

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Grace Lutheran Congregation seeks to bear witness to the love of God the Father, shown through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by proclaiming the Word, administering the sacraments, and providing loving service to our community.

Grace Lutheran Church

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Pastor's Message

I can't believe that it's already Lent again. It seems like just over a year ago we were celebrating Lent and now here we are at Lent's threshold again. I guess time really flies when it's not Lent. But seeing as how Lent and Easter this year arrives pretty much as late as it possibly could (don't ask me how they calculate the dates for Easter because I still don't really get it), that only means that next year's Lent will come all the sooner and before we know it, we'll be celebrating Lent again.

"Celebrating Lent". That almost sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it? I mean what's to celebrate? Sombre and sad Sunday services without happy music and "alleluia's". Forty days of giving up something you love. Taking a break from our fast paced lives to make time for silent reflection and remorse doesn't sound all that much like a celebration to me. So how do we "celebrate" it? Why is it even a season of our church? Does it really make a difference?

You know, that's one thing I really appreciate about the church calendar, it's really well thought out. Different seasons are placed in different times for a reason and purpose. So for Lent to be placed where it is, right after Epiphany and right before Easter, was a stroke of genius. While the season of Epiphany tells us about the character and nature of Jesus and Easter tells us of the redeeming grace through Jesus, Lent tells us that we're sinners! Isn't that great?

Wait a second...

Now I'm really confused. Why is it great to be told that we're sinners? Sure, we already know that we are, but it's not like we enjoy being reminded of that fact, not for a whole church season at least. But like in deep Lutheran theological tradition, it is a matter of contrasts. We know that Easter is about grace and mercy and how we are undeservedly forgiven and saved from our sins which is fine and dandy, but how much more fine and how infinitely more dandy Easter is when it's placed right after Lent, the time when we are reminded exactly how sinful we are.

So you see, Lent provides the perfect backdrop for the joyous and wonderful season of Easter. We are first reminded that we are an imperfect race that have fallen short of the glory of God but in spite of all that, Easter comes and we are pronounced children of God, a people once fallen but now raised, a nation once despised but now loved, an individual once a sinner but now a saint. Lent is a sad time of reflection and remorse, but it is also a time of renewal and regeneration. The more sinful we realize that we are, the more grace we find is bestowed upon us! Knowing that the love that God has for us encompasses our entire being, covering our sins and imperfections, recreating us to become the beloved children of God with whom God is well pleased is the greatest news that anyone could ever hear. And that to me, makes Lent all worth it! All thanks and praise be to God! Allelu... oh, we'll wait until after Lent to finish that word...

Grace Gives Back

On Good Friday, Grace Church has an opportunity to spend some time reaching out to our brothers and sisters on the downtown eastside. L.U.M.S. (Lutheran Urban Mission Society) is hosting a Walk of the Cross Service that will take place throughout several downtown neighbourhoods. We are asking for volunteers to make chili and also to hand out chili to people during the walk. Council has agreed that Grace Church will take an active role in this year's walk. Please consider helping out by either preparing some food or joining us on the walk. A sign up sheet will be posted soon.

Lent at Grace Lutheran Church

During the season of Lent, there will be several opportunities for people to be involved in worship, reflection, and fellowship.

Some are listed below:

March 9th Ash Wednesday Service at 7:00 pm

Soup and Sing Series

(Thursday evenings beginning at 6:00 for soup and fellowship. 7:00 pm Evening Prayer Service)

March 17th

March 24th

March 31st

April 7th

April 14th

Sign up sheets for soup will be posted. Please plan to come and consider inviting friends.

