

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 13, 2020 - Rally Sunday!
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

We sin against one another. In our gospel text, Jesus' challenge that we forgive 77 times revealing God's boundless mercy. When we hear the words of forgiveness in worship and sign ourselves with the cross, we are renewed in baptism to be signs of reconciliation in the world.

Prelude: Come into His Presence

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.)

- *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.*
- *Today we are holding an outdoor worship service on the lawn of Rollag Lutheran Church.*
 - *We are holding another "Fill the Pickup" with produce, canned goods, boxed meals and household items for the Barnesville Food Pantry and REACH-Food Pantry. We are also collecting cash donations!*
 - *During our outdoor service, we are recognizing the following milestones:*
 - *3rd Grade Bibles*
 - *Cradle Roll*
 - *Preschool Bibles*

Blessing of Teachers

God of wisdom, your Son came among us as a teacher. Send your blessing on all who are engaged in the work of education: give them clearness of vision and freshness of thought, and enable them so to train the hearts and minds of their students that they may grow in wisdom and be prepared to face the challenges of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Blessing of Students & Backpacks

Dear God, as we get ready to start another year in school, we ask your blessing on these backpacks, and especially on these children who will wear them. As they do the very important work of being students, bless them with: eagerness to learn, that their world may grow large; respect for teachers and students, that they may form healthy relationships; love for nature, that they may become caretakers of your creation; happiness when learning is easy and determination when it is hard; faith in Jesus as their best teacher and closest friend. We ask that you would protect these, your own children. Watch over them and keep them safe as they travel to and from school. As they learn, help them also to discover the different gifts that you have given each one of them to be used in your work in the world. As they hear the many voices that will fill their days, help them to listen most carefully for your voice, the one that tells them you will love them always, no matter what. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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- *In addition, other notes about today's service:*
 - *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 invites us to learn God's economy of forgiveness!*
 - *Today Pr. Jim message today: Learn to Stop what we're doing and let God in.*

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

(LIGHT CHRIST CANDLE)

Hymn: Gather Us In (ELW 532 / WOV 718)

Pam Aakre, Piano; Pr. Hope Deutscher, Flute

Verse 1: *Here in this place the new light is stream-ing;
Now is the dark-ness van-ished a-way;
See in this space our fears and our dream-ings
Brought here to you in the light of this day...
Gather us in, the lost and for-sak-en,
Gath-er us in, the blind and the lame;
Call to us now, and we shall a-wak-en,
We shall a-rise at the sound of our name...*

Verse 2: *We are the young, our lives are a mys-t'ry,
We are the old who yearn for your face;
We have been sung through-out all of his-t'ry,
Called to be light to the whole hu-man race...
Gather us in, the rich and the haugh-ty,
Gather us in, the proud and the strong;
Give us a heart, so meek and so low-ly,
Give us the cour-age to en-ter the song.*

Children's Message – Blessing of Students, Teachers/Administrators and Backpacks
Andrea Keene, GPR Youth Director

Blessing of School, Youth and Teachers/Administrators

Pr. Jim Greene, Pr. Hope Deutscher and GPR Youth Director Andrea Keene

Matthew 18:21-35 (The Message (MSG) - A Story About Forgiveness

²¹ At that point Peter got up the nerve to ask, "Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?"

²² Jesus replied, "Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven.

²³⁻²⁵ "The kingdom of God is like a king who decided to square accounts with his servants. As he got under way, one servant was brought before him who had run up a debt of a hundred thousand dollars. He couldn't pay up, so the king ordered the man, along with his wife, children, and goods, to be auctioned off at the slave market.

²⁶⁻²⁷ "The poor wretch threw himself at the king's feet and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' Touched by his plea, the king let him off, erasing the debt.

²⁸ "The servant was no sooner out of the room when he came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him ten dollars. He seized him by the throat and demanded, 'Pay up. Now!'

²⁹⁻³¹ "The poor wretch threw himself down and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' But he wouldn't do it. He had him arrested and put in jail until the debt was paid. When the other servants saw this going on, they were outraged and brought a detailed report to the king.

³²⁻³⁵ "The king summoned the man and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave your entire debt when you begged me for mercy. Shouldn't you be compelled to be merciful to your fellow servant who asked for mercy?' The king was furious and put the screws to the man until he paid back his entire debt. And that's exactly what my Father in heaven is going to do to each one of you who doesn't forgive unconditionally anyone who asks for mercy."

