

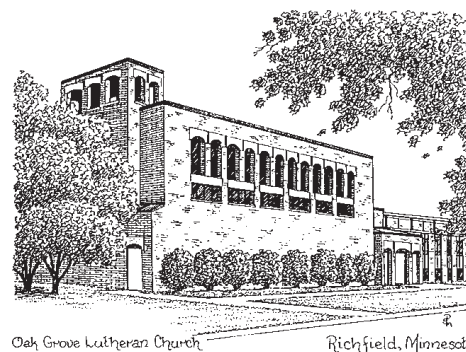
You talked, we listened, and this is what we heard (Part 1)

In order to get input from you, the Long Term Task Force held 6 “Conversations” between late August and October. About 100 members of the congregation took part – members who have been at Oak Grove for a few months to over 60 years, ranging in age from 7th grade to their 90s. Thanks to everyone who took part! It was great fun to hear your memories and ideas.

The first question we asked people to think about was, “What do you value about Oak Grove?” Here are some of the answers.

- The pastors:** Open to new ideas
Can talk to either one about anything
- Worship:** Great preaching
We can laugh together
We have a choice of style of service (contemporary or traditional)
The Lenten services are beautiful
We sing both old hymns and new ones
- Friendliness:** Casual, comfortable, relaxed
Feels like family
We have disagreements, but everyone is respectful and listens
Older people take younger ones under their wings
Children feel welcome and at home
Small enough that you can know most people, and everyone knows the kids
- Music:** Variety of groups
Talented people
Being a member of a group
- Interns:** Many have enjoyed the interns and hope we will include them in our ministry again soon
- Focus on mission:**
Opportunities to volunteer at Oak Grove and in the community
We are encouraged to follow our passions
- Other programs and opportunities:** Circles - Forums - Bible Studies - Concert series - Rally Sunday

The other questions discussed (What are your hopes and dreams? What should our connection to the community be? What does Oak Grove need to look like to accomplish these things?) will lead to plans for the future, and we’ll keep talking with you about what we have heard and where we go from here.



January 2011

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January Birthdays

- 3 – Kendra Kvamme, John A. Zarth
- 4 – Agnes Becker, Andrew Koppang, Beth Olson
- 5 – Madison Andrews, Brad Dimond, Kari Meyer
- 6 – Charles Wright
- 7 – Rachel Anderson, Steve Benzschawel, Harold Swanson
- 8 – Sharon Anderson, Jay Hauser
- 9 – Kjersten Brehmer, Amy Hero Jones, David Tveite, Kelsie Whited
- 10 – Phil Blades, Maisie Ebert, Lois Quam
- 13 – Karen Pettit, Donna Wold
- 14 – Kelly Berg, Clarence Francis, Ryan Hinton, Rev. Duane Olson, Brad Sveum
- 18 – Lempi Lien, Thomas Olson, Moreau Sankey, Amanda Tveite
- 19 – Jennie Moe
- 20 – Ryan Gerdes, Kelli Olson
- 22 – Gerald Hawke, Vivian Stromback, Shirley Tedamonson
- 23 – Terry Hauser
- 25 – Eileen Carlton, Nicole Hanson, Kyle Sunne
- 27 – Marc Boone, Honnie LaDue
- 28 – Amanda Boldt, Kayla Brehmer, Bob Meinke, Todd Refsal, Laura Thompson
- 29 – Bret Behnke, Patrick Grob, Kim Grussendorf, Ardelle Olson, Char Suneson
- 30 – Darrin Christenson, Scott Longley, Jesse Severson
- 31 – Virginia Hillbery

Support the Oak Grove Internship Program for 2011-12!

Let the church know if you want to contribute to this program. Deadline to contribute is January 15.
Thank you for your consideration of this program.

Circle Meetings for January

All Circles are Tuesday, January 4, unless noted

Esther - 7:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room.
Lidia Grabow, Hostess

Katherine – 1:30 p.m. at Miriam Haines,
6615 Lake Shore Dr. #117

Lydia-Ruth – 7 p.m.

Rebecca – 9:30 a.m. at Gladys Krohn’s apartment,
#323 at 7500 York.

“What Now, God?”

A spiritual retreat led by our very own Rev. Mary Kaye Ashley at Camp Wapogasset January 7-9, 2011.

God calls us to discipleship in each stage of our life! What is God’s invitation in our situation? What will strengthen us to answer those calls?

Registration forms are available in the church office or you can go online at www.campwapo.org

Contact Julie Tveite or Mary Kaye Ashley if interested in attending or if you have questions.

Notes of Thanks. . .

Dear Oak Grove Friends,

A big Thank You for your thoughts and prayers during my recent surgery and mending. Also thanks for the Prayer Shawl and your cards and calls. They were much appreciated. Thank you, thank you!

- Eunice Jurgens

Oak Grove’s Got Talent!

It is not to late to sign-up for the annual talent show.

If you have a hidden talent or one that you would like to share with others, the Annual Oak Grove Talent Show will be held on Friday, January 28, at 7:00 p.m.

