

## **Temple Talk: Growing Together in Faith**

Last week's talk was about Welcoming. Grace has been my church home for 63 years. If we have not met, I regret that I did not welcome you to my home when you first visited. This morning, I want to reflect on how we have been "Growing Together in Faith" over the past year. During this time, my faith- that God is in control and that Grace has a place in God's plan— has deepened through what I have witnessed this past year:

- our congregation's willingness to lead without a full-time pastor;
- the faith and service of our new members; and
- the faith our members openly express in worship.

### **Leading Through Transition**

Grace Lutheran has responded to the leadership needs of this pastoral transition, and I have witnessed several examples firsthand. The Call Committee is one. Each member approaches the work with enthusiasm and has already devoted many hours of preparation in search for our next pastor. In meetings, everyone contributes, identifies points others may have missed, and openly discusses Grace's needs and vision for the future.

### **Learning and Serving Together**

The Men's Sunday School Class offers another example. Despite busy schedules and other commitments, we work together to choose new study topics. And often, during class, we make time to discuss church member's needs and discuss how we can help.

### **Passing Faith to the Next Generation**

The Confirmation Program is another example. I agreed to assist Ruth with the program, in which parents attend class alongside their children. Seeing the parents' commitment to the promises made at their children's baptisms gives me hope for the future of the Church.

**Welcoming New Faith and Service.** I usually attend the early service, where I am encouraged to see new worshipers among us. Brian Wilson, for example, rides his motorcycle here most Sundays and I notice how he reflects on the prelude and postlude. I see his appreciation for the music faithfully provided by Jeremy and the choir. I also think of Kasey Tripp and Conner. During a recent Family Promise teardown, I expected us to be short-handed, but I didn't realize that they had signed up to help. I was both surprised and grateful when they arrived to help and impressed by their willingness to serve.

Worship: I am encouraged by the participation of the younger members. At the early service, I see the next generation of the Church. Some of whom are Aiden, Ava, Nayeli, Harry, Carter, and the older Youth like Lexi, Cameron, Zachary, Ashlyn, just to name a few.

And then, I look around at the adults. We may never know how our presence in worship affects others. I see how music moves us, how deeply our members value communion, and how volunteers faithfully bring communion to those unable to attend.

Grace has shown tremendous resilience during this interim time without permanent Pastoral Leadership. I encourage you to look around and see the faith of our members as we enter the next Chapter with our new Pastor.



## Growing Together in Faith

Grace's mission statement says: **"We share God's grace by welcoming all people, growing together in faith, and joining God's work in our community."** As we volunteer and serve, whether it be by providing a meal for Bethel Men's Shelter, following the Apostle Paul's journey in a Bible study with Ladies in Faith Together (LIFT) or joining together with Seniors at Grace, we form relationships and grow our faith together with others in the church. Grace members Pauline and Milt Jellum embody a lifetime of commitment to their faith. Pauline shares a portion of the impact this has made on their family and the wider community:

Pauline and Milt and their family gained strength for daily life by having a solid foundation of family values, Christian values, and educational values. For the Jellums, both of whom are "cradle Lutherans," church was always a central part of their life.

Pauline and Milt were involved in starting mission churches in Georgia and were charter members. Milt served as financial secretary at churches, while Pauline taught Sunday School, sang in the choir, played music, started women's groups, and served on church councils.



*Pauline Jellum, Karen Harris, and Milt Jellum.*



*Karen Harris, leader of Ladies in Faith Together.*

"Church is where you were on Sunday mornings." This is exemplified by the active involvement at Grace of the Jellum's daughter, Karen Harris, and her husband Art. Karen currently serves as Grace's Assistant Financial Secretary and has been the long-time leader of LIFT. Art is also an active member and served many years as a leader of GYM. The Harris children, Allyson and Matthew, are children of Grace, were active in GYM, enjoyed summer camp activities at Lutheridge and Lutherock, and now have families of their own.

Pauline and Milt were faithful stewards of their resources in order to be able to generously support their church and other missions and charitable organizations over the years. She and Milt have been steadfast to their faith and their churches and have shared their time, talents, and money in significant ways that have made a difference.

Now at the age of 92, Pauline says "being physically active is a challenge but we will continue our financial support of Grace." As it says in Ecclesiastes 3:1 "There is a time for everything, and a season for every purpose under the heavens."

