



Letters from the Dome

Greetings from Pastor

PASTOR PETER DEBERNY

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

As I write this letter from my desk, it is hard to believe that it has already been 8 months since my arrival at Grace Lutheran Church. And looking back on this time, I can say for certain that God blessed me greatly when He placed me at this congregation. Grace has been so welcoming in receiving their new pastor, especially one straight out of the Seminary.

Indeed, just one year ago I was still in the classroom studying and preparing to serve as an under-shepherd to God’s people. And now having been ordained and installed at only 25 years old, I am currently the youngest pastor in the Atlantic District of our Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. No pressure! Yet, Grace Lutheran did not reject me because of my youth. Instead, you all believed what I believe about the Divine Call: it was God Himself who sent me here to serve.

One of the themes I have repeated in the past few months is that God loves to work through His servants to accomplish His mission. This is how I regard myself publicly and in my own personal prayer life. I am only a servant of the Most High, given tasks to accomplish. As I often pray, “Lord fill me with your Holy Spirit that I might best serve your people!” I truly believe that as a pastor, there is no room for ego. For the truth is this: this is the Church of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ! I am only a servant—an

under-shepherd—of Jesus! There is no boasting, except in the great mercy and forgiveness that I have received from Him!

As your servant, I will work hard to continue the mission of our church: to strengthen the flock of believers and to care for our community. I hope that you will keep me and our leadership in your prayers as we move forward by the Spirit of God!

And speaking of moving forward, we have something new in the works here at Grace. You are currently reading it! I am so happy to announce the launch of Grace Lutheran’s new newsletter: “Letters from the Dome!” In this newsletter, you will be able to catch up on the happenings of this congregation and hear from many of our leaders.

Many thanks to our contributors in this edition which made its launch a success! And a huge thank you to Donna Smith who put in so much time and energy into making this idea into a reality! If you have interest in contributing to the newsletter in future editions, please let us know! God bless you all, and as always, go in peace and serve the Lord!



Pastor Peter Deberny

Inside this issue

| | |
|---|---|
| Greetings from Pastor | 1 |
| Pastor Peter Deberny describes his role as the new pastor of Grace... | |
| Words of Encouragement! | 2 |
| President William Farrell celebrates the blessings of the past year... | |
| Striving to be a Servant | 3 |
| Gary Miranda reflects on his journey in becoming a Lay Deacon... | |
| Christmas through Pictures | 4 |
| See the many joys of the holiday season at Grace Lutheran Church! | |
| My Journey to “Grace” | 4 |
| Donna Smith gives her account of how God brought her to this church... | |
| Boards Behind the Scenes | 5 |
| Liz Vasell discusses the work of the Board of Worship... | |
| “Rock-solid Promises” | 6 |
| Linda Guteres offers Biblical hope in the midst of the anxieties of life... | |

Words of Encouragement!

WILLIAM FARRELL

I hope this note finds you all well, as I continue to pray for all of you and the wonderful church the Lord has provided for us.

I have recently finished my first full year as your Congregational President, and I cannot believe how fast the time has gone by. It has been interesting and exciting in many ways. I have been able to slowly adjust to the responsibilities of the role itself and for that, I am thankful. I am a "Work in Progress". It is a pleasure to lead your church council, where we encourage one another, receive updates on the churches progress, discuss the future, deal with any matters of business and it is where many decisions are made. Most of all, I have enjoyed talking with so many of you and listening to all your thoughts and ideas.

I wanted to thank you for the trust you have instilled in me to lead in this capacity. The words of encouragement have certainly helped to make this past year a joy. I appreciate all the conversations I have had with so many thus far and look forward to many more in the future. Please know that I am always available for you. One of my goals is to ensure that we are as transparent as possible so, please feel free at any time, to contact me. If you are curious about something, if you feel that there was a change or decision made that you do not agree with, or you simply have an opinion, it is valuable. Please don't ever hesitate to reach out!

I would like to celebrate some of the amazing things that have happened this past year at Grace:

We called Pastor Peter Deberny and Praise God that he accepted. He started with us in July and has already been making such a positive impact. We are so excited for the future of Grace with Pastor here.

