**POP Member: Rachel Henderson, age 34**

I have been a member of Prince of Peace in Brooklyn Park for several years. I became active at POP when I moved to the Twin Cities for a job, just a year out of college. I came to Prince of Peace because my family had already settled in there, but very quickly, I found my own niche.

One of the things that drew me to POP was the vast amount of activities posted weekly and monthly. Coming from a small-town community in Iowa, church was not much more than Sunday morning activities and the occasional Wednesday evening gathering depending on the season. One of the first activities I participated in was Theology on Tap, a gathering of adults on Sunday evenings at various local restaurants or pubs. Not only did this offer me a chance to get to know other young adults from POP, it was a great way to get to know my city by visiting places I was unfamiliar with. Every month, the conversation would change as would the group of people, but each time it left me invigorated and charged, ready to tackle to coming week.

Soon after I came to POP, the Pastor approached me about a new program, called Group Life, which would be about small groups of people of similar demographics or schedules, meeting together to work through a 6-8 week series of topics. Of course, I was thrilled to host a group of young adults, singles and couples at my house. I had been in a ladies small group in college and formed great, lasting, trusting friendships with those ladies. Group Life at POP is more than I could have ever imagined. Not only did I form deep, lasting relationships; every week, I am challenged to think and grow, both in my personal faith and as a part of a larger community.

Prince of Peace offers a variety of worship styles, to suit whatever your personal preference and every week, the sermon is both relevant in the world, locally and globally, and challenges the members to think and grow beyond our comfort zone. Living comfortably is easy, but as we often hear and are reminded on a day to day basis—life is messy. POP staff and lay leaders are always present and ready to jump into a conversation with you about the messiness of life. They are ready to live it with you and walk the walk along side of you and best of all—they will be there to cheer on your victories.

Although I cannot participate due to health limitations, POP offers several worldwide mission opportunities on a regular basis. We are greatly invested in the global communities we visit, to the point that in both countries, we have built several different community projects for our brothers and sisters in Jamaica and Tanzania. It amazes me as the teams prepare and then return from their voyages, the stories they tell, and the joy they share, and the great privilege it is to go out into the world and see it from other perspectives.

Prince of Peace is a church home. As an adult struggling with chronic health concerns, one of the things I value most about POP is its accessibility and love. POP is present and responsive on social media and every week the sermons are made available via podcast. So, no matter my situation, I can have church wherever I am. But, most of all, the thing I love the most is coming to Sunday worship after a hospitalization. It’s the boost I need before returning to the world. Often times, I am very weak and slow, and everything hurts, but what I need for that final bit of healing is the nice warm hug of POP. I need to have communion, and feel that fresh start, I need to visit and greet the people, hugs abound at POP and that is better than any medicine! The family at POP will love you through any hardship in life.
Prince of Peace is a family. A home where generations come together to support one another, love each other and grow together.

We call ourselves a Welcoming Community and I think that is exactly what we would provide for young adults if we are given the opportunity to participate in this project. Come on over, POP will be waiting with a nice warm hug!

**POP Member: Sue Fodstad, age 59**

Prince of peace is my home church. And as I say home I mean "my" home. This church has surrounded me and my family through some difficult times and of course happy times as well. My family has attended Prince of Peace for 26 years. My daughters were confirmed here and one married in the church and one used Pastor Natalia in a different church because of her husband’s denomination. They have both been supported through the years as needed. Especially the years after college, and when they are making big life decisions, and big faith decisions.

This time in a young adult's life, after college is crucial for maintaining faith and choosing a life with the love of God by your side. Keeping this age group involved and drawn to church I feel is so very important. Life decisions are being made and families are possibly being formed with a significant other.

I have seen the struggle some young adults have during this time, they lose touch with friends, or have conflicts with their parents, or just don’t know their direction, and they really need God in their lives.

I would love to see Prince of peace really strengthen their call to these young adults. Because not only do they stay connected with God, they have great role models and mentors for life in a church like ours.

**Scott Taylor, Principal, Park Brook Elementary School**

To Whom It May Concern:

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Brooklyn Park, MN has come alongside Park Brook Elementary, which is located less than a mile from the church, to support the students in their education. I have observed and feel blessed to have the congregation of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church come alongside us with the willingness to give of their time, their talents, and gifts.

Park Brook Elementary is a pre-k – 5th grade elementary school with approximately 300 students. Approximately 85% of the students qualify for free/reduced lunches, 30% are on the continuum of learning English, and 91% are students of color.

Several days each week faithful members of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church come to Park Brook to enjoy lunch a student and then spend time reading. The readers work with the same student all year. Not only do they encourage the students in their reading and listen to and reading to the student, they develop a special relationship which is important for students.

When one enters the Park Brook office the warm, welcoming visual atmosphere is enhanced by the colors on the walls. A number of Prince of Peace spent a Saturday painting the office. Prior to this, the
office was a bland off-white, but now it is a two-tone that enhances the atmosphere. A number of families of color have not had good experiences in school, and my desire is to create that atmosphere where parents know that they are welcome and know that their children are important to us, which begins with the physical atmosphere we create for the students.

A number of times the youth group has come over to assist with projects throughout the building. I sometimes wonder if they know the impact that they have when they come to the school, but their help is always appreciated. They spend time working on projects that we just don't always have the time to complete, but make a huge difference. For example, we use stability balls as seats in our school; the youth group has helped clean these balls which is needed. They have assisted with weeding the courtyard amongst other tasks.

One special time for me was being able to visit with the youth group after they were finished working. We spent time praying and I was able to share my faith with them. As a Christian, it was a blessing to not only have the youth group come and assist the school, but to encourage them in their faith in Jesus Christ.

Prince of Peace assists with meeting the tangible needs of the community, living out their faith in Christ.

Later this year, the congregation will be preparing a meal for Park Brook families. This meal has taken place the past few years prior to our concert the students present to their families. This meal has helped bring families in for the concert. I have noticed that the congregation is sensitive to the dietary needs of some of our families.

I have noticed Prince of Peace Congregation members devote their time to the students at Park Brook, and being so consistent so that students can depend upon them. While I have highlighted some of the events above, I can think of so many other times when the church has come alongside us or let us use their facility. I have seen them live out their faith in Christ by reaching out to their community.

Scott Taylor, Principal
Osseo Area Schools, District 279
Park Brook Elementary