

GATHER PONDER SHARE

STORIES MEANT TO BE TOLD

Vol. 2, Issue 2
February 2023

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PRACTICE + RESURRECTION

“Practice resurrection” is the last line of a poem by the celebrated author Wendell Berry. But what does it mean to “practice resurrection”? How is it done? The Gospels show that resurrection is both anarchy and order, both a disruption of all things and the restoration of all things. If resurrection is both disruptive and restorative, we might expect that practicing resurrection will undo much of what we believe is true and reveal what and who we really are as God’s children. In the same poem, Mr. Berry offers a glimpse into what practicing resurrection might mean:

*So, friends, every day do something
that won’t compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it.*

“Practice resurrection” is also the title of a book by Eugene Peterson, who uses the letter to the Ephesians to unpack and expand Berry’s intriguing verses. In what he calls a “conversation,” Peterson explores Christian spiritual maturity and what is truly involved in growing up into Christ the head. According to Peterson (as he follows St. Paul), maturity in Christ includes prayer, community, the world, the Word, the Holy Spirit, and habits old and new.

We will explore what it means to “practice resurrection” as we walk with Eugene, Wendell, St. Paul and the Lord Jesus during our Lenten fast. Plan to join us on Wednesdays for worship, study and meals to break your fast, as we learn to practice resurrection and do something every day that disrupts and restores.

~Pr. Brooks



We normally talk of the Lenten season and the week that ends it as a special kind of journey, a going alongside Jesus as he makes his way to what waits for him in Jerusalem and beyond.

But Lent and Holy Week can also be understood as an exploration of what it means to be a baptized Christian in the slog of daily life. The stories and activities of Lent coincide with the waking of the (northern) world

to spring—and spring is messy! There is rain and wind and mud. There is cleaning and washing. There is plowing and planting. There is repairing and renewing. Amid all this activity, many times things do not go well—the wind and rain and mud undo the meticulous cleaning and washing, the careful plowing and planting, the tedious repairing and renewing. Wind, rain, and mud—a metaphor for sin.

Continues next page.

GPS is a quarterly publication of GLC – The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
GPS is published in four times per year.

So, it is in this time of year, when the wind and rain and mud threaten to get the best of us that we gather to hear Lenten stories: stories of disbelieving laughter, of being tossed into pits and among lions, of enemies plotting, of bargains being made, of cattle repenting, and more. And we hear promises: the promise of a cleansing, a washing that endures; the promise of vines and shrubs that grow and bear fruit; the promise of a repairing, a renewing that sets all things right;



of a planted tree that is both bare and yet the loveliest of all.

So resolve this year to be a part of our Lenten exploration—from Ash Wednesday right through the events of the Great Three Days. Hear again what God has done and is doing for us. The wind may blow, the rain may fall, the mud may go everywhere—but Easter and its glorious sun is on the way.



Lenten Worship & Fellowship Opportunities

February 22

Ash Wednesday Services

with imposition of ashes and Holy Communion

12 Noon and 7 PM

Wednesdays in Lent

March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

12 Noon - Midday Lenten Service

6 PM - Simple Suppers downstairs in the kitchen

7 PM - Lenten Evening Vespers



Services for Holy Week

Sunday, April 2 - Palm Sunday

8:30 and 11 AM - Worship Services

Thursday, April 6 - Maundy Thursday

7 PM - Worship Service

Friday, April 7 - Good Friday

12 Noon - Stations of the Cross

7 PM - Worship Service

Saturday, April 8 - Easter Vigil

7:45 PM

Sunday, April 9 - Easter Sunday

8:30 and 11 AM - Worship Services

Easter Brunch

9:45 AM - Between Services

AN ANNIVERSARY, AN ELECTION AND A MESSAGE

The 68th Regular LCMS Convention is coming this summer



Delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod prepares to hold its 68th regular convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from July 29th to August 3rd. This convention will be marked by three key matters:

- 1) The convention will complete the celebration of the Synod's 175th anniversary. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was founded on April 26, 1847, in St. Louis by representatives of fourteen Lutheran congregations. Various observances are scheduled for the convention, including a curated student art show in the main hall of the convention center.
- 2) A president, first vice-president and regional vice-presidents will be elected during the convention. The nomination process is beginning for these

offices, and details regarding congregational participation is being distributed.