We have had some outreach through our Discovery Camp, spreading the Gospel to the community children. (And some parents too!)



A group from our congregation prepare to march in the Mastic-Shirley Christmas parade.



A group of Discovery Camp attendees watch as Linda Guteres and Will Kelleher teach Bible stories!

We had our Rally Day and Community Picnic which had many in attendance. We have a Sunday school program that continues to provide a safe and educating space for our youngest children.

We have had many different Bible study opportunities to better understand God's word and spend time in fellowship with one another.

We had our community Christmas tree lighting and were involved in two of the neighborhood Christmas parades. (What Fun!) We have provided shelter for the homeless by supporting Maureen's Haven over the winter months here at Grace. We had the Women of Grace involved in many areas of ministry throughout the year.

There are many other things at Grace and many more to come. New ideas are also always welcomed!

As we journey through 2023, I would like to encourage all to get more involved. We all know of people who are involved and can see the obvious joy they feel serving God in that capacity. I would like to see more Bible studies offered, more indoor and outdoor events, fellowship nights with meals.... and much more. Church volunteering is a labor of love, but we can do so much more with more volunteers.

If you desire to help to work with a board, the council will help get you with the right group to get started. It all starts with prayer and consideration of where God will have you use your gifts and talents.

I would also encourage you all to stay behind after each service for some coffee, snacks and good conversation. Talk to at least two or three different people each week and you will get to know them. We are a church known for the pouring out of God's love and it all starts with our own members.

Thank you all again for allowing me to serve as your President.

(If you would like to contact me at any time, please feel free to email me at wfarrellx2@icloud.com.

In His Love,

William Farrell



Striving to be a Servant

My Journey through the Atlantic District Lay Diaconate

GARY MIRANDA

I never really thought of myself as “Deacon material”, but in December 2019, when one of our Deacons, David Santos, left to accept a call to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Middle Island, there was a void created, and a great deal more work was placed on the shoulders of our remaining Deacons, Tony Vasell and Ed Ritzmann and our vacancy Pastor, Charles Bell. David gave me a book to read - “Deacons: Servant Models in the Church”. He asked me to consider reading and praying about it.



Gary Miranda speaks at the annual Christmas tree lighting.

Later, I began to participate in worship service as a Server. Ed, Tony and Pastor Bell began a bit of a mentorship process with me (as well as with Patrick Doyle). About 8 months later, Patrick and I were approached about applying for the Atlantic District Lay Deacon Training program and begin two years’ study. I was a little reluctant to

start what I thought would be a lot of commuting to evening classes; I hadn’t done anything academically in about 35 years (I stopped college because the commute while holding a full time job was exhausting), and had concerns about financing this venture. But Ed and Tony explained that the financing would be made available through the congregation (if they approved my candidacy), and that, because of COVID, the program was to be administered through ZOOM, a “virtual” classroom. After some discussion with Lynn, I agreed to begin the program.

What followed was two years of college level study, ten six week units of continuing education. Each class was accompanied by a healthy dose of textbooks to read, unit final assignments / papers, and written reflections about what we learned. Time to exercise that gray muscle that resides between my ears. Well, you know how the education piece turned out; Patrick and I completed our studies in May 2022 and received our diplomas in August 2022.

What remains for us now is this: the completion of 200 service hours, with a minimum of 20 hours in each of the following five categories - Visitation, Teaching, Administration, Evangelism, and Liturgical Service. Then, a written report of the service performed, which is submitted to the Atlantic District Office, a final interview is scheduled with the Supervising Pastor, Regional Vice President, and members of the Advisory Committee. Upon passing the interview our names are forwarded to the Atlantic District Board of Directors, for final approval.

This has been a very rewarding experience all along; this congregation’s support and encouragement are heartfelt and deeply appreciated. I look forward to the day when I am commissioned as a Lay Deacon, and will be ready, willing, and able to continue to serve my congregation and my Lord.

Gary Miranda



Festival

OF WORKSHOPS

2023 Atlantic District - Festival of Workshops

Save the Date!

