



VOICE OF GRACE

Grace Lutheran Church, Atlanta

April/May 2017

CHRISTIAN OUTREACH AT GRACE AN INTERVIEW WITH PASTOR ADAM

By: Sheila Schutt

Why, in your opinion, is church outreach important and why does God want us to do it? How does it fit in?

Well, if we ask the question of what's Jesus all about, I mean it's a pretty broad question. He's about a lot of things, but I think that one thing that strikes kind of clear is that Jesus came into this world to save sinners. If you ask the question what is the function of the church, the church is here for that same reason. I think that's what outreach is. It's the church going out into the world to claim people for Christ. And, of course, after people are Christians and they're in the church, there is a lot of care that people need in their faith life as in their faith walk. But the primary function of the church is to win disciples for Christ, so I guess if that's what we mean by outreach, that's what's really important.

As a congregation, who should Grace be reaching out to?

Everyone ideally, right? But you can ask the question of where's our best opportunity to reach out to people. And I think that there's a couple answers to that question. Of course, a lot of times it's good to look at your immediate neighborhood. Where are you? Who are the people around you? And so we can do that. And we should do that. But then there's also unique situations in a metropolitan city like Atlanta. To think just about your neighborhood as the mile or two around it is narrow, I think. Just today, I was having conversations with people around Atlanta looking out at multiethnic ministries to refugees and immigrants and questioning what can we do in this area. What can we do in this way? Because, honestly, if we don't reach out to those communities, then our church body, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, probably will fade away pretty quickly. It's a changing culture we're in, and we need to expand our identity with our expanding culture.

Can you tell me about some of the service projects that you're planning?

We're starting slow. One thing that I noticed is that cultures don't change quickly. Grace might be an exception to that. There's a lot of people who seem onboard to try just about anything. Coming up pretty soon, we have a project where we're joining with Stepping Stone Ministry to feed the homeless. They go down to the Pine Street Mission I think every Saturday to feed the homeless. And right now, we're starting off with at least once a quarter. I'd like to move us to helping out once a month eventually. I'd also like to see other service projects involving outreach to refugees. There's so many ways we can do that. Another place where elders are looking at doing things is



Members of Grace, along with Stepping Stone Ministry, serve food to the homeless in Atlanta

getting involved in a Habitat for Humanity build. That's one elder's function. Another elder is our refugee elder, that's what he's going to be looking at. Jeff [Raymond] is working with the homeless community. And Lucien [Lane] is looking at Habitat for Humanity, so each elder is taking over a different social ministry outreach is how it's supposed to be working. Let's see how it goes.

What other ideas do you have for the future when it comes to outreach?

I think I'm trying to slowly build. I'd like to do it organically instead of very intentionally. I would like to see us supporting a church plant. I know that today when I was talking with some people there's talk about doing a multiethnic church plant in Clarkston, which is a major resettlement place. A lot of hurdles to get to there to do that. But that's part of Grace's history, and it's a history that people seem to value as a congregation, so it's one I would like to honor. There's so many different places and ways we can serve. I think just convincing ourselves that we need to do that is difficult. But I don't think it will be too difficult at Grace. I think there's a good community there.

Are you open to the congregation's ideas?

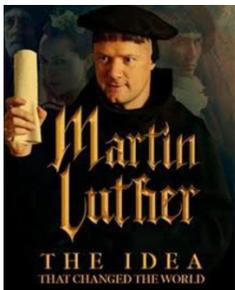
Yeah, I would love that. I've always got open ears, and I'm willing to try anything. So if anyone had any service projects they would like to do, I would also encourage people to just go out there and be Christians individually. Because the old model of let's get together and have our own home brew club, that's cool, it sounds fun, but why not go out to join other clubs and just be a Christian there? So I think an

important part of being a church is individually being a Christian and being a Christian in your vocation where you are. And that doesn't just mean talking about Jesus to everyone constantly. It means serving them faithfully, serving in your profession, faithfully in your vocation. Everyone in the church has a place they can go that no one else can. And so to be a Christian there is extremely important. You mentioned that you're involved in some secular social ministry things sometimes. I think that's awesome. I think we should ask the question does Jesus want to be here, there, wherever it might be. And I think that answer is always yes, right? Jesus wants to be everywhere, so that's where we should be, too. So, when we get involved in different projects as Christians, we shouldn't just do our own. I think we should see what's going on and be there.

Is there anything else you'd like to say about outreach?

You asked, "Would you listen to other service project ideas from people at Grace?" I would listen to any ideas from people at Grace. I love everyone at Grace so much. They've been very open and supportive of me here my first year. And so I trust them, and I trust people's intuitions. People know this community better than I do. People have been here longer. So if anyone wants to jump onboard and start doing something, you don't have to wait for Pastor Adam to check a box. I'd like to talk to you; I'd like to support you in it. But don't wait for a rubber stamp from the church to be a Christian. Be a Christian every day because Jesus has already rubber stamped you in your baptism, and you are His child so we should live like it.

MARTIN LUTHER MOVIE



For the 500th anniversary of the Great Reformation, Grace is hosting the historical docudrama screening of *Martin Luther: The Idea that Changed the World*.

The movie will be shown at Landmark Midtown Art Cinema (931 Monroe Dr) on April 20 at 7:30pm. Tickets are \$12 and can be purchased online or by speaking with Beth Ellsworth.

VBS VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



This year's Vacation Bible School theme is titled "A Mighty Fortress," where kids learn that God is their refuge and strength.