If you would like to be part of a cold winter night filled with fun, fellowship and warmth, give Del Hamaker a call at 612-807-8111.

The more entertainment we have, the more fun we have!



Far . . . Far . . . Away

I heard recently that something that has never happened before is about to happen. It involves the Voyager 1 spacecraft that was launched 30 some years ago with the intention of taking close-up photographs of the furthest out planets—Jupiter through Neptune. That mission accomplished, and nothing to stop it, it has just kept going deeper into space. What's soon to happen is for Voyager to leave what astronomers call the "heliosheath," which means it will no longer be under any influence of our own sun at all. Nothing from earth has ever been so far away from home before.

Not knowing what they would encounter in interstellar space, scientists equipped Voyager with a gold-plated phonograph that can play a variety of sounds from earth, including the sounds of wind, rain and ocean breakers; a human heartbeat, laughter and a mother's kiss; and the music of Bach, Mozart and rock-and-roll legend Chuck Berry's version of the song "Johnny B. Goode." There are also greetings in 55 languages and a message from then-president Jimmy Carter.

Thinking about being, quite literally, "where the sun don't shine," puts me in mind of the

psalmist who wonders if there's any place at all he could go where God was not there. Up in the sky? Deep underground? At the bottom of the sea? Nope, God has it covered. You can't hide in the dark from the Light of the World. You can't run away if God's already where you're going. The poet couldn't fathom a universe beyond the heliosheath, but if he could, I'm pretty sure he would concede, "Even there, O God, you already are."

If the psalmist was really trying to hide from God, this would be a terrifying realization. But he seems to find comfort in the thought that no place in human life, no matter how distant it may seem, is out of the reach of God's strength, support, compassion and love. The holy birth we have just celebrated shows that God will go to any length to be close to us, to be incarnate for us, and in us. We, too, might find our comfort in that.

Oh, you know the old joke: Word reached NASA from an alien life form that intercepted Voyager and listened to the record. There was just a brief message: "Send more Chuck Berry."

Pastor Tom Zarth

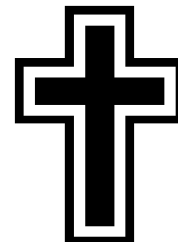
Have You Used a Towel Today?

Too personal a question to ask in the Messenger? Maybe - but maybe not! Fran Heitzman, the founder of Bridging, Inc., a non-profit group in Bloomington (and now in Roseville as well) that collects new and gently used furniture and household goods for needy families, came to speak at a forum in December. He challenged us to DO SOMETHING to help the poor. When asked what the biggest need at Bridging was, he quickly stated, TOWELS! Many people who come to Bridging do not have everyday things that we take for granted like towels.

SO, the youth of Oak Grove challenge you to watch for the White Sales in January and buy towels and towel sets (bath towel, hand towel and wash cloth) to donate to Bridging. There will be a collection area in the narthex. Help us meet our goal of 200. We can do it with your help!

End of Year Reminders

- * If you have not yet turned in an Estimate of Giving card for 2011, you still have time! Cards are located in the office or on the Welcome Stand just outside the sanctuary doors.
- * Please make sure all contributions for 2010 are in the church office by noon on Thursday, December 30.
- * Offerings have been low due to the recent storms in November and December. Please prayerfully consider keeping your pledge up to date for the final month of 2010.



Welcome into this New Year

Recently I'd been doing some research into the Serenity Prayer written in 1943 by Reinhold Niebuhr and latter reflected on by his daughter Elisabeth Sifton in her book entitled: Serenity Prayer (SP). It is here that she explains the SP. presuming that it's hard to accept "what cannot be changed." It reminds us of the human truth that no pain, death, or irreversible loss is easily managed. Yet acceptance must come serenely or not at all, since anger or resentment hardens the heart and makes acceptance impossible. On the other hand, all too many of us seem able, even ready and willing, to accept inhumane and cruel situations that we could ourselves do something to improve. Surely we should find it intolerable to endure them.

If instead we find the courage to change "what should be changed," how far will our decision take us? Do I act just for myself, or for my family, society, country? Does praying for the courage to make changes suggest that at morally ambiguous and dangerous junctures, let alone ordinary everyday ones, summoning up the strength to do this may require divine intervention?

Then—wisdom! The prayer says nothing about the moment of discernment when, if we are wise, we shall see which category is which. How do we tell? Most prayers thank the Almighty for having bestowed understanding, wisdom, and good fortune upon the faithful. Or they imply that the religious commitment itself, or God Himself—higher powers, anyway—will somehow generate the wisdom we mere mortals need to get on in life. But this prayer does not. Many prayers in many faiths petition God to show the way to right action. But this prayer asks only for wisdom to discern the right way on our own. It presumes that it's within our powers to accomplish this.

Still, it is a beloved prayer written below in its entirety:

SERENITY PRAYER

*God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to
peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world*

— Kitchen Konnection —

Looking out my window on this snowy winter night I am grateful to have a roof over my head and food on my shelves, and I am praying for those who do not have either. We are under blizzard conditions and most of the city has shut down. The shelters in the cities must be overloaded; the homeless are searching for a corner of warmth somewhere... anywhere. I pray that they survive the night and have the opportunity to celebrate Christmas and plan for a new year. I pray that they do not lose hope.

