

In this edition of Echoes, we are graced with a wonderful article by Grace Mueller. Grace is our congregation's lone centurion, but regardless of her age, I believe her story about her faith journey offers insight and wisdom for all of our faith journeys today.

The article by Liz Mongeon updating us on the activities of the Sewing Group reminds us about the ongoing opportunities for ministry even during these covid days and introduces us to a ministry to sailors on the Great Lakes that few of us are probably familiar with.

Even as the world and our lives are being lived out in ways that few of us could ever have imagined only a year ago, we are reminded that our faith continues to be relevant and alive, making us ever aware of God's amazing and life-giving love and grace.

Peace,
Pastor Brian

My Faith Journey – by Grace Mueller

Sometime on June 7, 1918 a baby girl was born to Caroline and Fred, both first-time parents. They named her Grace.

The Journey Begins

My devoted parents told bible stories and Daddy sang hymns and prayers to my sister and I in his beautiful tenor voice. My favourite hymn was:

Jesus, tender shepherd hear me
Bless thy little lamb tonight
Through the darkness, be thou near me
Keep me safe 'till morning light.

I was baptized at Emmanuel Missouri Lutheran Church in Vineland, Ontario on August 25, 1918.

A Seed Is Planted

Mother and Father both taught Sunday School together with some beloved ladies from church. Mom and Dad took us to the worship service, also, made possible by the magic of an arrowroot cookie in each pocket of my father's coat, which always appeared at the right moment.

At home, we did a little game of "playing church," which fostered the concept of church every Sunday. Marge and I would take out the shoe box of paper dolls, dress them in their finest, and take them to church, walking them around the dining room table and to their pew and then go find the rest of the congregation – parents, friends – other dolls. Since I was the oldest one, they chose me to be the minister. I wore my Dad's stiff white collar backwards. The pulpit was some kind of make-believe piece of furniture. The sermon and hymns were from what we learned in Sunday School. On the wall above the dining room hung a plaque with gold lettering that read:

Christ is the head of this house
The unseen guest at every meal
The silent listener to every conversation

These "playing church" games had quite an influence in my growth into faith and I believe was something that bound us together.

As we grew older and met new friends, the world seemed to widen also, and we began to realize there was room for others besides Lutheran.

Challenges Along the Journey

By Confirmation time, my faith was beginning to take root, but it wasn't until the death of my father a few months later that the world I had built for myself came tumbling down around me. This setback in my spiritual life cost me quite a few years, but I was gradually able to see that even through the worst tragedy, God is still in control and can bring peace to our hearts once more.

My friends reached out to me and together we joined with others of different backgrounds. It was a fun time that turned out to be an ecumenical first for us. Each Sunday night we went to a different church and sang along with them using our best singing voices. Then, after vespers, we walked to one of our homes to gather once more around the piano and sing before partaking of some delicious goodies provided by the hostess of the evening. Then home we went, laughing and singing some more. My spirits began to rise as I felt God's goodness and grace.

Unfortunately, this happy, carefree time was short-lived as the cries of war were heard and World War II had begun. For four long years it brought death and destruction, pain and suffering. Finally, it was all over.



Grace (bottom centre) donating plates with biblical images to Faith

There was so much work to do that the "Thank You God" was soon put on the back burner. Teaching

Christian principles and living a life of gratefulness was often neglected. Church doors had to be closed because of lack of interest. This is our world today.

My journey of faith will soon be over. Everything did not always turn out the way I planned, but ALWAYS it seems God sees through our human desires to show His own will.

Grace Mueller

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting is scheduled to take place on Sunday, **February 21, 2021** following worship. If we are able to worship in person again by that time, the meeting may take place in person. If not, the Synod has sent guidelines advising congregations how to hold their annual meetings online. You will be notified as soon as we know what form the meeting will take.

Zoom Coffee Time (– you don't need a computer!)

We all miss seeing each other's faces. We miss our social and coffee times together. We miss our conversations.

During the pandemic, technology has offered us the ability to worship together online. It's not perfect, but I'm sure glad we have it!

To help us connect socially together, a "Zoom Coffee Time" following the livestream worship service will be offered each Sunday morning at 11:00 AM beginning on Sunday, January 17. The link to connect will be sent each week with your printable orders of worship.

You can still participate on your telephone, even if you do not have internet or a computer, by calling: 647-374-4685 at 11 AM on Sunday and, when

prompted, entering meeting ID number: 749 772 0637.

Hope you can join us!

From the Sewing Group

This twelfth year for Faith's Sewing Group has been an eventful one, to say the least. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted so many lives around the world and has also challenged our group to adapt to many changes necessary to move forward. For safety reasons, in mid-March, the Sewing Group decided to halt working together on Tuesdays in the church. We had hoped the virus situation would be resolved in a rather short period, but that was not to be.

