

LOVING GOD...

CHANGING LIVES

Oak Leaves



A Publication of Oak Grove Presbyterian Church

Bloomington, Minnesota

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Dear Friends:

Recently a life-long Oak Grove member of retirement age shared her worries about membership with me. "We used to be 1500 members. So many of our members are older. I'm worried about our survival."

This is a subject to which I have given some thought and let me share with you my response to that concern. But before I do that, let's look at that figure of 1500 members from 25 years ago. Recently, someone who was on the session at that time said to me, "Well, 300 of those 1500 were dead." What he meant was that, in his opinion, the membership rolls weren't up to date at that time. That was news to me and now there is no easy way to tell if this was true or not. I do know that over the last couple years the Deacons' membership committee has worked hard to clean up the rolls and we think our figures are pretty accurate--526 members as of this date.

But clearly Oak Grove was once more than double the size we are today. Of course, most mainline congregations were much larger 25 years ago than they are today. But for those of you newcomers, what happened at Oak Grove? The congregation went through a typical, very regrettable church fight in the late 1980s and hundreds of people left at that time. A smaller number left about a dozen years ago over the issue of remodeling the building, always a controversial topic in a congregation. And membership showed a slow decline over the next decade as more members died than joined in that time.

Now, what was my response to this worried parishioner?

First, congregations have lifespans, just like people. Churches are born and at some point they have served their purpose and they die. Yes, we had 1500 members 25 years ago, but for most of our history we had fewer than 500 members.

Second, I'm not entirely successful at this, but I try not to worry about numbers. Institutional survival is not a goal worthy of the church of Jesus Christ.

Third, instead of worrying about numbers, let us focus on faithfulness. Why are we here? Fifty years ago our identity was as "the Presbyterian congregation in Bloomington." Today, not many people care about what denomination, if any, their church is. In this climate each congregation needs to ask itself, "Why does God need us? What are we doing today that few or no others are providing in our community?" My answer to those questions is found in several areas:

Our mission and social justice emphasis

You know the record: From the Pond Brothers bringing the story of Jesus to Native Americans to Oak Grovers ministering to people in the Japanese internment camp along the Minnesota River during WWII, from VEAP to Cornerstone to Homework Connection, from building a home for the elderly in South Africa to hosting Oasis, to building a school for girls in Pakistan, and on and on.

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Deadline for the March 2012 Oak Leaves is - February 15 - Articles may be edited for space and/or content.

February
2012

OAK LEAVES

Editor Beth Angerhofer
Editor-in-Chief Bill Chadwick

Oak Leaves is a monthly publication of:

OAK GROVE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
2200 W. Old Shakopee Road
Bloomington, MN 55431

Phone Fax

(952) 888-4621 (952) 888-2523

E-mail: ogpc@oakgrv.org

Website: www.oakgrv.org

Office Hours

Monday—Friday
8:30 am—5:00 pm

Oak Grove Staff

Ministers: **the 526 members**

Pastor **Bill Chadwick**
bcadwick@oakgrv.org

Interim Assoc. Pastor
Beth Hart-Andersen
bhart-andersen@oakgrv.org

Adjunct Pastor
Denise Dunbar-Perkins
chaplain0406@gmail.com

Director of Christian Education:

Mary Koon
mkoon@oakgrv.org

Office Administrator:
Beth Angerhofer
bangerhofer@oakgrv.org

Financial Secretary:
Dawn Acker
dacker@oakgrv.org

Youth Director:
Jake Van Pernis
jvanpernis@oakgrv.org

Technology Coordinator:
Penny Nesbitt
pnesbitt@oakgrv.org

Director of Music:
Judy Cooper
jcooper@oakgrv.org

Organist: **Nancy Hauser**

Kitchen Coordinator/Cook:
Lori Ericksen

Treasurer: **Jack Kley**
treasurer@oakgrv.org

Clerk of Session: **Connie Nesbitt**
clerkofsession@oakgrv.org

Child Care Provider: **Karen Hill**
Part-time Custodian: **Tim Dubis**
Custodian Emeritus: **Bill Broers**

2012 Per Capita is \$31.63

Oak Rovers — save the date

Save the date February 15 for a trip to Old Log Theater for lunch and performance of "Everyone Loves Opal." Call Rich Miller at 952-835-4729 with questions.

Intergenerational Weekend Retreat at Clearwater Forest Save the Date: March 2—4

We welcome individuals, couples and families of all forms to this event.

Activities will include outdoor recreation-cross country skiing, sledding, snowshoeing, hiking, etc. Indoor activities-cards, games, puzzles, reading, resting, eating, etc. **Scholarships are available.**

Cost: \$58 per room per night + \$15 per person for food (\$8/child)

Final costs will depend on the size of our group

Example: fee per couple - \$116 (2 nights/room) + \$30 (food)

Contact Larry Pearson (952-835-9480 or pear3408@aol.com) with questions.

Quilting for Charity

If you are interested in joining a quilt-for-charity group at Oak Grove, call Judy Harder at 952-890-3952 or Pam Williams at 952-881-1556.



