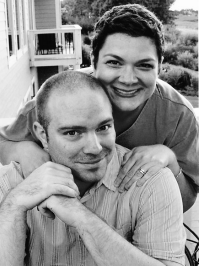


GRACE NOTES

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

#22

November 2009



Sarah Westerhof 1971- 2009

Sarah was born in June of '71 and baptized at Grace CRC by Pastor Paul Brink. In '86 we went to the Philippines, and she attended Union International Church with us for three years. After that Sarah came back to the US to attend college at Calvin.

In the middle 90s, Sarah made her profession of faith at Grace under the teaching of Pastor Van Harn. In 2000 Sarah and Jason were married by Grace's pastors Steve Venhuizen and Ruth Hofman.

Sarah worked at Nancy De Young's studio since about '93, and found there a strong and nurturing fellowship of Christian women. She and Jason visited various churches, but none had much appeal for them. Even though both sets of parents were Christian Reformed down to their socks, Sarah and Jason were not drawn to any congregation or denomination.

In February of '08 Sarah was diagnosed with leukemia. On the day she was diagnosed she said to us, "I am God's child now, and I'll still be God's child no matter what happens." And that's how she faced her 21 months with leukemia. Through the first round of chemo, through remission, through the return of the cancer, and through the recent weeks of chemo, her constant reassurance to her family was, "I know this is very hard for you, but remember, no matter what happens, everything is going to be alright."

September and October were spent in the hospital. When she was taken "downstairs" in the middle of the night for an emergency cat scan, she told Liz the next day, "I thought to myself – I might die. And I imagined myself curled up in God's hands and I knew I would be alright. I was sad for you guys, but I wasn't afraid."

Near the end of '08 a book swap at Boston Square CRC led to getting to know the pastors at Boston Sq. Sarah and Jason started attending worship occasionally, and this fall when the leukemia returned, Pastor Elizabeth began to visit Sarah in the hospital. Jason began to meet with Pastor Jay to prepare for making profession of faith. Just before her death on Nov 1, Sarah had requested the transfer of her membership from Grace to Boston Square.

Together with Sarah, we continue to celebrate the new life in Jesus, and we await the resurrection.

Liz and Karl

What Did Our Garden Grow?

A few pounds of cherry tomatoes, a handful of okra, some peppers, some swiss chard, a pretty big pumpkin, and quite a few bouquets of rosemary and sage. That's what the Grace Garden grew. But it did more. It nourished friendships with the neighborhood children—many of them Gems—who helped set up the beds, plant the seeds and water the plants. It strengthened friendships between Grace Church gardeners; it grew friendly contacts with neighbors on LaGrave and

Jefferson streets. The Grace Garden's harvest has been gathered, but it's still coming in.

Barbara Haviland and I came up with idea for a Grace Garden after church in the winter of 2008. We both love our own backyard gardens, and we thought it would be fun to see whether Grace Church neighbors would enjoy them too. We first thought of starting a garden behind 118 Buckley—for access, protection, and water. But Jack got ICCF's permission to plant on the vacant lot across the street on the corner of Buckley and La Grave. We built our raised bed frame out of scrap lumber, with the help of Adam Flokstra, and we asked for contributions from the Kent County Department of Health, Meijer and Flowerland.

The children in the neighborhood were intrigued with the project, and they



were its best salesmen. We found out that Torres family on La Grave already has a big backyard garden so they did not need our raised-bed frame. But then we found out that Mr. Torres is a good carpenter, and he was ready and eager to help James La Grand knock together some more raised-bed frames for other neighbors. We found out that landlords on La Grave won't let their tenants have backyard gardens. But then we found that some children who live on La Grave have godparents on Jefferson who own their own houses and were eager to have raised-bed gardens in their back yards.

We got help from many sources. The Kent County Department of Public Health gave us a cubic yard of good garden soil—and we shared it with our neighbors on Jefferson Street. Barbara got donations from Meijer and Flowerland for seedlings and garden tools. Chuck Bowsma gave us three or four giant tomato seedlings, and John Kooreman donated fencing.



Virginia LaGrand

In early June we had a planting party. Megan, Margaret, and Barbara Haviland and the La Grands, were joined by Trudi Ippel and Leah Yoder, the Torres children and other children from La Grave Street. (see the photo). Soon the Torres parents came out to join the fun. After a few weeks Mary Nasca and neighborhood children asked whether they could

plant something more—so we built a pumpkin patch and planted it with heirloom seeds.

All summer long volunteers signed up to take a turn watering and checking up on the garden for a week. Sally Kikkert did it for several weeks, and Cathy Bouwsma, Mary Nasca, Melanie Karr, and Trudi Ippel helped out.

Santiago Torres thinks we should fill the vacant lot with garden beds next year. Barbara and I are making plans—Bill Flikkema already told us he has some scrap lumber for more raised beds. If anyone else wants to join the garden, just talk to us—our planning sessions are right after church in the fellowship room.

