

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:

Pastor's Remarks:

I remember the first time I heard something like Psalm 104:27-28 used in a prayer. I was sharing a meal with Bishop Riegel (WV-WMD Synod), and I asked him to offer a blessing. Without hesitation, he offered words from the Psalmist, praying, "...the eyes of all look to you, O Lord, and you give them food in due season. You satisfy your creation with good things." The prayer was effective and instructive. Often, we come to God in prayer with a laundry list of requests, hopes, fears, and longings. It is easy to forget that prayer can also be a recitation of the innumerable acts of God's goodness. Much like the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer that is prayed in worship just before we share in Communion, we are on the right track when we take the time to list some of the ways God has been so good, so gracious to us. There is power in the retelling, strength in the ongoing story of a faithful God who provides for us everything we need in life. This is the antidote to the worries of the world, which have threatened every generation with the lies of scarcity. We cannot predict how it will look, but any quick journey through our history is a reminder that God will, somehow, provide for us.

I have seen that provision in the way Grace's people have been so wonderfully supportive recently. The support for the Youth and adult leaders going to the Gathering this summer has been such a powerful witness to the belief we all share in the future of our church. Of course, supporting some of our younger members now is more than supporting the future; we are supporting the church in the present, too. The vitality of our congregation continues to be its multigenerational ministry. We minister to the sick and the healthy, the old and the young, the members and the strangers, so that all may encounter God's grace for themselves. We care for the building and the plant life around it. We look to the needs of the surrounding community, too. In the past month, I have seen so many examples of how all eyes are on God to provide, and through ordinary people like you and me, God has once again provided.

We approach Pentecost in the same way, trusting God will provide for the church. In the very beginning (before 'church' was even a concept), Jesus' promise of the Spirit was made manifest in the community of believers. The newly faithful had seen the risen Lord, and those with long-held beliefs had their eyes opened by a Spirit that was poured out on all nations, such that each heard the truth in their native language for the first time. We will support some of our Youth once again this Pentecost, as several will Affirm their Baptisms. Their commitment to a life of faith is confirmed by all of us, and their milestone is also our chance to reaffirm our own Baptisms. Together, as we pray for God's help and guidance, we remember what we embody – all eyes turn to their Creator in trust and the Creator never leaves them wanting.

Peace in Christ,

Pr. Gregg

Pastor's Remarks:

This month has been full of support for our Youth! We had the Variety Show & Raffle, the Plant Sale, and Youth Sunday! Each of these was great in its own way, and each also supported our Strategic Plan for Grace, bringing our mission into action!

Our Variety Show and Raffle was an evening of fun and fellowship. We had 14 variety acts shared, including mime, tai kwondo, music, poetry, and skits! We raffled off 19 items, including art supplies, quilts, cards, games, and experiences. And we shared an evening meal and so many moments of laughter! Many people commented on how *fun* this evening was – just being together to enjoy something, with the bonus of supporting our kids. In this evening, we made strides in our priority of "Increasing Congregational Connections" – bringing families, especially with children, further into our ministries; getting to know each other better; showing one another that we are loved and belong.

A few weeks later, our Plant Sale, cultivated and run by Sabrina Blanks, filled the stage in the Fellowship Hall with sprouts of all kinds of good things. Once again, members gathered around and delighted in the talent of one of our own, who grew these from seeds! I heard many members talking with each other about planting, gardens, hopes for the seedlings they were buying – connections building around shared passions.

And with those two events complete, **we have reached our 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering fundraising goal!** Thank you to everyone who has supported our Youth as we prepare for this incredible trip! We can't wait to share more about how this trip impacts our Youth (and our adults).

Of course, Youth Sunday can't be forgotten. On May 12, we had 15 Youth and 5 Young Youth take part in our worship leadership. As I said in my sermon, the purpose of this day is not to parade our kids around, but to give them an intentional day of support and encouragement to try out worship leadership roles – and they did so well! Many of the kids tried something new, and a number of them said between services over breakfast that they really enjoyed it and would try it again another Sunday. In those comments, we made strides in another Strategic Initiative: "Growing Volunteers and Leaders", specifically, increasing Youth and Young Adult participation. And perhaps our kids even inspired some of our older members to try something new – we're never too young or too old to serve God!

I've really enjoyed this past month of ministry, with all the connections and fellowship and joy shared at Grace. I hope you've experienced at least a bit of that, too! If so, I invite you to share that story with someone else, to spread the joy a little further. And if you're in need of a joyful moment, I invite you to join us in any one of the many things happening at Grace these days – there's more than enough goodness to go around.

Peace in Christ,
Pr. Rachel