

Gran-Park-Rollag Parish and Living Grace Lutheran Church
In ministry partnership since 2017

Gran-Park-Rollag Parish

3 Churches – 1 Ministry: Energized by God
To celebrate, share & show God's love
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Living Grace Lutheran Church

A worshipping community of the ELCA focused on
making known God's love and grace by:
Welcoming Everyone, Sharing Jesus' story,
Growing in faith and Serving beyond ourselves.
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Worships at The Garrick Theater,
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Sunday, September 6, 2020 - Labor Day Weekend
Virtual Holy Communion Worship Service
Led by Pr. Hope Deutscher, Pr. Jim Greene, and Andrea Keene
Music Provided by: Pam Aakre, Piano; Pr. Hope Deutscher, Flute

Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.

Pre-Service Music: *Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus*

Pam Aakre, Piano

Welcome/Announcements

- *Pastoral Care: Pastor Hope Deutscher and Pastor Jim Greene are available for pastoral care. If you or a loved one are hospitalized or ill, we would love to be caring for you. Please call or email us at the numbers above. Andrea Keene is also available to talk to parents and youth.*
- *We have a variety of ways we are connecting with people – continuing Bible Studies and Book Studies on Zoom. Check out our Facebook page and Newsletter for details.*
 - *Monday evenings (every 2 weeks): Paul Tillich Bible Study (Hosted by Joe Hass)*
 - *Wednesdays at 10 AM: Luke Bible Study*
 - *Wednesdays at 7 PM: Women's Book Study – What Happens When Women Walk in Faith by Lysa Terkeurst*
- *Be a subscriber to the YouTube channel – Rollag Lutheran Church – when you do, you become one of the first people to know when a worship service is available for you to watch and it also helps boost our visibility with others who may be looking for a service to watch!*
- *Smart Team Update: Under the advisement of our Bishop Bill Tesch, our Mutual Ministry Team, which represents our 4 congregations has become the Smart Team. Parish Council President Chad Mickelson and Tabitha Hass have also joined this Smart Team, which is evaluating and discussing how and when we can safely worship*

inside our buildings.

The SMART Team met on August 18th to discuss the opportunities for fall youth programming and worship services. Following the discussion, the team gave the following recommendations to the Parish Council, which unanimously approved them on August 20th.

- Youth Programming: We'll let the first few weeks of school occur and re-evaluate. During September, we'll provide online content and meet outside in person for specific events. We'll also model what the Hawley and Barnesville Schools are doing regarding in-person vs. distance learning.
- Worship and other gatherings:
 - We welcome outdoor worship services, events, meetings and classes – if they can be done safely.
 - Encourage anyone who is feeling ill or showing COVID-related signs/symptoms to not attend in-person church activities.
 - We'll follow the synod recommendations of not holding indoor worship services until all can safely worship.
 - Continue with outdoor services (weather permitting), online worship services, and other online opportunities.

The SMART Team will meet again on September 22nd, evaluating how the schools are doing and make appropriate updated recommendations to the Parish Council. In the meantime, our congregations continue to prepare for accommodating indoor worship. (See letter from GPR Parish Council President Chad Mickelson at www.gprparish.org.)

- *Next Outdoor Worship: Sunday, September 13th at 9:30 AM on the lawn of Rollag Lutheran Church. All are welcome to join us for this worship service. We will continue to provide online worship services, even on Sundays when we host an outdoor one. During our Rally Sunday Outdoor Worship Service, we will recognize and celebrate the following milestones:*
 - *Cradle Roll,*
 - *Preschool Bibles, and*
 - *Third Grade Bibles.*

We will also be blessing teachers/administrators, students and backpacks/devices during our service!
- *Welcome to Living Grace! This morning we are again worshipping God from Living Grace's home in the Garrick Theater in Hawley. As a mission congregation, one of our favorite hymns is "All Are Welcome"! This morning is no different – we are glad you are here and worshipping with us.*
- *A word about our service today:*
 - *You can follow along – large print bulletins are available on our websites!*
 - *Today, we again invite you to participate in Virtual Communion. Please prepare some bread/crackers and wine/juice to share communion during today's service.*
 - *Thanks to the children for being a part of the worship service. Andrea will have a children's sermon in a few minutes.*
 - *Thanks to Pam Aakre and Pr. Hope for providing music.*
 - *Today Pr. Hope will share how we can "fight like Christians."*
 - *Today Pr. Jim will focus on how the language of love is a game changer.*

- Andrea will bring us a time of recognizing our youth who are returning to school – we'll celebrate Cradle Roll, Preschool and Third Grade Milestones!

