

Open Doors Ministry- A Story of Unconditional Love

“When I am afraid, I will trust in You.” Psalm 56:3

By Nicole Zaccaria, Coordinator of Open Doors Ministry

If you have not had the pleasure of meeting Theresa Bussert and her son, Zak, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce them to you. I met Theresa in September 2014, shortly after I had joined Grace as the Open Doors Ministry’s Coordinator. Theresa was a single mom, looking for a church home for herself and her four-year-old son. As she told me her story, I knew that God had placed her in the arms of Grace.

Theresa knew that she wanted to be a mom. Coming from a family with several domestic and international adoptions, adoption had always been in her heart. She found Zak in Ethiopia and they immediately fell in love with one another. After overcoming many obstacles in the adoption process, she brought him home just before his first birthday. As Theresa settled into the life of raising him, she quickly became aware of some developmental differences in the way he learned and loved. Theresa found support for Zak to address these differences at home and at school. Despite therapies and the support that Theresa’s extended family provided, there were moments of grave worry and uncertainty. Theresa knew that she needed comfort from a church home. As she and Zak sought this addition to their lives, they entered a dark time. Although Theresa found many congregations that wanted her to be “a part” of their church, Theresa reports feeling that they wanted Zak to remain “apart” from the congregation. She sadly shared that she had never experienced such unwelcoming feelings.

When Theresa and Zak came to Grace, a plan developed to address his strengths and his challenges. Zak started as a preschool boy, and lasted about 10 minutes in the Sunday school classroom. He is now consistently attending Sunday school and engaged in the lessons. In addition, he has become a participant in choir, and in 2016, he sang in two different services! Zak also attended Vacation Bible School, and in December, he joined the Children’s Night Out, hosted by Chamus Burnside-Savassini and the Children’s Ministry team. This allowed Theresa to enjoy a relaxed dinner out with her sister, and her words of gratitude were profound.

The name Zak’s birth mother gave him was Mintesinot,

which means, “All things are possible with God.” There are times that Theresa continues to be scared and overwhelmed, but she finds strength in this name. She also shared that Open Doors has just strengthened her faith. Theresa tells the story that when

Zak started at Grace, there was never an alarm about his needs. During our first conversation in September 2014, Theresa had shared that her spiritual goal for Zak was to find a church community that could accept him for who he is. She now states that Grace is the church home that she had been searching for her whole life. She is forever grateful for the all-encompassing acceptance that Grace has bestowed upon them. This is why she attends Grace. This is why we have our Open Doors Ministry.

Theresa and Zak’s story is just one of the many beautiful Open Doors stories. **Our annual celebration is on February 25 and 26.** We will host special speakers during the services, focusing on the Unconditional Love that defines Open Doors. We will also enjoy a celebration in the Activity Center between services on Sunday. We will have information about the ministry, as well as the opportunity to support us through various vendors: Special Sparkle will be returning to sell specially designed bracelets, authors will be selling books that vary in perspective about special needs, and we will have therapy dogs that have become a part of supporting our ministry. Please join us for this special day!

If you or someone you know is seeking a church home and feeling limited due to special needs, please contact (nicole.zaccaria@peopleofgrace.org). We can create a plan and support you!



Grief Share: New Small Group



Have you experienced the loss of a loved one? Have you struggled with all of the emotions, and changes that come with grief? Judy Cornett, a member at Grace, did, and because of her personal experience with Grief Share, a new small group ministry was born here at Grace to help others just like her, journey through their grief. Judy explains, “The death of my husband, Jerry, put me on a path that is frightening and lonely. My family and church are very supportive. However, I found that attending a Grief Share group that consisted of people just like me, who were experiencing similar feelings, was what I needed. It was a safe environment for group members who shared only if they wanted to.”

In this 13-week class, the group utilizes videos that feature well-known counselors as well as lay people and covers topics like how to deal with regret, anger, and guilt. The class will help you learn skills to face the challenges of grieving and to move forward towards rebuilding your life. As part of moving forward Judy wants “to share the Grief Share experience with others.”

Grief Share will begin at Grace on February 12 at 2:30 p.m. in Room 254. Facilitated by Judy Cornett and Katy Klepper. For information, or to sign up, please contact Mark Himel (mark.himel@peopleofgrace.org) or (630-355-1748).

VISION UPDATE | Let's Revitalize Grace!

By John Bodine, Grace Projects Team Chair

Can we find a way to make visitors to Grace feel right at home? Can we make it easy for visitors and young families to find their way around on Sunday morning? Can we find a way to avoid gridlock after Worship when heading for coffee? What can we do to enhance and enrich our sense of “community” across our various Grace activities?

These are questions that surfaced from our 2014 church-wide survey and 2015-2016 Visions Team efforts. Follow up on the Visions Team recommendations and generous funding from the Glenna Holloway Estate gift of 2016 have led us to consider a renovation of our facility. We have engaged JNKA Architects, to help us develop a Grace Renovation master plan and to move us toward our Visions Team goals. We have committed only to development of a master plan at this time. Work to implement the plan will be subject to Grace member review and available funding, and will likely be phased over time to minimize disruption and financial impact.

The process for accomplishing the master plan will require extensive input from our staff and members to ensure the architects get a complete and representative impression of the current and future needs of Grace including what we'll need to revitalize and once again grow our community.