Saturday March 11, 2023 at
Village Lutheran Church and Chapel School
172 White Plains Road, Bronxville NY 10708
9:30 am to 3 pm

Over 30 Workshops to refresh and energize
you in your ministry!

Register Online at ad-lcms.org

Christmas Through Pictures



This past Christmas Season was filled with so much love and fellowship. There were so many events to participate in and enjoy the company of our members as well as the William Floyd and Center Moriches communities. Grace Lutheran Church was the ONLY church to participate in the Mastics, Shirley Community Parade. It was so wonderful to see our Pastor marching in his robe with our members alongside our beautiful float sharing God's love with the thousands of onlookers. We also once again held our Annual Tree Lighting filled with caroling and refreshments. It truly was a beautiful season filled with fellowship, joy, and love.



My Journey to "Grace"

DONNA SMITH

I was raised in a traditional Catholic home. We went to church, said grace every night with our meal and our prayers at night. I was baptized, made my communion and confirmation, went to CCD classes but never felt like it was all there was. I knew of the Trinity but never understood it. I knew that Jesus died for our sins but I kept searching for the empty spot to be filled. I was never introduced to the bible even though my parents had a beautiful one with pictures displayed in their bedroom.

I was married in the Catholic Church I was brought up in and my children were baptized and made communion and confirmation in the Catholic Church we joined when we moved to Shirley. I taught CCD classes and went to church almost every Sunday and my boys became Altar Boys. I was still feeling empty. Randy was raised Presbyterian and I admired his knowledge of the bible. Randy

asked me to check out Grace Lutheran in the first few years we lived out here. He never pushed but always supported me. I was so curious but never wanted to disappoint my parents by leaving the Catholic Church. But after my daughter Katie's communion I had enough. I was appalled that such a sacred event had become nothing but a fashion show with everyone talking (loudly) and not being respectful of the sacrament. I tried another Catholic Church but I was still not filled. So then a dear friend brought me to Grace Lutheran one Sunday. I was overwhelmed with the kindness shown me on that very first visit. I came home and told Randy I think I found my home. We started to attend regularly and slowly my heart grew more and more filled. I had been in a bible study with some Catholic friends so I was learning more and more through the word but at Grace Lutheran I began to learn to live the word.

Continued on the next page...

My Journey to “Grace” (cont.)

My daughter who was 9 years old loved attending Grace Lutheran and being involved in Children’s Church and all Youth activities. My sons, who were Confirmed teenagers, didn’t want to leave the Catholic Church which saddened me but Pastor Ernst advised me to just lead by example and they will find their way.

I never knew exactly what it was I was searching for during all those years but I know without a doubt I was searching for God’s grace in my heart and life. I needed to understand that Christ died for ME.

Through God’s grace I was forgiven which allowed me to be renewed in heart and mind. This saving grace allows us to live the life God wants us to experience and share with others. In 2 Corinthians

12:9 Paul tells us that the Lord said “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”. In my weakness I knew nothing of the Lord’s salvation and grace for all those years but I can now boast as Paul did that in my weakness may the power of Christ rest upon me.

I’m a sinner but through Grace (Church) I received God’s grace which I am so grateful for every single day of my life. I pray you also have found God’s grace and salvation.

Donna Smith



Boards Behind the Scenes

DONNA SMITH

I recently had lunch with the Board Of Worship Chair, Liz Vasell to find out exactly what the Board Of Worship is all about as well as Liz’s history at Grace Lutheran Church. Liz and Tony Vasell have attended Grace Lutheran Church since Christmas Eve 1992. They served as Greeters prior to Service in that first year and became members in 1995 after taking Discipleship Class with Pastor Ernst. Liz has served in so many capacities at Grace Church. She has been the Chair of Social Ministry, Council Secretary, Council Treasurer, Chair Of Fellowship and now Chair of Worship. Liz has been our Church Secretary since 2007. Liz feels that she has a better understanding of many of her office duties due to working with so many Boards over the years.

The Board Of Worship is vital in the day to day running of the church yet most of us aren’t even aware of what goes on behind the scenes. Let me share some of the responsibilities Liz and her Board perform.

