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LEADERSHIP REPORTS

Senior Pastor Report

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (*James 1:2-4*)

Each January, it has been our practice to pause and reflect on all the blessings that God has poured out upon Grace Fellowship Church and to recount some of the highpoints of ministry over the past year. While I am certain that we would all agree that 2020 has brought to us some daunting challenges as we have navigated through the troubled waters of a pandemic, political unrest, and shifting cultural values, the passage above reminds us that even when faced with trials we can rejoice. We take great comfort in the assurance that God is continually at work in our lives, enlarging our faith and producing in us spiritual maturity.

As you read through the reports included in this booklet, I am certain that you will join me in marveling at God’s faithfulness, His inexhaustible grace, and His tender mercies. What a privilege to serve our God and to join with fellow believers in reaching out with the gospel to those who are yet to experience His salvation.

The Ministry of the Word

The Pastoral staff at Grace Fellowship Church remains committed to the clear, careful, passionate proclamation of God’s Word. This past year, our morning services featured the completion of a series of messages on “*The Church – The Gospel Made Visible*,” followed by a series on “*Exodus*.” In addition, we were blessed to have Len Hardt, Stephen Anderson, and Sam Bray sharing messages, both from the pulpit and on our YouTube channel.

The Ministry of Prayer

This year I want to again thank all those who participated in the Grace Fellowship Church Prayer Team. Each week the members of the prayer team received a weekly prayer sheet with a list of special requests. Throughout the week intercession was made on behalf of those listed on this sheet. What a privilege to bring these requests before God and to praise Him for the many answers to prayer that He has provided.

The Ministry of Missions

On October 18th, it was our joy to welcome Bill & Joy Carrera to our morning services. The Carreras updated the church on their preparations to return to Peru following a lengthy medical leave in the states. The Carreras are serving with *SAM Academy* and *SAMair*. This year also included the home-going of one of our dear missionaries, Denise Krup. Ken and Denise have served for years with AWANA Ministries in the greater Chicago area. Denise was diagnosed with cancer in early March and went home to glory on April 16th. Indeed, this year offered unique challenges for all of our missionary families but we were encouraged to learn how the Lord opened up so many special opportunities for them to minister, even in the midst a world-wide pandemic.

The Ministry of the Lord's Supper and Baptism

Another highlight of our worship at Grace Fellowship Church is the regular observance of the two ordinances that Christ has given His church. As is our custom, we met at the Lord's Table on the first Sunday of every month and reflected on the wondrous salvation that was purchased for us through Christ's death on the cross. In addition, we featured the observance of the Lord's Supper at our Christmas Eve Service.

Along with the regular observance of communion, we rejoice that this year four people professed faith in Jesus Christ and followed their Lord in baptism and four new members were added to the church.

A Words of Thanks

I would like to express my heart-felt thanks to our audio, video and web services teams who enabled us to minister to our church family and community during this challenging year. Because of their sacrificial service, we were able to livestream our services and effectively communicate with our congregation. I would also like to thank the members of our Worship Team for faithfully leading us in worship each week. And finally, I would like to thank our janitorial staff and the many volunteers who worked diligently to clean and disinfect our facilities each week.

What a joy it is to be a part of such a loving and committed body of believers. May God continue to bless our efforts as we seek to glorify Him in all that we do!

Rejoicing in His Faithfulness,

Robert Crain
Senior Pastor

Associate Pastor

“The mind of a man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.” Proverbs 16:9

When the year 2020 began, everything seemed to be “business as usual.” In the Sunday evening worship service, we were going verse by verse through Peter’s second epistle, under the theme “Finding Truth in a World of Deception.”

Of course, we all know, COVID-19 entered the picture and changed everything. With our Sunday evening services cancelled, we began offering weekly YouTube videos for comfort and encouragement. I began a six week series entitled, “Who Is Your God?” This series was a study of the Hebrew names for God, taken from the Old Testament. These names for God describe His character, thus enabling you to understand your God better.

Also on the Grace Fellowship YouTube channel is the Sunday worship service of April 19, 2020. Given the anxiety and fear that many people were experiencing at this point of the “COVID lockdown,” we looked at four Biblical passages in this message and answered the following questions:

- How should I think when I feel I’m out of control?
- How should I think when I’m pressed to my limit?
- How should I think when my problem is more than I can handle?
- How should I think when my problems won’t go away?

Obviously, we still haven’t come all the way out of the effects of this COVID pandemic . Therefore, I encourage you to go back and revisit this message from April 19, 2020.

In August of 2020, Pastor Bob Crain was on sabbatical, and I was given the privilege of filling the pulpit for the entire month of August. During that time, we went verse-by-verse through Romans chapter 12, under the theme “Transformed by the Gospel of God.” In this five-part series, we saw how the Christian life is not about *getting from* God, but rather it’s about *giving to* God – soul, body, mind, and will. This series can also be revisited on YouTube.

At this particular point, we have not rebooted the Sunday evening service. However, we have resumed our verse-by-verse study of 2 Peter during the Adult Sunday School class on Sundays at 9:30 am.

And so, as unpredictable as the year 2020 was, the Word of God has still been taught and preached, and His people have continued to remain faithful. I am very thankful to be part of such a loving fellowship of people here at Grace. In spite of these trying times, God’s people have been such an encouragement to me. Though we have no way of knowing what is awaiting us in 2021, we can be certain that our loving God is Sovereign (Proverbs 16:9) and His Word will remain.

“For truly I say to you until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”
Matthew 5:18

Len Hardt
Associate Pastor

Associate Pastor of Music Ministries

Music is an integral part of worship as we gather together each week to lift our voices in praise and adoration to God. Due to the pandemic, our music ministry this year was quite different than in previous years.

The **Worship Choir** was only able to present 7 anthems this year (January 5th through March 15th). It is believed that the virus can be more easily transmitted through singing in close proximity to one another. Therefore as a precaution, it was decided that Worship Choir should be suspended until such time that it is deemed safe.