- 3) The convention theme will be "We Preach Christ Crucified," based on 1 Cor. 1:18–25. In a recent Synodwide email, LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison wrote, "In a world of uncertainty, the church's proclamation, her mission, her identity remains the same. We preach Christ crucified."

Our own Pastor Brooks was elected by the congregations of our circuit to represent us at the upcoming convention. He will be in attendance with other delegates to discern the will of our Lord for our Synod as we look with hope and joy to the future!

The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod and the Man in the Leather Jacket

The man in the leather jacket is C.F.W. Walther, a seminary professor and pastor ordained in Germany. He was president of the *German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States* when it was founded in 1847. One hundred years later, on the occasion of its 100th Anniversary, the present name of *The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)* was adopted.

Walther was part of the Saxon immigration that took place in 1838, seeking freedom to practice and follow confessional Lutheranism.¹ This 27-year old pastor was the group's leader when they

settled in Perry County, Missouri. He served as pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in St Louis for 46 years, after which he became the first president of the LC-MS.

Under Walther, the LC-MS grew rapidly through an active educational and evangelistic program. Church members frequently met newly-arrived German immigrants at port cities and guided them into congregations.

There were 14 Congregations who signed the body's constitution on April 26, 1847 at Saint Paul Lutheran Church in Chicago, IL. Today there are approximately



¹Confessional Lutheranism (and confessional Lutherans) are distinct in the Protestant world because such Christians would say the contents of the *Book of Concord* (which contains the Ecumenical Creeds, the core writings of Dr. Martin Luther, and the essential confessions of the Lutheran Reformers) are trustworthy because they agree with the Scriptures, rather than simply being useful writings that could be ignored.

6000 congregations and **close to 9000 pastors.**

Have you ever explored the LCMS website (lcms.org)? There are a lot of resources there including: “Life Together as Synod”. These short videos take a look at LCMS history; the church’s structure and governing documents; its boards, entities and institutions; how a rostered worker is called; and everything in between. Whether you are a new Lutheran or a church

worker with years of experience, you will learn something new about your Synod through this resource.

Plan to travel and looking for an LCMS church at your destination? Click on “Locators” in the upper right section of the home page. This feature will help you find: churches, schools, workers, District Offices, Universities, Campus Ministries, International Schools and Partner Churches.



Anecdotes from the Archives

As some of you may know, I have been working in the Archive room digitizing the Parish Ministry Counsel meeting minutes. While doing this I have come across some interesting facts about the history of Grace Lutheran Church. For instance:

Did You Know:

That the beginnings of what is now known as Grace Lutheran Church was started in a house belonging to the J.J. Appel family, located at 2606 Englewood Ave. This was in 1937. There were 6 families that met at this location for years, the J.J. Appels, Mr. John Barringer, Mr. & Mrs. A. W. Holler, Mr. & Mrs. Howard Davis, Mrs. Helen Roll and Mrs. Florence Grossman.

In the late 1960s and 1970s there were lengthy discussions and meetings about

possibly relocating Grace, which took years, and it was decided that Grace would stay at the corner of Buchanan and Green Street. What may have been the tipping point was a donation of property and a lot from a neighbor, Mrs. Kathryn Lindsay. This property was located at 906 Buchanan, which is now our current parking lot. An excellent example of God's answer to prayers. Her donation was accepted and the motion to relocate was rescinded.

Then when Pastor D. Paul Nelson (1971-1990) became Grace's pastor, a second service was added and the Wednesday evening education program began.

See more “Anecdotes from the Archives” in future publications of GPS magazine.

Gracefully submitted by Judy Barnes
1/30/2023



The Journey to SED Lay Deacon Certification

The journey began several summers ago when Dan Heuser, who then was lay deacon of education, and I attended the SED Summer Conference. The main speaker was Greg Finke, author of Joining Jesus on His Mission. The whole focus of the conference was on equipping us to be everyday missionaries Jesus calls us to be in our vocations. The Holy Spirit did a work on my heart, teaching me the importance of reaching out to unbelievers. As soon as I got home, I scheduled an ice cream social with the five families who live in my “private neighborhood.” We had lived in this neighborhood for 14 years and only knew each other by last names and our contact was an occasional hand wave. Prior to this conference I was perfectly content with these shallow relationships.