April 21st Maundy Thursday

April 22nd Good Friday

ESL classes @ Grace

We offer ESL classes for all levels each Tuesday afternoon between 1:00 PM and 2:00 PM in the church Library. We are charging a nominal fee of \$20 for 12 weeks which covers the cost of supplies and snacks. *Spread the word...*

Preschool Report: Teacher Kim was honoured at the January 30th church service for her twenty years of commitment and dedication to the church's preschool. This occasion provided a time to meet Kim's family, husband Laurie, sons Cody and Luke, as well as some of the preschool families. Over the past twenty years we have seen many changes in the neighbourhood as the demographics changed and we have noticed the changes in our registration numbers. This past year was particularly challenging as we dealt with the lowest enrolment in over ten years, but we are encouraged by the strong start to 2011 with 38 out of 40 spaces filled and very good registration numbers for the fall program. As always, if you know of anyone who is looking for a quality local preschool, please feel free to talk up Grace Lutheran Preschool. We have newly printed colour brochures available for you to pass on to friends and neighbours. They're located on the table in the Narthex.

Yes we have seen many changes but we have remained committed to the play-based learning model that has been the essence of our program. The value of play based learning is enjoying a renewed acceptance; full day kindergarten is embracing this model. People are starting to talk and write about the value of play. The following article was printed in a recent YMCA newsletter and describes how play can help with learning, creativity and social skills.

Let's Play with Our Children! By Walter F. Drew

Printed with permission from Child care information Exchange

For the past two years I have been involved with creative play workshops for parents: hands-on play experiences for adults. Using an abundant variety of unusual recycle materials, as well as clay, blocks, and paint, we play, sometimes alone, sometimes with others. Adults, we fiddle and explore with stimulating materials, using them in different ways for organizing, building, arranging, or otherwise creating unique three-dimensional patterns and designs which no one has ever seen before.

"The colours attracted me...as did the idea of building something. I began to put the pieces out one at a time, according to how the colours looked together. The construction has a tilt, an unevenness, and a rolling quality...sort of like life itself." -Margaret

Spontaneous creative play relaxes us and focuses our attention, so that we can experience our own creativity. In the same way as children engage in the reverie of spontaneous play, we, as adults, rediscover the joy and importance of play and creativity.

Play develops curiosity and self-determination.

Play encourages us to follow our own intuition and satisfy our curiosity. We find out about the world through self-active exploration and determination, both of which develop naturally through active creative play.

"As I was playing with the materials, I imagined myself back in my grandmother's time and this was my one-room school house (pointing to her structure). This is the first time as an adult I was able to follow my imagination and do this. I play with my children, but I only follow their imagination, not my own." -Doris

Following play, we talk about our experiences. Focusing first on the physical play, we share what we did, how we used the materials, what thoughts or feelings we had as we played, and whatever associations are summoned by our play. Reflecting and sharing aloud about our play experience validates us and the importance of play in relationship to creativity. Our play reveals new knowledge of our world and new potential for us as learners.

Play builds knowledge of ourselves and social relationships.

Play provides a safe way to explore different roles and to express other facets of our personalities. New connections are made.

"At first I didn't want to do this. But then as I got started...all of my inner feelings started to come out. With kids, you put your feelings on the back burner and deal with their feelings. Then, you realize that you have to take a moment for yourself."- Linda Continued...

Play builds self-esteem and a sense of personal power.

Hands-on, self-directed, satisfying play teaches us to believe in our own inspirations. We can plan, make decisions, experience control, and express our ideas through creative activity.

"You have to believe in yourself and focus your imagination on what your goal is, then you can accomplish it...say, 'This is me! I can do it!'" - Geraldine

It is up to us as parents to observe, listen, and interact with our children in play to better understand the importance of their instinctive, spontaneous, creative play, and to engage in play ourselves. We can make our children's play hearty, enjoyable, and safe, through our companionship and encouragement.

Play enables us to focus and develops our power of concentration.

Play relaxes us and helps us to focus. The experience of being absorbed in a pointed play activity develops our capacity to concentrate and leads to a sense of fulfillment and a feeling of productivity.