As we light the Christ candle, let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship.

(LIGHT CHRIST CANDLE)

Confession and Forgiveness (JIM)

As we move into this time set apart by God to deepen our connection with God and to set aside the distractions and struggles we might be carrying, Let us open our hearts and minds and place everything in God's hands.

TAKE A MOMENT NOW TO PLACE EVERY THOUGHT, WORD, OR ACTION INTO GOD'S HANDS AND BECOME WIDE OPEN TO GOD.

We confess: **Gracious God, so much of our thoughts, words, and actions are like a pesky cell phone which we spend more time connected with than with you and the people we share this world with. Help us to set our distractions down and home in on you and ways we can be helpful, kind, and encouraging to one another. May we learn the language of love and let your love God and direct us every step of the way.**

People of God, it is God's desire to unbind us from thoughts, words, and actions which place walls between us and others. Forgiveness is where God's best work starts. God forgives us all our sins and calls us to live free of the distractions of negativity as we walk fully in the power of God's grace, love, and wisdom. Let us all walk hand in hand with God. Amen.

Children's Message

Andrea Keene, GPR Youth Director

Hymn: Jesus Loves Me (ELW 595) Pam Aakre, Piano; Pr. Hope Deutscher, Flute

Verse 1: *Je-sus loves me! This I know, for the Bi-ble tells me so;
Lit-tle ones to him be-long, they are weak, but he is strong.*

Refrain: *Yes, Je-sus loves me, yes, Je-sus loves me,
yes, Je-sus loves me, the Bi-ble tells me so.*

Verse 2: *Je-sus loves me! He who died heav-en's gates to o-pen wide;
He will wash a-way my sin, let his lit-tle child come in. REFRAIN*

Verse 3: *Je-sus loves me! He will stay close be-side me all the way;
When at last I come to die, he will take me home on high. REFRAIN*

Scripture: Romans 13:8-14

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. ¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Message

Pr. Jim Greene

How many languages do you speak fluently- i.e. more than a few words?
Me? Where's the bathroom/Spanish; Order a beer/German; Yoda/Hebrew

We speak more languages fluently than we know- we're not done learning. We all know English- I'm saddened at the loss of Norwegian speakers; It wouldn't hurt to learn Spanish.
Language rule: "Use it or you'll lose it!"

Let's explore how many languages you know: (please answer for yourself)

* Show of hands: How many know how to cuss and swear? If it's not a language then why do people say, "Watch your language!"?

* How many know the language of making excuses? (Ever "watch" someone make an excuse- our body "language" also speaks loud and clear!)

I COULD list a lot more: Sarcasm; Kindness; Rationalization; what else?

Paul challenges us to speak and put our whole body into a language which, as we keep practicing, will help us live a better life while also letting go of our unhealthy "languages".
What language is that? The language of love!

LOVE is NOT just a feeling or a clever trick or a ruse: it's a game changer!

Let's take a specific example: The wearing of masks- I don't like them, however, when I wear them out of "love" the care for others EVEN if they aren't 100% effective- isn't it more caring than saying, "No one's going to tell me what to do!"

The language of love is a game changer because we don't wait for a perfect time where we know how everything will work out 100% of the time. Love says, "do the best you can with what you know in a way that shows the most care for the most people!" Not always easy- not always as fast as we'd like- but it's better than living with a lot of regret after the fact.

When Jesus looks at us from the cross- does he do this in love or in judgment? When we take up the bread and the wine- do we remember we are loved and are challenged to be more loving or to just get by.

Love is meant to be a game changer- to help us notice when we're off track and change as well as when we're on track to move forward. The best part of love? You can't wear it out!
LOVE: practice it; learn from it; pass it on!

Hymn of the Month – *Standing on the Promises*

Pam Aakre, Piano; Pr. Hope Deutscher, Flute

Verse 1: *Stand-ing on the prom-is-es of Christ my King,
Through e-ter-nal a-ges let his prais-es ring;
Glo-ry in the high-est, I will shout and sing,
Stand-ing on the prom-is-es of God.*

Refrain: *Stand-ing on the prom-is-es, stand-ing on the prom-ises,
Stand-ing on the prom-is-es of God my Sav-ior;
Stand-ing on the prom-is-es, stand-ing on the prom-ises,*

I'm stand-ing on the prom-is-es of God.