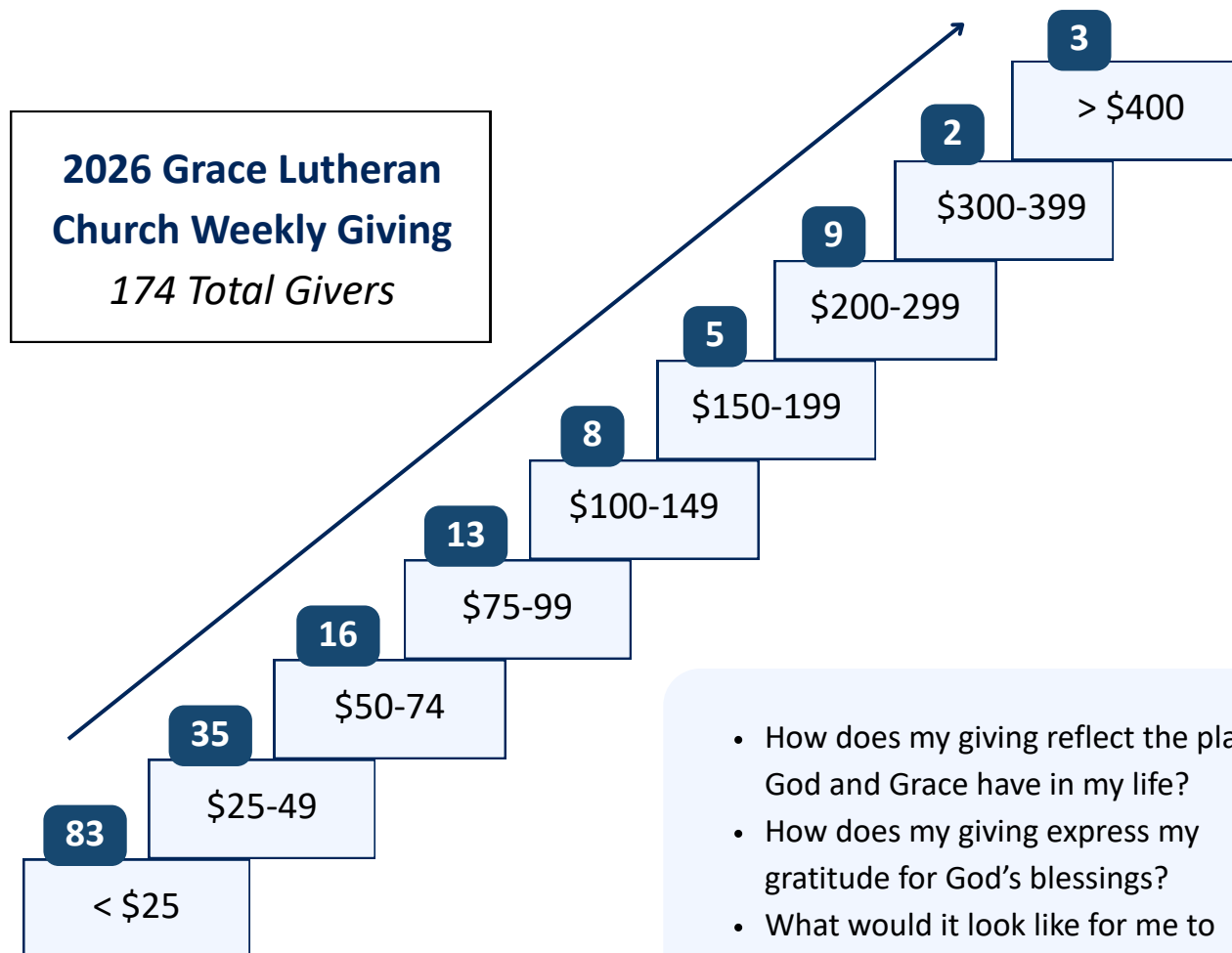
In 2027, as members of Grace, we pledge to renew Grace's commitment to growing together in faith. Together we will move Forward in Faith as we await the Holy Spirit's guidance in selecting our next pastor. As we continue this journey, may we always join with one another to do God's will by utilizing our gifts and in turn experiencing the joys and blessings it brings to ourselves and others.



Our gifts and offerings, joined together, support the ministries that carry out Grace's mission.

The chart below provides a picture of our current giving.

Find your current weekly giving level, then consider the questions below.



- How does my giving reflect the place God and Grace have in my life?
- How does my giving express my gratitude for God's blessings?
- What would it look like for me to take the next step in my giving?