

July 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:

Today I'm writing from the waiting room at Discount Tire. I recommend this business to you and not because they are giving me a discount for saying so (I checked). Nevertheless, even with the perks of a reasonably comfortable chair and the free WiFi that allows me to draft these remarks while I wait, the whole experience is still a pain. Somewhere along the way, I drove over a screw, and once embedded in my tire, it has been letting air out ever since. Most (if not *all*) of you know the frustration. You know the way issues like this can change your plans and disrupt your schedule. You also know there is no way around the problem. Tires roll better with air and making some kind of repair is non-negotiable.

This kind of disruption is what we faced during our time in New Orleans for the Youth Gathering. Our plans were disrupted by delays, weather, crowds, and construction (just to name a few). With each disruption, we had to pivot, going in new directions to discover God's provision in a way we did not expect. The delays allowed us more time for community in our little group. The weather sometimes made it so we could play games for which we might not have otherwise made the time. Disruption was a common theme, but because we expected its arrival in one form or another, we could greet it with a spirit of adaptability, rather than dismay. We knew somehow God would provide for us and together trusted that provision.

Disruption itself was one of the themes of the Gathering. The broader theme was 'Created to Be' and this was subdivided by some of the things we – baptized children of God – were created to be. We were created to be disruptive. The event's planners knew this well. Between the language used at Baptism and Affirmation of Baptism, we make promises to proclaim Christ in word and deed, care for others and the world God made, serve people in Jesus' example, and strive for justice and peace in all the earth. In these high and holy callings, I identify a substantial amount of disruption. We work for peace and justice in a world that isn't. We serve and care for others in a world too focused on self-satisfaction and self-preservation. In a world obsessed with acquisition and consumption, we proclaim Christ – the one who gives himself away *without* cost. Our faith certainly calls us into a life of disruption, one that first causes us to set our own comfort to the side, looking instead to the needs Jesus so often heralded as the better foci of our concern.

This is Year B of the lectionary cycle, and it is August. For those who are familiar with the rotation, there is groaning, weeping and gnashing of teeth, for this is the 'Bread of Life' discourse in John's Gospel story. We spend five long weeks exploring the teaching of Jesus that he is the true bread, the sustenance we need. Sitting in a tire store, wishing I was anywhere else, today I think about how I am not missing anything I don't already have. I have Jesus. I have bread to sustain me. I am not spending my time *here* to the benefit of others necessarily, but I will have most of my day (God willing) when I leave, so as I am mindful of what I already have, the dominant thoughts in my head are these: To whom can I give something today? Who is in need? What does my God-given daily bread equip me to do next?

My disrupted day is not ruined. No day could be ruined when Christ is already providing so much.

Peace in Christ,
Pr. Gregg

Pastor's Remarks:

This month included the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans. It was an incredible experience for our 8 youth and 4 adults. This Sunday, between services, we'll be sharing a Thank-You presentation with the congregation, with photos and stories shared by our Youth. Rather than trying to capture all of that in a page, for this month's remarks, I would encourage you to be at the Thank-You presentation, or to view the PowerPoint of that presentation by clicking [HERE](#). This trip would not have happened without the significant support of the Grace congregation, and I am deeply grateful for the many ways Grace made this trip possible.

Peace in Christ,
Pr. Rachel