



Grace United Methodist Church

September 19, 2021

OUR WELCOMING STATEMENT

We celebrate God's gift of diversity and value the wholeness made possible in community equally shared and shepherded by all. We welcome and affirm people of every gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, who are also of every age, race, ethnicity, physical and mental ability, level of education, and family structure, and of every economic, immigration, marital, and social status.

We acknowledge that we live in a world of profound social, economic, and political inequities. As followers of Jesus, we commit ourselves to the pursuit of justice and pledge to stand in solidarity with all who are marginalized and oppressed.

We are all invited to bless this church with our love, our presence, and our participation.

PRELUDE

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND GREETING ONE ANOTHER

MOMENT OF SILENCE/OPENING PRAYER

CALL TO WORSHIP

Listen. Divine Love beckons us saying:

Arise, beloveds, and come away.

God draws our attention in body and spirit toward what is healing, what is good, what is true.

Made alive with hearts of flesh, we cannot settle for ways of life that deaden, destroy, or create hearts of stone.

Seeking the arms of God, we pursue life abundant.

The One who satisfies our deepest desires will not leave us wanting.

With passion, we seek and follow the call of God.

OPENING HYMN

UMH 351

"Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior"

OPENING PRAYER

O Lord, who has mercy on all, take away from us our sins, and mercifully kindle in us the fire of your Holy Spirit. Take away from us the heart of stone, and give us a heart of flesh, a heart to love and adore you, a heart to delight in you, to follow and enjoy you, for Christ's sake, Amen.

READING

Ezekiel 36:26-38

SERMON

Pastor Nate Nims

SPECIAL MUSIC

"There is a Balm in Gilead"
Cheryl Fraracci, mezzo-soprano

Traditional Spiritual

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE PRAYER JESUS TAUGHT

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERING

OFFERTORY

CLOSING HYMN

UMH 519

"Lift Every Voice and Sing"

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE



In Loving Memory

A Celebration of Life service for Rev. Bill Cotton, who died August 3, 2020, will be held today at 2:00 p.m. at Grace. A reception with light refreshments will follow the service in the Activity Center. Please keep Bill's family and all who mourn his passing in your prayers.



A Celebration of Life service for Rev. Barbara Dinnen, who died April 3, 2020, will be held at Grace on Saturday, September 25 at 10:30 a.m.. A luncheon will follow at Christopher's (2816 Beaver Avenue, Des Moines) at 1:00 p.m.. Please keep Barb's loved ones in your prayers.

2021 Thanksgiving Ingathering

It's that time of year again. School supplies will be going on sale in July, and we will be accepting donations for the 2021 Ingathering soon. You may place your items in the receptacle in the church entryway. These items are used during natural disasters and, more generally, to help those in need.

Below are the items needed to complete each kit. If you have any questions about the items, you may contact Lisa Blair (841-223-2372 (please text first); lhb22@blairlinn.net) or Jean Kerber (978-733-3887). For information about making the cloth bags, contact Susan Ryon (616-828-8511).

Personal Dignity Kit Contents:

- 1 Bath Hand Towel - No kitchen towels and please avoid the larger plush towels. We have limited space in the bag.
- 1 Bath Washcloth - No dishcloths
- 1 Adult Toothbrush - No multipacks
- 1 Bar Soap - 3-4 oz
- 1 Shampoo - 16-18 oz
- 1 Deodorant - 2-3 oz - stick, roll on, or pump
- 1 1-gal Re-sealable Plastic Bag
- \$2 donation for razor and toothpaste

All items must be NEW

Student Kit Contents:

- 3 Notebooks -1 subject spiral 8" x 10 1/2"
- 1 Ruler - 12" long with metric
- 6 Pencils - unsharpened
- 1 Pencil Sharpener
- 1 Pencil Eraser - 2" or larger
- 1 Box 12 Colored Pencils
- 1 Box 24 Crayons
- 1 Pair of Scissors - student round tip

Place in a one handle cloth bag.

Mary Circle will meet tomorrow in the Community Room at Wesley Acres. Outside members are asked to enter through the Green Awning entrance.



Grace recently purchased multiple A-frame signs to help guide new folks to our parking lots. We are looking for folks willing to put them out each Sunday morning, and, if you are willing, we would let you collect them after worship, too! If you are interested in helping or would like more information, please contact Coreen Witke at coreenwitke@gracedesmoines.org.



Throughout their years of Sunday School, children develop a foundation of faith that will support them throughout their lives. At Grace, we are in need of adults who are interested in guiding our younger members as they build that foundation during Sunday School. As Christians, we are called to share our faith. It is a divine gift to have the opportunity to do so with children and youth. All curriculum is provided, as are all materials needed for each class. If you are feeling the nudge to share your faith, please contact Coreen Witke at 515.255.6400 ext. 230 or at coreenwitke@gracedemoines.org. Our prayer is that we have a team of teachers that allows for personal connection with each student and enough flexibility so that the responsibility for teaching is shared. Take some time to pray about your calling to see where your faith takes you.

Guide to Prayer and Study, September 20-25

Monday, September 20

Read - Lamentations 3:16-26

Notice - In 586 B.C., Babylon's army destroyed Jerusalem and exiled many leading citizens. (You can read about Jerusalem's fall in 2 Kings 25:1-21). Lamentations recorded the anguish of an Israelite that was not exiled and had been left behind in Judah. The writer of Lamentations couldn't see any hope for the future (verse 18). And yet, the Common English Bible renders one of the great words of the Old Testament, the Hebrew *hesed* in verse 22, as "the faithful love of the LORD (Yahweh)." Other English translations use expressions like "steadfast love" or "unfailing love." In their moment of hopelessness, the writer trusted in God's unending love even in the rubble of a burned, ruined city, no doubt with unburied bodies still in the streets. How have you been able to hold to God's steadfast, unfailing love even in your worst times?