The **Worship Team** normally presents special musical selections every fourth Sunday of each month. However, this year the Worship Team has sung almost every Sunday since May 17th (the Worship Team recorded worship music three Sundays in May prior to returning to in-person worship on June 7th). The Worship Team has sung 29 anthems during the 2020 year and consisted of Lisa and Greg Coutts, Abby Davis, Joe and Virginia Ebner, and Kim Sisk.

We are so blessed to have a number of talented instrumentalists (Mark and Michael Carrera, Ron Denison, Virginia Ebner, Chris Limerinos, Dan Pluister, and Courtney Ruhe) who accompany us in worship each week. I appreciate their willingness to serve the Lord with their respective gifts. If you play an instrument and would like to use your musical gifts in worship, please contact me.

This year, the **Christmas Program** was held on December 13th at 3:00 p.m. Normally we would have the Cantata Choir present a full-length cantata, but this year again was quite different due to the pandemic. Instead of a cantata, we presented a program of musical selections (solos, duets, and worship team selections) and scripture readings centered-around the Christmas story. The Grace Note Chimes (Jill Carrera, Lisa Coutts Abby Davis, Virginia Ebner, Courtney Ruhe, and Kim and Mikayla Sisk) presented five special numbers. A special thanks to Pastor Sam Bray and Adam Ruhe for reading our selected scriptures and to those who presented special numbers (Stephen Anderson, Joe and Virginia Ebner, Abby Davis and Martha Tyler). Approximately 90 people were in attendance with many individuals joining the live stream (to date - 225 views).

Music ministries at Grace could not take place without the willingness of the individuals mentioned above to give of their time, talent and energy. It is truly a blessing to serve the Lord with these individuals. I would also like to especially thank Mark Carrera and Ron Denison who have led worship in my absence this year.

Special thanks also goes to my wife (Lisa) for her assistance as coordinator of special music. The following individuals presented **Special Music** throughout this year: Stephen Anderson, Mark Carrera, Abby Davis, Ron Denison, Joe Ebner, Virginia Ebner, Ashley Garrison, Elizabeth Kledzik, Dan Pluister, Bill and Krystle Sieczkowski, Kim and Scott Sisk, Martha Tyler, and the Worship Team. If you are interested in presenting special music, please contact Lisa or me.

Many thanks to the **Audio/Visual Technology Team** (Bill Beaumont, Luke Beaumont, Michael Larson, and Barry Luchene) who effectively and efficiently facilitated our ability to live stream our services once we realized that many in our congregation could not safely attend weekly services. I truly appreciate their willingness to take on this challenge and their continued service throughout this difficult year.

As we look forward to this next year of music ministry, it is my prayer that in the near future the Worship Choir will be able to lead us again in worship and that God will continue to bless the music ministry here at Grace Fellowship Church. Please pray that we will continue to honor and glorify Him through our praise and worship.

Greg A. Coutts
Associate Pastor of Music Ministries

Associate Pastor of Outreach & Education

I have had the privilege of serving as the Director and primary teacher of 180 (Jr High Youth Group), the Commander of Awana, Superintendent of Sunday School, and a Young Adults leader. Although COVID-19 has complicated aspects of every ministry, the Lord's blessing is even more evident in every ministry. We have five new, never-before-attended students in 180 who now regularly attend our group. Awana has several students who are not only new to Awana, but are new to

the faith and who are attending regularly and are being built up in the faith. The Young Adults Ministry has also seen the largest number of new members than any previous year! Although an increase in numbers is a tangible marker of growth, the personal growth of those who attend our programs has been even more encouraging than the numbers. The Lord has been blessing our church and is being faithful to His promise that He will grow His church!

If you know someone who is looking to get plugged into a great Christian community, I would encourage you to invite them to our church; there are opportunities for every age to get connected to the body of Christ and experience meaningful relationships. If you want to see God's hand more at work in your life, I would encourage you to contact me for ministry opportunities because the Lord has surely been at work through the ministries at Grace!

Sam Bray
Associate Pastor of Outreach & Education

Associate Pastor of Student Ministries

"But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the One who lifts my head" (Psalm 3:3).

I praise the LORD that the words of this psalm continue to prove themselves to be true in my life and in the lives of all believers. This past year has been a difficult one in many ways, but God has sustained, strengthened, uplifted, encouraged, stretched, grown and drawn me closer to Him this past year than any other before it. He has continued to prove Himself faithful, merciful, forgiving, loving and good to a man who deserves it not. Through this challenging time we are living in, I am so thankful that we have a solid Rock to stand upon.

My deepest desire as a youth pastor is to be a faithful minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, see the lost come to know the Lord Jesus as Savior and accept His gospel and to draw my students closer to our awesome God: to lead them to the unfathomable love of the Father, the gentle heart and perfect sacrifice of the Son and the presence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. It has brought eternal joy to my heart to

see the high schoolers mature in their faith, grow in their love for God and long to walk in a manner worthy of His gospel. It is a great honor and privilege to serve His people in this capacity and I look forward with expectation to seeing them continue to increase in their knowledge of Christ and to faithfully walk in step with the Spirit in 2021.

Stephen Anderson
Associate Pastor of Student Ministries

Elder Report

Looking back at the year 2020 is like no other year. We have lived through times that none of us would have predicted at the beginning of the year. When the pandemic began, the elders met and prayed for wisdom. Though the manner in which we could meet changed, our desire to worship God and gather together didn't. God provided a way for us to gather via YouTube and Zoom. Our thanks to the many faithful people that made it possible to worship together.

As weeks turned into months, we discovered how we could begin to gather in person in a limited capacity while keeping the church safe and complying with the regulations. A plan was put into place, thanks in large part to the deacons, ushers, and custodians. This made it possible to safely gather, worship, sing songs, and sit under the Word of God in services. It was a blessing to begin gathering again in the house of the Lord with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

During the summer, the elders decided to restart some of the fall ministries and Sunday School classes. With some restrictions on gathering, some adjustments to their programs and many hands diligently cleaning the church, we again were fellowshiping with one another.

Throughout this entire year and all its changes, I have seen one thing absolutely constant - God is unchanging, faithful and has provided for our needs. From the new requirements needed to worship together, to the finances, to the protection of our people - God faithfully provided all of our needs.

