



## We Are Growing!

By Pastor Julie Wright

There's something about the new year that causes us to reflect and then look forward. We clean house. Organize. Return to routines. Make resolutions and goals for the coming year. It's a familiar pattern for many of us. And now, as February dawns, we enjoy seeing a bit more light from day to day. Even in the cold and dark of winter, new light is dawning. My toes, while still semi-frozen, have been painted a new shade of pink — a foreshadowing of spring that will eventually return — and along with spring, my sandals will at last come out of hiding.

In the season of Epiphany, we wait, hope and finally jump for joy when the light of Christ breaks into our world and our lives. The manger scene is still in our peripheral vision as we move beyond it into a new season — a season of light. It is in a new season in the life of the congregation that we find ourselves - a season of growth.

- With joy and deep gratitude, I have accepted the call to serve as Lead Pastor. This comes after serving this community for two years as Associate Pastor.
- Interim Pastor Roger Hardy has joined Amazing Grace part-time for a period of 3-6 months to assist with the transitions we are experiencing, to work with church council and staff, provide pastoral care, preaching and worship leadership, and support me in my role..
- Tim Marburger began serving as Children and Youth Minister in December. Tim brings 30+ years of experience to his role. At his installation, we welcomed 80 of Tim's closest friends and colleagues! Now that's a big welcome, Tim!
- Barb Forthun joined us in January as Sanctuary Choir Director, who comes to us with years of experience in music education and has directed choirs in several churches. We have enjoyed having Barb's husband and children join the choir as well!
- Sunday School Co-Coordinators Kami Burgess and Trisha Ebensteiner bring their love of children and deep faith to the young people of this congregation. We are thrilled to welcome them in these new roles.
- In the neighborhood surrounding the church, hundreds of new homes are being constructed. These new neighbors are already starting to arrive and some have come to visit the church.
- Even the church office is in the midst of a makeover. Fresh paint and re-organizing is doing wonders to bring a fresh look to our work spaces.



Change can be exciting. But it can also be overwhelming and bring with it a flood of emotion – from grief to joy, stress and uncertainty. I want all of us to be in conversation about this season of change and growth, so we will be creating a new section of Amazing Grace’s website called, “We’re Growing!” (<http://aglcigh.org/about-us/were-growing/>) This is where you can go for the latest updates on the transitions happening at Amazing Grace and the ministry we share, as well as strategic goals and initiatives in process.

The common thread that runs through scripture is that God is with us, as we sang all throughout Advent with the hymn, O Come, O Come Emmanuel. More than that, we celebrate in worship each week that our God is one of transformation, newness and growth. Together we rest in the promise:

“See, I am making all things new.”  
- Revelation 21:5

As your new Lead Pastor, I am in a season of my own growth and transformation. As I grow into this new role, I ask for your prayers and your blessing. Be in conversation with me and the rest of the staff. Come, visit our new office spaces. Be a partner with us in the newness and growth that is to come.

Our God does in fact make all things new – in God’s church, in our lives, and in the world. That is a powerful promise I will lean on in this season of change and growth. I invite you to do the same.



<b>February Worship</b>			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Lessons</b>	<b>Worship Services</b>
<b>February 5</b> <i>Epiphany</i>	<b>Salt &amp; Light</b>	Isaiah 58:1-9a (9b-12) Psalm 112:1-9(10) Matthew 5:13-20	8:00 and 10:30 am Worship with Holy Communion
<b>February 12</b> <i>Epiphany</i>	<b>Choose Life!</b>	Deuteronomy 30:15-20 Psalm 119:1-8 Matthew 5:21-37	8:00 and 10:30 am Worship with Holy Communion
<b>February 19</b> <i>Epiphany</i>	<b>Sermon on the Mount</b>	1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23 Psalm 119:33-40 Matthew 5:38-48	8:00 and 10:30 am Worship with Holy Communion
<b>February 26</b> <i>Transfiguration Sunday</i>	<b>My Beloved</b>	Exodus 24:12-18 Psalm 2 Matthew 17:1-9	8:00 and 10:30 am Worship with Holy Communion

# Worship and Music Ministry

## Worship and Music Notes

by Louise Lentz, Worship and Music Chair

### Calling Musicians for Wednesday Lenten Services

Attention instrumentalists and singers: We will carry on the tradition of asking children (and adults) who wish to play or sing a prelude for our Wednesday evening Lenten services to contact Brad Pipal to be placed on the calendar. The dates available are March 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th and April 5th.

