



February Grace Notes

Volume 12 Issue 2

February 2024

Worship in the Wilderness

“Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6)

We begin the season of Lent with a service on Ash Wednesday, February 14 at 7:00 p.m. Through the period of 40 days we are invited to reflect on what it means to be in the “wilderness.” Even though the land is frozen in the midst of winter, it also is a harsh environment.

Wilderness in the Bible reminds us of the people of Israel wandering in the desert until the time of crossing into the promised land came to pass. It was a time of testing their resolve to choose God. Jesus also found himself in the wilderness after being baptized by John in the Jordan River. The scriptural provision sustained Jesus knowing fully well that “a person does not live by bread alone but by the very “Word” of God. The same “Word” or Divine presence is consistent from the beginning of time.

Jenny Philips writing about Jesus and the wilderness explained that in the Bible wilderness is a “liminal space—an in between place where ordinary life is suspended, identity shifts, and new possibilities emerge.”

We go through a particular season where we experience turmoil that can sometimes be translated as doubt. It is a personal journey in the midst of change. The promised hope is that we are resilient because God is always doing a new thing. Paul said, “ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

Each Sunday during Lent we are invited to ponder what it means to be on a journey:

*A Spirit led Journey, A Simple Journey, A Sorrowful Journey, A Sacrificial Journey,
A truth-Speaking Journey and A surprising Journey.*

“The desert and the dry land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom like the crocus. They will burst into bloom and rejoice with joy and singing.” (Isaiah 35 :2)

Come and join us for worship at Grace.

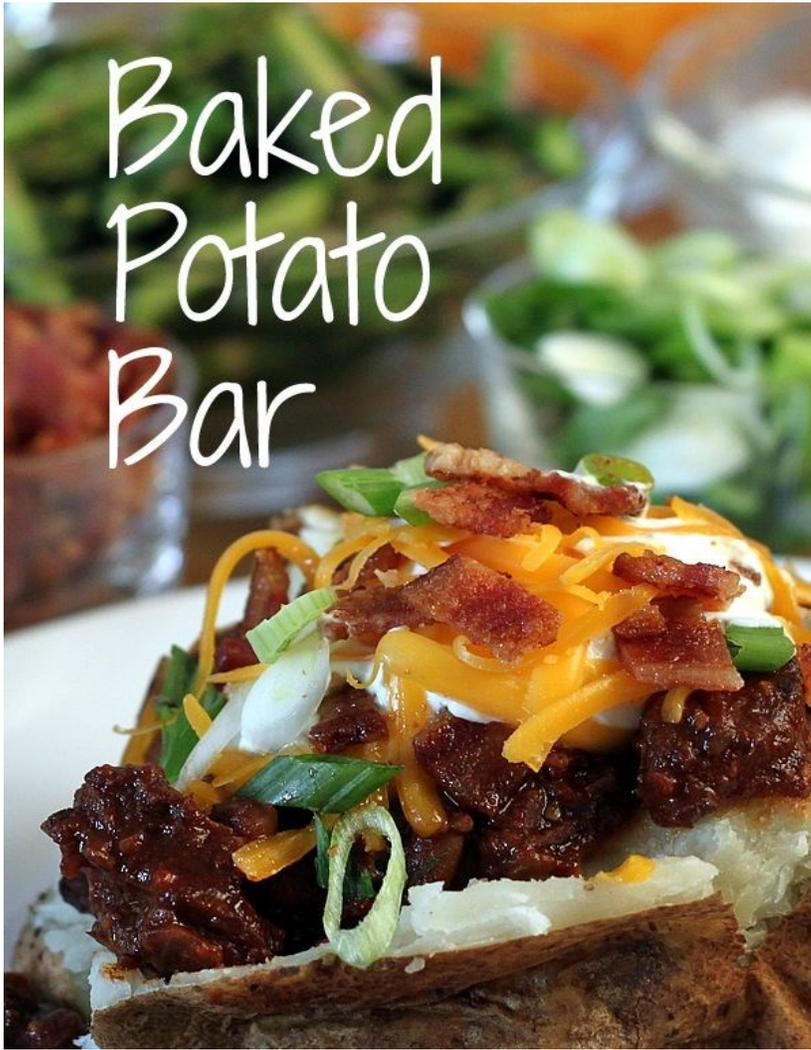
God bless the Church,

Pastor Romir R. Esguerra

LOOKING FORWARD

February 14 - Ash Wednesday Service @ 7:00 p.m.

