



Harbinger

www.graceevanston.org • churchoffice@graceevanston.org

Fall 2016

**Affirming,
Courageous, Caring**

**Grace Lutheran
Church of Evanston
1430 South Blvd.
at Wesley
847.475.2211**

**Grace Is An Open
And Affirming RIC
Congregation**

OUR MISSION:

To courageously live out our faith by sharing grace with each other and the communities we serve.

OUR VISION:

All God's people will feel accepted, challenged, and cared for by Grace Church.

**9:00am & 11:00am
Worship Services
Every Sunday**

Rev. Daniel Ruen
Pastor

pd@graceevanston.org

Mark Bowman
Music Director

**The Rev. Kaari
Reierson, The Rev.
Jen Rude, and The
Rev. Raquel Rodriguez,**
Colleagues in Ministry

Marie O'Brien
Parish Administrator

Jackson DeLeon-Lopez
Sexton

Generations Class Harkens to Grace's Overall Mission

Pastor Daniel



This will be the third year of our very successful Generations program at Grace. We've covered history, theology, interfaith ideas and issues, traveled to many different faith communities, engaged with one another as adults, youth, and

elders, and we've begun to integrate service and mission projects into our program. The Generations youth have gone to Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Center for the second year in a row for confirmation camp.

I am so happy to begin this third year with an emphasis on the Bible. We'll be covering scripture, interpretation, and biblical literacy all year long. All are welcome at Generations classes, which will begin formally on Sunday, October 2nd.

The Generations focus this year will represent an all-church theme in terms of education: deeper and more regular engagement with the Bible as it relates to Christian discipleship. Diakonia, a two-year course that covers all aspects of discipleship, will begin in September at Grace every Saturday from 9am – 12noon. A primary focus is the Bible, and how one's understanding of the Bible supports the Christian life. I'll also be offering weekly Bible studies on Facebook live and through a call-in service on the phone. Every Wednesday night you can engage with the upcoming scriptures for the week with me, enhancing your Sunday morning worship experience. And if you can't make worship, this Bible study can be accessed almost anywhere, so you can stay in touch with Grace and with your own exploration of God's Word.

One of the reasons I believe Generations is so successful is because it engages our adults on an existential level. It feeds them. When the adults separate into their own group for discussion, I sense how hungry everyone is for some time to speak about our fears, our anger, our sadness, our joy, and our curiosity. How many spaces like that do we have in the world? Not many. The church should endeavor to be a place where we can refresh ourselves with the stories of hu-

man paradox, to see our kinship with the simultaneous sinners and saints of the scriptures, and hopefully hear the protagonist—God—speaking a word of grace to us on our way.

Christian education is also 'courage' education. The implications

of the Biblical story should be, on a visceral level, frightening to anyone who is paying attention. Jesus is asking for all of us, for our entire being. Be warned, said the great theologian, pacifist, and activist Dietrich Bonhoeffer, because the story of God is the story of transformation, change, and repentance. "When Jesus calls someone," he wrote, "he bids them to come and die." It takes courage to hear and accept the truth about ourselves, about the church, about our institutions, our families and our world. Most people don't want to be free in the way that Jesus describes freedom. I have to fight it every day of my life as a pastor of the church.

Yet I have also glimpsed the promise of Jesus' call; I have felt the deep peace of letting go and allowing God to guide my path. I also see this promise reflected in the stories of God and God's people in the Bible. It is a story that travels across countless generations and has somehow ended up right here, in your reading of this article. Maybe right now is the moment when you take up Jesus' cross and begin again. Learn again. Try again. To listen with tired but stubborn ears to the new thing God has been doing for thousands of years.

I am banking on the word of God this year. I believe it will re-energize me as a disciple, as a pastor, as a friend, a husband, a citizen, and a father. I am also praying that it bears fruit at Grace if more and more people can access it through our Generations class, our Animate adult small groups, our weekly Bible study, and the Diakonia course. I pray it bears fruit in your life.

Welcome back to a new educational year at Grace, and my thanks to all the leaders and teachers of our shared discipleship together!

