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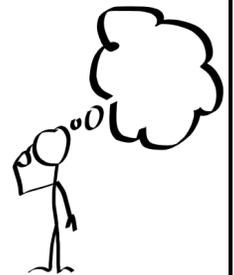
“ONLY CONSTANT IN THE WORLD IS CHANGE”by Pastor Ken Gibson

I am not sure where I heard the above quote and I am not sure who it is attributed as having first said it, but it seems to me to hold true at some levels. The other quote that I have also heard, and again I don't know who to attribute such, is; “The more things change the more things stay the same.” These two sayings seem to contradict each other on some levels yet speak to some same truths regarding time.

What I am thinking about these days is how I am, as of this month of February, starting my tenth year as Senior Pastor here at Grace. Can you believe it? We have shared nine years together and we are starting to be in year #10. Wow! It is a bit amazing really when I think about it as, up until now, the longest I had ever lived in one place is eight years. And the longest I had stayed in one call was just under seven years. So I am breaking all kinds of personal records in my time spent here at Grace. My feelings on such are a bit mixed actually. As I think of the life changes that have happened in these past nine years, I can't help but be both sad and happy. But in many ways the realities of this speak of how both statements above have elements of truth. Lots of things have changed in the past nine years yet also many things have stayed the same. And I realize that such is the case for all of us. Our children grow up, they move off to college, they get married, and many things change yet the same love and desire to be connected is always present.

Now some of you may be saying; “So what are you saying Pastor?” “Get to the point.” OK here is what I am thinking; many things in our life together seem to be the same, in fact maybe too much the same for our own good. I believe it is time for us to think anew. Think afresh. So what I am going to ask us all to do, as we head into 2018 together, is to think of something new that you would like to have happen in the year or years ahead. What new idea or new ministry might you want to see happen. Maybe it is just new to you, say like; “I have always thought about being on the altar guild.” Well then sign up to serve on one of the altar guild teams.” Or maybe you are thinking; “I wonder if the bible study group that the men are in is something I would appreciate?” Well, we meet on Tuesday mornings at 6:15 a.m. so come and check it out. Or maybe it is an entirely new ministry that you think we at Grace should be considering. Stop in for a chat let's see what might be possible. Please realize that perhaps the stirring in your head and heart about all these possibilities is the work of the Holy Spirit. And far be it from me or any of us to build a barrier in front of the Holy Spirit.

Ten years! WOW! “Only Constant in the world is Change” “The more things change the more things stay the same.” Thanks everyone.



SENIOR LUNCHEON- February 27, “How to Be a Friend to Someone with a Serious Illness” Often times when close friends or family members are seriously ill, we do not know what to do or say to bring comfort to them. Come explore creative ways to provide support, love and joy to those we care about. Our menu is Italian Casserole, Two Cheese Tossed Salad, Garlic Bread and Peach Crisp. Cost is \$5, so bring a friend ! Sign up in the Activity Binder by February 25. Questions, call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063.

CALLING ALL COOKS.... Have you heard the call? Lenten Soup lunches begin **February 14**. We are desperately in need of some of you wonderful cooks to sign up to make your favorite soup. For more informational sheet or to sign up, see the Activity Binder or call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063.



MITTEN TREE - Thank you for donating hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, underwear, and socks to help families in our community stay warm. Because of your generosity as well as a Thrivent Action Team Community Impact Card, we were able to give about 300 items to the Family Health Partnership Clinic, PADS Emergency Shelter, and the Old Firehouse Assistance Center.

PRAYERS-Please lift up these petitions in your prayers—To become a praying member of the Friends in Prayer, please submit name and e-mail address to dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org.

World: Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, churchwide staff & their families, Bishop Jeff Clements, synod staff & their families, those serving in military conflicts, Arusha Town Lutheran Parish in Tanzania (our companion parish), Scott Bunch serving in the military, Chaplain Major Darrell Kyle deployed with the United States Air Force.

