

GRACE NOTES

News from and about Grace Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan Vol.7 num.9, NOVEMBER, 2015

LILLIAN V. GRISSEN, April 23, 1922 – October 31, 2015

When Lillian and Ray Grissen became members of Grace Church in 1982, she brought her rich experience and adventurous spirit that blessed the church. We soon learned what Andrew Kuyvenhoven, editor of *The Banner* with whom Lillian served as an assistant editor, meant when he reported that “Lil has the wisdom of a grandmother and the energy of a teenager.”



Lillian took time to listen to the fellow members of her new church to learn our history and mission, and then to offer her many gifts in serving Christ. Her writing skills contributed to the quality of our *Grace Notes*. Her teaching and leadership toward opening the church offices of deacon, elder, and pastor to qualified women was always gentle and strong. She was elected as elder and chaired the Council in 1992 before our synod approved it in 1995.

Her ministry in and through Grace Church ripened into a volunteer position as Ministry Developer. She accepted an office in the church building in and from which she worked almost daily in cooperation with Mac Brandon, Ellen Rottman, and the pastor. She consulted regularly with church program leaders, always assisting with staffing, materials and facilities to develop our ministries.

Before she retired in 1999, there was a familiar scene frequently on weekday mornings at the church that tells a big story. Ray and Lillian would arrive as though they were “coming to work.” Ray was carrying his small tool box because there was always something in need of repair. Lillian was carrying her note pad and pen because she had to meet and/or phone people. Their hospitality was always open to church neighbors.

In her many roles of serving in the Christian Reformed Church she published many books and articles. Two books that were published in 1991 and 1993 especially represent the quality and character of her ministry in Grace Church: “For Such a Time as This; Twenty-Six Women of Vision and Faith Tell Their Stories,” and “A Path Through the Sea; One Woman’s Journey from Depression to Wholeness.” With Ray, Lil has stamped her servant leadership deep in our history and thereby has shaped the character of Grace Church.

*Rev. Roger Van Harn, Pastor Emeritus
November 7, 2015*

GRACE CHURCH PLAN 2015-2018 RESPONDING TO GOD’S CALL

Just over a year ago the Council embarked on a planning process; now we are ready to present this plan to the Council and to the congregation.

This article is one step in introducing the plan to the congregation. A task force has been at work, building on the planning retreats held by council. In the fall of ‘14, and again in the fall of ‘15, the Council met for a day, and then the work was continued by the planning task force, headed up by Michael Bruinooge.

You are encouraged to read this prayerfully, asking God to show Grace his leading clearly, and asking him to give us grace to follow in faithful obedience. Your feedback and questions are very important to Council as we put this all together. We urge you to talk to Pastor Jack, Pastor Khary, Michael Bruinooge, Paul Ippel, or Pastor Karl. Ask questions! Make suggestions! We want to hear from you.

The plan builds on our existing vision to be a healthy, urban, diverse expression of Jesus’ family, to be one with him and each other. Our mission statement remains essentially unchanged. It’s about forming a Grace community that truly experiences love and grace, where we share deeply with each other, and where we support and encourage each other to engage in ministry for the Kingdom in every part of life.

It is the Gospel that animates us, gives us life, and calls us to lives of focused obedience. We are committed to living out that Gospel “right here”, in this community, on this block, in this neighborhood.

So our mission, our vision, our values are pretty much unchanged. So -- What IS changed? A lot! In this plan we seek to recognize and respond to big changes happening in our community of Southgate. Economically, racially, by most any marker you use, our neighborhood is changing. but that’s not all! Grace is changing too! We are growing, especially young families with small kids. And we are aging as a congregation too. We have very few families with teens. We have a new generation of members who are our leaders, our link to upcoming generations, and our link to the younger families and college students arriving in our community.

So what priorities have we identified for the coming 3 years?

We will focus on 5 areas of our congregation’s life.

1. Community Outreach

This emphasis will include the Grace Community House at 118 Buckley, which will focus on college student ministry. It will also include partnerships with a rich variety of organizations around us, such as Youth For Christ, Brown Hutcherson Ministries, U Prep, ICCF, Southgate Block Club, and several more. We are also committed to focus on neighbors who are experiencing all the changes in

our neighborhood, but who experience the downside of those changes.

The AdComm and the To-be-named pastor of Out-reach will oversee this outreach initiative.

2. Discipleship

This emphasis will focus on the “bubble” of pre-schoolers who are beginning to make their way up through our ranks. In addition, Sunday School for youth and adults needs to be re-invented, and we want to develop a healthy offering of small groups. This cluster is our “faith formation” challenge; we want to prioritize growth in faith and life at Grace. In this area we will be trying some innovation in faith formation, starting at least 3 small groups per year, and we’ll strengthen our training, teaching, preaching to focus on discipleship for all ages. Adcomm, Elders, and staff will oversee this initiative

3. Worship

To refresh our worship we have begun to consider the possibility of having two services on Sunday mornings, more participation by youth and young adults, and more focus on multi-ethnic diversity. And we’ll initiate 4 “Church Life Sundays” per year, which will be a celebration of our unity in diversity, and will be geared especially for inviting neighbors. Worship and Fellowship Committees, and the Elders, will oversee this initiative.

4. Leadership Development

This initiative is about developing more leaders and



doing a better job of matching gifts and opportunities. We will develop training, we will create “apprenticeships” so that newer leaders can train in under experienced leaders, we will create a training package for this effort. AdComm and the staff Admin Committee will oversee this.

5. Administration

As Grace grows in size, we need to attend to our organizational life. We will improve decision making by greater clarity for decision making responsibility, and better communication about decisions we make. This will also include better follow through and accountability. This emphasis on improving our administration will include recruiting a volunteer part time staff administrator. The Senior Pastor and the Council oversee this dimension of our life together.

Again, this plan is a “work in progress”, and Council will continue to seek advice and response from the congregation as the plan approaches being a “final product”. Of course, no plan is ever a final plan. Changes continue at a rapid pace both inside and outside of our church, and we need to be responsive, creative, obedient, as circumstances develop. So pray as you discern with us how best to move forward together as we serve God in Southgate, Grand Rapids, Honduras, Nigeria, Rehoboth, and wherever God calls us.

Karl Westerhof

MEN OF GRACE

A Grace Church men's group has begun meeting, and over 30 men of Grace turned out for breakfast, cooked by Pastor Jack and his kitchen crew. But that wasn't the best part of the meeting! Our focus was on how we can encourage and support each other on our journey to be men who



are disciples of Jesus, following him, and becoming more and more like him. How can we join each other on that disciple-walk? We began to explore this together, and we closed with a time of prayer for each other.

What are the influences and messages we get from our society about what it means to be a real man? What does

Jesus have to say about this? We need to be with each other on this journey. Some of us are interested in projects we could do together, some are interested in sports, almost everyone is interested in building the kind of fellowship that creates safe and uplifting relationships. We want to be able to tell each other our stories, be heard and cared for, encouraged and challenged. What will be our best format? How often will we meet? Will we meet

altogether sometimes and in smaller groups for some of the time? We will continue to explore what works best for us, and we will meet again on Saturday December 5 at 8:00 am. for about 90 minutes. Sons and fathers, brothers and friends.... all men of all ages are welcome! If you have questions, please feel free to talk to Pastor Jack, Pastor Khary, or Pastor Karl.

Karl Westerhof