Message – Modeling God's Forgiveness Pr. Hope Deutscher

How many times do I need to forgive someone? Peter asks Jesus this question – about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.

We have to give Peter some credit – he knew the answer from Jesus was going to be big. How many times should I forgive someone? – not, 1, 2 or 3 times but 7 times before I write this person off? Think about that...if someone wrongs you 7 times ...Peter's answer seems pretty radical! Peter knew Jesus would set the number high but Jesus responds 77... much higher than Peter imagined for sure.

"Seven" symbolized completeness; a talent was worth fifteen years of a laborer's wage; a denarius was one day's wage. Seventy-seven plays with the ancient idea that seven is the number of fullness and perfection, because seven combines three, a number that suggests divinity, and four, recalling the corners of the flat earth. So with seventy-seven, Jesus multiplies the number of total perfection.

Christians do not, in fact, live in godly perfection, but continuously need the mercy of God and the forgiveness of the community. The use of the imagery of debt suggests that we actually owe to one another both ethical living and gracious forgiveness.

The problem with counting how many times we forgive is that we're really not practicing grace; we're just extending our patience. If we keep counting wrongs – we are not forgiving, for the past is never really washed away – it's just relegated to the archives. When we choose to forgive, we have to be ready and intentional in stopping the rehashing of the painful moment that the person wronged us. Often we speak about forgiveness but whenever anything else happens in the relationship those old wounds are opened up all over again.

When we choose to forgive someone, we take the risk of restoring the relationship back to where it was before we were hurt. It may not ever grow beyond that, but we have to be willing to get back to where we started. That means taking a risk – we might be hurt all over again. There are no guarantees this will not happen again. We have to risk that – just as God has taken that risk with us.

As people of forgiveness and faith – we are not to wait until someone earns our forgiveness – that's as impossible as us trying to earn the love of God...and it is just as unfaithful.

Being a disciple requires an expansive perspective on forgiveness. Today our perspective is broadened by the good news that God's forgiveness is not based on our idea of fairness, but rather on abundant, unimaginable grace. God "does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities" (Ps. 103:10). The king forgives our entire debt, no matter how enormous it is (Matt. 18:23-27). ... And we are also challenged to stretch our perspective and forgive each other. With Peter, we learn to stop keeping score (Matt. 18:21-22). When that repentance comes, we have to let go of the obstacles that keep us distant from the person who has hurt us. ...Will we live out the kind of unfair grace that has been shown to us by our Redeemer?

On Holocaust Remembrance Day in the year 2000, survivor Elie Wiesel requested that the German Bundestag officially ask the Jewish people for forgiveness for the atrocities committed under the Third Reich. In his address he mentioned that such a request for forgiveness will have "extraordinary repercussions in the world."

Two weeks later, President Johannes Rau visited Israel to ask for forgiveness on behalf of the people of Germany. As a result, an exchange program was set up in which young people from Israel visit Berlin each year.

By one Holocaust survivor forgiving the unimaginable crimes against humanity but a nation under the Third Reich – forgiveness multiplied in ways one couldn't imagine. That's how God's love, grace and mercy works – more than we could ever imagine!

Together, I want you to join me in confessing our own sins to God...and we will together receive God's grace and forgiveness as we come before him with repentant hearts.

Confession and Forgiveness

Faithful God, Our sins weigh us down, and we struggle to live in freedom and joy. When we turn and return to you, O God, you greet us with love and forgiveness 77 times more than what we could imagine.

We come with repentance hearts, confessing that we are captive to sin, known and unknown.

At times, we turn from your loving embrace and go our own ways.

**We put obstacles in the ways of forgiving others.
We pass judgment on one another before examining ourselves.
We place our own needs before those of our neighbors.
Make us humble, that we can turn away from our transgressions.**

God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection, Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims: Your sins are forgiven in the name of † Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who died for our sins, redeeming us. Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness to do God's work in the world. **Amen.**

Let us pray, O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

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 4: *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.*

Scripture: Genesis 50: 15 - 21

Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" ¹⁶So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, ¹⁷'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." ¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? ²⁰Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. ²¹So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Message

Pr. Jim Greene

(I'll tell people I'm going to yell "STOP" early in the sermon!)