Input at this stage will occur in two parts:

1) Questionnaires: Beginning January 15 through February 15, we are circulating questionnaires to members, group leaders, and church staff each with their respective forms. Organization and office forms will be given directly to staff and group leaders for them to address concerns and needs related to their events, meeting places, and activities. The member forms will be made available through the church office, through group leaders, and on-line via Grace Connect. You will not need a Grace Connect login to fill out the on-line form, but to receive it we will need your up-to-date email address. We will send out numerous notices and reminders of the importance of getting your input, but all questionnaires must be completed and/or returned to the Church Office by February 15.

2) Interviews: Our architecture partners, JNKA, will then review and collate questionnaire responses to guide them in conducting six 90-minute interviews of

our Grace community. In the interviews they'll probe deeper to understand Grace and our future direction. Interview groups will be limited to 10-12 people. Grace Group Leaders will select representatives to participate. Pastor Cindy will have some flexibility to ensure we are getting a good cross section of our membership. **All participants must be identified to John Bodine** by February 1. Once we have a list of participants, they will be asked to sign up for a specific interview time and date via Grace Connect. All designated interview participants will be activated in Grace Connect with a login ID.

The participant representation plan is as follows:

Staff Members (12), Vision Teams: Children & Young Families (2), Education & Spiritual Development (2), Outreach & Assimilation (2), Attendance (1), Preaching & Worship (1), Church Council (2), Trustees (2), Staff Parish (2), Stewardship & Finance (2), Adult Groups: Forum (1), Hearts on Fire (1), New Connections (1), Open Hearts & Minds (1), Portico Collective (1), Questors (1), Children's Education (4), Youth Council (3), PDO (2), UMW (2), FCM (1), NOW (6), Music (4), ODM (2), Other (8); for a total of 66 people.

The Interview schedule is as follows:

Interview 1: Sun. 2/19, 1:00 p.m. (Fireside)

Interview 2: Sun. 2/19, 2:30 p.m. (Fireside)

Church Staff: Tues. 2/21, 10:30 a.m. (Room 254)

Interview 4: Tues. 2/21, 7:00 p.m. (Fireside)

Interview 5: Sun. 2/26, 1:00 p.m. (Fireside)

Interview 6 – Sun. 2/26, 2:30 p.m. (Fireside)

Members of the Grace Projects Team from whom this initiative has sprouted will participate in subsequent visioning/program reviews with the architects. This will be an exciting project that will hopefully stir creative ideas for re-energizing and revitalizing our Grace community.

If there are questions or concerns, please contact a member of the Grace Projects Team:

Jeff Barbeau	John Bodine
Chamus Burnside-Savazzini	Larry Hartman
Mark Himel	Betsy Koepnick
Ron Laub	Gail Lindsay
Rick Loufek	Cindy Marino
Steve Peters	Ron Wills

Feed the Need MobilePack

By Gay Craig, Feed the Need MobilePack Co-Chair

If a hungry child approached you, and all you had in your pocket was a quarter, what could you buy that child? A quart of milk, a pizza slice, a hamburger or hot dog, a cup of soup? A quarter will not buy much, and certainly not anything, that could nourish a child for an entire day. Yet, Feed My Starving Children can turn that quarter into a nutrient-rich meal that will feed a starving child with one meal a day, give him/her hope for a future--and give you three cents change. Multiply that quarter by hundreds of thousands, and the blessings grow exponentially.

Your helping hands are vital. Please join Grace members and thousands of volunteers on February 18 and 19 at North Central College at the FMSC 2017 MobilePack. This year's goal is 1.2 million meals during five packing shifts on one weekend. Our church's preliminary commitment is 150 slots to pack 35,000 meals costing \$6,600. Packing slots are open to anyone five years old and older (for children, adult to child ratios apply). Previous experience and special skills are not required, and new volunteers are always welcome!

Jesus told Peter that if he loved our Lord, Peter should feed Jesus' sheep and lambs. The children's choirs have taken that instruction to heart, and have already raised \$1,153 toward the boxes of meals they will gather to pack and bless at the MobilePack. This annual opportunity teaches them, and all of us, how impactful we become when we put our faith into action.

Your financial help is essential. We are close to meeting our dollar commitment, additional funding will allow the event to exceed 1.2 million meals. Please prayerfully consider feeding a child for one year with a contribution of \$80, or subsidizing a packer for one shift with a \$50 contribution. Of course, any amount is helpful and appreciated. There are envelopes in the pews for your convenience. Checks should be payable to Grace UMC, with Feed My Starving Children on the memo line.

Registration for our packing slots will be the last two Sundays in January between the Sunday services, in the Activity Center. Volunteers are necessary in behind-the-scenes support positions, such as check-in, greeting, ushering, hospitality, and set-up and clean up. For additional information, please email Gay Craig at gaycraig@sbcglobal.net, or visit www.feedtheneedillinois.org, or FeedTheNeedIL on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Choral Evensong and Pre-Service Organ Recital on February 26 starting at 3:30 p.m. This event will begin with Stephen Buzard, acclaimed concert artist on the organ, followed by Choral Evensong with the Grace Chamber Singers. Evensong is a classic form of worship with scripture readings, hymns, Psalms and Canticles (biblical songs). This 45-minute service is contemplative in style and draws us to holiness at end of the day. Concluding with a free will offering benefiting the Music Fund and a light tea reception.

Grace Notes March - Even if you regularly receive Grace Notes by email, next month you will receive Grace Notes and the Lenten Devotional booklet by mail.

NOTE: The Lenten Devotional will also be available as a PDF on peopleofgrace.org.