Pastor Daniel

Grace Adult Ed 2016-2017

Adult Education at Grace gives us a chance to enjoy regular get-togethers with a small group to dig deep into topics that help us reflect on our lives as Christians. This year in adult ed, we'll complete our study of the Animate video series by working through the final series, **animate FAITH** » on "Practices."

We'll hold a kickoff potluck dinner meeting and first session at Grace in early October, and all are invited. If you were in a small group last year, please plan to return, or if you haven't participated before and want to see what this format is all about, please come to this opening session. You'll have a chance to check out the format and sign up for a small group that suits your schedule and location.

The Practices series examines such topics as prayer, worship, sacraments, and community – all of these were hot-button issues for Martin Luther as he critiqued the Roman Catholic church 500 years ago, and our hope is that this Animate series will be a useful companion to the Reformation 500 activities Grace will participate in throughout this year.

Please plan to join us! If you have any questions, feel free to contact Susan Graef or Bonnie Gunzenhauser.



Godly Play and First Followers

The first classes for Godly Play and First Followers are scheduled to begin on September 25, just after the first service at 10:15am. The curriculum will mirror the successful lessons of the past few years, with the addition of a few new stories and activities. Since we have a small number of active students in the K-2 age group, the education team members are just beginning to discuss ways in which to involve some of our Pre-K families, too. We'll keep you updated!

First Followers, for students in grades 3-5, will continue to build upon what's worked in the past, as we continue to plan lessons that help students grow their knowledge base and vocabulary as they begin to approach the Bible and their beliefs from a more analytical perspective. We hope you took time to view the table that was set up in the back of the Sanctuary throughout the summer, where several of the creative activities and projects we completed were on display. We'll continue to cover similar themes and topics this year, as well as explore the Reformation, in light of the 500th anniversary in 2017.

The education team continues to invite all congregation members to join in and help with leading classes! The planning will be done for you—you'll just need to arrive at 10am eager to participate in the faith formation of our youth! If you feel called to help out with any age group, please contact Jarrod Gaither, Jeanine Brownell, or PD!



Fall Worship at Grace

September brings a resurgence of worship opportunities at Grace. On **September 4** we resume having two worship gatherings on Sunday mornings—at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. In order to help Grace members, friends and visitors have a clearer understanding of the nature of these two worship gatherings, we are proposing to name the 9:00 service "Connections" and the 11:00 service "Traditions."

The theme and focus of our worship gatherings in September will again be "Let All Creation Praise" (as we have done the past two Septembers). This Season of Creation offers us the opportunity to turn our attention toward God the Creator and seriously reflect on our relationships with the whole of creation. The theme and focus for each Sunday will be:

September 4 Ocean Sunday

September 11 Storm Sunday

September 18 Universe Sunday

September 25 Blessing of the Animals

Take special note of the Blessing of the Animals service on September 25 when everyone is invited to bring pets to join in worship and receive a blessing.

Then on Sunday, **October 2** Grace will launch its full fall program including educational offerings for children and youth. You will be hearing more about our plans to Implement an active outreach campaign this fall to invite neighbors and friends to participate in our worship gatherings and programs.

Looking ahead into the fall, **November 6** is All Saints Sunday at which Grace draws on Day of the Dead traditions to honor and remember loved and esteemed persons who have gone on before us.

Grace Choir Resumes

The Grace choir resumes singing in worship on Sunday, **September 11**. Singers meet in the sanctuary at 10:30 to prepare the song for the morning. Then choir typically rehearses for an hour after worship one Sunday a month—this will also be on September 18 from 12:15-1:15PM. Singers of all ages and abilities are invited to add their voices to the choir. Direct any questions to Mark at markleby@comcast.net or 773-316-8892.

Advent Worship Planning

Any persons interested in helping to plan and lead worship in the season of Advent leading up to Christmas should contact Pastor Daniel pd@graceevanston.org or Mark markleby@comcast.net

This is a wonderful opportunity to make a short-term commitment to be part of a creative process that shapes our worship experiences at Grace.



