

April Remarks from Our Pastors

In their reports to Council each month, Pastor Gregg and Pastor Rachel conclude with some personal remarks that summarize the most recent period of their leadership here at Grace.

Senior Pastor's Remarks:

Lent has been good this year, and it isn't over yet.

Midweek activities during Lent have always been a highlight of my experience in a congregation and this year is perhaps the best I've known. I imagine this is because of the inability to gather in these ways for the past couple of years. Fortunately, we are making our way forward now, and the community around tables and well-worn liturgy has somehow managed to feel both familiar and refreshing. I hope others have found our time together to be beneficial, too.

Beyond those basic elements, our subject matter has been strong. Each week we explored together what it means to be a church together, without sacrificing the unique perspectives each of us has. We explored what it means to be church, Lutheran, church *together*, and church for the sake of the world.

We got a better sense of who we are, what we are carrying forward, and what God is calling us to become as a people who live out their faith in this place. We have celebrated our theological heritage, our unique congregational story, our strong bonds of friendship, and our renewed commitment to make a meaningful impact on the community around us. I am so grateful for every person who shared their time and their voice in these events, and equally humbled by the strong willingness of so many to supply us with delicious food throughout these weeks.

Now we are about to embark on the most meaningful part of the Lenten journey: Holy Week. This is the portion of Lent where we set aside all that we are doing and turn our attention towards what God in Christ has done for us. Yes, we will still lead in worship, prepare food for Easter Sunday, rehearse music, bring flowers for the cross and more. All these things are not exactly service, though - more like observance. These are rituals - ways of embodying our humble acknowledgement of what Jesus has done. These things we do in Holy Week are responses of love, expressed in light of a love so great that it would gather us all together and redeem us in resurrection light.

And following Holy Week, we get a whole season of celebration! Easter is not just one day, but an entire season to dwell in the promises and freedom of God's victory over sin, death, and all the forces that oppose God's Reign. Easter is a victory we share, even though we didn't do anything to obtain it. The victory is extended to us through God's Grace, and we receive it without hesitation. How good it will be to share in this season together, too, in a time when we no longer need to be separated from one another. In a way, this Easter season will be a unique reminder that just as we are not separated from one another as we once were, we are also not separated from God. I look forward to celebrating with you in this season to come.

Peace in Christ,
Pr. Gregg

Pastor's Remarks:

Two years ago, I preached about the "Lentiest Lent I ever Lented" – talking about how the pandemic had given Lent an intense reality of 'giving things up' and cast a deep shadow on the season. This year, while we are not yet done with COVID, I find myself reflecting on how good of a Lent this has been in my eyes. I would not usually characterize Lent as a joyful season, but this Lent has felt different in that way.

I have been so glad to see so many people taking part in our Wednesday evening events; full tables with lively conversation have been uplifting. Our Outreach Committee chose three excellent partners for the year and we've heard great excitement from the partners already. I was blessed to lead our Communion Milestone class for TWELVE children and their adults; it was an afternoon of affirming our place at God's table, enhanced by the striking answers only children can give. Our youth did an outdoor scavenger hunt, reveling in the beautiful weather and the gorgeous landscaping and flowers that members of Grace have so lovingly tended. Personally, we adopted another puppy, and our first puppy, Mina, is over the moon to have a friend.

In this moment, I am grateful for the gift of Grace Lutheran and the gift to be part of ministry in this place. There are so many good things happening and so many good people involved. The Holy Spirit is blowing among us. As we enter into Holy Week and the Easter season, I hope that this joy continues. I hope that God continues to call us together and to send us out. I hope that we keep finding delight in God's world and in one another. If you've had some moments of joy this Lent season, I invite you to share them, with me and with each other. Joy is one of those things that grows the more we share it, and we can never get too much joy.

Peace in Christ,
Pr. Rachel