Woodstock: Pastor Ken Gibson & his family; Pastor Amanda Bergstrom & her family; Grace Staff; Grace Council

Health Concerns: Catherine Aavang-Roush and her infant son, Leo, Marge Birk, Lois Bloese, John Bloese, Ray Bock (husband of Sharon Bock), Mary Sue Boerner (friend of Paul Lockwood & Diane Baker-Lockwood), Sheila Boggess (friend of Kathy Stone), Frank Bunch, Dale Carlson, Allison Clark (niece of Martha & Bill Fleck), Lou & Janie Czarny (friend of Paul Lockwood), Nancy Davis, Patrice Dunn, Verna Eslick, Russ Freeman, Robert Giron (brother of Patty Kozlow), Becca Guenther (niece of Gretchen & Claude Hutchens), Tamasa Gutierrez (mother of Patty Kozlow), Wallace Halvorson (father of Shelley Tucker), the Kamps family, Diana King, Nancy Knieja (friend of Martha Fleck), Keith Kulpinski (friend of Spanbauers & Thurows), Ken Lindenmier (brother-in-law of Diane Baker-Lockwood), John Mahoney, Renee Merklin (friend of Rachel Bratanick), Tammy Millman (daughter of Karen Millman), Kem Moran (friend of Barb Aavang), Carl Neubaum (son of Donna Neubaum), Carol O'Brien (sister of Bill Larsen), Gloria Ogle, John Oliver (friend of Ron & Mary Koehn), Sue Olsen, Arne Olson, Vicki Pilgard, Carol Raffel, Carol Rank, Shawn Rank (son of Carol Rank), Johnny Rankin (friend of Joe Evanoff), Sheila Readel, Rene Rebman (uncle of Ron & Mary Koehn), Jean Reed (mother of Mary Hoyt), Joan Russell (mother of Sheri Conover), Stanley Russell (father of Sheri Conover), Jasper Schinkoeth (grandson of Deb & Joe Evanoff), Colton Sciluffo (infant son of a friend of Joy Oberman), Ellen Schulz (daughter-in-law of Diane Schulz), Bill Seger, Eleanor Setser, John Sorensen, Elsie Stoddard, Ginny Stroh (mother of Fay Wilson), Doris Sunday, Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahan), Ellie Mae Thompson (great niece of Gladys & Ken Renner), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Bev Visconti, Bud Winter, Ruth Zirves

Sorrows: Ian Clark (uncle of Bill Fleck), Ken Brunner (cousin of Marge Birk), Lindsey Voss (friend of Ron & Mary Koehn), Don Millar (brother of Ken Millar), Dick Schroeder, Shelley Tucker

If you wish to add a prayer request for the newsletter, please call the church office at 815-338-0554. Your prayer concern will run for one week and may be renewed. Submissions to the *Friends in Prayer* e-mail and phone teams may also be submitted by telephone to the church office or by e-mail to Gracewoodstock.org. Due to confidentiality laws, hospitals no longer notify churches or pastors when a member is hospitalized. If you or a member of your family have a medical procedure planned or is admitted to the hospital, please call the church office.

CROSSES OF OIL, WATER, AND ASH.....by Pastor Amanda

This past week I had the chance to pretend baptize a baby doll, two days in a row. At preschool chapel time this week, Grace's preschool teachers were teaching about baptism, and then we gathered at the baptismal font, where I shared what we do at a baptism in worship.

We talked about how babies, kids, teens, and adults can be baptized; and then I showed the preschoolers how we use a seashell to scoop water and pour it over someone's forehead (this week, the baby doll) three times in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I told them that then, either I or Pastor Ken make the sign of the cross with oil on the forehead of the newly baptized.

Next, we all dipped our fingers in the baptismal font and practiced making the sign of the cross on our own foreheads, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to remember our baptism, to remember God's love for us.