Getting to Know the Palmer Family



We don't worship at the same church each Sunday, but we do take our daughters to church every week. This means we spend most of the worship hour shushing, corralling, and wondering when is the right moment to take the two-year-old to the nursery (and which one of us will take her). Habituation helps them learn about how to behave in worship, but we've found that progress is painstakingly slow. If Miriam can stay in the sanctuary for two more minutes each week before going out to the narthex, it feels like a victory.

But it also felt like a victory when, shortly after her second birthday, I asked Miriam one day what she likes most about church and she said with a grin: "dip it in the wine!" When thinking about the sacrament brings such visible joy to your toddler, you know you're probably doing okay as parents.

Our five-year-old, Anna, also gets gleeful about church. She mostly colors and snuggles during worship, but she also listens. When she whispers to a parent during the service, it's generally to ask a question about something she just heard in the sermon or a hymn. And she can't walk past a baptismal font without marking her forehead—and her chin, just for good measure—with the sign of the cross.

Anna's still at the age where she wants to be just like her mother, so if you ask her what she wants to be when she grows up, she'll say "a pastor, a hospice chaplain, and a book editor." This answer reflects my recent vocational journey. After eight years as the Lutheran Campus Pastor at the University of Chicago followed by a short stint in chaplaincy at Lutheran General Hospital, I landed in January at the Christian Century magazine where I edit the book review section. I've been given a Synod Call for this position, which means that I fairly regularly preach and preside around the synod, filling in for clergy friends when they're called out of town or simply need a vacation.

My husband, Liam, works at Northwestern University as a research professor in chemistry and research director of one of their academic institutes. We were recently moving some bookshelves at home and I came across his doctoral dissertation, which is titled "Guest Binding in Hydrogen-Bonded Capsular Hosts." I have no idea what that means, but I noticed that the guest/host language sums up what I love most about Liam—his gracious hospitality and gentle compassion. You'll

most often see Liam sitting at the foot of the bookcase in the narthex, entertaining Miriam while listening to the service, so that Anna and I can stay in church and worship.

We're not members of Grace, but we've been attending about once a month for the past year and it has come to feel like extended family. It's a community that shares our origin and values and stretches us to be better than we normally are. I don't mean to romanticize Grace. We visit a lot of churches, and they all stretch us in diverse ways, calling us out of our comfort and into our calling as Christians living in a broken world. But there's something beautifully tangible about the way we see the gospel articulated and lived out at Grace. It's a model that we'd like our children to grow up with.

Elizabeth Palmer



Cassie Slater Wowed Us In "Man Of La Mancha"

A group of Grace members and friends went on a field trip to the Marriott Lincolnshire to see fellow Grace member Cassie Slater performing in "Man of La Mancha" in mid-August. We were rewarded with a dazzling performance by Cassie and the rest of the cast.

Cassie opened the performance with an unaccompanied solo, sung in Spanish, to set the mood. She then went on to play several roles as the action moved from a prison to an inn to a courtroom and so on. The play made us wonder about the thin lines between reality and fantasy, hope and despair, aspiration and wishful thinking.

Each actor in this musical was on stage for the entire performance, played without an intermission for nearly two hours. Cassie told us later that this is exhausting.

The playbill's bio about Cassie told us about her extensive professional experience in local and regional theater, including winning a Joseph Jefferson award in Chicago. We all enjoyed the opportunity to watch someone we know performing so well on the professional stage. Maybe we can organize another trip to Lincolnshire next winter to see her in "Mamma Mia."

Dave Utech



There are Polyglots at Grace!

Don't worry, though. They're not doing anything illegal or immoral. Polyglots are people who speak multiple languages. Here are just a few of them...

Dominique and Marjorie Baptiste and Rools Jean are from Haiti, where the official language is French. Native Haitians, however, speak Creole among themselves, even though it was not allowed to be spoken in schools until the 2000s. Creole is the result of the contact between French settlers and African slaves during the Atlantic slave trade. Dominique says that someone who knows French might be able to pick out a word or two from the conversation of someone speaking Haitian Creole, but it really is a completely different language.

And, as we all know, none of them have any trouble telling it like it is in English!