The services begin at 7 pm. **Your music should be either sacred or classical.** Brad is available as accompanist.



## Barb Forthun – New Sanctuary Choir Director

by Louise Lentz, Worship and Music Chair

Welcome to Barb Forthun who joined us on January 1 as our Sanctuary Choir Director. Barb has extensive experience as a church musician; directing several church choirs that have included a variety of ages, accompanying choirs and worship services. Her personal music ministry and faith journey has been enriched by the variety of congregations she has served – Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian. As a career music educator, the majority of her experience has been as a choral director. In working with choirs, she encourages fun, fellowship and musical growth, while providing a positive, efficient and musical experience. Her passion for music is evident.



## Singing for Your Health – Join the Choir

by Louise Lentz, Worship and Music Chair

In a recent news publication on healthy aging, I discovered an article titled “Singing for Your Health.” I don’t think you need to be “old” to reap the benefits of singing, so here are some key points from the article.

There are numerous reasons to sing and sing often.

- Evidence points to singing as having psychological benefits and singing also increases oxygenation in the bloodstream . . . it can serve as an aerobic activity that promotes a healthy heart.
- Singing can help to alleviate stress by releasing oxytocin, a natural stress reliever, into the blood . . . any steps taken to help relieve stress can lighten one’s mood and release tension.
- Singing, particularly group singing, can lessen feelings of depression and loneliness.

You don’t even have to be a good singer to reap the benefits of singing – singing can produce satisfying and therapeutic sensations even when the sound produced by the vocal instrument is of mediocre quality. That means no one need be afraid of singing their favorite songs. As Barb, our new choir director, has said; “if you don’t like your voice, give it back to God.”

Singing is more than just a social activity, a popular pastime or a way to improve health and reduce stress. Singing is also a powerful way to enhance our worship. Singing praises to God is an uplifting and inspiring experience. The Worship and Music Ministry team strives to include music in a variety of ways in our worship services. As always, we appreciate your feedback and suggestions.



## A Note from Barb!

Submitted by Barb Forthun

Thank you AGLC for your warm welcome and to Susan Young for your encouragement as I take over the reigns of directing the Sanctuary Choir. I look forward to getting to know everyone and growing in faith with the choir as we work together to enhance the worship experience at AGLC through music.

I want to invite anyone who has a love of singing, or wants to try singing to consider joining us at rehearsals on Wednesday evenings. I am flexible and very open to anyone joining on a trial basis just to check us out. I think you will find that it is more than just a choir rehearsal. Read on:

In the Worship and Music news, chair person, Louise Lentz, shares an article that talks about the health benefits of singing. There are additional health benefits from participating in a choir.

In an article by Heather Parker (2010), it is pointed out that the joy of group singing (choir) creates a sense of community and a sharing of love. Singing gives you that 'feel good factor,' producing "happy endorphins" which help you feel alive when you are singing. (This is also known as the "runner's high," and I would rather sing than run, especially in this weather!) This, in turn, creates positive energy. I can't tell you how many times that I had a long Wednesday, and I really didn't want to go to church choir, whether to sing or direct, but went anyway. Every single time I ended up coming home with energy to spare!

There is evidence that group singing lowers blood pressure, boosts the immune system, massages the digestive system, and has been effective in relieving insomnia. The effects on mental and emotional health are positive as well. These are a few of the benefits that result when you are immersed in beautiful sounds from the group who sing powerful and positive affirmations into your body (and mind).

It is all about sharing - sharing of love and of harmony. I invite you to give it a try. It can be a very healthy, moving and emotionally releasing experience. Not to be missed.

## Attention Theater Goers

Submitted by Barb Malamen

The Church Basement Ladies are at it again! You've met the ladies, now meet the men in *Rise Up O Men*. There are 36 seats reserved for the Sunday, March 26, 2pm performance. The sign up sheet is posted on the community bulletin board. Sign up now! If we have more interested in attending, the sooner I can request additional seats the better. Final count is due March 5. The cost is \$31 a piece if we have at least 30 attending. The performance is at the Plymouth Playhouse in Plymouth, MN, located at the intersection of Hwy 494 and Hwy 55. Car pooling is suggested. Contact Barb Malamen.