Even though we cannot see the oily cross at baptism, or the crosses of water each time we remember our baptism- sometimes we can smell the oil and feel the water. And somehow, even though we cannot see these crosses on our foreheads, we trust in the power and promise and wonder of the cross of Christ.

In a few more weeks, we all have a chance to see crosses on our foreheads, crosses made of ashes. Each year we begin the season of Lent, the time of preparing for Easter, by gathering for Ash Wednesday worship services (February 14, at 12 PM & 7 PM).

I get that it's the middle of the week, and that remembering we are dust and to dust we shall return does not sound all that great, but for a few moments in worship, or when you catch a glimpse of your reflection later that day, or when you look around at your siblings in Christ, we get to see those crosses on our foreheads. We see a visible reminder that we are oh so loved by the God who claimed us in the waters of baptism, marked with the cross of Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit forever.

Will you choose to spend an hour in worship together this Ash Wednesday? It falls on Valentine's Day this year, and I cannot think of a greater love than God in Christ. I look forward to seeing the cross of Christ on your forehead for a day, crosses of oil, water, and ash; marked and sealed forever.

WHY CHRISTIANS?- Why are you a Christian? Over the past couple years, Nadia Bolz-Weber and Rachel Held Evans have hosted a conference called "Why Christian," that has been a 'one-of-a-kind gathering of pastors, practitioners, artists, dreamers, and doubters around one question: Why Christian?' You are invited to gather at Grace to watch videos and share conversation as we hear speakers respond to that question from the 2015 Conference. Each speaker tells their own story, you may or may not resonate with their life experiences, and in hearing other people's witness, the Holy Spirit may stir up in you your own wrestling with this question of faith- Why Christian? We'll meet on seven Tuesday evenings in February and March from 6:30-8:00 P.M. (**February 6 – March 20**). It's ok if you cannot make it to each week, but please sign up on the Activity Board if you plan to attend so we can prepare a space to gather. Childcare will be provided; please note age(s) of children on the sign-up sheet as well. Contact Pastor Amanda with questions. Hope to see you there.



ANNUAL MEETING- Be sure to save **February 25** for the Annual Meeting following the 10:45 a.m. service at approximately 12:05. A Ministry Matters presentation will follow the Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting is an important time for everyone in the congregation to know what is happening in our church and to familiarize themselves with the budget. Annual reports will be emailed and available at the Information Center as of February 10.

Souper Bowl of Caring- February 3 & 4. On Super Bowl Weekend, Grace's Youth Group will be collecting \$ in soup kettles as a part of the nation wide youth group effort to gather donations for hungry people. Coins, bills, checks are all welcome to make a joyful noise and donation to ELCA World Hunger after worship.

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE-The deadline for the March newsletter is February 15. Send articles to Tammy Baier at tbaier@gracewoodstock.org, or the church office. Questions: Call the office at 815-338-0554.

ALTAR GUILD – We are in need of members to join our Altar Guild. Being a part of the Altar Guild you would help set the altar for worship services. This includes some of the following: communion stations, candles and special services such as funerals, weddings and baptisms. You would work with a group and your group would be signed up for approximately 3 months per year. If you can help with this ministry or have any further questions please give Denise Klabunde, in the office, or call; 815-338-0554.

THE HEAT IS ON....CHILI FEST- February 11. You are invited to Chili Fest following the Transfiguration Dixieland Jazz worship services on February 11. Please sign up on the Activity Board, and note if you'll be bringing chili or cornbread. We'll share in a friendly chili fest competition, share a good meal & fellowship, and there will be raffle baskets to raise funds for the High School Youth Group's trip to the ELCA Youth Gathering. We hope to see you there!



2018 YOUTH GATHERING- We give thanks for your continued prayers for the 12 high school students who will be participating in the ELCA Youth Gathering this year, and the adult leaders who will accompany them to Houston in June! We invite you to learn a bit more about our group by visiting the Activity Board in the narthex. And we welcome your financial support for this trip: gifts may be given in the giving envelopes at Activity Board, and/or at the upcoming Chili Fest fundraiser. Thanks for continuing Grace's strong tradition of support for participating in the ELCA Youth Gathering!