Clare Tallon Ruen learned French as a young child when her family lived in France for a year. She also studied the language in high school and for a year in college, and now her brother is married to a French woman. She sings in French on one of Pastor Daniel's original compositions.

Clare spent time in the Czech Republic teaching English, so she also speaks Czech – you may have heard her and Marianka Fousek speaking together before or after church sometimes.

Rina Campbell is a native Evanstonian, and her husband Peter Spies is from the Midwest – of Germany. Rina was a French major in college, studying the language with the intent of spending her junior year in the French-speaking African country of Senegal. A student uprising caused the program in which she intended to enroll to close, so instead she ended up in Bordeaux, France. Peter studied French in school and fell in love with the country as a child when he had the opportunity to spend one-month visits with a French family over several years. He moved to Bordeaux during a break from law school with the intent of meeting and marrying a beautiful French woman, but instead, as he puts it, he met "this American spitfire."

Peter had studied English in school but was not proficient in the language, and Rina spoke no German, so they courted in French. Peter says that back then he thought Rina was very polite and kind of shy; Rina says that she just didn't have the nuanced vocabulary in French to fully express all her thoughts and feelings. Peter returned to Germany and Rina eventually moved there, where she learned German and she and Peter married. When they relocated to Evanston and Peter became fluent in English (after enduring a period of time when Ri-

na's father shouted at him in an effort to help him better understand the language), he discovered the true Rina – way more opinionated and outspoken than she was in French!

Rina also understands some Tagalog (mostly the swear words), a language spoken by a majority of Filipinos, because her mother was from the Philippines. Her mother didn't encourage her children to learn the language, though, because of the discrimination she had experienced as an Asian immigrant. Peter also studied Latin in school but, aside from Kaari Reiersen and Alison Laurence, there's no one to talk to in that language. Don't tell Logan and Max, but Rina and Peter still speak in French when they want to talk about something they don't want the kids to know about.

Grace Garden 2016

The Grace vegetable garden, on the west side of the church property, has been going great this year! The plants that like the location are chard, kale, and cherry tomatoes. We have harvested many, many bags of each and donated to both Curt's Cafe and the Reba food pantry. We still have weeks of harvest ahead of us, too. *God's Work, Our Hands* is very true in this case.

From this....



...To this, in a few short months!



CABARET

FOR BRIDGES TO HOME!



Saturday, Oct. 1, 2016 at 7:30 PM at Grace

Suggested Donation: \$20.00 ticket (sold at door)

Imagine yourself sitting at a small, round table at the Moulin Rouge in Paris or even at Space in Evanston, waiting for the curtain to rise on the first act of the cabaret show, when much to your surprise, you know the performers who bring you one terrific musical act after another!

You aren't at the Moulin Rouge or at Space - you are in Fellowship Hall at Grace Lutheran Church to see the Bridges to Home Cabaret, featuring the wondrous talent of Grace, Immanuel, Trinity, St. Paul's and Lutheran Campus Ministry at Northwestern churches of Evanston.

This Cabaret is a fundraiser for Bridges to Home's mission to raise \$10,000. to help finance an apartment for two young men who will soon be leaving the sheltered home at Our House.

For those of you who may have missed our GraceNote messages and temple talks during worship service, here's a brief explanation of Bridges to Home:

Bridges to Home is the result of 5 Lutheran churches sitting down together to determine what they could do in a combined effort to meet an unmet need in Evanston. After consultation with various community organizations, notably Curt's Café, Connections for the Homeless, Interfaith Action, and Family Promise, the need was clear. We are going to help young men who have not gotten off to a good start to develop good and productive lives. Bridges proposes to donate \$10,000. per year to subsidize a 2-bedroom apartment in Evanston for 2 young men at a time. These 2 men will be coming from Our House, a sheltered home for 5 young men run by Connections for the Homeless. Our subsidized apartment will be the step of interdependence in the route from dependence to independence.

Food, Beverages, and Entertainment! Come to the Cabaret to enjoy sweet and savory treats made by the 5 churches, various beverages, and entertainment to delight one and all. Meet members from the other churches and the organizations who have worked with us.