The elders continually monitor the pandemic situation and the impact of it with regards to gathering for worship and fellowship. We now

offer livestream services, videos that can be downloaded, Sunday school classes on line, some youth and weeknight ministries, as well as, gathering in person for services on Sunday morning. Our hope is that we can open all ministries very soon.

Please join together with me in praising God for the pastoral staff that He has provided us. Their work throughout this past year has been daunting. Each of them has risen to the challenge and are quick to give all the glory to God.

Tim Kledzik
Chairman of the Elder Board

Deacon Report

To say that 2020 was a strange year would be a quite an understatement. The deacon board is so thankful to our God who allowed us to creatively help meet the needs of our church building and His people. I am always amazed and humbled by the group of men He assembles, especially this year when the numbers were few. We are also very thankful for those who stepped in to help maintain our church building. Please pray that we will continue to be faithful in our service to Him.

Each year the deacon board earnestly maintains the building from normal wear-and-tear. We encourage all of our members and regular attendees to notify the church office if the building is in disrepair and needs attention. You may also leave a note in the deacon mailbox in the downstairs church office.

In 2020 the deacon board was unable to host luncheons for the widows and widowers of our church. We truly miss that special time for us to meet, talk, and spend some time with them. We are ready to plan another luncheon if and when the Lord allows, and we look forward to that time together.

The Deacon Board in conjunction with Randy Rasmason (Head of Security) will continue to develop our Emergency Action Plan (EAP) as we learn from real life experiences. This will be an ever changing docu-

ment as we continue to learn. Our EAP includes our security detail. The security team is dedicated to the safety and security of our church members. If you are led to serve in this ministry, or would like more information, please contact the Church Office.

Please continue to pray for our deacon board, that we would continue to be faithful to the reading and studying of God’s Word as we continue to minister to the church. Our desire is to be faithful and willing servants as we glorify Him in all we do.

Peter Colangelo
Chairman of the Deacon Board

CHILDCARE

Baby Rosebuds

It has been a tradition at Grace Fellowship Church to place a red rosebud at the front of the church when a new baby is born to someone in our church family. This is always a happy occasion and one in which we all can rejoice.

2020 Births—3

Nurseries

Due to Covid-19, there have been some changes to the infant and toddler nurseries. Most notable are the efforts made to sanitize and cleanse the nurseries and that the nurseries are only offered during the 9:30 Worship Service. For the time being, there are fewer people who are able to serve in the nurseries and the sacrifices made by those who serve are even greater than before. However, the value of this ministry to the church is at an all-time high. Nursery ministry has always been vital to Sunday morning church services, but now that families, and moms in particular, are without reprieve from the demands of caring for children, the nursery offers parents the opportunity to wor-

ship with the body of Christ and be encouraged by His Word having their souls cared for after a long week of constantly caring for others.

Those who serve in the nursery have continued to provide quality care for children and are making sacrifices that are crucial to the well-being of the church. We are incredibly grateful for those who serve in the nursery, and if you have benefitted from this ministry, please thank those who serve. If you want to be a part of this vital ministry, please contact me for more information on how you can serve your church in a big way by serving for one hour a week.

Pastor Sam Bray is the contact person for the church nurseries. He can be reached at (708) 280-8299 or sbray@gfcoakforest.org.

EDUCATION

Children’s Church (K-2)

Children’s Church usually meets during the 11:00 Worship Service and is a Sunday School class that ministers to children in grades K-2. When services shut down in March, this ministry was suspended, and in June when services resumed with a smaller number of attenders and volunteers, Children’s Church did not resume. We look forward to the day when we can offer this class again.

Pastor Sam Bray is the contact person for Children’s Church. He can be reached at (708) 280-8299.

Sunday School (K-8)

Sunday School is a great opportunity to be taught systematically from God’s Word and interact with teachers in the process. Sunday School is offered at every age level during the 9:30 Worship Service, and an additional adult Sunday School class is offered during the 11:00 Worship Service. Our children’s Sunday School is designed to give students a well-rounded church experience—from worship to time spent studying and learning God’s Word—and education that is accommodated to

their age. Our Sunday School classes are divided by grade (K-2; 3-5; 6-8; 9-12), and the foundational teaching curriculum is *Answers in Genesis* which teaches students the entire Bible and helps them to apply it to their lives.

Our Sunday School program's goals have not changed, because they come right from the Word: "the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5). This goal is accomplished by the dedicated, preparation, love, and care of all who teach in this ministry. As the Word of God does not return void, the students who attend these classes have also been living up to this goal. The K-2nd grade class has been served by Emilie Bray and Linda Crain with Becky Sanders as the worship leader. The 3rd-5th grade class has been served by Dale Ralston and Sam Bray with Anne Aggen as the worship leader. The 6th-8th grade class has been served by Mark Jackson, and the 9th-12th grade class has been served by Stephen Anderson. These classes are also supported by the help of invaluable substitutes: Elizabeth Kledzik (K-2); Paul Rowell (6-8); and Bill Sieczkowski (9-12).

Pastor Sam Bray is the contact person for Sunday School (K-8). He can be reached at (708) 280-8299.

Adult Sunday School Classes & Electives

- 9:30 AM Class

In March of 2020, the COVID lockdown put the 9:30 am Adult Sunday School Class on hold. During that time, Leon Gombis, after faithfully teaching Sunday school for over 50 years, decided to step down in order to focus on other ministry opportunities. We are very grateful for his years of faithful teaching.

In the fall of 2020, the 9:30 am Sunday School started up again. Len Hardt has been teaching from 2 Peter, continuing the Sunday Evening series, "Finding Truth in a World of Deception." Dale Ralston will also be filling in on occasion, teaching from the epistle of Galatians.

Our goal is to accurately handle the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15) and to apply it to our lives in a practical manner (1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:2). So bring your Bible and join us at 9:30 am in room 304/306 on the Lord's Day, and together we can "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*" (2 Peter 3:18)

- 11:00 AM Class

In 2020, we were able to finish our study in the Life of Christ, the book of Hebrews, and a review of the Spiritual Disciplines. This next year, Lord willing, we will complete a book study in 2 Corinthians, and we have a tentative plan for *Fundamentals of the Faith*.