Virginia LaGrand

A Budget Report

This is a brief report on Grace Church finances for 2009. First the Deacons give thanks to God for the faithful giving from members of Grace Church. We have some wonderful contributors whose contributions make the church program possible.

At the end of October we had completed 83% of the budget year. At that time the receipts were at 75% and the expenses at 80% of what was budgeted for the year. In past years the last two months receipts have been better than average as members try to fulfill their financial commitments to the church. So, while we are doing quite well, we will be anticipating some end of the year contributions.

Increased year-end contributions will likely be used for completing the church's obligation for denominational quotas, replenishing the Building Reserve Fund since some of it was used to replace carpeting in a few rooms.

The restricted funds include, among other, the Food Pantry, Benevolence, Building Reserve Fund, and the Buckley House. The Food Pantry budget was greatly assisted by the memorial gifts for Ted Rottman. The Benevolence Fund is also doing all right at this time. We have used \$5,000. of the Building Reserve Fund for the carpet project, so it would be good to replenish that reserve fund in case of major unanticipated facility expenses. Finally, the Buckley House has not achieved financial stability and will need additional revenue.

The Deacons are currently working on the 2010 budget and the church members will have an opportunity to discuss the budget when it is presented to the congregation.

The Deacons

The Facility Committee (with Help) at Work

There is a new look at Grace, which you've surely noticed. Yes! We have new carpet and 3 rooms are newly painted! Melanie Karr's dad, Mr. Harry Mulder, has painted classrooms 10 and 11 and Paul and Trudi Ippel have painted the lounge.

The carpet was purchased and laid by Verhey Carpet. Through Steve Van Kooten's pleading with Verhey, 221 sq. yds. of carpet and labor was purchased, with the approval of the Ad. Council, for \$5008.34. This was paid for using funds in our Grace Church Restricted Funds, an account used solely for major repairs and purchases. Many thanks are due to the people who were involved in the decision making for purchasing the carpet and for the painting!

There are also things you probably have not noticed. With some prodding, the city has planted new young trees on Sheldon Ave. Bill Flikkema added more grass seed and fertilizer. Jan Ericson, Mary McKinney and Mary Van Harn cleaned the kitchen. Thousands of leaves on Buckley were raked up by Kim Eggebeen and Mary Van Harn and brought by truck loads to Chuck Bouwsma's garden. All of the sanctuary chairs (the top sides) were washed and sanitized by Kim Eggebeen. (Anybody want to do the bottoms?) A used lawn mower and a used

snow blower were donated to the church. Robbins Lock changed all of the outside locks and the office locks for security reasons.

Kim Eggebeen (our custodian) finds our church in short supply of tools. Can you look in your workroom or garage for any extras you may have and get them to the church during office hours or on a Sunday? Some supplies needed: a pipe wrench; regular, needle nose or vise grip pliers; 2 snow shovels; a salt spreader on wheels; a 2 foot saw for trimming trees; 2 empty 5 gallon plastic buckets with lids for salt storage; 6 large (2 foot) planters with bottoms for church plants; and 2 kitchen brooms.

More committee members are always welcomed and volunteers for projects are always needed. Please see Steve Van Kooten or Mary Van Harn if you are available for serving on future projects.

Mary Van Harn



NEWS FROM COUNCIL

The Grace Church Council met at 8am on Saturday, November 7 at the RDV offices in downtown Grand Rapids. We were warmly welcomed by Eileen Kooreman. Karen DeVos led the group in our opening devotions. We spent time and prayer reflecting on what it means "to be the body of Christ".

Mike Bruinooge and Rev. Kooreman introduced our discussion for the morning. They reviewed the Grace Church planning process that led to the creation of our current vision statement and mission plan. GRACE BREAKS THROUGH! We have been focusing on four specific areas – children and youth, fellowship, neighborhood, and worship. Council members spent the remainder of the morning breaking up into small groups to discuss each of these topics. We talked about the values that drive us in each of these areas, about specific actions taken in the past year, and suggested ideas about what we might do in the coming year. The room was filled with energy and ideas.

We concluded the morning with a light lunch. Mike Bruinooge posted many of our comments on the walls. We reviewed them and then talked about themes that emerged from our discussions. The strategic planning committee will be reviewing our comments and sharing their observations with the Council.

It was good for Council members to spend a morning talking about what we need to do for our youth, worship, fellowship, and neighborhood. But it is a conversation in which all Grace Church members need to participate. What will each of us do to ensure that GRACE BREAKS THROUGH in each of these four areas in the coming year. We will never accomplish all that needs to be done, but we can make a start in each of these areas. Some examples from the past year include: the elders appointed Bob Crow to be our youth elder for the coming year, a small group started a community garden across from the church, we had many participants in small groups discussing the topic of *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, and the Worship Committee has made a proposal to the elders about communion.

We ask each of you to help us identify ways that we can share God's Grace in our neighborhood, our worship, our fellowship, and with our children. Talk with each other. Talk with an Elder and Deacon. Pray that what each of us does demonstrates GRACE BREAKING THROUGH.

Paul Ippel, Council President