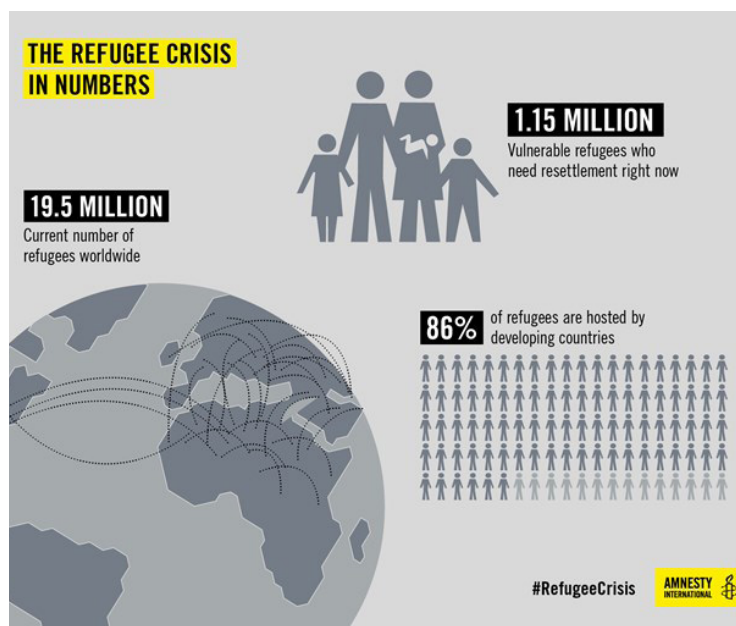
Global Refugee Crisis and Local Action

St Nicholas Catholic Church, Evanston, which has supported refugees in a number of ways, is hosting a splendid presentation on Global Refugee issues in the Oldershaw Hall, immediately behind St Nicholas Church on 29th September at 7:30pm; all are cordially invited to attend.

This document introduces and recommends an enlightening presentation on the refugee crisis, heard recently at St Paul's UCC Chicago. Two local speakers who are also international experts on the subject spoke to members at a Sunday morning forum, covering complementary aspects of the current global situation.

Scott Hibbard (Associate Professor of Political Science, DePaul University) presented a number of eye-opening geopolitical facts about the refugees' countries of origin and the Middle East region as a whole, giving the audience some valuable insights into the complexities that feed and sustain the tension and conflict that force people to flee their homes. His discussion of the implications of all this information for international relations, U.S. foreign policy, and refugee concerns was thoughtful and revealing.

His wife, Tara Magner (Director of the MacArthur Foundation's Chicago Commitment) traced common routes that asylum seekers take to Europe and the United States, including the points where they finally land and make their first application for refugee status. Her figures showing the numbers settled in various countries were astonishing. She followed the refugees' journey to United States, through the various departments whose regulations and procedures they must navigate, and through the hearing processes necessary to determine whether or not they meet UNHCR criteria for refugee status. She provided a deeper look into the asylum seekers' human experience of fear, frustration and endurance.



While neither presenter claimed to offer definitive answers to the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers, they did provide an excellent springboard for communities ready to explore their options for local action and policy advocacy. With this understanding of the refugee and resettlement process, faith communities and other concerned groups will be able to see several opportunities for intervention by our congregations:

- through sponsorship of refugee families resettled in the United States;
- Through visitation of asylum seekers in detention in the United States, post-detention accompaniment, and resettlement, and
- through advocacy for improvements in the system, including the abolition of child detention and relief from the threat and reality of deportation.

Presenters

Scott Hibbard is a DePaul University Professor who teaches courses on American foreign policy, Middle East politics, and international relations. He has been at DePaul since 2005 and spent the 2009-2010 academic year teaching at the American University of Cairo, as part of a Fulbright Award from the U.S. Department of State. Professor Hibbard worked in the United States government for twelve years, as a program officer at the United States Institute of Peace and as a legislative aide in the United States Congress. He is the author of *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United States*

Tara Magner joined the MacArthur Foundation in 2012 as a U.S. Program Officer focusing on Migration, Policy Research, and other program areas, and was named Director of the Foundation's Chicago Commitment in January, 2016. Tara's previous service includes advising Senator Patrick Leahy (for the Senate Judiciary Committee) on immigration, refugee protection, human rights, national security matters, Freedom of Information Act, and government secrecy. In 2008, Tara was appointed to President Obama's Transition Policy Working Group on Immigration. She has also served as a Commissioner on the American Bar Association's Commission on Immigration; Director of Policy at the National Immigrant Justice Center; and Deputy Director of the Winston Foundation.

