

# GRACE NOTES

News from and about Grace Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan

# 16

May 2009

## Grace House at 118 Buckley

At our April retreat, from Friday evening until Sunday noon we cooked for each other, washed each others' dishes, played "Truth or Dare", ate chips, took walks, prayed together, listened to each other's life stories, discussed the concept of Christian urban community, and reviewed house norms. We learned a few things about each other's preferences in dining! From Karl's oatmeal to Manny's hamburger helper to Carena and Mari's French toast, we ate well, though maybe not always with delight. Adam is our healthy eating advisor, but we didn't always listen to him. Now back from our first weekend retreat in April, the residents of 118 Buckley got back into our routines of exam preparation, work, and discipleship.



Immanuel Phillips

The end of the school year was extremely busy for most of the residents, and since we are still so new at living together, it takes some extra energy to make things work. It's not so easy to throw a group of strangers together and expect that they will immediately be able to experience joyful community fellowship and unity.

We are beginning to establish some routines for house meetings and devotions together, and at least one meal per week together. Karl Westerhof is usually a part of these special times to be together. We've got wifi access now, and we are just beginning to make use of all the beautiful shelving built in by the Bear Manor craftsmen.

We are starting to make friends with neighborhood kids, who asked one day if they could see our house.



Mari Macey

When we took them through, they said they thought it was a little boring - not enough pictures on the walls. We're working on that.

We really enjoyed being part of the Rembrandt "Last Supper" scene during Holy Week at Grace, and we'll be alert to other ways we can develop and use our talents. A few of us participate in other opportunities to act as well!



Mary Nasca

As we got to know each other, we learned things to appreciate! Mari brought her great laugh and her ability to really clean a house! We also learned that for her being outside the city meant "too many trees". Carena and Mari are both graduates of the youth program of GR urban youth leadership initiative, and aim toward careers in medicine and social work respectively.



Carena Shannon and Adam Flokstra

We found out that Adam loves sports, and he is a "mover" with truck and dolly. Mary is our "eating on a budget" specialist. Manny can sing with his mouth packed with peanut butter. Oh, and he also amazes us with his constantly busy schedule of musical involvements.

First priority for the Grace House is becoming a community ourselves, and then branching out into activities that will make us salt and light in Grace and in the Southgate neighborhood. We request your prayers for us!

If you want to donate things like toasters, can openers, kitchen utensils, pots & pans, furniture, pictures, etc, please coordinate with Karl Westerhof. Some of you have already made contributions to the house at 118 - THANKS!

## Welcome Committee

During the past few years the Hospitality Committee has often talked about ways Grace can be more welcoming to our visitors and each other. Last fall the Hospitality Committee decided to form an ad hoc committee called the Welcome Committee. The job of this group was and is to talk about ways to be more welcoming and then bring those ideas and how they could be implemented to the Hospitality Committee. The four people who are serving are Rachel Draayer, Brittany Dekker, Eileen Kooreman and Marcia Lucas. It was fun to get together and brainstorm some ideas and ways Grace could be welcoming. We decided to focus on how Grace welcomes visitors.

The main theme the ad hoc committee has talked about is what happens after the coffee on Sunday morning. How are visitors treated during the service and afterwards? How can we move to a deeper and meaningful level of knowledge with those visiting and interested in becoming a part of Grace? The committee then chose ten ideas from

our original brainstorming session and then decided to focus on developing a welcome room/area that would be staffed during the coffee time and would include printed materials with information about Grace. It is also our goal that this welcome area would be welcoming children as well as adults. Of course, when this is ready we will be asking Grace members, if you are interested in helping, to staff this area

Another item that will be implemented soon is to have children handing out the children's bulletins. There was a sign up sheet on the bulletin board, but if your child did not sign up yet please let one of the committee members know.

If you have any ideas or thoughts about these topics the Welcome Committee would enjoy hearing them.

*Marcia Lucas*

## Welcome New Members

Grace Church is happy to welcome James and Virginia LaGrand. They met at Calvin College as students. After they graduated they were married and moved to Nigeria, Africa to teach. After their return to the States James attended Calvin Seminary and Yale University, studying theology. He was ordained as a Christian Reformed minister in Chicago in 1969.

James and Virginia lived in many different places, sometimes serving a church, sometimes studying, and at other times teaching. James studied in England and Switzerland, earning a Th D from Basel University. He served as pastor in Chicago, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Gary, Indiana. After James' retirement they moved to Hyde Park, Chicago, where they lived in a Christian community.

Virginia began Ph D work in Linguistics when they lived in Switzerland, and completed that degree while teaching at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois. She was a Professor of English there for eighteen years, retiring in May 2008.



Both James and Virginia were born and raised in Grand Rapids. James remembers visiting, what was then Buckley Chapel, as a child because his family attended First Christian Reformed Church. They say that a desire to be closer to their children and grand children is what brought them back to Grand

Rapids. They have four sons and four daughters-in-law. Three of the couples live here in town and the fourth one lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. They are the happy grand parents of nine grandchildren,

They look forward to an active retirement. They live on Prospect Avenue, just north of Grace Church. They are eager to be involved at Grace Church. Virginia is excited to work with others to develop backyard gardens around Grace Church. James has joined the Jail Ministry where he has been preaching. They both hope to join with other church members in a social justice interest group.

They are also very concerned about Christian education. They would like to work with our Christian Education Committee

in recruiting new students from the area to the Christian schools. Both James and Virginia continue to be involved in urban politics and in World Missions. James' ministerial credentials will be held by Grace Church and that means that he is an additional Associate Minister of Grace Church.

Welcome Rev. James and Mrs. Virginia La Grand.



## WELCOME BACK COLEMAN'S

**Carey-** He is currently working for the Michigan Department of Corrections in Muskegon. He was previously in Ionia but recently the prison he was working at was closed. He has been with the State of Michigan for about 5 years.

**Beth-** Works at the denominational office on Kalamazoo Ave., in the Advancement Services Dept. Her work includes gift entry, and demographics and she has been there one year. **Tiffanie** (20 yrs) She is currently attending GRCC in the culinary arts program. She plans to continue on for her business degree when she graduates from CC. Tiffanie works part time at Frederick Meijer Gardens in the Cafe.

**Courtney** (17 yrs) She is a senior at the Potter's House High School. Courtney works part time at Russ restaurant and will be attending GVSU in the fall. She has not yet decided on her major. **Morgan** (13 yrs) He is a 7th grader at the Potter's House. Morgan loves to play sports and he especially likes soccer and basketball. He has played for Wyoming Parks and Rec and this year was able to participate in school sports.

**Joseph** (8 yrs) He is a 2nd grader at the Potter's House. Joseph is a very active child and loves to play, play, play. He is currently playing soccer for Wyoming Parks and Rec.

Beth and Carey were married at Grace Church in 1985. Roger Van Harn married them. They changed churches in 1998, and attended Roosevelt Park

CRC when their children started going to the Potter's House. They have recently transferred our membership back to Grace. They said we appreciate all the friends we have here at Grace and are grateful for welcoming us back.



Sally Kikkert also returned as a member. The following people made Professions of Faith: Jennifer Brown,

Al Ewing, Taylor Ling, and Jonah Kok. We welcome them as full members into our fellowship.