

GRACE NOTES

News from and about Grace Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan Vol.7 num.6, AUGUST, 2015

CHURCH OFFICERS



Council President: Paul Ippel, Council Vice President: Gordon VanHarn, Clerk of Council: Ann Geenen, Treasurer: Char Jansens



Elder Chair: Bob Crow, Elder Vice Chair: Marla Hoekwater, Elder Secretary: Ryan and Sarah Schreiber,



Deacon Chair: Kim VanHarn, Deacon Vice Chair: Jill Hausmann, Deacon Secretary: Ann Geenen

Administration Committee members: Char Jansens, Nikki Pinder, Ann Geenen, Paul Ippel, and Jack Kooreman



directors for the home and will begin the recruitment process for new residents. The Grace Community House Steering Committee will be established and work with the Bridgewater's in implementing the Task Force recommendations. If you are interested in serving on this committee or know of students that might be interested in living in the home, please contact the church office or the Bridgewater's. An opportunity will be offered to the congregation in the near future to hear more about our plans for the Grace Community House. Thanks to Tom Hoeksema, chair of the Grace House Task Force, for a very complete and well reasoned report.

Strategic Planning Committee:

Mike Bruinooge provided Council with an update on the work of this group. Based on ideas generated at the 2014 Council retreat, a small group (Mike Bruinooge, Karl Westerhof, Khary and Jennifer Bridgewater, Paul Ippel, and Rev. Jack Kooreman) has been meeting for several months to review our current plans and suggest ways to react to ongoing changes in our community and congregation. A proposed plan will be shared with the congregation in September, reviewed and discussed at a Council retreat in October, and finalized at the November Council meeting.

COUNCIL CORNER



Grace Community House:

Council received and reviewed a report from the Grace House Task Force and accepted their recommendation to recruit college students attending downtown colleges. The students will live in the Grace House, be mentored by a member of

the congregation, be guided in daily living by a resident assistant, with our goal to be a "real ministry to neighbors, along with opportunities to learn from living in community and from hands on experience in urban ministry." Jennifer and Khary Bridgewater were appointed as interim



Does Grace Church need a defibrillator?

This idea was suggested by some church members and discussed at an Ad Com meeting. Bob Bosch agreed to research the need, cost, and process for making this resource available to visitors to our church. Bob contacted neighboring churches and medical experts to determine the need for this device in our church. Based on his assessment including the number of daily visitors and our proximity to health care and emergency services, Ad Com decided that we did not need to purchase this equipment at this time. Thanks, Bob for doing this research for us.

Paul Ippel, President of Council

JAMES LA GRAND 1941-2015

James La Grand, CRC pastor and member of Grace Church since his retirement in 2008, died July 4, and is mourned by the Grace church family, and most especially by his wife of 52 years, Virginia.

James and Virginia chose Grace church because James considered it an “important urban congregation,” according to Virginia, “and because his ties went back to Buckley Chapel, when he used to attend as a member of First CRC, one of the founding churches.

James had been ill with a Parkinson’s-like disease for 7 years and had faced steady loss as his abilities deteriorated. But he remained steadfast in church attendance, and cheerful to those who greeted him. Virginia was a loving care-giver during this time, along with several of their four sons and their wives and children.

James’ life was committed to theology, pastoral care, and justice. From an early age, justice issues were his passion -- from the CRC’s relationships with the apartheid churches of South Africa to the CRC’s stance on women in office to racial issues in Chicago and Grand Rapids. At Grace, one of his commitments, as long as he was able to participate, was to the church’s service to the jail population at Kent county jail. He and Virginia were committed to the work of AJS, in which James participated as he could.

Even as his ability to read deteriorated, he still loved to talk theology. His unique and frequently unusual look at various issues has already been missed. He will continue to be missed for all his many qualities of Christian manhood, grace under suffering, and thoughtful consideration of issues.

As Pastor Jack Kooreman said in James’ funeral service, “When James and Virginia came to Grace I thought James could teach me about inner city ministry and justice issues and how to pastor. And he did. But what he most taught

me was that God was real to him in his suffering. God was with him. James lived in peace and God’s grace all through his illness.”

We miss you,
James.

Karen DeVos