Tara has published articles with the MIT Press, the International Journal of Refugee Law, and the Georgetown Immigration Law Journal.

Contact David Folkes, 805/232-6308, St.Nicholas Peace and Justice, for more information.

*United States High Commissioner for Refugees

View from the French Quarter

by Amalia Vagts, Executive Director

With gratitude for input from others in the LGBTQ community

I've just returned from the 14th ELCA Churchwide Assembly and inaugural Grace Gathering in New Orleans, attending in my capacity as executive director of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries. For me, the week was a combination of joy, sadness, growth, challenge, gratitude, disappointment, and a deepened commitment to proclaim the good news. Hey, sounds like church!

I was reminded of what called me to engage in this ministry in the first place. My fire has been lit with resolve. We've got work to do.

Seven years and three assemblies after changing church policy to affirm the calls and relationships of LGBTQ people, our community was largely invisible in the programming throughout the week. I'm thankful for all the thought and hard work that went into an increasingly wonderfully diverse and multi-perspective assembly. I'm thankful for the provoking and energizing conversations about racism, racial equality, and white privilege. It was fantastic to see how much is changing! Our church could have also delighted this past week in celebrating LGBTQ folks as we rightfully celebrate the growing, gorgeous and long overdue overall diversity of our denomination. There are now 659 Reconciling in Christ ministry settings, with another 430 on the journey. There are 230 openly LGBTQ pastors, deacons, and candidates for ministry. There are congregations that have formed or grown because of the ELCA's deepening welcome of LGBTQ people.

All cause for great joy - yet, our church leaders missed many opportunities to celebrate this good news and the gifts of LGBTQ people.

Because there was no formal space for LGBTQ people at this assembly, Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries and ReconcilingWorks created it for LGBTQ people and allies at co-led events throughout the week. We met for daily prayer - five of these led by openly LGBTQ ministry leaders, and one by an ally bishop. The gathered group ranged from 30 - 75 each day. It was amazing to have that space with our people and our allies. I'm grateful especially to our allies for their commitment. Some people commented about how they had to "figure out where the LGBTQ people were." At future assemblies, we hope to see more publicity about LGBTQ-led opportunities in order bring more awareness to those not yet familiar with the many ELCA people working in support of a church that celebrates diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions.

Midway through the week, we co-hosted a reception and working conversation at a hotel across the street from the Convention Center.

Nearly 100 people (including four ELCA bishops) gathered for community and socializing. After the reception, about half the group stayed for conversation in small groups. We invited conversation about what LGBTQ people and friends need as we look ahead to 2019. That year will be the 10th anniversary of the policy change that began to recognize same-sex relationships and welcome partnered LGBTQ people to serve as rostered leaders. We asked people to share a word



to describe the current state of LGBTQ people in the ELCA, to consider what LGBTQ people in the ELCA still need and to reflect on why they stay in the struggle.

There were two consistent themes in these conversations - invisibility and possibility.

Many LGBTQ people and allies felt invisible this past week.

As we see the beautiful changes coming from a deepened

understanding of what the church receives when we welcome, affirm, and include diverse voices, faces, languages and cultures - we long for our LGBTQ identities to become part of that richness. Those who are LGBTQ and know others in the community felt comforted to see familiar LGBTQ faces in worship and to see LGBTQ people and allies as leaders and voting members throughout the week. Yet others newer to our church had no idea that they were among friends. You can't see we're LGBTQ by looking at us. LGBTQ people need to claim our own identities, and our allies must name us in order for our diversity to be known. We lament the invisibility of LGBTQ people among those explicitly celebrated in the hall and in worship. It is our sincere hope and prayer that future assemblies will visibly celebrate the gifts of LGBTQ people and worship leaders.