Verse 3: *Stand-ing on the prom-is-es of Christ the Lord,
Bound to him e-ter-nal-ly by love's strong cord,
o-ver-com-ing dai-ly with the Spir-it's sword,
Stand-ing on the prom-is-es of God. REFRAIN*

Matthew 18:15-20 (The Message)

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ “If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you’ve made a friend. If he won’t listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again. If he still won’t listen, tell the church. If he won’t listen to the church, you’ll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God’s forgiving love.

¹⁸⁻²⁰ “Take this most seriously: A yes on earth is yes in heaven; a no on earth is no in heaven. What you say to one another is eternal. I mean this. When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action. And when two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I’ll be there.”

Message – How to Fight Like a Christian Pr. Hope Deutscher

I’m going to begin at the end of our reading – we hear the saying: “where two or three are gathered in my name, Jesus is there among them.” We often use this saying when we are disappointed when only a few people come to worship or Bible study when we had hoped for more. However, these words by Jesus are part of a discourse about hard conversations, disagreements and reconciliation...a call to forgiveness. Two or three people can get together in many locations. That doesn’t necessarily make them united in Christ. To be “gathered in my name” is to be gathered in the spirit of forgiveness...and we are united in Christ when we forgive each other.

Jesus wants God’s church to reduce conflict through direct discussion, accountability, and transparency. Here in this gospel reading, Jesus is not inviting reflection but some very direct and practical advice, leaving little wiggle room for interpretation.

Jesus tells us there will be NO “in-sinning” against one another in the church, but something as important as relational hurt within the body of Christ can’t be left to chance. When it comes to forgiving in the Body of Christ, Jesus says, “Do it like this.”

The irony – it’s really hard to talk about problems in a church...we do the passive approach...or Minnesota nice – hoping it will just evaporate or solve itself. Even as Paul was helping build up God’s church, he took time out to write to quarreling Christians in churches that were just beginning...division is not a new thing – but we are being called to look at such disagreements with Christian eyes.

If we are to forgive as God forgives – we have to pay close attention to the way God forgives us. In God’s economy, forgiveness is not a feeling, it’s a choice made in faith. We need to hear that a lot...because many of us assume that being able to forgive is a matter of feeling it – that we will know it’s the right time to forgive because we will want to - but Jesus implies that moment is not coming.

There are several shows about reality competitions, including *Big Brother* and *Survivor*, groups of strangers are put together in a certain location for a certain period of time and expected to figure out how to live together. They then vote each other off one by one until

only one person remains. We may think that a church could operate that way too...we are a bunch of people put together in a certain place for a certain amount of time, and sometimes we want to vote each other out of the community.

But Jesus gives us a guide for discipline. Although some behaviors are inappropriate in the life of the church because they could hurt the community, the way we are called to treat each other is with forgiveness and love—not with votes “off the island.”

So Jesus spells out conflict resolution in 3 easy steps.

1. Go directly to person who has wronged you and speak alone with the person...long before we harbor it and it slowly poisons us against the possibility of reconciliation or we wait until we see their signal to come and apologize. Is this fair to go find the one who has sinned against YOU? Absolutely not. But did Jesus do it for US? Absolutely.
2. Now you can involve others. But again, Jesus is not saying, “Go and talk about this person behind their backs.” Jesus is saying, “Bring in others whom he or she might listen to.” By having others involved in this way, Jesus says will give some appropriate perspective to the issue.
3. If that step doesn’t work, Christ calls on us to involve the church. We are invited to look at our churches as a place of healing and reconciliation for all members, in addition to the outsiders. Jesus’ point: the church is the mediator in a world of misunderstanding, and the peacemaker in a world of passive-aggressiveness.

Its practical work of turning from sin to repentance, conflict to reconciliation. It’s hard work...but we are reminded that God has not abandoned us – and that Christ’s resurrection and ascension are a beginning for us, not an end.

The question *how do we live together, work together, as the body of Christ?* is as relevant today as it was for the disciples and the first Christians. We keep asking these questions because the way we gather as Christians should be profoundly counter-cultural. We do not gather as a social club, because if we were, there would be no reason to continue to gather if conflict arises, if uncomfortable issues are raised, or if “the way it’s always been” begins to change. And if the church is only a social club, there is no reason to do the hard work of reconciliation and forgiveness.