Making Change- Midweek Lent. On February 14, we gather for Ash Wednesday worship services at 12 PM & 7 PM. For the following Wednesdays in the season of Lent (Feb. 21- March 21), we gather at 12 PM & 7 PM for a half hour midweek worship service. This year our worship follows the theme "Making Change." Please join us in worship as we reflect on change of season, habit, circumstances, heart, and plans. Soup lunches follow the noon service, and PrimeTime dinner begins at 5:15 PM before the 7 PM service.

AMAZON SMILE- Do you shop online at Amazon? If you do, Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Grace Lutheran Church. You can learn more and start your shopping at smile.amazon.com.: just search Grace Lutheran Church Woodstock, IL.

DIXIELAND WEEKEND IS COMING- Our Annual celebration of Jesus' Transfiguration which closes the church's emphasis on the birth of Christ and moves us into Lent, paralleling Mardi Gras is joyfully celebrated with Dixieland instrumentalists and our singing of hymns in New Orleans' Jazz style. Mark your calendar for this once a year worship expression on **February 10-11** at all three services. Music at our Saturday service will feature jazz clarinetist Mike Knauf and vocal lead Katie Reilly. Music at Sunday services will be led by our combined six choirs and also include anthems by each of our major age grouped choirs. Come Sing traditional hymns including Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, Precious Lord, Just a Closer Walk WE Thee, and be lifted by the joyous annual singing of When the Saints Go Marching In. Invite a friend to join you.

LENTEN DISCIPLINES- Lent is a season to deepen our relationship with God. In preparation for Lent and Holy Week, Deacon Judy Rooney will present an adult forum on Spiritual Disciplines that can easily be incorporated into your daily reflections. Please join us on Sunday, **February 18**, at 9:45 a.m. in Luther Hall, to learn some time honored disciplines that can help Lent be a more meaningful time.

e-GRACE – To receive your *Grace For Today* newsletter online just stop by the Information Center and sign up for this service. No one will be removed from the "hard-copy" mailing list unless they have formally subscribed to the e-newsletter.

MEALS ON WHEELS- There is still a need... Meals on Wheels is desperately seeking two volunteers once every 5 weeks on Mondays. Meals are picked up at Centegra, Woodstock, at 10:45 and delivered in our area to people who cannot cook for themselves. This is an important ministry! If you can help please call Jeannine May 815-943-4849.

PRIMETIME MEAL TEAMS- HAVE YOU HEARD THE CALL...There are just a few dates that are still vacant for meal teams for PrimeTime. Please consider helping this ministry. It is very helpful to busy families involved in choir, bells, confirmation, and school events to have a meal ready to enjoy by their families. The following are dates that are still available: 2/28, 3/7, 4/4, 4/18 Just taking one date would be a huge help. Contact Melissa McMahon for more information or meal team ideas, mmcmahon@gracewoodstock.org.

CHURCH CLOSINGS AND EVENT CANCELLATIONS - When severe weather arrives, Grace Lutheran Church will follow D200 closing and cancellations. All weekday activities, including preschool, will be cancelled if D200 has cancelled classes. Please check the [Emergency Closing Center website](#) or any of the radio stations listed on the [D200 website](#) for any severe weather cancellations.

WHY CHRISTIAN?- “Why, in the wake of centuries of corruption, hypocrisy, crusades, televangelists, and puppet ministries do we continue to follow Jesus?” That is part of the question that Nadia Bolz-Weber and Rachel Held Evans, the organizers of the Why Christian? Conference posited, and then invited people to respond. A variety of practitioners- lay people, pastors, professors, and writers, from a variety of denominations- Lutheran, Vineyard, Catholic, Baptist, Episcopal, reformed; from different orientations- gay, straight, and transgender; and from a diversity of ethnicities- white, African American, Indian, Latina; gathered to wrestle with and respond to this question, Why Christian?. You are invited to gather on seven Tuesday evenings at Grace, 6:30-8 PM (**February 6-March 20**) to watch videos from the 2015 conference and share in conversation. Please sign up on the Activity Board if you plan to be there! Perhaps you'll share in this question too, why are you Christian?