The Lord opened up the use of technology to resume meeting together during the Coronavirus pandemic. We were able to start with some measure of fellowship online while we were not physically meeting late in the spring and summer. It was wonderful to see people's smiling faces and to be able to share something of our struggles, and to watch what the Lord was doing in each person's life. Having the technology to offer both in-person and live-streaming has been a blessing for which we are praising God.

The goals we have in the 11:00 Sunday school class are pretty simple and straightforward: to learn how to interpret Scripture, to learn how to use our spiritual gifts in service of one another, and to learn how to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. I praise the Lord for the fellowship that we enjoy each week.

- Grace 101: Discovering Membership

In the spring and fall of 2020, we held our 3-week Membership classes. Attendees were able to learn about Grace Fellowship Church, Biblical foundations, and what it means to be a member. This class is typically attended by people considering membership but anyone interested in learning what we believe is welcome.

The 2021 Membership Classes are scheduled for March and September.

- **Understanding Believers' Baptism**

A two-session overview of the biblical meaning and ordinance of believers' baptism is offered twice a year. It is taught by Pastor Crain on two consecutive Sunday afternoons. If you are interested in learning more about baptism, contact the church to find out when the next class will be offered.

OUTREACH

180 (Gr. 6-8)

This past year, we have been blessed with our study of how to grow in our knowledge and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. We took an in-depth look at our Lord from eternity to eternity, studied his earthly ministry, and prepared our hearts for His second coming and the fulfillment of His kingdom promises. Although the restrictions related to COVID-19 made us conclude our school year schedule sooner than anticipated, the Lord had providentially ordained that our last teaching session would be on Christ' second coming, millennial reign, and the New Heavens and New Earth. It was this message of future hope that the students were able to stand on as times became difficult with the stay-at-home order.

The Lord, yet again, made a way for the ministries of our church to continue and thrive as He opened the door to online meetings and Bible studies which eventually became summer meetings outdoors with social distancing. The Lord knows that it is not good for man to be alone, and I am grateful that He opened the door for the student ministries to fellowship, grow in God's Word, and play socially distanced games.

This past fall, we began an extensive study in the book of Romans for the teaching time in our regular Thursday night 180 meetings. It has been such an encouragement to me to see our Junior High students taking such an interest in God's Word that they are taking notes on what they are learning (even though there are not tests), and that

after a break for the holidays our students expressed joy that we were going to continue our study of Romans! This past year has been a difficult one, but it has brought great joy to my heart to see our Junior High students expressing their great joy in fellowship in God's Word and with God's people.

Sam Bray is the contact person for the 180 ministry. Phone: (708) 280-8299

Awana

This year, Awana has begun like no other year—questioning whether we were going to have club at all. We began planning another year of Awana and figuring out how to make it work, while at the same time the school districts in our area were preparing for fully remote education. We planned in hope that God would make a way for us to continue with another year of our Awana ministry, and God proved Himself faithful to the ministries of our church.

It has become evident why, at least in part, God made a way for us to continue with our Awana program—there are a handful of students who are new to the faith who now attend Awana regularly at our church! We have students who are taking the first steps of faith being led by the faithful men and women leaders and directors of the Awana program which God has at Grace. God has not only been faithful to provide for us to continue in ministry, but He has shown Himself faithful to build His church!

Not only has God brought new people into our church to hear the message of the good news of Jesus Christ, but He has shown a light in the world through our Awana students by the annual Awana Food Drive. The provisions that were given through the annual Awana Food Drive were a gift of love, care, and consideration to those who are in need. In this way and many others, the Awana program has been salt and light in this dark world in a very tangible way. We are grateful to God for all that He has been doing through the leaders and directors of Awana, and through the students who are being trained in the service of Christ.

Pastor Sam Bray is the Awana Commander. If you would like to become involved in this children's ministry, please contact him.

Community Expo

Each year in October, the city of Oak Forest hosts a Community Expo to help inform residents about local businesses and services. The Community Expo is attended by hundreds of area residents who visit information booths and displays set up by local businesses and organizations. Grace Fellowship Church has been present at the Oak Forest Community Awareness Fair since 2002, providing a friendly face and introducing our church to our community and neighbors.

Unfortunately, the 2020 Community Expo was cancelled due to COVID-19. We look forward to representing our church to our community in the future.

Pastor Len & Colleen Hardt are the contact people for this outreach ministry.

CrossTrainers

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

CrossTrainers is the High School group at our church. We have a Sunday school class each week and a Thursday night meeting where we have a message, small groups and game time. In addition, we meet together for fun events outside of the church to build relationships with the students. Our goal is that those who do not know Christ will come to a saving faith in Him, and those who do know the Lord will deepen their understanding of the Scripture and live their lives more fully for the LORD. We desire for them to be equipped to go out into the world and be able to stand firm upon the foundation of our Lord and His holy Scripture against a culture that is drastically opposed to what we believe.

By God's grace, we have been able to continue meeting as a group throughout this entire year in person or on Zoom. In our Thursday evening messages, we began the year by teaching some essentials for practical Christian living. When we transitioned to Zoom during the initial lockdown, we were able to study through Colossians, Philippians, Ruth and a series on the parables of Jesus. Once the weather became warmer, we began meeting outside and studied through the book of Ephesians. In September, we began meeting in person at the church once again and have been studying through the book of Romans. This ministry is incredibly thankful for its leaders: Nikki Anderson, Bill Sieczkowski, Krystle Sieczkowski and Cameron Wall. It would not be the same without the gifts of each and every one of them.

In Sunday school, we completed the book of Genesis in the *Answers in Genesis* curriculum and entered into the book of Exodus. When we transitioned over to Zoom in March, we decided to combine our studies with our meetings on Thursdays and studied through Colossians, Philippians, Ruth and a series on the parables of Jesus. Over the summer, we studied through Proverbs 10-18. When we resumed Sunday School in person, we entered into a study of the Gospel of John.

We are excited to start a new year and are looking forward to what the LORD has in store for the CrossTrainers ministry!