My friends, we have been saved by grace, and liberated by God’s love to love one another. God calls us into community knowing that being in community is hard. In scripture we can find practical guidance for gathering through good and hard times. The Holy Spirit is always at work—in, through, and among us—to gather and regather us again.

At this time, I invite you to bring forward your bread and wine or cracker and juice.

As we hear these words from Matthew 26 (Verse 26-29)...

²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ²⁷Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

Instead of holding grudges, or gossiping about the betrayal by his own, Jesus broke bread with his disciples...he offers the same forgiveness to you...and me.

So hear these words:

Virtual Communion:

The body of Christ, broken for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.

May the body and blood of Jesus Christ, strengthen you and remind you that you are eternally in relationship with God who invites reconciliation, forgiveness and love. Amen.

Receiving of Offering (SLIDE)

Thank you for remembering the importance of continuing to Tithe your financial gifts. You can mail your offering to your church or give through Tithe.ly online (mobile and online option) or by mail. Visit livinggracehawley.org or gprparish.org for specific information.

Prayers

Lord of life, you have given us six days on which to work, and modeled resting in your word on the sabbath. We give thanks for fair labor practices that offer time for rest and leisure as balance to our daily work. We pray for good and productive work in our daily professions and pursuits for the welfare of our neighbors. We pray for just and safe working conditions for all, for living wages, for honor and dignity in our employment. We pray that you work against all forces that steal human dignity or rob communities of the economic support they need from their labors to live sufficiently and well. For all those who defend the dignity of work, and all those who help us discover how to connect our faith to work, we give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Look at your hands. Notice their power and gentleness.
Together, we bless our hands together.

At this time we want you to lift up your hands, look at the tenderness, the cracks and lines, the calluses and all that show the work YOU have done over the years. And if you are young, look at your hands and see them as tools that God has given you to use in building his kingdom here on earth.

We continue with this Hand Blessing by Diann Neu...

**“A Hand Blessing” by Diann L. Neu,
WATERwheel Vol. 2, no. 1 (Winter 1989). Used by permission.**

Blessed be the works of your hands, O Holy One.
Blessed be these hands that have touched life.
Blessed be these hands that have nurtured creativity.
Blessed be these hands that have held pain.
Blessed be these hands that have embraced with passion.
Blessed be these hands that have tended gardens.
Blessed be these hands that have closed in anger.
Blessed be these hands that have planted new seeds.
Blessed be these hands that have harvested ripe fields.
Blessed be these hands that have cleaned, washed, mopped, scrubbed.
Blessed be these hands that have become knotty with age.
Blessed be these hands that are wrinkled and scarred from doing justice.
Blessed be these hands that have reached out and been received.
Blessed be these hands that hold the promise of the future.

Blessed be the works of your hands, O Holy One.

O God, the heavens declare your glory and tell of your work in creation. From you come the gifts of our bodies and minds, our skills and abilities, and the opportunities to use these gifts in sustaining our lives and in helping our neighbors. We pray for those whose livelihood is insecure; for those who are bearing heavy burdens and stressful times at work; for those whose work is tedious or dangerous; for those who have experienced failures at work; for those who have lost a job; and for all who face any difficulty in their lives of labor. Surround them with your never-failing love; free them from restlessness and anxiety; keep them in every perplexity and distress; and renew them in facing the opportunities and challenges of daily life and work; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (*ELW Occasional Services for the Assembly*, p. 407)

We come together, sharing in the work of God's kingdom...and join in praying as Jesus taught us.....

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

The night is gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day; let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Creator who made the light, the Christ who is the light, and the Spirit who ignites the light within abide with you and all creation now and always.

Hymn - Love Divine, All Love Excelling (ELW 631/ LBW 315)

Pam Aakre, Piano, Pr. Hope Deutscher, Flute

- Verse 1:** *Love di-vine, all loves ex-cel-ling, Joy of heav'n, to earth come down!
Fix in us thy hum-ble dwell-ing, all thy faith-ful mercies crown.
Je-sus, thou art all com-pas-sion, pure, un-bound-ed love thou art;
Vis-it us with thy- sal-va—tion, en-ter ev-'ry trem-bling heart.*
- Verse 2:** *Breath, oh breathe thy lov-ing Spir-it in-to ev-'ry trou-bled breast;
Let us all in thee in-her-it; let us find thy prom-ised rest.
Take a-way- the love of sin-ning; Al-pha and O-me- -ga be;
End of faith, as its be-gin—ning, set our hearts at lib-er-ty.*