Yet more importantly, the journey to lay deacon certification began before I was a twinkle in my parents’ eyes. You see, I am dead without my Lord, Jesus Christ. It is He who gives me life. He “didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb.” (Psalm 139:13 RSV). In my Baptism as an infant, He gave me new life and has sustained that life through faith for 72 years. I was raised in a small country church, faithfully attending a Union Sunday School and Lutheran worship with my extended family every Sunday.

This was a place where I was welcomed and knew I belonged. In my home we said grace at mealtime and for 12 years my daddy “tucked me in” every night with a Bible reading and prayer. When I stayed overnight at my paternal grandparents’ home, I participated in morning devotions before breakfast. I also saw my grandfather kneel in prayer outside his truck every evening when he arrived home in the evenings. Otherwise, there wasn’t any formal “discipleship” training in my home or church.

Jesus provided people in my life who loved me unconditionally to protect me from the damages I suffered from a mother who was impossible to please. God knows I spent my childhood trying to be all that I thought she wanted me to be to make up for “ruining her life.” My maternal grandmother, great aunt, aunt and confirmation pastor were some of those people. It wasn’t so much that these people displayed spiritual disciplines. What mattered most to me is that each one saw me as a person and I felt treasured by them. Being the studious type and loving to learn, I took my 3-year confirmation very seriously. Perhaps this is why my confirmation pastor played an important part in my faith life, affirming me and encouraging me.

The truth I have always known and attribute to a Lutheran worldview is that I am the Lord’s beloved child and He would never leave me. Nothing could separate me from His love. This gave me “freedom,” a sort of license, if you will, to wander from the faith. He continued to pursue me and draw me to Him as I dabbled in different religious experiences and sinful practices. My favorite saying of Luther’s was “Sin Boldly.”

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ~ Galatians 2:20 NIV

When my daughter was confirmation age, I realized how foundational my Lutheran confirmation was to my faith. There was just something lacking in the other denominations and practices I had tried. This is when we found Grace Lutheran Church. At this time in my life, I worked two jobs to

provide materially what I thought my children needed. They were baptized as infants and we prayed a rote prayer at mealtime. As a family we attended church and Sunday School every week and I insisted they complete confirmation. This was the extent of disciple-

ship in our home. I realize now that I had abdicated my parental responsibility for discipling my children to the professionals in the church. Now my children are wandering and lost. I trust Jesus' Baptism promise that they are sealed with the Holy Spirit and He is at work leading them home to Him. As a result of these experiences, I want to use my mistakes and what I have learned in the lay deacon program to walk alongside others in equipping them to disciple their children. Additionally, I have learned the importance of the church community in welcoming the children, "seeing" and affirming who they actually are rather than demanding that they conform to traditional cultural expectations of how children should behave.

You still might be asking, "why did I want to complete the lay deacon certification process?" Since that summer SED conference, I have been led to books and podcasts about discipleship and missional living. And...who did Jesus send to us at Grace Lutheran? Pastor Brooks, from whom I have heard the Missio Dei (the sending message of God) proclaimed every Sunday. After the summer SED conference, I received district communications regularly. In one of those communications there was an announcement about the lay deacon certification course. At this time, I was serving as Lay Minister of Education and thought this training might prove useful in that role. Nerd that I am, I chose to do it with no other goal in mind other than personal growth and chose to pay for it out of pocket. As you can imagine I was drawn to the purpose of the Deacon Training Initiative: "to equip and empower men and women to walk in the footsteps of generations of Lutherans trained for Kingdom service within their congregation and beyond as everyday missionaries in love and service to their neighborhood and community." Do you see Him? Do you see Jesus everywhere, leading me to where I am right now in my life?