CLWR's bailing days were cancelled this year. And, then on September 30, we were shocked and saddened to receive notification that CLWR was discontinuing its We Care program. The decision was based on difficult travel restrictions, warehouse costs and a realization that the program was neither a rapid nor a cost-efficient way to respond to immediate, critical needs faced by many around the world. Groups were asked to keep their goods and reach out to in-need organizations in their communities.

As we were contemplating our next steps, we received a call from Pastor Dan Phannenhour, chaplain for the Mission to Seafarers at the Hamilton Port. As it happens, Pastor Dan is known to many of us as a former Faith intern in 1987-88. The Mission participates in a global act of appreciation for seamen during Advent and Christmas each year by delivering gift parcels over three ports – Hamilton, Oshawa and Toronto. These ship workers bring 90% of everything we import, yet they remain largely invisible, far away from their families at Christmas and for extended periods. They come from poorer

backgrounds in places like Haiti, Philippines, Ukraine, and India, earn low wages and are grateful to receive gifts as a cherished souvenir of Canadian Christian care.

The Sewing Group has formed a partnership with the Mission and in mid-October it was happy to receive 1,085 of our blankets, close to 900 sundresses/shorts, and some miscellaneous goods. Due to Covid restrictions now in place, this large quantity should suffice its needs for about two years.

Pastor Dan forwarded to us a message and picture from the Master of a Dutch ship in dock, which reads in part: *"On behalf of the crew of Stella Polaris, I would like to thank the Mission to Seafarers in Hamilton and everybody involved for your gifts. Please find attached a picture from our Christmas eve on board. It helps in these difficult times to comfort us. I wish you and everybody else a merry, hopeful Christmas and a healthy, happy new year."*



Since many of our group have continued to work from home, other agencies have been and are still being explored for us to support, e.g. Pregnancy & Resource Centre – Brant; Canadian Food for Children, Mississauga; Mennonite Central Committee, Kitchener; Salvation Army Booth Centre, Brantford, etc.

Again, due to the pandemic, after having received six annual City Foundation grants, this program has been put on hold for the foreseeable future so the Group's largest source of income is no longer

available to us. We are especially grateful for individual donations and the purchase of blankets to continue our work.

Respectfully submitted, Liz Mongeon

Seminary Field Placement Student

Faith Lutheran has a long history of participating with the seminary giving students preparing for ministry experience in a congregation. Typically, that has meant having an intern student work full-time in the church for up to a year. Students are also placed in congregations in field placements while still taking classes. These field placements are only for a few hours each week, and typically involve worship leadership and preaching. We welcome seminary student Bethan Riehle-Jones to serve as a Field Placement Student with us this semester. I have asked Bethan to write a brief introduction for you. Bethan writes:

“My name is Bethan Riehle-Johns, I am in my third term of the master of divinity program at Martin Luther University College (formerly called Waterloo Lutheran Seminary). I was baptized Anglican but have attended Lutheran congregations for as long as I can remember. My home congregation has been Peace Lutheran Church in Pickering for over 20 years. I am passionate about music ministry and lifelong faith formation through community, service, and study. My interests are really varied, science fiction and fantasy are passions of mine, I am an avid Dungeons and Dragons player. I also love anything to do with outdoor adventure and outdoor exploration. I’m not really familiar with Brantford, but my mother was born in Brantford and my maternal grandparents lived on Walnut street when they immigrated from Cornwall. I’m really looking forward to getting to know your community.”

Notes from the Church Office

THANK YOU to the congregation for your very generous gifts to the Staff at Christmas.

2021 OFFERING:

2021 offering envelopes are available by calling the office (519-753-3833) to arrange for pick-up. You may use envelopes from other years (or any envelopes that you have) as long as your name and/or offering number is on them.

Ways to continue to support your church include:

- PAR (automatic monthly bank withdrawal)
- E-transfers
- Mailing your offerings to the church
- Dropping off your offerings through the mail slot at the bottom of the stairs near our Church Street entrance

Please call the Church Office for more information on any of these options.

Wanted: Lectors and Special Music for Livestreaming Worship

Our Christmas worship service included wonderful videos of or folks reading lessons or playing special music. There’s no reason that can’t happen every Sunday morning! This can be done both with pre-recorded material or live (music is best done pre-recorded for sound quality).

If you can participate in this way, please let Pastor Brian know and we’ll get you all set

Please note that the church building is closed during the provincially mandated lockdown, except for essential pastoral, administrative, and maintenance purposes. If you need to be in the building for any reason, please make arrangements with Judy in the office. Thank you.