Imagine you're someplace you are naturally at; doing what you'd naturally be doing; with people you naturally trust- AND you hear "STOP!"

Naturally you'd "STOP"; check out the situation; get into fight/flight mode AND while on high alert you move to make the best choice possible.

While the reading from Genesis doesn't have "STOP" in it- Joseph's brothers are on high alert since their father has died and they are unsure if Joseph, who they treated terribly, might now get his revenge on them.

Quick Review: Joseph had made his brothers mad by: Exposing their poor work habits; by sharing 2 dreams where they would bow down to him; & by receiving a fancy coat of many colors from their father and wearing it!

His brothers, resentful of Joseph; Put him into a pit; sold him into slavery; ignored his cries for mercy! NOW Jacob has died - it's time for a STOP!

Sidebar: When bad things happen we naturally wonder where God is at? In this story- God helps Joseph learn from his experiences (doesn't cause them) and blesses Joseph's learning! In our life, how often do we STOP and invite God to help us grow or just blame God? It seems Joseph did!

We don't know what lessons Joseph learned through his trials but we know by his response to his brothers he had grown. Notice how Joseph says: "STOP, Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good." - Would we say that?

While we call today Rally Sunday- what if we instead called it STOP day?

STOP: Since God set aside this day- how can we use it for the good?

STOP: DID YOU KNOW THAT Rally Sunday is about setting an intention to learn about AND with God through every situation-? At Rally Sunday we give tools like: Bibles; Worship; 1st Communion; Sunday School; Praying & Scripture to help us STOP and connect with God. Tools to help us ask: "How is God helping me to learn and be blessed through this?" May we learn to STOP and trust God is with us to help us learn NOT to make life go the way we want. Imagine if we STOPPED trying to run life and let God take the lead.

Virtual Communion

Whenever we celebrate Holy Communion, we need to hear the words: "STOP all you are doing and receive my body and blood to remind you I am with you always!"

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this in the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in the remembrance of me.

Communion The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.

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.

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

Proverbs 3:5-6: Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers...

Philippians 4:13: "I can do all this through him who gives me strength." Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers...

Isaiah 48:17: "This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go." Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers...

Isaiah 30:21: "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers...

Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers...

Joshua 1:9: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers...

Ecclesiastes 12:1-3: "Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor Him in your youth before you grow old and say, 'Life is not pleasant anymore.' Remember Him before the light of the sun, moon, and stars is dim to your old eyes, and rain clouds continually darken your sky." Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers...

Proverbs 4:23: "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you." Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers...

Psalms 20:4: "May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed." Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers...

James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers...

1 Corinthians 10:31: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers...

May you find comfort in these scripture verses as you head back to school, know that you are not alone. God is with you and has great plans for you! When school stresses you out, bad things happen, or things just don't seem to be going your way, know that God works all things together for those who love Him. School is one step in our lives that is shaping you into the person He has called you to be, so give it all you've got! Give God your best and He will help you out with the rest.

Benediction (HOPE/JIM)

Teachers, students and parents – may you know that we are in this together – 2020 has been turned upside down, today our worship service was turned upside down a bit. This new school year is filled with some unknowns but we do know that God is with us and we are better together as we walk together this fall.

May the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all as we enter a fall filled with change and transitions.

We join together in our closing hymn, "God's Work. Our Hands." Written for the ELCA for our *God's Work. Our Hands Sunday*. As the hymn calls us to work together, repairing the world, feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless. We are gifted by grace to respond in God's love – to share the good news of God's gospel.

Hymn – God's Work. Our Hands Pam Aakre, Piano, Pr. Hope Deutscher, Flute

Verse 1: *God's work, our hands; work-ing to-geth-er,
Build-ing a fu-ture, re-pair-ing the world,
Rais-ing up homes, plant-ing new gar-dens,
Feed-ing the hun-gry and shelt-'ring the cold.
Bless, God, our hands as we work in your name.
Shar-ing the good news of your Gos-pel.*

Verse 4: *God is at work in and a-round us;
Seed-lings are sprout-ing and bread's on the rise!
Washed and set free, hum-bled and hon-ored,
Gift-ed by grace, we re-spond in God's love.
Bless, God, our lives as we an-swer your call,
Shar-ing the good news of your Gos-pel.*