# From the Christian Education Ministry Team

## Tuesday Night Bible Study - A Study of Romans

Submitted by Pastor Julie Wright

In this, the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, it is fitting to study Romans, the book that played a part in Martin Luther's own questioning and searching for answers in his life of faith. Please bring your own Bible.

Where: Inver Glen Senior Living (located next door to the church) in the Community Room.

When: Tuesday evenings - 7:00-8:00 pm.

Contact: Pastor Julie Wright [jwright@aglcigh.org](mailto:jwright@aglcigh.org)



## Christian Education Ministry Team

Submitted by: Kent E. Rhein-Medina, Chair

Have you heard the Good News? After many months, God has touched the hearts of **Kami Burgess** and **Trish Ebensteiner** who have stepped forward and are the new Sunday School Co-coordinators! Both have lots of experience with Sunday School so they will be able to take over these duties in a virtually seamless manner. Trish and Kami also bring with them creativity, enthusiasm, and an energy which you will begin to see in their planning of activities in the year to come. With these two on board, as well as the beginning of **Tim Marburger's** employment, the Christian Education Ministry Team (along with **Barb Malamen**) is back to full strength. We are committed to bringing everyone at Amazing Grace experiences that nourish your relationship with God and each other.

During February, the children will be looking at the story of Mary and Martha during the Sunday School hour. **Anna Hahnfeldt, Sara Liegl, Carolyn Oleson, Kami Burgess, and Patty Johnson** will be bring these women to life through creative arts, science, Bible study, and other activities. We are blessed to have such gracious people to give of their time to the children of the congregation. Can you help, too? Please take a moment to look at the Sunday School Bulletin Board by the elevator. There is a sign-up sheet for rotations until the end of the year. Even if you have never taught before or don't have school-aged children, I hope you will consider this as one way you can *Be the Light*. The curriculum is provided for you and I promise you will get all the support you need. I look forward to seeing those rotation spots fill up!

The Christian Education Ministry Team is looking for additional members to carry out the many activities that are in the works in the coming months. We plan on meeting the 4th Tuesday of each month at 5:30 PM at the church. Feel free to come as you are. Everyone is welcome.



# From the Youth and Family Ministry Team

Submitted by Tim Marburger, Children & Youth Minister

It's been six weeks since I began my call here at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church. Six whirlwind weeks of studying, planning, meeting, greeting and trying to keep up.

My installation happened on January 8 and what a day it was!! Thanks to **Pastor Julie, Helen Yotter, Mary Y., Pam Rutten, Tanner R., Elizabeth Anderson, Hope B., Carter H., Vinny M., Zachary R. and Hailee W.** for being part of the service. Many visitors have said how nice and welcoming everyone was. Thank you to Amazing Grace for the wonderful gifts representative of my call to your congregation – the salt of the earth for wisdom, clothed in the righteousness of Christ (gorgeous blanket) and the unbroken oneness (the Tanzanian bracelet and wood cross).

I continue to reach out to families in the congregation to find times to come visit at your home. I hope we can find times. Expect my call or better yet, give me a call to set something up. I also held a meeting with elementary kids and their families on January 22. Lots of info was gleaned at that "Meet and Greet."

I am also looking ahead to our monthly activities. I know in the past this was called Sunsets, but I would like to try activities after service on Sunday to strive to get the youth while they are there for church. In addition, one of the requests made at the middle/high school meet & greet was to meet other kids. I've had a first meeting with other youth ministers in hopes of working jointly on activities and programming. Keep an ear open for more on this.



## **FUN ACTIVITY:**

**Sunday, February 12, 12:00 – 2:30pm - Middle/High School**

After church we will have lunch and then go bowling.

There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex.



**GERTEN'S PLANT SALES COMING IN MARCH!!  
STAY TUNED FOR MORE DETAILS.**

Beginning on Ash Wednesday (March 1), youth and their families will be hosting the weekly Lenten Suppers. We will provide simple meals to the community.