Many LGBTQ people and allies saw the possibility of how our church can move forward in great ways this past week. We have hope for the possibility of a richer kingdom when LGBTQ voices and faces are celebrated. We align with others who feel invisible and filled with possibility - and we are filled with resolve to help our church continue to move forward to that great day.

We have begun to experience how good the church can be when we break from a narrow understanding of church dominated by white Northern European culture. We are all connected in this journey - especially those of us seeking to lead from the margins. What joy awaits this church as we continue to break open the racism, patriarchy, heterosexism, homophobia and transphobia, ableism, classism and sexism which continue to confine us.

As we do the hard work, we more clearly see the possibility of becoming a church transformed by the named and celebrated gifts of all people.



Amalia Vagts (pictured here on the assembly floor with Proclaim member Rev. Emily E. Ewing) was on the floor "legally" for the first time this year (was also there as a peaceful protester in 2005). This year, she especially enjoyed seeing young people at the microphones, conversations about race from a fantastic variety of perspectives, would love to hear Leymah Gbowee speak every single day, and appreciated

hallway conversations during this churchwide assembly - with those committed to our work, those who've never heard of us, and those who need our work but can't yet be public about it.

Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries: www.elm.org

ELCA Approves Lutheran-Catholic Ecumenical Document

NEW ORLEANS (Aug.10, 2016) – The 2016 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Churchwide Assembly took several significant steps Wednesday moving forward the mission of this church as a church for the sake of the world.

By a vote of 931 to 9, the assembly overwhelmingly accepted the “Declaration on the Way,” a unique ecumenical document that marks a path toward greater unity between Catholics and Lutherans. Following the vote, an emotional assembly stood to applaud the momentous decision.

At the heart of the document are 32 “Statements of Agreement” that state where Lutherans and Catholics do not have church-dividing differences on topics about church, ministry and the Eucharist. More tentatively, the document also explores differences that remain.

“Dear sisters and brothers, let us pause to honor this historic moment,” said ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton addressing the assembly following the vote. “Though we have not yet arrived, we have claimed that we are, in fact, on the way to unity. After 500 years of division and 50 years of dialogue, this action must be understood in the context of other significant agreements we have reached, most notably the ‘Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification’ in 1999.”

“This ‘Declaration on the Way’ helps us to realize more fully our unity in Christ with our Catholic partners, but it also serves to embolden our commitment to unity with all Christians,” said Eaton.

To honor the occasion, Eaton presented a gift of communion ware made especially for the assembly to Bishop Denis J. Madden, auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and co-chair of the ‘Declaration on the Way’ task force. ELCA Presiding Bishop Emeritus Mark Hanson served as co-chair from the ELCA. The task force had gathered and presented to the church agreements reached in dialogues between Lutherans and Catholics.

“I feel so privileged and so grateful to have spent these few days with you. Speaking with you, sharing time with you, and praying with you,” Madden said. “I thank you for allowing me and my colleagues to join you in the Eucharist celebrations which have been a great joy and always a remembrance that soon we will be celebrating these together as one body.”



The assembly expressed gratitude for the pioneering ecumenical text and commended the declaration (together with other ecumenical texts) as a resource “for the common life of the church as we approach 2017 and beyond.” Concerning the Statement of Agreements, the assembly’s action to receive the 32 common affirmations “recognized that there are no longer church dividing issues” between Lutherans and Catholics with respect to these statements.

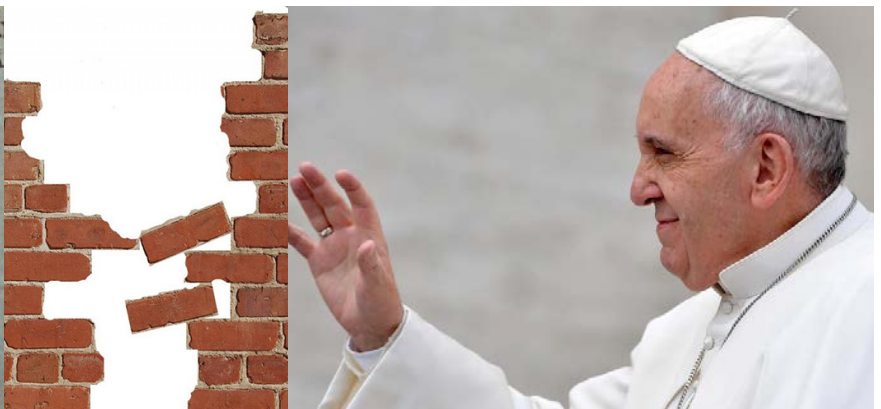
In another major consideration, the assembly voted 921 to 11 in favor of AMMPARO – the ELCA’s strategy to Accompany Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities.