Stephen and Nikki Anderson are the contact people for the CrossTrainers ministry. You can contact Stephen by phone or email: 815-545-9121 and sanderson@gfcoakforest.org. You can contact Nikki by phone: 708-212-0384.

Immanuel's Child

Each October, our church family participates in the Immanuel's Child: *Star of Bethlehem* project to further God's kingdom in Russia. The Slavic Gospel Association distributes your *Immanuel's Child* contributions to local churches in Russia who in turn give locally-purchased and lovingly-wrapped gifts to thousands of children, including Russian picture

Bibles, a special Christmas present, follow-up care and discipleship by believers along with your signed Star of Bethlehem ornaments.

Thank you for participating in the 2020 Immanuel's Child: *Star of Bethlehem*. This year, we sent \$1,465 along with your stars to 59 children in the lands of Russia.

An SGA-supported missionary pastor in Kazakhstan shares about one visit last week. He shares, *"One of the families that we blessed with Immanuel's Child gifts is a large one—there are six children in the family. Their mother worked together with one member from our church. When they worked together, the brother witnessed to her about Jesus and invited her to the church. Several times the church had visited this family with the Gospel. We worried that the children would not want to come, but finally they did, praise God for that!"*

What is most important is that this outreach is not just a single event, but an effort to bring people to faith and to make disciples. The pastor continued, *"Then we had a private conversation when I was able to ask them a couple of questions and then gave them some spiritual exhortations: "Now you are laying a groundwork for your whole life, and it will depend on what you choose to build it on, so build your life on the teaching of Jesus Christ and become His disciples!" The children were very happy that there are people who do not forget about them, and they were especially delighted to get your gifts and presents. I told them about the Star and the people whose names are written on them. May the Lord bless you and reward you hundredfold! May the Lord Himself grow this seed of goodness and lead them to the saving faith which is in Christ alone!"* The simple joy of learning that people on the other side of the world pray for them and care about them, and then hearing the hope of heaven in Jesus Christ, warms hearts in the coldest of winters. Through these faithful churches, the seed of the Gospel will be watered by the power of God as they seek to make disciples of all people.

If you are interested in helping with this annual ministry, please contact Kelly Johnson at 708-275-0357.

Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School is another ministry that was suspended in 2020 due to COVID-19. But dates have tentatively been set for the summer of 2021, and if God is willing, we will resume this action-packed and God-honoring week of fun in July.

Lisa Coutts has been our VBS Director for many years and the contact person for this ministry.

Website/YouTube

Last year, our church website had over 18,500 page views— an increase of over 2,000 more than the year before. An average of 53 people visit our website each day to learn about our pastoral staff, see the events on the church calendar, and find out our service times.

When COVID-19 shut down our Worship Services in late March, our pastoral staff turned to YouTube to communicate with our church family, and we have continued to use the video-sharing platform to bring God’s Word to those who cannot worship in person each Sunday.

Kelly Johnson is our webservant and welcomes any feedback to improve our web presence.

COVID-19 Timeline of 2020

March 20	Illinois shelter-in-place order
March-June 3	Pastoral staff posts 38 devotionals to YouTube
April 12	Easter Service broadcast to empty sanctuary
April-June 7	Pre-recorded online services began on Sundays
June 14	Resume in-person services with masks & social distancing; 9:30 am service is livestreamed via YouTube
December	163 YouTube subscribers 35-40 real-time views each Sunday 150-300 views of each service per week

COMMUNITY

Hope and Refuge (Support for Those Suffering)

“God Is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

Hope and Refuge desires to develop a biblical theology of suffering as a foundation from the Word of God to stand upon. This group welcomes all who have gone through suffering, are currently going through suffering, or have a desire to be a helping hand to those who are going through difficulties. We seek to provide comfort and support and to equip those who come to provide the same for others. Additionally, we desire to create an environment where believers feel comfortable to share their suffering, pain and challenges with one another so that we can better understand the needs of our brothers and sisters, bear one another’s burdens, pray for each other and comfort one another with the comfort we have received from God in our own suffering (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Stephen Anderson and Mark Johnson are the contact people for the Hope and Refuge ministry. You can contact Stephen by phone or email: 815-545-9121 and sanderson@gfcoakforest.org. You can also contact Mark by phone or email: 708-250-8686 and kram.nosnhøj@gmail.com.

J.O.Y. (Adult Social Events)

Oh, how we missed our nights of fellowship and fun in 2020! COVID-19 put the kabosh on our Cookout & Bags Tournament, Chili Cook-off, raucous game show spin-offs, and Annual Christmas Party. We are certainly looking forward to resuming our adult social events in the future.

Dawn Bruinius is the contact person for this ministry.

Joyful Noise Children's Choir

The Joyful Noise Children's Choir is an opportunity for the children to minister to their family, friends and church family. Once a year, the Joyful Noise choir puts on a full production of a Christmas musical. They begin in September; meeting every Tuesday and usually perform the first Saturday and Sunday in December.

This ministry was suspended during 2020 due to COVID-19. We eagerly anticipate the day when we can once again enjoy a children's Christmas production.

If you are interested in being a part of this ministry, please contact Lisa Coutts.

Membership

We are grateful to God for the members of Grace Fellowship Church and their constant and steadfast devotion to one another as the family of God. We currently have 175 members.

New members in 2020—4

Men's Fellowship

The Men's Fellowship is a great opportunity for the men of our church to become better acquainted with one another. They traditionally meet on the second Saturday of each month at 7:00 a.m. for a hearty breakfast and good fellowship.

This ministry was suspended in 2020 due to COVID-19. The men are looking forward to resuming their time together in the future.

Pastor Robert Crain is the contact person for this ministry.

New Beginnings (Seniors)

Our Seniors ministry has met once a month, nine months per year. They enjoy an hour-long inspiring program and then catch up on each other's lives during a delicious catered lunch.

This ministry was suspended in 2020 due to COVID-19.

Paul Rowell is the contact person for the Seniors New Beginnings Ministry.

Small Groups

The Small Group Ministry is a great way to get plugged into the dynamics of the church body here at Grace. Small groups are dedicated to discipleship, fellowship, service, and prayer. Four separate groups have met at homes or at church throughout the week.