Pray - Creator God, thank you for the gift of this new day. Whatever trials or hardships I may face today, let the morning light remind me that your mercies are ever-present with me. Amen.

Tuesday, September 21

Read - Psalm 31:9-12, 17-24

Notice - Almost half of the psalms are "laments" like our reading today from Psalm 31. Laments are Hebrew poems that express feelings of fear, grief, sadness, and anxiety. This psalm included depression, limited vision, humiliation, anger at foes, and panic. In verse 17, the psalmist prayed, "Lord, don't let me be put to shame." What internal messages, perhaps under the pressure of external events or other people's words, trigger your feelings of shame? How can you build an identity as God's beloved child that can limit shame's destructive effects on your life? (This is hard work and may require help from a trained counselor/therapist)

Pray - God, like the psalmist, I want your kind of honest strength. Teach and guide me in building my trust in you as I respond to your calling. Amen.

Wednesday, September 22

Read - Isaiah 40:26-31

Notice - After years of exile, Israelites were finally able to return to their homes, but would now face a hard, wearing trip by foot from Babylon to Israel. It was tempting for them to think God didn't see their hardships. The prophet pointed readers to God, who created everything, and whose understanding is beyond human reach. Isaiah invited them (and us) to trust in God's grace even when we don't understand. Trust allows us to "hope in the Lord" for renewed strength, and through faith to "fly up on wings like eagles," to "walk and not be weary." Few feelings are lonelier than the sense that you are alone in your problems and must face them with no support or help. Can you recall times when you have felt like the Israelites in Isaiah 40:27: "My way is hidden from the Lord; my God ignores my predicament"? Are there areas of your life today that feel that way to you? In what ways can you reconnect with the Creator who "doesn't grow tired or weary" of caring for you?

Pray - God, when you and your love feel absent from my life, help me trust you and cling to hope. Remind me of what I too easily forget—that you love, value and care for me. Amen.

Thursday, September 23

Read - Acts 2:14, 22-36

Notice - Fifty days after Jesus' crucifixion, crowds arrived in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. As Jesus was being prepared for the cross, Peter was swearing that he didn't know Jesus, but now, 50 days later, Jesus proclaims, "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact" (verse 32). In 50 days, Peter went from denying he even knew Jesus to claiming witness to the resurrection. What do you think gave Peter the courage to make this claim? How do you imagine Peter's life was transformed in such a short time? Have you ever experienced a similar transformation from a past that you struggle with into a present boldness and courage?

Pray - Jesus, your resurrected, living presence transformed Peter. You are still alive, and I ask you to continue the work of transforming me from the inside out. Amen.

Friday, September 24

Read - 2 Corinthians 12:6-10

Notice - While Paul never specifies what the 'thorn in the flesh' is for him, it's clearly something that troubles him and even hindered his life and ministry. Paul prays that this thorn might be taken away, but it remains, and still Paul trusts in God's strength to be with him in his weakness. In the Message paraphrase of the Bible, verse 9 is translated, "I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size I just let Christ take over!" What "thorn" (or "thorns"—physical, emotional, relational) do you have to deal with? How have you found "My grace is enough for you" coming true in everyday terms? In what ways, if any, have you found that "when I'm weak, then I'm strong"?

Pray - Jesus, I'm human, and you know I like being strong much better than I like being weak. Help my trust in you to keep growing stronger even at times when everything else in life is making me feel weaker. Amen.

Saturday, September 25

Read - James 1:2-5, Romans 5:1-5

Notice - Every life has challenges. Some are minor; others test the very fiber of our being. James urged Christians to meet life's tests as "occasions for joy." Paul sketched the spiritual growth process through which every Christ-follower can develop a character that meets challenges, not with despair, but with hopeful awareness of the holy moments they might lead to. Neither apostle wrote through naïve, rose-colored glasses. Human nature is not at all inclined to view tests as "occasions for joy," as something to "take pride" in. That's why they focused on God's wisdom and love as the divine gifts that can turn our hard times into occasions for growth. When has God given you wisdom to face a tough challenge, or surrounded you with love and support for the strength you needed? In what ways does God's ability to "grow you" through life's challenges help you view hard times differently?

Pray - God, keep teaching me to view life your way. Help me learn more and more how to value even the tough, painful times you can use to help me grow in endurance, character, and trust. Amen.



ARISE!
SHINE!

**YOUR LIGHT HAS COME;
THE LORD'S GLORY
HAS SHONE UPON YOU!**

ISAIAH 60:1



WORSHIP LEADERS: Rev. Nate Nims; Joe Jongewaard, liturgist; Ann Gerdom, Music Director and organist; Michael Gookin, Senior Choir Director.

† In hymns, prayers, and liturgies, use language that makes worship meaningful, enriching, and inclusive.

All music used under OneLicense A-727197

Hymnals: United Methodist Hymnal (UMH); The Faith We Sing (TFWS); Worship & Song (W&S).

Call to Worship originally from enflashed and has been adapted by Nate Nims

Opening Prayer modified from St. Ambrose of Milan (AD 339-397)



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Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter at GraceDesMoines

Worship in-person with us at 10:15 a.m. Sunday morning, or join us online.

Watch the livestream of the 10:15 am service on the GraceDesMoines Facebook page, on our YouTube channel, or at gracedesmoines.org.