

Grace Presbyterian Church

"To see Long Island awakened to the glory of Jesus Christ."

Update from Pastor Mark Middlekauff

Does God really work all things for good? That is a question that lurks in the minds of many this year in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. So much hardship and sorrow has befallen our country and our world this year that virtually nothing we call good has escaped intact. We have lost loved ones and friends to COVID-19. We have lost employment. We have been under a dark cloud of uncertainty and separation for so long that some have become deeply anxious or depressed. We have been locked down from ordinary, healthy, in-person relationships that God intends for the flourishing of human life. And with regards to what lies ahead, we find ourselves simultaneously hopeful and dejected by our earthly progress.

And so, with all this hardship impinging upon us daily, how is it that we are able to affirm the words of Job saying, "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive disaster?" (Job 2:10). It is through the gospel that Job and we are able to answer, "Yes, we shall receive good and disaster!" For the gospel declares that though sin has ravaged God's good creation, God has lovingly intervened. God has triumphed over sin and death through his son. And we his children are alive in this hope already, though we labor and groan in the present as we await the New Heavens and New Earth.

God's people have always endured the trials of this broken world with gospel hope! And this is not the first pandemic (nor the deadliest pandemic) that Christians have endured with hope, and yes, even great fruitfulness. It is in the times of great darkness that the light of Christ in his people has shown the brightest. And my friends, this is how God is able to work all things (even this pandemic) for good, for those who love him and are called according to his purposes (Rom. 8:28).

As your pastor, I rejoice in the truth that Grace Presbyterian Church is alive in the hope of the gospel. And this hope has empowered us to more than persevere this year. We were one of the first churches in New York to "pause" worship in March. We then worked hard to provide an online worship service from March into July. And in July we launched an outdoor worship service with a custom-built stage, and we revamped our building so we could carefully worship indoors. We also began livestreaming our indoor service! This all came at quite an expense of both time and money, but we pulled it off. Currently, we are worshipping indoors according to state and federal guidelines, and it is going quite well.

As 2020 draws to a close I am unable to say with confidence that 2021 will bring the return to "normal" that people set their hopes upon. But between now and 2021 we will celebrate the birth of our savior. And in that birth, we can know for sure that God does "work all things for good for those who love him" (Rom. 8:28). And that nothing can "separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39). Amen.

Grace & Peace,
Rev. Mark Middlekauff



First Outdoor Service



Tuesday Night
Ladies' Grace Group



Barbara Albright's Birthday Celebration

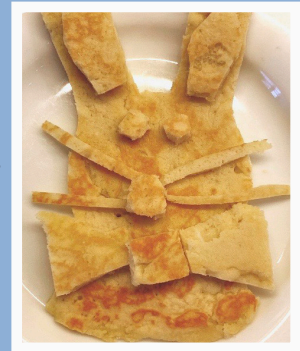
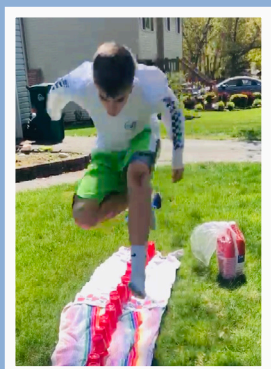


Mark's First Outdoor Sermon

Lesley Middlekauff

Youth Ministry Update

Things have looked a little different this past year for our Youth Ministry at Grace. Although, despite the restrictions as a result of Covid-19, we have had a sweet time in new creative ways. Last spring, when we were in strict lockdown, we started meeting for Youth Group on Zoom. Although this was not optimal, we made the most of it and actually had a lot of fun playing games like charades, scattergories, and household scavenger hunts. We also had some fun competition with weekly challenges to complete at home. We were wowed by the student's pancake creations, cup jumping skills, toilet paper towers, etc. Then as the weather got warmer, we decided it would be safe to gather outdoors in small distanced groups. It was wonderful to be off the screens and in person! We were blessed to enjoy amazing sunsets around a bonfire each week at a beach on the bay, where God provided the perfect setting for some small intimate gatherings where we were able to share life stories, get into deep conversations, and see relationships grow and flourish. When the weather cooled off, we did not want our gatherings to end so we made the decision to move our meetings to the church where we would have enough space to meet distanced and masked. In this new setting, we are now enjoying the opportunity to do a youth version of Christianity Explored. It has been a joy to dig into the book of Mark each week and provide students with an opportunity to converse and ask big questions about who Jesus is, what He says, and why it really matters to us. We also are enjoying some fun, laughter, and social interaction, something we have all realized we need and crave in these strange times. Overall, praise God for all He has done over these last months in providing our church, our youth leaders, and our amazing students with these opportunities for His love and hope to work in us and through us!



Korey Tietjen

Meet the Tietiens



We bought our house in Water Mill in 2004, a year after we were married. We were not sure we could afford it. We had never heard of such a small house costing so much! Thank goodness God provides!

Korey was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and raised in a suburb of Houston, Texas. She grew up in the Methodist Church, attending weekly services and youth group activities. In college, she worked with the youth group and took them on several work trips to south Texas.

Greg was born and raised on Long Island, in Huntington, NY. He also attended the local Methodist church with his parents, brother and twin sisters.

Several years ago, our eldest son told us his friends were going to something called Second Saturdays Out. We looked into it and have been signing up ever since! Then we found out about GraceCamp in the summers and had to be a part of that too! A combination of curiosity and a little guilt prompted us to start going as a family to Sunday services. We've been regular attendees ever since. We hope to sign up for the next members class when it rolls around again.

Adriana Pariz

GraceGroups

"We are working on our discipleship program, please be in prayer" is a phrase we said for a long time at Grace Church. As we looked through resources and curriculum options, we realized that we are a unique church and needed to come up with a curriculum and program that better suited us. Pastor Mark Middlekauff and I began meeting and working on this program years ago. We developed not only a curriculum but also procedures, expectations, and leadership training. In the spring of 2020, we trained our leaders and began preparing for a launch in the fall. It has been a long time coming and on October 6th, we officially launched our discipleship program at Grace Church, which we are fondly calling "GraceGroups."

Due to the pandemic, we were not sure how many people would sign up. We were filled with joy as we saw 32 men and women sign up!! So, including our leaders, we have 45 men and women in a GraceGroup! We are thrilled! We have divided our GraceGroups into men only and women only and we have three groups of each. We meet on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays throughout the East End. The feedback has been utterly positive and encouraging from everyone involved! People have really enjoyed the devotionals, the accountability, the relationships and the spiritual growth. Our GraceGroups could not have come at a better time, as our need for deep relationships is especially felt during this pandemic. We are able to meet on Zoom from our homes and still build deep friendships and mature in our faith. Our GraceGroups are made up of four different spiritual phases, each building on the last and they each take roughly a year to complete. If this phase one is any indication, I cannot imagine how much we will all grow and mature in the years to come!

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