Due to COVID-19, this ministry was suspended during 2020.

You can contact Pastor Len Hardt or the church office for more information on Small Groups.

Women's Bible Study

Women's Bible Study meets on Tuesday mornings at Grace Fellowship Church from 9:30-11:00 a.m. During winter and early spring of 2020 we began a study of Hebrews using Jen Wilkin's book and study guide entitled, *Better*. Unfortunately, the study was cut short with the onset of the Coronavirus. About 12 women attended each week.

In late summer, we met via Zoom to view Melissa Kruger's DVD series on, *Contentment*. It was a blessing to study together and share prayer requests even though we could not meet in person.

In October, we began a book entitled, *With the Master: Before the Mirror of God's Word* by Susan Heck, a study in 1 John. After taking a break for the holidays, we will resume our study in January.

A special "thank you" to Mandy and Rose Germain, who kept our little

ones in nursery and “thank you” to Lisa Coutts who prepared the schedule, lessons and crafts for the preschoolers each week.

It is our prayer and goal that the women who attend will be encouraged in their walk with the Lord and that God will be glorified as we meet for fellowship and to study His Word.

Lisa Coutts and Linda Crain are the contact people for this ministry.

Young Adult Bible Study

The Young Adults Ministry (a.k.a. YABS, Young Adults Bible Study) has been a product of the Lord’s growth in and of His church. Over the last few years, those who have consistently attended YABS have had the opportunity to study individually and discuss collectively 23 of 27 New Testament books and several Old Testament books. It has been a great encouragement to witness what the Spirit has been impressing upon the hearts of the young adults of Grace Fellowship Church. The conversations that have taken place in our gatherings are the evidence of the edifying work that the Lord is doing in our church; but not only is the Lord edifying our minds, but he is edifying us as a whole as He is knitting us together in love and adding to our number. This past year, we have witnessed the Lord bringing more people to our Bible study than any other year, many of whom have become regular attenders. Shortly before the holidays we had a gathering of over twenty young adults who were eager to fellowship with God’s people and spend time discussing God’s Word and His will for our lives!

The YABS is a great place for young adult believers to come and have fellowship with God’s people in God’s word. This coming year we will be spending many months studying Luke and Acts and growing in our fellowship as a community. If you know a young adult who is seeking good Christian fellowship, YABS is a place to find it; please let them know about our group, extend an invite to them, and give them my contact information—I would love to welcome them to our group!

Sam Bray is the contact person for the Young Adult Bible Study. He can be reached at (708) 280-8299.

Young Men's Bible Study

"At all times it is necessary to pray and not to lose heart" (Luke 18:1).

The Young Men's Bible Study was started this year during quarantine in order to provide a way for continued fellowship during a time that we could not meet in person. In April, we began meeting over Zoom to study the gospel of Luke, catch up with one another and pray. I have been greatly encouraged by each and every brother who attends the group and look forward to continuing meeting together and edifying one another!

The Young Men's Bible Study meets on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at the church from 7:00-9:00 PM. All young adult men are welcome and encouraged to join us!

Stephen Anderson is the contact person for the Young Men's Bible Study ministry. You can contact Stephen by phone or email: 815-545-9121 and sanderson@gfcoakforest.org.

Young Women's Bible Study

This season we have studied various passages throughout the Bible to better understand key doctrines of the Christian faith with the aim to be well-equipped women of the Word. We have covered various doctrines and areas of theology including the inspiration of Scripture, soteriology (the doctrine of salvation), the gospel, the role of women in the church, and hermeneutics. We began 2021 with a series on the Doctrines of Grace. It has been encouraging to observe this group of young women demonstrate a hunger for a better understanding of the Bible and the deep things of God. We hold meetings bi-monthly (the second and fourth) Monday of each month at 7 pm at the Ruhe's home.

Please contact Courtney Ruhe for more information about this ministry.

SERVICE

College Care Cards

This ministry was suspended during COVID-19. Some students attended class in-person for a while and then were sent home during surges of the virus. Others attended classes online throughout the spring and summer. We hope to restart this ministry in the future.

Amanda Bregin is the contact person for this ministry.

Communion

Communion is observed on the first Sunday of each month throughout the year, during the 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. services. Also, it is observed during the Good Friday and Christmas Eve services.

The communion ministry serves the family of Christ at Grace Fellowship Church by preparing the elements before each communion service.

In 2020, the Fromer, Hines, McDowell, Stevenson and VanZee families participated in the setup/takedown of the communion elements.

Due to COVID regulations, in-person services were paused in March, and resumed in June. After the services resumed, we started using self-contained communion elements that were placed on a table near the back of the sanctuary.

We appreciate everyone's flexibility during 2020, and look forward to serving in 2021. If you are interested in participating in this ministry, please contact the Church Office or inquire at the Information Desk.

Phil and Erica Hines are the contact people for this ministry.

Funeral Lunches

The Funeral Committee serves the members of our church by providing and serving a luncheon after a funeral service. At a time of grief and sadness, this ministry to family members offers comfort and one less detail about which to be concerned.

Although this year has been unusual with regard to Covid-19, the Funeral Committee was asked to provide a luncheon for several of our members, and were glad to serve in this way.

In January, we served a luncheon for the family of Gordon Sandstrom. In August, our dear brother Dave Bodine went home to be with the Lord, and we held a luncheon for the friends and family who attended the memorial service.

Also in August, we served a small luncheon for the immediate family of Elizabeth Thomas, the mother of Rhys Thomas. And then in December, we again were called into service when Linda Ahnger went home to be with her Lord, and the Funeral Committee served a luncheon for her family and close friends.

I can't say enough about the women who have served on the committee over the years. They have given up countless hours to minister to others. I am so thankful for each of the women who help as they are able. It is a privilege to serve the Lord in this way.

Please contact Kathy Gombis if you would like to be a part of this ministry.

Sunday Coffee Fellowship

Coffee Fellowship is a good time to become acquainted with other attendees who might also be relative newcomers and appreciate casual conversation over a cup of coffee. The Coffee ministry team is blessed to facilitate this fellowship.