February 18- First Sunday in Lent. Lenten Study



February 4th
9— 12 pm

Dine In or
Carry Out

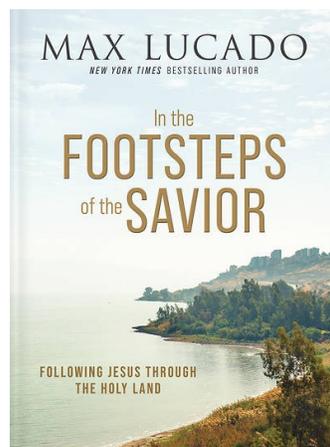
Dine In at
Grace Place

\$8 each

Your choice of
toppings



SIGN UP NOW!



We invite you for 'In The Footsteps of the Savior' Lenten Study in person and via Zoom on **February 21st, 28th** and **March 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th** from 6:00 pm to 7:00 p.m. We will use the book, **In The Footsteps of the Savior** by Max Lucado. The book is not required but is available for purchase \$15.00. A signup sheet for in person or via Zoom is on the bulletin board in the narthex.

PASTOR LAURA BARKLEY to serve Grace UMC beginning July 1st, 2024

As announced last month Pastor Romir is retiring on June 30th, our congregation was very fortunate that we were given prompt notice, as we were at the top of the list in our conference for a new pastor - giving us the best of the best for our church. Last week SPRC met with our district superintendent and are pleased to announce that Pastor Laura Barkley will be joining us here at Grace as of July 1st. Her bio is attached along with a picture of her family - husband Craig and their children. She does have a connection with some of us already as her inspiration for ministry came from Rev Barb Donica who previously served at Grace. We look forward to welcoming Pastor Laura and her family and seeing how she will move Grace in a direction of growth and new ideas.

Blessings, Kara Hocking, SPRC Chair



Pastor Laura Barkley

I was born and raised in Rockford, Illinois. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Human Services from Judson College and a Master of Divinity from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. I am an ordained Elder in the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church. I've served churches in Belvidere, Rockford, Palos Heights, Barrington and most recently, Carlisle, Kentucky.

I have a passion for pastoral care, preaching and teaching. I seek to connect the words of scripture with how to live it out in our everyday lives. I am dedicated to providing a safe place for all people to feel welcome to come and explore their faith. I hope to help congregations and individuals claim their call to share God's love outside the walls of the church.

I am married to Craig and we have seven children: Gracie (22), Mikayla (20), Jonah (16), Zander (12), DeWayne (10), Jaylon (7), and Emmett (7). I am an advocate of foster care and adoption. In my spare time, I love to read, kayak and go on hikes.



Thank
you ❤️

I would like to thank you all for the Christmas cards and gifts. What a blessing to be working with such generous people. You all make me feel like family.

And a big thank you to these ladies for the decorating of the sanctuary for Christmas. Andrea Schoenrock, Pat Meyers, Val Jelinek, Barb Fisher.



Thanks to mission-minded folks at Grace who make a difference in our community and the world.

Thank you to Pastor Romir and congregation friends for the cards & words of support in the passing of my mother.

Donna Robertson

Thank you to the Geopper Snow plowing and removal company for their fantastic job of keeping our church cleared of snow and ice. I have watched them very early morning spreading and plowing to keep us safe. You are the best!

Adrienne Hartman

GRADITUTE CORNER

Thank you to all those members who served in leadership roles in 2023 and for those who have agreed to be in leadership for Grace this year 2024.



Education Update

'SAVE THE DATE'

Vacation Bible School 2024 is scheduled for
Monday, June 24th through Friday, June 28th.

9:00 am—11:30 am

Mars and Be Yond!

Contact **Diane Morrow** if you are interested.

UNITED WOMEN OF FAITH
will meet

Tuesday, February 13 at 1pm in
Grace Place.

We will make our blankets for Big Brothers.
Bring your favorite pair of sewing scissors.

**United Women in Faith will bring the
Children's Moment on the 18th for the
blessing of these blankets.**



Communion Servers

Anyone interested in becoming a
Communion Server please contact
Val Jelinek at 815-744-7924. There is a
sign up sheet in the narthex on the
bulletin board.