## Notes from Evangelism/Stewardship Team

### Missions Updates...

#### ELCA World Hunger - Raw Talents

Submitted by Zella Vandervort

In the midst of a food desert, where no grocery stores sell fresh produce, McLaughlin Grows Urban Farm is meeting a critical need for residents of Muskegon, Mich. McLaughlin Grows Urban Farm, supported by your gifts to ELCA World Hunger, grows everything from radishes to tomatoes in the middle of the city and teaches adults and teens how to grow their own food. During the summer, Laurie Wieschowski, the farm's manager, teaches middle schoolers the importance of weeding the farm and picking bugs off plants. The reward, says Laurie, comes when the produce grown is served at the public school for lunch. "They get excited when they see the kale, lettuce and carrots they've been tending," Laurie said, adding that some students return after the session to volunteer at the farm.

This program also hires student interns who earn a stipend while learning how to promote urban gardening and develop leadership skills. In a city where nearly two-thirds of the residents earn incomes below the federal poverty level, this is an important investment in the community's future. High school senior Briane Brooks has been involved with the farm for two years, weeding, harvesting and talking to the farm's visitors. "I love the work," she said. "I love being involved in the community." As part of the Youth Empowerment Program, Briane is paid hourly, but for her, getting healthy food to people is the important goal. To ELCA World Hunger, she adds, "Your donors are involved in something much bigger than you'd ever believe. You are helping a hurt community." Thanks to your gifts to ELCA World Hunger, Briane and many residents of Muskegon now have access to fresh, affordable fruits and vegetables they need to thrive.



Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger support innovative solutions that fight hunger and poverty in nearly 60 countries around the world, including the United States.

#### China Service Ventures

Submitted by Charlotte Gronseth

**"A big thank you to Amazing Grace Church for the warm mittens, hats and socks you sent for the Stay Behind kids!"**

This thank you came in an email from Mim Neller-moe, who together with her husband Jeff serve as CSV's missionaries in the area of Rooster Mountain and Sinyang.

The timing of AGLC's gift is perfect. On January 28th it is the Chinese New Year--the year of the Rooster--when all fix up their homes and buy new clothes for the celebration. These Stay Behind Children live in miserable conditions and are not able to get new clothes. What AGLC sent to them is a big gift for these kids and will bring them warmth and cheer. Thank you!

# Council Corner

## From the Council President

Submitted by Annie Morgan, Council Vice President

*As winter winds shape drifts of snow  
God breathes in us a way to go.*

Throughout the coming year, I'll use the newsletter to communicate with you. I would also invite you to use my personal contact information anytime I can help answer questions or clarify information.

### CELEBRATIONS IN 2017

Let's celebrate a year of partnership and sharing with the Spanish-speaking Pentecostal Church who worships each Sunday afternoon in our building. We are in need of a couple of people from Amazing Grace who would be willing to help put together a luncheon to take place between our last service of the morning and their afternoon worship. Can you help with this February event?

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church was established almost ten (10) years ago! This April we will celebrate the community that was formed during the unification of Royal Redeemer Lutheran Church and Peace Lutheran Church. Planning for this event has not yet begun. Would you consider helping to plan this event?

We voted to install Pastor Julie Wright as the lead pastor at Amazing Grace. Now, we can plan an installation! Pastor Julie will be considering dates and arrangements for that, and we'll work with the Bishop and other synod representatives for their support. Please let me know if you are interested in helping to make installation special for Pastor Julie and our congregation.

### TRANSITION INFO

Pastor Roger Hardy began his work as Interim Pastor on January 16. He will be participating and helping with various education events, Bible studies, worship services, ministry team meetings, and the like in an effort to get to know people and the goings-on of Amazing Grace. While he walks with us over the next 3-6 months, Pastor Hardy will be gathering information and forming a team to assess the staffing and lay ministry needs for Amazing Grace. Findings will be presented to the council later this winter.

As Pastor Julie begins in a full-time lead pastor capacity, we continue to partner with the synod to ensure she has ongoing support, education, and mentorship. We are establishing a mutual ministry team to affirm and strengthen staff. And we commit as a congregation and council to continue to develop our lay ministry leadership for a strong and healthy church.

### STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Continued implementation of the congregation's strategic plan will be overseen by the incoming Vice President, Jennifer Rutschke. Ministry teams and leaders who are working on projects will report monthly progress to the council through Jennifer.