However, out of an abundance of caution, this ministry was suspended for most of 2020 in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We are

all looking forward to sharing a midmorning cup of coffee together on Sunday mornings in the future.

Gina Danaher is the contact person for this ministry and can be reached at 708-597-6388.

Audio Team

With the challenges that the year 2020 has brought to all, the audio team has had to shift gears as well. With the decision to use a livestream as a means to minister to those confined or quarantining at home, the need to create an additional audio mix was necessary. The Lord has been faithful in the challenges presented.

During 2020 God has provided the financial resources to be used to continue upgrading some of our outdated and aging equipment. We replaced the on stage base amplifier, upgraded our antenna system, and upgraded three wireless mic systems to digital technology.

In 2021 we will continue to upgrade the wireless mic systems along with hopefully growing the audio ministry team. If you have an aptitude for audio or are teachable, please contact either the church office or Barry Luchene (708) 514-4138.

The audio ministry team consists of: Mike Larson, Tim Leensvaart, and Barry Luchene. We continue to pray for Tim as he has had some health challenges this year which have limited his availability to serve.

Barry Luchene is the contact person for the Audio Team.

Tech Team

The Tech Ministry is a new and exciting ministry that we have just added this year, mainly because of the pandemic.

I am sure everyone of you have had the opportunity to experience and be blessed by the importance of this ministry, especially during the months that we could not attend services in person. We are continuing to grow and improve on this ministry and we really appreciate your

patience as we learn and broadcast our services each week. We are also open to any feedback you might have but that might mean you have knowledge in this area that you could use in helping serve with us.

With a growing ministry we are desperately looking for more individuals to serve. It is not a big commitment, especially if we get a good amount of people to support. You DO NOT have to be tech savvy to serve. A few positions we have available, only take the skill of listening and pressing a key on the computer. With that said, we are also looking for a few people that have some computer skills. If you are a teenager or above this ministry could be for You! We can be very flexible in making the right weeks work for you during the year to help. If you are interested in this ministry or have any further questions, please feel free to reach out to Bill Beaumont at church or contact him.

I do want to give a few shout outs! First to Barry Luchene for his partnership and for opening up space for us in the tech booth. Secondly, there is no way we could have done this without the great dedication and tech expertise of Luke Beaumont. I can't thank him enough for his support and for the awesome way we have been able to work together each week to make this a better experience for all.

Bill Beaumont is the contact person for this ministry. He can be reached at bill@meminmotion.net or 630-605-2216.

“I have been isolated in my home for most of the year. But every Sunday morning, my daughter comes by and turns on my computer so I can watch the broadcast from church. It has been such a blessing to me, and I am so grateful to the Lord for His gift of technology!”

Clarice Stegink

Ushers

The Usher Ministry is made up of dedicated men that are scheduled on a pre-assigned monthly basis. Each man serves one to three months a year and are committed to taking care of your needs during each service. Their role is greeting you before the service, helping you get seated and making you feel welcome at Grace. They also take the offering (pre-COVID) and are responsible for cleaning up after each service which includes sanitizing the sanctuary, collecting the registration books (pre-COVID), communion cups and trash. Hopefully these men have ministered to you each week by meeting your needs and by showing their love for the Lord with their friendliness and helpfulness.

This year has caused us to make a few changes in how we serve you. I really appreciate your understanding and the flexibility of our men during this time.

We continue to look for men of all ages that are willing to serve in this way and that can usher at least 1-2 months of the year. We can be very flexible in choosing the right weeks for you to serve. If you are interested in this ministry or have any further questions, please feel free to contact Bill Beaumont.

Again, I appreciate each of the men for their faithful service, especially this past year and look forward to what our Lord will bring us in 2021.

If you are interested in this ministry or have any further questions, please feel free to contact Bill Beaumont at bill@meminmotion.net or 630-605-2216.

Welcome Committee

The Welcome Ministry was organized in order to extend a warm welcome to our visitors and assist newcomers in connecting with the membership and ministries of Grace Fellowship Church. Since 2007, a committee of volunteers regularly staffs the information booth after every Sunday service to greet visitors and offer a special first time visitor gift. The gift contains information about church services, minis-

tries, and opportunities for fellowship at Grace, as well as a thought provoking book highlighting the Scriptures, and promotional GFC items.

It is our hope that the first contact effort and follow up interactions will be encouraging to visitors, and will help them feel that they could make Grace their church home.

The committee had 8 women who happily volunteered their time on Sundays to this important ministry. Regularly staffing the “Welcome Booth” at the information desk were Dawn Bruinius, Colleen Hardt, Linda Larson, Lisa McDowell, Sharon Pedigo, Jan Visser, Amanda Bregin, and newest member Anne Aggen.

With the cessation of in person worship services in March, the Welcome Committee members also were sidelined. When services did resume, in an effort to reduce social interactions, the committee members were still paused in their service – Pastor Steve and Pastor Sam became the point of contact for new visitors.

In 2021, the Welcome committee would like to continue being available to greet and inform new visitors, to be able to host “New to Grace” luncheons as needed, and would like to expand the number of volunteers available to help serve each Sunday. Each member of this committee takes turns staffing the Welcome station at the information booth for each of the Sunday services, a time commitment of about a half an hour at each service. We can always use more help. If interested in serving in this ministry, please contact the church office.

Colleen Hardt oversees this ministry. If interested in serving in this ministry, please contact Colleen or the church office.