As you are reading this, the homeless survivors of tonight's storm have either found shelter or remain on the streets. Please pray for them that they will have a new year filled with the possibility of new beginnings. I am looking forward to the New Year and hope that you are, too. We have so many opportunities to grow in our ministry here at Oak Grove within our own walls and out into the community. Join us...invite your friends and maybe even a stranger in need.

A meal is a great way to start...Remember: Wednesday evenings are great food for the soul!

Happy New Year!

January 5 - Cheeseburgers & Fries

January 12 - Ham & Au gratin Potatoes

January 19 - Tater tot Hot dish

January 26 - Chicken Chow Mein with Egg Rolls

Dinner served 5:45-6:30pm.

Everyone welcome!!!

\$4.00 per plate.

All dinners served with salad bar and dessert

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

God bless and keep you,
Margie

*as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right if I
surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life and
supremely happy with Him.
Forever in the next.
Amen.*

Dawn Sankey
WELCA Secretary

Milestone Updates

Parents place Holy Scriptures in hands of their 3rd graders September 19, 2010

After introducing their third graders, parents fulfilled their baptism promises to by presenting new Bibles to them on the



first day of Sunday School, September 19. Sunday School teacher Michele Myroniuk and helper Sarah Swenson said they look forward to using the new Bibles in class. The Adventure Bible is based on the New International Version featuring sections that introduce each book of the Bible, suggestions on verse memorization and explanations of how people lived when the Bible was written.

Kids also explored their new Bibles looking up the verses used in the Sunday service and Eloise Peterson's favorite verses. Receiving their new Bibles were Jack Wold with parents Scott and Lisa plus grandparents Duane & Shirley; Grant Larson with dad Kevin; Josh Behnke with parents Bret and Jen; Blake Duncan with dad Dennis, grandparents Nancy & Dennis Lewis, great grandmother Avis Little and cousin Nadiya; and Devon Sanchez with grandmother Carolyn Bacon.

First Graders with active hands learn Lord's Prayer in Sign Language



Led by Kris Swan, first and second graders with their families and special guests learned the Lord's Prayer in a memorable way. Swan taught this important Christian prayer using American

Sign Language at a faith milestone event on Sunday, Nov. 14. Understanding the Lord's Prayer with phrases like "on earth as it is in heaven" and "forgive those who trespass against us" can be difficult. However, explaining their meaning using the signs helps the youth remember the significance of the words. Oak Grove youth attending the milestone were

Three-year-olds receive Spark Story Bibles on October 3, 2010

Isabella Polzin, Tyree Harris, DeShaun Harris, Gracie Taylor, Elena Elfstrum, and Wyatt Elfstrum gathered to listen to stories from their new Bibles read by their teacher AJ Sammon and helper Katherine Zoellmer. The Spark Story Bible features colorful pictures with favorite stories like the Jesus Blesses the Children, Jonah and the Whale and The Disciples.

The Bibles are gifts from Oak Grove to celebrate the start of their Sunday School journey. Special guests were Wee Praise Director, Carol Swenson and Accompanist, June Sveum who sang "Jesus Loves Me" and "B-I-B-L-E" songs with the kids. Three-year-old Mitchell Ebert received his Spark Bible later.



Baptism Birthday Milestone set for January

Anyone baptized in 2010 will be invited to a special birthday party set for Sunday, January 9. This special event gathers these families together to celebrate the blessing of baptism.

Picture caption: Special Oak Grove guest Kris Swan stands with first and second graders who learned the Lord's Prayer in American Sign Language on Nov. 14. Pictured from left are Cody Botsford, Sophie Behnke, Linae Larson, Lily Peterson, Shaelyn Schneider, Ava Durand, Natalie Hanson, Bridget Foley and Maggie White.

Bridget Foley, Shaelyn Schneider, Natalie Hanson, Cody Botsford, Sophia Behnke, Ava Durand, Lily Peterson, Linae Larson and Maggie White. Some favorite Lord's Prayer signs were bread, glory and father.

Youth and Family

Faith Formation for Kids, Families and Adults

Mark these dates for Camps 2011

Castaway - June 26 thru July 2

Camp Wapogasset

Tim Team - July 29 thru August 5

Youth Camp - July 31 thru August 5

SEEDS - July 29 thru July 31

VBS - TBA

Youth Lock-In Volunteers

Looking for a way to stay involved or just want to help out? We are looking for volunteers to help out with a middle school lock-in for January 21-22. You don't have to be there all night, you can do part of it. If interested or have questions, please contact Jennifer Murdick at 612-590-0681 or jrmurdick@aol.com.

Family Fest Winter

Warm-Up Weekend

January 14 thru 17 and February 18 thru 21
at Grand View Lodge in Nisswa.

Check all the information out at
familyfestministries.org.

Parenting Workshop

with Steve Kahn

January 29, 2011 - Cost \$10

Oak Grove Fellowship Hall.

Check out Parenting Articles on Steve Kahn's
website at drstevekahn.com