Current active projects include relaunch of a justice team, evaluation of staffing model, work on continued sustainability of Vacation Bible School programming, exploration of worship and music styles, and creation of a process for evaluating the church's giving to outside mission partners.

I am very excited about the year ahead and honored to work with you as Council President.

# A Warm Welcome



On January 16, I will begin my role as part-time Interim Pastor at Amazing Grace. It will be a time of change for both of us. Times of change can be filled with many responses, often depending on how we have dealt with change in the past. For my part, I see this as coming from God and so you and I are not entering this new relationship alone. The God who has brought us to this point in our lives will be the same God who will guide us in this faith journey together.

I understand my role as Interim Pastor as: (1) Being a listener to your stories, as individuals and as a congregation; (2) Being a pastor in your midst providing pastoral care and leadership through preaching, presiding, teaching, and visiting; (3) Being a mentor and coach for the new lead Pastor; and (4) Being the facilitator for the assessment and improvement of staffing and lay ministry team models.

I enjoy outdoor activities (walking/hiking/gardening/kayaking/cross country skiing/golf) and doing projects around home. I find meaning through reading, journaling, and visiting family and friends. I spend time in scripture, prayer, and meditation each morning. My wife and I have lived in St. Paul since 2013.

*Peace,*

*Interim Pastor Roger Hardy*

## Fellowship

### Women's Retreat

Submitted by Pastor Julie Wright

The Women's Retreat that was slated for February 24-25 has been canceled. We are in need of a team to spearhead and plan this retreat for a future date. If you're interested in being on this planning team, please contact Kent Rhein-Medina, Christian Education chair.



### OWLS – Older, Wiser, Lutherans

Submitted by Lynn Zentner

On the third Thursday of each month, you are invited to join us at 11:00 a.m. for a "pot-luck" lunch and some fun together. Coffee, tea, water, lemonade, and cookies will be provided. **Please bring a dish to pass.** We will gather on **February 16<sup>th</sup>** at church in the Upper Room from 11:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. Come alone or bring a friend for some fun and relaxation.

# Justice Team

Submitted by Annie Morgan

The justice team for Amazing Grace has begun its planning for a re-launch. A team met on January 19 to begin to formulate a charter and mission statement. Work continues for the next two months with meetings at which ALL ARE INVITED:

- Thursday, February 16, 7 p.m. at AGLC
- Thursday, March 16, 7 p.m. at AGLC

The team also invites your feedback. Your ideas can be submitted through the church office or email to Mark Morgan.

How do our faith values inform our call for justice today?

What would you like to see AGLC's Justice Team do or not do in the future?

How would you like to be informed or involved about the work of the AGLC Justice Team?



Prayer Concerns can be called in to Mary Garfield.



**Pastoral Care—Focused Outreach**

- Servant Ministry Coordinator: Pastor Julie Wright
- Meal Coordinator: Lynda Bartlette
  - Ride Coordinator: Norm Beckman
  - Respite Care Coordinator: Judy Thompson
  - Funeral Support Coordinator: Barb Malamen
  - Personal Prayer Coordinator for Worship:  
Judy Thompson

**Hands and Feet Ministry—  
Evangelism/Stewardship Team**

Coordinator: Pastor Julie Wright

**AMAZING  
GRACE**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

7160 South Robert Trail  
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55077



Amazing Grace Lutheran Church  
Joining God at Work in the World!  
All are welcome!!



**Website:**  
[www.aglcigh.org](http://www.aglcigh.org)

**Staff:**

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Interim Pastor—Pastor Roger Hardy  
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Administrator—Angy Thelemann:  
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Sanctuary Choir Director:  
Barb Forthun: [bforthun@aglcigh.org](mailto:bforthun@aglcigh.org)  
Joyful Noise Choir Director: Angy Thelemann

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Trish Ebensteiner: [tebensteiner@aglcigh.org](mailto:tebensteiner@aglcigh.org)

Vacation Bible School Co-Coordinator—  
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Dre Noble: [dnable@aglcigh.org](mailto:dnable@aglcigh.org)

**Main Office Hours:**

(Typically)  
Monday: Working Offsite  
Tuesday—Friday: 9:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

**Deadlines:**

The newsletter article deadline  
is always on the 15th of the month. Bulletin  
announcements or additions are due on  
Wednesdays.