Ridgewood United Community Pantry

Operations Summary -- 2023

Operating Income

\$11,830.36	Cluster church groups (incl. New Lenox)
\$10,775.46	Grants (through NIFB)
<u>\$2,444.00</u>	Individual donors
\$25,049.82	

Operating Expenses

\$21,311.05	NIFB -- Food
\$450.00	Trinity UMC -- Utilities/space
\$574.61	Comcast/TMobile -- Internet service
\$819.38	Diapers/wipes
\$165.00	Ahern Exterminating
\$452.00	Waste Management -- Garbage service
<u>\$1,050.31</u>	Supplies (bags, boxes, stamps, etc.)
\$24,822.35	

Capital Expenses

\$7,477.07	Expenses associated with move to new location
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Service Provided by Month (Average)

252	Families served
782	Individuals served

Families Served by Week (Average)

56	1st Wednesday -- New Lenox
69	2nd Wednesday -- Trinity, Ingalls Park, Hope
64	3rd Wednesday -- Grace
53	4th Wednesday -- Plainfield
53	5th Wednesday

Pounds of Food Served by Source

38,255	EFP -- Provided by US Government
11,120	TANF/ESFP/Grant Purch
47,756	Purchased from NIFB
36,518	Bread/Produce -- free from NIFB
<u>12,350</u>	<u>Donated (estimated)</u>
145,999	Total

Amount/Cost of Food Served to Each Family (Average)

13	EFP -- Provided by US Government	\$0.00
4	TANF/ESFP/Grant Paid	\$0.00
16	Purchased from NIFB	\$8.21
12	Bread/Produce -- free from NIFB	\$0.00
<u>4</u>	<u>Donated (estimated)</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>
48	Total	\$8.21

Families & individuals served continued to rise during 2023.

47% of operating income came from donations through churches

43% of operating income came from grants

10% of operating income came from individual donors

89% of operating expenses went to food, diapers & wipes



OUR CHURCH'S FINANCIAL HEALTH

December

2023 Income & Expense Summary

Comparison to expected cash flow for budget approved 12/20/23

	December		Year to Date	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
INCOME	\$35,809	\$45,336	\$279,500	\$295,771
EXPENSES				
Apportionment	\$2,317	\$13,902	\$27,804	\$27,804
Salaries & Benefits	\$14,886	\$15,023	\$188,390	\$179,427
Administration	\$1,220	\$937	\$14,650	\$12,536
Programming	\$934	\$469	\$11,200	\$7,436
Church Buildings	<u>\$6,233</u>	<u>\$6,294</u>	<u>\$93,100</u>	<u>\$86,118</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$25,590	\$36,625	\$335,144	\$313,321
	\$10,219	\$8,711	-\$55,644	-\$17,550

Notes:

- 1) Strong finish to 2023. Income exceeded budget by over \$16k.
- 2) Expenses were \$24K less than budgeted.
- 3) Apportionment to NIC was paid in full

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS ARE READY FOR PICK UP!

Your 2023 financial giving statements are now available. If you haven't picked them up already, please stop by the table outside the church office and pick yours up today. Help us save \$ on postage expenses. Thanks, Jim Morrow

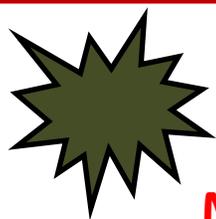
What's Happening at Grace DayCare

The children are enjoying playing in Grace Place when the weather does not cooperate outside!

Several babies have transition to the toddler room so there are a few openings in the baby room. Tina is calling parents on the waiting list to fill the spots Financially the daycare is doing well for the month of December. Educational costs were a little higher than usual due to the teachers doing more craft projects with the kids during the holiday season.

The dishwasher in the kitchen is old and it needs to be replaced. The daycare has been approved for the Start Smart Grant. The daycare program will receive \$20,000 each quarter and this will end September 2024.--\$15,000 of this grant money goes directly to staff and the other \$5000 may be used for rent and supplies. The teachers and staff will be receiving a bonus and a raise in March! There are 12 women on the daycare staff. Tina is working on her Master's Degree in ECE in Administration at National Louis University, she should graduate December 2024 from the program.