ADULT BUS TRIP- Adult Bus Trip – Saturday, March 3, 8:15 – 6:15 “All About Aurora” Our coach bus will take us on a tour of Aurora’s Historical Buildings before our guided tour of Fermilab. Lunch is at the only standing Roundhouse in the U.S. dating back to 1855. Then sit and relax thru “Cabaret” at the Paramount Theatre. Cost is only \$75 +lunch. For more information or to sign up, please see the Activity Binder. Questions, call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063 Sign up and pay by February 4 to avoid a \$10 late fee.

Mark your calendar for the following summer trips:

June 16, Fireside Theatre, Fort Atkinson, WI to see Church Basement Ladies 2

Summer, Aug 2, White Sox, Buffet, Bingo & Ballgame



FUNERAL PLANNING— Do you have favorite scripture passages and/or hymns? Is there something you hope to have included in your funeral service? We have a simple worksheet where you can note your favorite scripture, hymns, and other details, and we invite everyone to fill one out to share with your family and bring to the church office so we can file it away, and at some point know how to best honor your wishes. Please stop by the church office to pick up a Funeral Planning Worksheet, or you can find a copy on Grace’s website under “Communication & Documents,” and then “Forms and Documents.” Thanks be to God, that even in the face of death, we proclaim the promise of the resurrection.

ELECTRONIC GIVING—Do you know about Electronic Giving? Electronic Giving is a confidential, no charge, automatic withdrawal program; and it is one option available for giving tithes and offerings. Electronic Giving provides an option to give on a regular basis (weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly). Enrollment forms to sign up are available at the Information Desk, and on Grace’s website (under “Communication and Documents,” then “Forms & Documents”). As in our giving and our annual estimates of giving, if your situation changes, automatic giving through Electronic Giving can be changed by contacting the church office. Automatic gift amounts can be changed, or put on hold with one week’s notice. Please feel free to contact the pastors or church office with any questions about Electronic Giving.

PREPARE THE WAY

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Committed— \$497,579.06
Received— \$513,875.45
Goal— \$780,430.00

SYNOD NEWS-

Walking Together is the weekly e-news of the Northern Illinois Synod. Everyone is encouraged to subscribe by using the online form at <http://nisynod.org/pubs/wt/> or by sending names and email addresses to karin@nisynod.org.



Northern Illinois Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

SAVE THE DATE-

Souper Bowl of Caring- FEB 3/4
Committee Night- FEB 6
Why Christians?- FEB 6
Transfiguration & Chili Fest- FEB 11
Blood Pressure Checks- FEB 11
Capital Campaign- FEB 12
Ash Wed. Noon Service- FEB 14
Lenten Soup Lunch- FEB 14
Ash Wed. Evening Service- FEB 14
DAP- FEB 15
Council- FEB 15
Tending the Inner Life- FEB 18
Youth Group Retreat- FEB 19
Faith Circle- FEB 19
Souper Bowl of Caring- FEB 3/4
Committee Night- FEB 6
Why Christians?- FEB 6
Transfiguration & Chili Fest- FEB 11
Blood Pressure Checks- FEB 11
Capital Campaign- FEB 12
Ash Wed. Noon Service- FEB 14
Lenten Soup Lunch- FEB 14
Ash Wed. Evening Service- FEB 14
DAP- FEB 15
Council- FEB 15
Tending the Inner Life- FEB 18
Youth Group Retreat- FEB 19

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Visit the Grace website for the most up-to-date
information for all that is happening at Grace!

gracewoodstock.org