7645 or e-mail carolalmb@comcast.net.
- Urgent financial support is needed for **Haiti earthquake relief**. Your prayers and generous gifts will make a life-saving difference. Please give today at www.elca.org/haitiearthquake. You can also donate through Thrivent to receive a 50% match up to \$250 individual donations; go to www.thrivent.com/helpinghaiti.
- Please bring donations of new and individual personal care items (toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, etc.) to Grace to support **Operation Hope Tote**. We will collect these items every Sunday from now until the end of March for delivery to the Springfield Rescue Mission.
- On the rare occasion that a **storm cancellation** announcement must be made prior to Wednesday evening or Sunday morning worship service, it will be communicated via the WFSB/CBS-3- and ABC-40 TV stations.

Church Council Members

President: Kevin Shea
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Chair of Properties: Open

*Interested in serving on the council?
Email Kevin Shea or anyone listed
above. Volunteers are welcome!*

February 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 EOY financial statements available at Grace for pickup	2 Bible Study, 9:00 a.m. Needlers, 10:00 a.m. Conf. Class, 4:30 p.m. Women's Bible Study, 6 p.m.	3 Worship, 6:00 p.m.	4 - Council, 6:30 p.m.	5	6
7 - Worship, 9:30 a.m. Souper Bowl Tropical Sunday	8	9 Bible Study, 9:00 a.m. Needlers, 10:00 a.m. Women's Bible Study, 6 p.m.	10 Worship, 6:00 p.m. Cong. Care Team, 7:00 p.m.	11	12	13
14 - Worship, 9:30 a.m.	15	16 Bible Study, 9:00 am Needlers, 10:00 a.m. Conf. Class, 4:00 p.m. Women's Bible Study, 6 p.m.	17 Ash Wednesday: 12:00 noon service & lunch follows 6:00 p.m. Worship	18	19 Rummage Sale dropoff 1:00p.m. - 5:00p.m.	20 Rummage Sale, 10-2
21 - Worship, 9:30 a.m. Book Club, 11 a.m.	22	23 Bible Study, 9:00 am Needlers, 10:00 a.m. Women's Bible Study, 6 p.m.	24 Lenten supper, 6:00 p.m. Holden Eve Prayer service following supper	25	26	27
28 - Worship, 9:30 a.m.			Feb. 24, 7:00 p.m.: Youth Worship Experience @ West Springfield Teen Center			

March 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Bible Study, 9:00 am Needlers, 10:00 a.m. Conf. Class, 4:30 p.m. Women's Bible Study, 6 p.m.	3 Lenten supper, 6:00 p.m. Holden Eve Prayer service following supper	4 - Council, 6:30 p.m.	5	6
7 - Worship, 9:30 a.m. Worship asst. training (following worship)	8	9 Bible Study, 9:00 am Needlers, 10:00 a.m. Women's Bible Study, 6 p.m.	10 Lenten supper, 6:00 p.m. Holden Eve Prayer service following supper Cong. Care Team: 7:00pm	11	12	13
14 - Worship, 9:30 a.m. <u>Congregational meeting following worship</u>	15	16 Bible Study, 9:00 am Needlers, 10:00 a.m. Conf. Class, 4:30 p.m. Women's Bible Study, 6 p.m.	17 Lenten supper, 6:00 p.m. Holden Eve Prayer service following supper	18	19	20 Spfld. Rescue Mission "Operation Sunshine" 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
21 - Worship, 9:30 a.m.	22	23 Bible Study, 9:00 am Needlers, 10:00 a.m. Women's Bible Study, 6 p.m.	24 Lenten supper, 6:00 p.m. Holden Eve Prayer service following supper	25	26	27
28 - Worship, 9:30 a.m. Palm Sunday	29	30 Bible Study, 9:00 am Needlers, 10:00 a.m. Conf. Class, 4:30 p.m. Women's Bible Study, 6 p.m.	31 Holy Week; <u>no worship</u>			

New church office hours

Please note general church office hours have changed. They are now 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon Monday through Thursday. Thank you!

Newsletter feedback

Let us know what you think of this edition of the Spirit of Grace. Also, we need volunteers to help produce future editions of the newsletter. Free desktop publishing training provided! Email Eric Parizo at eparizo@comcast.net to learn more or offer feedback.

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Grace celebrates five years on a **Mission of Hope**.

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Pastor Harman on simplifying during the Lenten season.

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A year-long **Women's Bible Study** group meets Tuesdays.

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Council President **Kevin Shea** on a stewardship revival.

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