Peace, Diane Morrow



**Grace United
Methodist Church is
celebrating paying our
apportionments in full for
2023!**



February 14 - Ash Wednesday
March 24 - Palm Sunday -
March 30 - Easter Egg Hunt 10:00 a.m.
March 31—Easter Sunday
May 5 -Confirmation
June 2 - ASP Commissioning Day
June 8-15 - ASP Trip
June 24-27, 2024 - VBS



Like us on
Facebook

Have you friended Grace on Facebook? Type in '**Grace Umc**' in your search bar and friend us. This is another avenue for you to keep up on 'what's happening' here and to share

with your family and friends. We have special events that your family and friends can attend and enjoy their time here. And maybe they'll want to join us in Sunday School, or the choir, or a committee. Let Grace UMC be their source of spiritual growth.

Happy Anniversary

Les & Maria Cheney February 20, 1983
 Ubaldo & Shannon Rojas February 23, 2020

Happy Birthday

- 2/1—Cheri Johnson
- 2/2—Carol Zettergren
- 2/4—Trudy Pearson
- 2/8—Patricia Daniel
- 2/9—Stella Guzman
- 2/10—Stella Slinkard
- 2/12—Katie Robertson, Lester Cheney,
Sarah Osborne
- 2/14—Eleanor Findlay, Sean Renzi
- 2/15—Ashlyn Furto
- 2/17—Nelly Bessette, Frieda Clausen
- 2/18—Jacob Whitney, Ron Tucker
- 2/21—Arleta Gordon, Joan Norris
- 2/22—Daniel Small
- 2/23—Diane Morrow
- 2/24—Valerie Jelinek, Dulcinea Cabreda,
Isabella Cabreda
- 2/25—Landon Hocking, Grace Petersen
- 2/26—Morgan Orasco
- 2/27—Christopher Ray



LOST AND FOUND

DID YOU KNOW THERE IS A SMALL LOST AND FOUND HERE AT CHURCH?

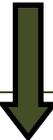
BOX IS LOCATED ABOVE COAT RACK IN NARTHEX.

GLASSES, SUNGLASSES, BLACK AND DECKER KEY ON A KEY CHAIN, RINGS, KIDS BRACELET AND NECKLESS.



JANUARY ATTENDANCE	WORSHIP 8:30/10:30 AM	CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL	ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL
January 7	4/60	18	14
January 14	3/38	13	4
January 21	3/71	20	12
January 28	4/71	26	10

FEBRUARY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 7 am Men's Breakfast 	2	3
4 Communion Sunday 8am Worship 9 am Religious Ed 10:30 Worship 9-1pm POTATO BAR	5	6 6:30pm SPRC	7 6:15 Bells 7:30 Choir 	8 7 am Men's Breakfast	9	10
11 8am Worship 9 am Religious Ed 10:30 Worship	12	13 1pm UWF Blankets	14 11:30am Pantry 7pm Ash Wednesday service	15 7 am Men's Breakfast 	16	17
18 BLANKET SUNDAY 8am Worship 9 am Religious Ed 10:30 Worship	19  5pm Daybreak Dinner	20 5am Daybreak Breakfast 6:30pm Finance 7:30pm Church Council	21 6:15 Bells 7:30 Choir 	22 7 am Men's Breakfast Articles for March Grace Notes due into the office.	23	24
25 8am Worship 9 am Religious Ed 10:30 Worship	26	27	28 6:15 Bells 7:30 Choir	29 		

old screens coming down



Chief Inspector Cathy



100 lbs TV's going up





A huge thank you goes out to this team of hard workers. Cathy and Greg DuBois, Steve Meister, Don Lutz, Dave McBride, Mike Purciarello, Kevin Shaw and Miller Perry.

Join us at worship on Sunday's at 10:30 am to see the brand new AV system.

We are working hard to bring you the best Audio Visual experience!

A poster board of more photos is in the narthex. Check it out!



Grace United Methodist Church

1718 Avalon Avenue

Joliet, Illinois 60435-5799

Worship Service February 14th 7pm

A graphic with a light purple and grey watercolor background. The text "ASH WEDNESDAY" is written in a bold, blue, serif font. Below it, the word "Worship" is written in a large, elegant, purple cursive font.

ASH WEDNESDAY
Worship