CANDIDATES FOR OFFICE—2021

Elders:

Mark Carrera

Greg Coutts

Robert Crain

Len Hardt

Mark Johnson

Tim Kledzik

Dale Ralston

Deacons:

Geoff Aggen

Peter Colangelo

Tom Deuter

Jim Garrison

Phil Hines

Dan Rhodes

Steve VanZee

Treasurer: Gene Winship

Financial Secretary: Donn Hamrin

Assistant Financial Secretary: Dan Rhodes

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Income Statement 2020

For the period ended December 31, 2020

4101	Regular Offerings	\$	499,597.70
4201	Electronic Offerings	\$	132,071.22
4104	Awana Offerings	\$	944.00
4107	Social Activities	\$	61.33
4106	Fellowship Offerings	\$	34,788.25
4113	Building Fund Offerings	\$	3,863.13
	2020 Expenses	\$	588,407
	2020 Budget	\$	614,717
	2021 Budget	\$	634,118
	2021 Weekly Need	\$	12,194

GL	Description	2021		2020	
		Budget		Expenses	
5100	Salaries	\$	325,000	\$	271,606.29
5105	Payroll Taxes	\$	13,000	\$	9,115.42
5110	Housing Allowance	\$		\$	32,009.60
5115	403 (b)-(9) Expense	\$	8,400	\$	8,400.00
5175	Children's Church	\$	300	\$	
5205	Hospitality - Sr. Pastor	\$	700	\$	100.31
5210	Hospitality - Music Pastor	\$	500	\$	
5215	Hospitality - Youth Pastor	\$	200	\$	48.78
5220	Hospitality - Assoc Pastor LH	\$	150	\$	
5216	Hospitality - Assoc Pastor SB	\$	200	\$	36.81
5300	Library - Senior Pastor	\$	300	\$	222.63
5305	Library - Music Pastor	\$	100	\$	
5310	Library - Youth Pastor	\$	100	\$	93.63
5315	Library - Associate Pastor LH	\$	100	\$	79.00
5311	Library - Associate Pastor SB	\$	100		
5400	Maintenance - Buildings	\$	8,000	\$	9,618.88
5405	Maintenance Parsonage	\$	1,000	\$	1,430.58
5410	Maintenance Paint/Carpet	\$	900	\$	254.23
5415	Maintenance Lawn/Shrub	\$	5,500	\$	5,355.00
5420	Maintenance PC & Printers	\$	1,200	\$	1,239.72
5425	Maintenance-Copiers	\$	1,600	\$	1,450.00
5430	Maintenance-Snowplow/Salt	\$	3,500	\$	2,320.00
5431	Maintenance— HVAC	\$	1,000	\$	5,703.80
5432	Maintenance—Fire Protectio	\$	1,000	\$	1,675.00
5500	Insurance-Church Property	\$	12,000	\$	12,861.58
5510	Insurance-Staff Medical	\$	41,700	\$	43,424.98
5515	Insurance-Vehicle	\$	1,050	\$	968.70
5600	Utilities - Electric	\$	9,000	\$	8,315.53
5605	Utilities - Gas	\$	6,500	\$	4,591.11
5610	Utilities - Water	\$	900	\$	474.00
5700	Mortgage Principle & Int	\$	106,368	\$	43,623.59

GL	Description	2021		2020	
		Budget		Expenses	
6000	Supplies Building	\$	3,000	\$	4,533.06
6005	Supplies Office	\$	3,000	\$	2,327.83
6010	Supplies-Printing	\$	1,200	\$	667.53
6015	Supplies-Paper	\$	1,200	\$	608.61
6020	Supplies-Kitchen	\$	250	\$	145.12
6105	Scavenger	\$	1,000	\$	1,049.11
6110	Vehicle Expenses	\$	3,500	\$	2,243.24
6111	Bus Rental	\$	1,000	\$	516.02
6201	CrossTrainers	\$	3,000	\$	1,888.63
6202	Youth 180	\$	3,000	\$	569.36
6300	Postage & Shipping	\$	2,500	\$	2,224.22
6203	College Care	\$	1,000	\$	520.00
6305	Phone Local & Long Distance	\$	3,700	\$	3,611.05
6310	Telephone Alarm System	\$	750	\$	720.00
6315	Telephone-Cell	\$	1,500	\$	1,428.10
6320	Publications	\$	1,200	\$	1,565.70
6321	Publications - Counseling	\$	100	\$	
6325	Software Upgrades	\$	1,200	\$	2,932.12
6330	Professional Fees	\$	3,100	\$	2,375.00
6335	Bank Charges	\$	400	\$	253.20
6340	Penalties	\$	100	\$	
6345	Licenses & Permits (OF)	\$	100	\$	30.00
6400	Music-Sheet	\$	3,500	\$	2,308.61
6405	Music Aids	\$	150	\$	
6410	Music Equipment Rental	\$	100	\$	
6415	Music Maintenance	\$	1,000	\$	840.00
6420	Sound/Video Maintenance	\$	700	\$	2,908.81
6500	Honorarium-Guest Speaker	\$	500	\$	
6505	Honorarium Music	\$	600	\$	225.00
6510	Honorarium Seniors	\$	1,800	\$	
6600	Athletic	\$	100	\$	
6605	Awana	\$	4,500	\$	2,985.96
6610	Communion	\$	200	\$	313.79
6620	Flowers	\$	2,100	\$	863.32

GL	Description	2021		2020	
		Budget		Expenses	
6625	Sunday School	\$	500	\$	557.13
6630	Nursery Care	\$	150	\$	72.20
6635	Educational Course	\$	150	\$	
6640	Social Activities	\$	5,000	\$	1,086.88
6645	Vacation Bible School	\$	2,800	\$	9.98
6655	Women's Ministries	\$	750	\$	15.37
6670	Funeral Lunches	\$	600	\$	993.91
6675	Benevolence	\$	250	\$	180.00
6679	Video Streaming	\$	500	\$	29.98
6680	Miscellaneous	\$	500	\$	
6685	Seminar	\$	300	\$	
6690	Travel Staff/Guest	\$	500	\$	932.16
6695	Missionaries				
	Awana - Krup	\$	2,400	\$	2,400.00
	Team - Kaiser	\$	3,600	\$	3,600.00
	Wycliffe - Carrera	\$	2,400	\$	2,400.00
	Reach Beyond - Ringenberg	\$	1,200	\$	1,200.00
	ABWE - DeKryger	\$	4,800	\$	4,800.00
	Op. Mobilization - Zellers	\$	2,400	\$	2,400.00
6696	Outreach Ministries	\$	650	\$	
6697	Joyful Noise	\$	400	\$	104.56
6698	Background Checks	\$	400	\$	810.00
6699	Electronic Notification	\$	450	\$	222.00
7000	Update Computers	\$	2,000	\$	2,588.92
	2021 Budget	\$	634,118	\$	588,407
	Estimated Weekly Need	\$	12,194		