Just like my confirmation, I took this course very seriously. It was intense and consumed much of my free time. It was two years of voluminous reading, a weekly paper and projects along with small cohort coaching bi-weekly. But it was oh so worth the sacrifices. Summarizing how I have been transformed by this program is difficult. This quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in *Life Together*, says it well: "Once a man has experienced the mercy of God in his life he will henceforth aspire to only serve." Much of what before had been just head knowledge, the Holy Spirit fired in my heart to now live, to be a true follower of Jesus. Concepts like the theology of the cross and

dying to self for the sake of my brother, sin and unbelief, confession and forgiveness, Jesus is Lord, I now live as real life. As a servant leader at Grace my passion is to equip and coach team (small group) members in the Grace mission, to discover their calling, their identity and authority in Jesus and to grow as missionaries in their vocations. In my personal life, I am called to equip, empower, engage and connect people (believers and unbelievers) to Jesus and show them the way of Grace.

Jesus' call for me to serve as a certified lay deacon at Grace is clear. I am willing, confident and passionate that what I have learned and experienced can assist our Grace community to move forward in our mission and vision. I humbly request your acceptance to serve you as an SED certified lay deacon.

SED lay deacon certification is not a new ministry role. It was new to me and may be new to you. I expect that you have many questions about this role. There will be more information forthcoming and I am always open to discussing it further with groups and/or individuals. You also can check out the program on the SED website:

<http://se.lcms.org/resources/sed-lay-deacon-program/>.

~Bev Hudgins
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- IT ALL STARTED WITH THE FRIEDENS... - AT LEAST IN NORTH CAROLINA

What do the North Carolina counties of Guilford, Rowan and Cabarrus have in common? They are the sites of the five oldest Lutheran churches in this state. Historians write that beginning about 1740 many families moved into the territory along the waters of the Haw River, Reedy Fork, Eno, Alamance, Travis Creek, Beaver Creek and Deep River.

To understand why these areas were settled, you have to go back to European history and review the struggle known as The Thirty Years War. Religious hatred and troubles in a region known as Palatinate caused large numbers of people to flee to America. Their native lands in Europe were destroyed.

Natives of this region poured into Pennsylvania and then to the South. Records show that more than 30,000 males over the age of 16 had come over. From this group came the immigrants to North Carolina.

Between 1670 and 1750 a large number of Lutherans came to North Carolina. They settled mainly in the territories mentioned in this opening paragraph. A Lutheran minister wrote: "The German settlement in Guilford County is 28 miles long and 18 miles wide. Many hundreds of families live here close together." Records also show that in 1771 the German population of Rowan County, Orange County, Mecklenburg County, and Tryon County was probably around 15,000. This included about 10,000 Lutherans.

During these days the churches were generally built through the efforts of the Lutheran and the Reformed people. Such was the case with what we now know as the Friedens church which is located 6 miles South of Gibsonville. The Lutherans and the Reformed people, even though they were joint owners of the church property, conducted their services separately. This church was also known as Brick Church.

During this period of about 70 years both denominations were ministered by the same pastor. Both the Lutheran and Reformed Church spoke German and so did the pastors. The name Friedens come from the German word meaning peace and tranquility

The first English Lutheran preacher in North Carolina was Reverend Robert Johnson Miller, a native of Scotland. He reached the United States in 1774 and came South with General Greene's army during the Revolutionary War. He remained there to preach after peace was declared.