The ELCA developed this strategy based on commitments to uphold and guarantee the basic human rights and safety of migrant children and their families; to address the root causes of migration in countries from Central America’s Northern Triangle and Mexico and the treatment of migrants in transit; to work toward just and humane policies affecting migrants in and outside the U.S.; to engage as a church with all of its companions, affiliates and partners to respond to the migration situation and its causes; and to advocate for migrant children and their families.

The assembly also voted 895 to 23 to accept the 2017-2019 budget proposal approved and recommended by the ELCA Church Council. The budget proposal includes:

- a 2017 current fund spending authorization of \$65,296,005 and a 2017 ELCA World Hunger spending authorization of \$24.8 million;
- a 2018 current fund income proposal of \$64,057,220 and a 2018 ELCA World Hunger income proposal of \$25 million; and
- a 2019 current fund income proposal of \$64,151,175 and a 2019 ELCA World Hunger income proposal of \$25 million.

The assembly – the highest legislative authority of the ELCA – is meeting at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans. Meeting under the theme “Freed and Renewed in Christ: 500 Years of God’s Grace in Action,” the assembly’s business will include preparations for observing the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.



Who Woulda Thunk it?

There's an old joke that tells of St. Peter giving a tour to some new arrivals in heaven. He shows them many different worship venues. They peek inside and see a variety of ways to worship God. However, at one location St. Peter says to the group, "Please be quiet and tiptoe around this site. It's the Lutherans and they think they are alone up here."

That old joke pretty much tells of relationships between different branches of the Christian church. There was little cooperation between denominations until the end of the 20th century. Add to that the Roman Catholic view that the Protestants were "our fallen brethren." No love lost there!

Now fast forward to the 21st century. Relationships are much different. We Lutherans cooperate with other Protestants and (take a breath here) there's even talk that we might talk with Catholics too! That is about to become reality in Evanston.

Earlier this year a group of Evanston Lutheran and Catholic people gathered to plan a year of events leading up to the celebration of the 500th Anniversary of Luther's start to the Reformation. The event will culminate with a service on October 31, 2017 when the Bishop of the Metro Synod and the Archbishop of Chicago will renew a Synod-Archdiocese covenant.

In the meantime, many events linking Evanston Lutherans and Catholics together are planned. We will have the opportunity to participate in activities at many interest and activity levels. Here's a sampling of events planned.

- September 11, 2016 - **God's Work Our Hands**
Kick-off at Immanuel Lutheran Church at 12:30p.m. A brown bag lunch will be provided.
- October 2, 9, and 16, 2016 - group discussions of "Conflict to Communion" a document looking at the steps taken toward full, visible unity of the church, held at St. Nick's Catholic Church from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Couples in Catholic/Lutheran marriages may be particularly interested in these dialogs.
- October 30, 2016, a presentation by the Reverend Doctor Martin Marty will kick off more activities planned to link Grace, St. Paul's, Immanuel, St. Nick's and St. Mary's dialog surrounding Lutheran-Catholic issues. This presentation will be held at St. Paul's Lutheran Church at 3:30 p.m.



In the months ahead other events will include a hymn sing, "Hymns and Hops", "Myth Busters" panel discussion, dialog on Lutheran-Catholic marriages, and several other opportunities to share our common Christian faith. So stay tuned for more information and updates. It's an exciting time in the Christian churches of Evanston. We will let you know specifics as they become available.

Connie Wood

Grace, Showing Our Pride, July 31, 2016



Grace

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