"At first, I found that things that worked before didn't work today. But as I continued to work at it, I became engrossed in the play and forgot everything else. How often this happens to children! I see why they enjoy their play so much." -Rita

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Each of us, child or adult, has a developmental need to experience our creativity through play. It is essential, not only to understand, but to represent, to express this capacity through form and action, and, in turn, to value and help develop that ability within our children. But first we as adults must be aware of that power within ourselves.

Play builds the foundation for success and personal competence.

The richer the play experience, the richer the *potential* for understanding and self-expression. Fantasy play is important in forming this base of experience.

"I tried to think of how these dowels could represent people; I stood some up. As people they looked beautiful. I had tall ones, short ones, some are heavy. I love people and we have all kinds of people to deal with. I see all kinds of people here." - Hattie

Play teaches us to value differences.

Through play we come to see the natural diversity in what other people make, think, say, and feel. We learn to value differences rather than fearing them.

"I kept looking at others' stuff and thinking, 'What can that be?' Then I thought about how awful it is to ask a kid, 'Matt, what are you making?' or 'What is it?' It doesn't have to be anything in particular, it can just be." - Julie

Play is the heart of rejuvenation.

Play allows us to see things differently. Messing around with recycle materials, blocks, paint, and clay is fun. Making playfulness part of our daily lives facilitates quality time.

"I didn't know what to do with the materials, so I just listened to the music and then my mind started to wander faraway and I began building a castle. I felt very peaceful and calm as I was playing and building." -Marilyn

Let's play with our children! Let's take the time to relax and play for our own well being! Through creative play everyone learns in their own way, exploring, thinking discovering. We don't have to know all the answers; we don't have to be certain of what needs to be done next. In play we acknowledge our willingness to be equal, to not know, to learn with our children. We interact with an attitude of "What happens if..." or "I wonder if...?"

By playing as adults—by ourselves or in collaboration with others—we learn again to value the play and creative energy of children.

Walter F. Drew is the founding director of the Institute for Self Active Education and the Boston Public Schools' Recycle Center in Boston, Massachusetts. He is also the creator of Dr. Drew's Blocks.

RECALL NOTICE

(submitted by Heleen Scrooby)

The Maker of all human beings (GOD) is recalling all units manufactured, regardless of make or year, due to a serious defect in the primary and central component of the heart.

This is due to a malfunction in the original prototype units code named Adam and Eve, resulting in the reproduction of the same defect in all subsequent units. This defect has been technically termed "Subsequential Internal Non-Morality," or more commonly known as S.I.N., as it is primarily expressed. Some of the symptoms include:

1. Loss of direction ...
2. Foul vocal emissions
3. Amnesia of origin
4. Lack of peace and joy
5. Selfish or violent behavior
6. Depression or confusion in the mental component
7. Fearfulness
8. Idolatry
9. Rebellion

The Manufacturer, who is neither liable nor at fault for this defect, is providing factory-authorized repair and service, free of charge, to correct this defect. The Repair Technician, JESUS, has most generously offered to bear the entire burden of the staggering cost of these repairs. There is no additional fee required. The number to call for repair in all areas is: P-R-A-Y-E-R.

Once connected, please upload your burden of SIN through the REPENTANCE procedure. Next download ATONEMENT from the Repair Technician, Jesus, into the heart component. No matter how big or small the SIN defect is, Jesus will replace it with:

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Peace
4. Patience
5. Kindness
6. Goodness
7. Faithfulness
8. Gentleness
9. Self control

Please see the operating manual, the B.I.B.L.E. (Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth) for further details on the use of these fixes.

WARNING: Continuing to operate the human being unit without correction voids any manufacturer warranties, exposing the unit to dangers and problems too numerous to list and will result in the human unit being permanently impounded. For free emergency service, call on Jesus.

DANGER: The human being units not responding to this recall action will have to be scrapped in the furnace. The SIN defect will not be permitted to enter Heaven so as to prevent contamination of that facility. Thank you for your attention!

P.S. Please assist where possible by notifying others of this important recall notice, and you may contact the Father any time by *Knee mail!*