The Board Of Worship provides all material needs and supplies for worship. They prepare and oversee the Acolytes, Ushers and Altar Guild. The Board also participates in the orders of worship including music and special services, always being aware of the liturgical heritage of the church and the present leading of the Holy Spirit in the

worship life of the church.

Every season of the church brings different preparations and supplies to be bought and shared such as Advent and Lenten Devotion Books, Palms, Ashes, Communion wafers, wine, candles, permit for service at Shirley Beach, fitting Confirmants for robes, etc. The Board also plans and coordinates all decorating for each season and event. So much of what we take for granted as we enjoy worshipping each and every Sunday is due to the service of The Board of Worship.

I’m so grateful to Liz and her Board Members for their service to Our Lord and Grace Lutheran Church. Their service allows us to sit back and be filled with love and joy because they’ve helped supply many of the tools needed.

Every newsletter I will interview a different Board Chair so that they can share with you the goings on of their Board and how their service enhances the life of our church. Please don’t hesitate to speak to one of our Council Officers or Board Chairs if you have an interest in serving on a board. All Help Is Welcome. God Bless You!

Liz Vasell



Lutheran Women’s Missionary League

Invites you to the

40th Biennial Convention

June 22-25, 2023

Wisconsin Center — Milwaukee, Wisconsin



Upcoming Events!

March 11th —
Festival of Workshops (more info on page 3)

March 12th —
Congregational Meeting following 9:15 Worship

March 17th —
Maureen's Haven (Homeless Ministry)

April 6th —
Soup and Bread at 5:30 PM
Maundy Thursday Service at 7:00 PM

April 7th —
Good Friday Service at 7:00 PM

April 8th —
Men's Breakfast at 8:00 AM

April 9th —
Easter Sunrise Service at Shirley Beach (6:22 AM)
Traditional Service at 8:00 AM
Contemporary Service at 10:00 AM
Easter Egg Hunt following Contemporary Service

June 26th - 30th—
Discovery Camp (Vacation Bible School)

More events and activities will be announced in our Sunday bulletins! Stay tuned!

Reach out!

Phone: (631) 281-8196
Email: church@graceinmb.org
Address: 240 Mastic Rd, Mastic Beach, NY 11951

Join Us in Worship!

Sunday Traditional Service
7:45 AM

Sunday Contemporary Service with
Children's Sunday School
9:15 AM

Wednesday Mid-week Lenten Service
7:00 PM

Rock-solid Promises!

LINDA GUTERES

2 Corinthians 4:8-12 *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.*

Believe me when I tell you, I don't cry "pretty". Just this past week, I found myself "crying ugly" due to life's circumstances. Once again, stress and anxiety cut me off at the knees. Everyone has them; days when Satan wins the battle; when the strong find themselves face down at the foot of the cross, unable to stand, begging for mercy. We pray for God to fix our circumstances, to heal our brokenness, to slaughter our enemies, and to pick us up, dust us off, and make all things wonderful once again. Honestly this doesn't usually happen.

Looking back on my life, I realize God has done the greatest work in me when I was in my own personal valleys of despair, heartache, and pain. While I don't want my life to always be in a state of chaos, I'm thankful the hard times are not wasted, that I have learned great lessons through these experiences. His light brought me through my darkest nights.

1 John 1:5-7 *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

His almighty hands held mine as I walked through the valleys of healing.

Psalms 23:4 *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

His rock-solid promises, made firm and secure with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, has proved to me that I can trust God beyond my capability to understand.

Ephesians 1:11-14 *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

This past week is almost complete, and I'm continually reminded of some basic truths. God is faithful and He will never leave me. He will never abandon me. God loves me beyond comprehension and my future with Him is secure. Satan may win a battle or two, but always remember, God has won the war!

Dear Lord,

All praise, honor, and glory be unto You, our Risen Lord and Savior! Thank You for bringing me through the dark times of my life. Thank you for shining Your glorious light into the darkness that surrounds me. You are faithful. We can trust You. You are God and You love me. Thank you for the assurance of Your Holy Spirit who lives in my heart. For this, and for so much more, I am grateful.

Amen

Linda Guteres