The program will run for one week at the end of July. Specific dates and times are TBD. We're looking for volunteers to help run this year's VBS. If you're interested, please let Pastor Adam know.

THE PASTOR'S CORNER

Easter Greetings!

The good news of Jesus Christ risen from the dead is the reason we have gathered here this day. In fact, this news is so good that we gather every Sunday of the year to celebrate the hope we have now that Christ is risen. We might even say that every Sunday is Easter Sunday.

As the theologian Jaroslav Pelikan lay on his death bed, some of the final words he spoke were, "If Christ is risen, nothing else matters. And, if Christ is not risen - nothing else matters." These words remind us that in Christ's triumph over death that first Easter day, we have been given a promise from our God that reorders all the matters of life. Such a great promise is this: that it sustains us in every hour—in hours of joy or sorrow, in hours of life or death.

Now, we have a hope that cannot be robbed from us by any trouble this world or the devil cares to throw at us. The great hope of death robbed of its sting, the hope of the grave overcome, the hope of being raised bodily from the dead to life everlasting.

Just as a stone dropped on the still surface of a pond sends a ripple that soon reverberates across the whole surface of the water, the resurrection of Jesus Christ sent out a wave of hope that would spread to all the corners of the world. What great news we have that because Christ has been risen from the dead, all those who look to him will also be raised. The promise given to us that he will come again to raise us from the grave, to give to us a life unending in his Kingdom.

This is the kind of news that causes us to reorder our lives. With such great news, all the worries and troubles we encounter in life take a back seat to the great promise of everlasting life given to us by faith in Christ. Through this Gospel message, the Holy Spirit stirs up wonder and joy that our God would give to his people so great a hope.

Indeed, Christ is risen! Alleluia for the great love of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ! Alleluia for the love of God, which has promised to us that he will not leave his people in death! Alleluia because he will raise us bodily from our graves to welcome us into a blessed life under Christ our King in his Kingdom for days without number! Alleluia! Christ is risen!



- Pastor Adam Ellsworth

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Lanes' Vow Renewal: April 23

Lucien and Jackie Lane have invited members and friends of the congregation to join them as they renew their marriage vows in celebration of their 35th wedding anniversary. The short ceremony will take place at the church after the service, and a reception in the Fellowship Room will follow. Please plan to be there on this very special day!

Piety by the Pint: April 27, 7pm

Join us for brewed beverages and fine fellowship at Torched Hop Brewing Company (249 Ponce de Leon Ave).

Church Cleaning Day: April 29, 9am

If you have a spare hour (or more), please pop by. All the supplies are here, so all we need is you!

Bible Study: May 3, 6-8pm

We have a new group Bible study beginning May 3rd! Study topics will rotate between a book in the Bible and topical book studies covering topics such as parenting, fellowship, apologetics, church history, outreach, and relationships. For our first study, we will be using Lifelight studies to examine Paul's letters to the Galatians, Phillipians, and Colossians.

When: Wednesdays from 6-8pm

Where: Church

Who: Anyone! Babysitting will be available.

A meal will be provided from 6-7pm, and if you'd like to provide a meal, please use the sign-up genius: www.SignUpGenius.com/go/20F0D44AEAA29A46-wednesday or speak with Joanna Ozgo (joannamwo@gmail.com). The study will begin around 7pm.

Please talk to Pastor Adam or Joanna Ozgo by Easter to ensure your copy of the study gets ordered. Study books will be \$12, and only one is necessary per family/couple. This is a wonderful opportunity for fellowship and to spend time in God's Word. Hope to see you there!

Adult Confirmation and Membership Class, Part 2: May 6, 9am-12pm

Pastor Adam will cover the chief parts of the

Christian faith as found in the Bible and taught in Martin Luther's Small Catechism. Current church members who want a refresher on the Catechism are welcome to attend as well as those who desire more information on the teachings of the Lutheran Church. If you are interested, please let Pastor Adam know. Even if you missed Part 1 of this class, you are still welcomed and encouraged to attend Part 2.

Voters' Meeting and Elections: May 7

The bi-annual voters' meeting will be held on Sunday, May 7 following the service. The main item of business will be electing officers for the Church Council and the Board of Elders. All voters and interested members of our congregation are encouraged to attend. If you are a member of Grace and are 18 years of age or older, you are a voting member of the congregation. Plan to attend to take an active role in the affairs of your congregation. After church and prior to the meeting, a lunch will be served in the Fellowship Room.

IN OUR PRAYERS

- » **Our homebound members:** Irene Rosenkoetter and Marjorie Hunecke
- » **Continued healing:** Arlene Kateen, Linda Jones (daughter of John and Arlene Kateen), Owen Lecklider (son of John and Arlene Kateen)
- » **For expectant mothers:** Kimberly Crom (daughter of Eldon and Grace Geisert)
- » **For our mission partners:** Rev. Joseph Song, Stepping Stone, and Lutheran Services of Georgia
- » **For our seminarian:** Joe Warnke

WEEKLY WORSHIP

- » **Children's Sunday School, Sundays 9:45am**
- » **Adult Bible Study, Sundays 9:45am**
- » **Confirmation, Sundays 9:45am**
- » **Worship Service, Sundays 11am**

CONTACT US

www.gracemidtown.com | 404-875-5411
1155 N. Highland Ave., Atlanta, GA 30306

@GraceLutheranATL 