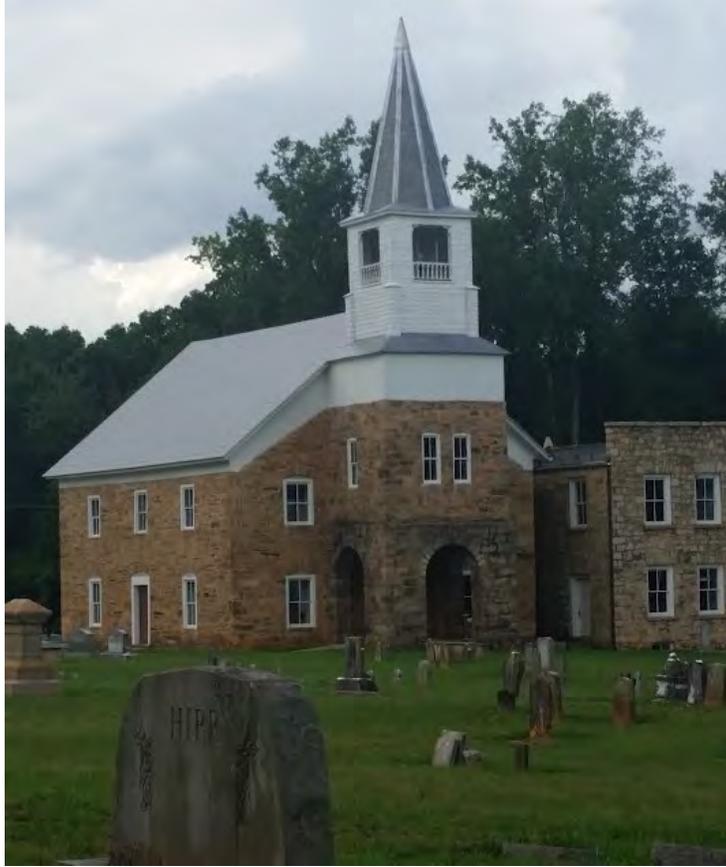
The first ecclesiastical assembly of the Lutheran Church in North Carolina was held in Salisbury in May of 1794. The Reverend R. J. Miller was the first minister ordained by what is now known as the Lutheran Ministerium.

In a copy of the minutes of a Lutheran Virginia conference held in 1806 reference is made to Friedens church. "In that region which lies partly in Orange and partly in Guilford counties there are three Lutheran churches, three Reformed churches, and one joint church named Friedens."

And that is a brief summary of how the Lutheran Church got started in North Carolina.



A smokehouse was built with logs from the original Friedens church, resembling the original church. Read more in an interesting article here: <https://www.wral.com/from-church-to-smokehouse-to-chapel-the-story-of-friedens-little-chapel/19599259/>



Read more about the oldest Lutheran Church in North Carolina here:

https://www.ancestraltrackers.net/nc/rowan/organ-lutheran-church.pdf?bclid=IwAR3h1awqH7X0PdUwT8kA7p0rqE0NO_GzMIN9ToNj4E7xkFhgWLZmWmOToSj



WHAT IS THE SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT (SED)?

The [Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod](#) (LCMS) is organized into 35 **districts**, 33 of which are defined along geographic lines. Each district has a [president](#) who oversees the congregations in his district, which are further subdivided into local [circuits](#). The position of president is roughly analogous to the role of [bishop](#) in many church bodies, but LCMS doctrine supports a generally [congregationalist polity](#)¹ as opposed to an exclusively [hierarchical governance](#)².

Each district chooses its own president from among the [pastors](#) in the district at its triennial convention. In some districts the district president occupies a full-time position, while in others he continues to serve as pastor in a congregation.

The 35 district presidents plus the synod president form the Council of Presidents (COP), one of whose duties is to place graduates from the two [LCMS seminaries](#) as pastors in congregations that have requested such a candidate. If a congregation desires an experienced pastor to fill a vacancy, the district president may suggest a list of possible candidates (gleaned from interactions with the COP as well as other sources), but the district president does not assign pastors in this case; the congregation extends a "call" directly to the pastor.

Grace Lutheran Church is located in the Southeastern District. It was formed between 1938-39 out of the Eastern and English Districts. Included in the SED are



the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Washington, DC, Virginia and Maryland with the exception of Garrett County. It also includes York and Lancaster in the state of Pennsylvania.

This district has 216 congregations, 64 preschools, 21 elementary schools and 3 high schools.. The office is located in Alexandria, VA and its recently-elected President is Rev. Dr. William Harmon.

Rev. Dr. Bill Harmon is a native of Baltimore, MD where he attended Emmanuel Lutheran School and Baltimore Lutheran now Concordia Preparatory School. He then attended Concordia College, New York and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis MO. Harmon earned a Doctor of Ministry degree with an emphasis on leadership, renewal, and coaching from Regent University, in Virginia Beach, VA.

His congregational service includes serving as Associate Pastor in Flat Rock, MI, then in Garden City, NY as the Family and Youth minister at Lutheran Church of the Resurrection.

In 2002, Pastor Harmon accepted the call to serve as lead pastor at the Lutheran Church of the Resurrection in Garden City, NY. In 2008 he accepted the call to serve as Executive Director and senior pastor at King of Glory in Williamsburg, Virginia.

