Grace Lutheran Church

October 1, 2024

Dear Grace,

Each week, we begin worship together by proclaiming our congregation's mission: *We share God's grace by welcoming all people, growing together in faith, and joining God's work in our community*. This year, we have been living into our mission, implementing our Strategic Plan and 3 strategic initiatives: Growing Volunteers and Leaders, Increasing Congregational Connections, and Serving Campus and Community. We have made great strides in our work, and as part of our fall Stewardship drive, we will be sharing stories of these successes!

Our first story comes from Grace member Chris Sherk. Chris's story shares how living into our mission makes a difference in the lives of members, neighbors, and those we haven't even met yet.

> *Living in downtown Rock Hill, I see the needs of our neighbors on my daily walks. And each day, mindful of these needs, I say this prayer: "Dear Lord, help us to be your voice speaking out love and acceptance, help us to be your feet walking beside those in need, help us to be your hands to clothe, feed, and shelter them."*
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> *My late wife, Sue, and I, shared a faith-based commitment to service, which was strengthened during our time attending the Sunday evening Mass at the Oratory. We began serving in the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen, regularly seeing more than 50 people a day. After COVID and Sue's passing, I felt the need for a change and began reconsidering my roots in the Lutheran and Presbyterian churches while looking for a new faith community. Checking out church websites, I found Grace and online worship. The service at Grace, the music ministry, and the all-welcoming message I was receiving attracted me to Grace.*
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> *As I became part of the Grace congregation, I wanted to get more involved with church activities. When Leslie Starnes, executive director of Family Promise, gave a presentation at Grace, I was interested, and a follow-up sermon gave me the final push to commit. As I considered the volunteer roles, I imagined that Saturday overnight host might be tough to fill, and so I have made that 'my night' to volunteer.*
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> *As I've volunteered, I've gotten to know many Grace members. I've enjoyed talking with Heather Litzinger and her boys, Cameron and Zachary. I've joined Bob Stonebraker and Annie-Laurie Wheat for dinner with our guests – Annie-Laurie knows how to keep the conversation flowing! On another Saturday evening, I got to know Bob Wasserman better, and I was blown away watching Ruth playing a card game with one of the children. She was a natural, engaging the child – it was terrific!*

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I also enjoy getting to know the families who stay with us. One of our guests was from up north, where I'm from, and we shared stories of our wintertime experiences. I had a conversation with another guest, and she shared how deeply grateful she was for the hospitality Grace had shown. I've heard this several times; one of the most common things I hear in my conversations with the guests is how Grace is one of their top host churches in hospitality and comfort. One family even left a nice thank-you note.

I think it was destined for me to help in this way. From my daily prayer to Saturday nights with Family Promise, God has been guiding me to serve our neighbors. I'm glad to be doing that with Grace!

In 2025, we will be **Renewing Our Purpose** and recommitting to our Strategic Plan, initiatives, and mission. In the coming weeks, we will share more success stories. We will also hear generosity stories from members - how they see God working at Grace, and why they choose to support Grace financially.

In addition to these stories, bulletin inserts, an invitation letter, and a brochure will share more about Grace's continuing goals for 2025 and how you can support and be a part of them. In all of this, we hope you will see just how much your support can mean for our congregational ministry!

In a few weeks, you will be invited to consider your offering for the coming year. Please begin praying about this request and consider how God is leading you to respond. As people of faith, we give to God joyfully as we are able, using the blessings we have been given to give back to God's church. With our responses, we are sharing the love of God in the world. Giving generously together, we will be able to serve God and our community in exciting ways!

On October 27th, we will participate in Commitment Sunday by making our commitments for our 2025 offerings to God during the worship service. (You will receive your Commitment Card in the mail later this month.) You may also mail your Commitment Card to the church office or fill out your card online. Know that <u>every</u> commitment, of <u>every</u> size, makes an impact in our ability to do God's work at Grace.

Thank you for being part of Grace! Thank you for supporting and giving to the ministry God has set before us. Please pray for our ongoing work together, **Renewing Our Purpose** in 2025.

Peace in Christ,

Grace's Stewardship Committee Pr. Gregg Pr. Rachel

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