In May of 2022, Pastor Harmon was elected President of the Southeastern District LCMS. His focus as president is: Immeasurably more. "We place our hope, our trust and our present and our future in a God who is able to do immeasurably more than we could ever imagine or think." Ephesians 3:20-21

Harmon has served on various boards within the church the community. He has served as a circuit visitor, a district vice president, and a presenter at various conferences including the National Youth Gathering LCMS. He and his wife Gayle, who serves as a teacher in the public school system, have been married for 28 years and have three adult sons.

¹System of governance in which every local church is independent or autonomous. ²A structure of governance that ranks leaders into various levels of authority.



GO & MAKE **Update**

We are beginning to take action on some projects mentioned in the Go & Make Campaign booklet. Specifically they are:

Sanctuary Lighting: The original quote to improve the sanctuary lighting is a few years old. We are in the process of obtaining two new quotes. The Properties & Facilities team is anxious to see what options there might be.

Youth Room (former Library): On January 29th, several families met to form a PALS group for families. After the late service on the 3rd Sunday of the month, they will gather for lunch and fellowship. Also on that Sunday, these families will attend the late service. When the Gospel lesson has been proclaimed the children will head to Fellowship Hall. The ultimate goal, however, is to be able to usher these children to a newly renovated kid friendly room. Before this takes place, there is work to be done:

Walls: Remove wallpaper and add sheetrock to where bookcases were and prep for painting.

Floor: Scott and Donna are researching which type of flooring will look good, be durable, and withstand any possible flooding.

Wittenberg Room: The vision for this room is to transform it into a place for members and the Duke Lutherans to gather. Some renovations being considered:

Floor: (see above).

Walls: A portion of the wall is damp; the paint is peeling off. This must be addressed before painting the walls again. Two companies will be coming to look at the wall to assess the situation.

Equipment: An attempt will be made to sell the slide and climbing equipment.

Pews: Will be removed temporarily while renovations are taking place. A few might be offered for sale in the future.

Thanks to the Resource Team for starting to make the vision cast in Go & Make a reality!

Thank you for your capital campaign contributions that will help make the vision cast in Go & Make a reality!

THANK YOU!!



Grace Notes is a publication of
Grace Lutheran Church.

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The Rev. Dr. David H. Brooks

Assistant to the Pastor:
Rev. Richard Kuehn



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PALS Group Coordinators

Altar Guild: Donna Gesell, Amy
Robertson, Dede Crosmer
Book Club: Donna Gesell
Choir: Jenna Young
Duke Lutherans: John Kolba, Geoff
Heintzelman
Embrace Grace: Chris Wethman,
Amy Gesell
Families with Children: TBD
Games Group: Geoff Heintzelman
Grace Golfers: Joe Wethman
Growing thru Grief: Joyce Rea,
Kathy Pittman, Vivian Harris
Home-Centered PALS Facilitation:
Barb Tippin
LWML/Quilters: Sharon Kay,
Kathy Pittman
Racial Reconciliation: Dan & Jane
Heuser
Stephen Ministry: Joyce Rea,
Joe Wethman
Sunday Morning Discussion Group:
Geoff Heintzelman
Sunday School (Children):
Donna Walston
Walltown Ministry: Joe Wethman,
Elmo Walston

Mission Statement: We are called to *Welcome Everyone to Walk the Way of GRACE*, and walk in that way in our individual lives, in our shared life in our various communities, in our common life with our neighbors, and even to the world at large as God sends us. The *Way of Grace* is to: **GROW** with Jesus, **REJOICE** in God, **ANSWER** with hope, **CARE** for the neighbor, and **EMBRACE** community.

Vision Statement: God has a plan **FOR OUR LIVES**, and so we teach how to walk in the path of Jesus Christ; **FOR OUR NEIGHBORHOODS**, and so we work to build healthy and strong communities; **FOR OUR CITY**, and so we share life with our neighbors in Walltown, Trinity Park, Duke, and the Triangle; and **FOR OUR WORLD**, and so we go with Good News.

Core Values: Because God loves us first, we value worship rooted in Scripture and Sacrament, service to all people, and being a welcoming community that loves and forgives one another.