Save the Date-Project Homeless Connect

submitted by Ron Dubis

Project Homeless Connect is a one-stop shop model for delivering services to people experiencing homelessness. Twice each year, Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis partner with service providers, businesses, citizens, and faith congregations to bring multiple resources to one central location where people can come to access the services they need. Six Oak Grovers volunteered for the December event. Mark your calendars now for Monday, May 14th and be part of the effort to end homelessness in Minnesota. For more information go to

<http://www.homelessconnectminneapolis.org>.

Twins Outing — Save the Date: Sunday, June 10, 2012

It's winter, but spring training and a better Twins season (after all it can't get much worse!) is not far behind. Sunday June 10, 2012, is the date for the annual Oak Grove Twins outing. It will be an interleague game vs. the Chicago Cubs, and the seats are in section 239, rows 3-8. We have 70 seats reserved, so ski, skate, and enjoy the snow but think baseball! Contact Ron Dubis (rojiti@aol.com or 952-887-6852 with questions.

Session highlights from December 2011 meeting

- Session approved the 2012 budget
- Encouraged committees to eliminate meetings during Lent to focus on attending the Wednesday worship services at 6:30 pm

Connie Nesbitt, Clerk

THE DEACONS' BENCH

This month we are highlighting the service of providing medical assistance equipment when a need arises. We are pleased to offer this service to our congregation. Our inventory currently includes a wheel chair, crutches, canes, walkers (standard and four-wheelers with seats), stabilizing boots, bathroom chairs and a large shower chair. For information and/or to request equipment usage, contact the church office (952-888-4621) or Marikay Wolf (952-881-2615).

We accept donations of equipment that may benefit others in need. Donated items must be in good condition. We could use an additional portable wheel chair and tub rails. Donations can be brought to the church during normal business hours.

Your Board of Deacons

Help Needed as Oak Grove Hosts the

March 2012 Presbytery Meeting

Oak Grove will be host to the Presbytery meeting on Saturday, March 10th. Help is needed in many areas. There will be setup to do before the date. We also need greeters and ticket takers, help with meal prep, and clean-up. More specifics will follow in Sunday blue sheets and info in the narthex. If you are willing to help, contact Ron Dubis at 887-6852 or rojiti@aol.com. This is a great way to have fun while sharing your working talents with your fellow Oak Grove members!

**WORSHIP FOR:
FEBRUARY 5—26**

***Sunday Morning
SERVICES AT
8:15 am & 10:45 am***



FEBRUARY 5

5th Sunday after Epiphany
Sermon by
Beth Hart-Andersen

FEBRUARY 12

6th Sunday after Epiphany
Sermon by
Bill Chadwick

FEBRUARY 19

Transfiguration of the Lord
Sermon by
Mary Pol

FEBRUARY 22

Ash Wednesday
Service at 7:00 pm
Sermon by
Beth Hart-Andersen

FEBRUARY 26

1st Sunday in Lent
Sermon by
Bill Chadwick

• Social Justice Meeting

• Please join us the first Thursday evening of each month at 7:00 pm. Our focus is on two issues — LGBT equality and immigration. We need you on February 2, 2012.

Peace, Your friendly Social Justice Committee

Recent Kiva Donations from the Mission Committee

In December 2011, we gained \$245 in Kiva donations at the Heifer Marketplace. Also, the Senegal group (from a previous Kiva loan) had repaid \$130 of their loan. So we had a total of \$375 to donate. We found a business in Pakistan, Nasreen's Group, so we loaned them \$375. Their story:

Nasreen has applied for a loan from Kiva partner Asasah for further improvement of her husband's animal sales business. With the loan, he will buy goats and sheep in larger quantities. He will raise them and will sell them at a profit to local butchers. He also has a buffalo and earns additional income for the family by selling its milk. Nasreen is a seamstress and sews clothes for her neighboring clients for profit. She is very skillful and receives regular orders every month. In her spare time, she provides support to her husband in his livestock business. She provides the animals with food and cleans their living space. She has given birth to seven children. One of them is enrolled in school and two are working to contribute to the family financially. Nasreen has a lot of confidence in her husband and his business, and she is certain that after this loan investment, her husband's business will grow and enable her family to improve their standard of living.

Later in December 2011, we gained an additional \$375 in repaid loan monies from the Senegal group, which is now 100% repaid. So we had a total of \$375 to donate. We found a farmer in Uganda - Pascal Mugabi - who needed only \$275 to top off that loan, so we loaned the \$275. His story:

Pascal, 48, has been farming for close to 20 years. He plies his trade in Mpigi. The widower and father of eight grows and sells cash crops, such as coffee, sugarcane, maize, and bananas. He supplements his income by raising pigs. What explains his longevity in this business? Pascal says it's through purposefulness and hard work that he has managed to keep his business afloat. In addition, the crops he grows sell well, which helps to explain his long tenure in the business. Though he has made great progress, Pascal is still hell-bent on greater success. His determination will come in handy. In the near future, he hopes to expand his pig husbandry business. Pascal intends to use his Kiva loan to purchase high-grade manure to apply to his crops.

And lastly, also in December 2011, we still had \$100 of repaid loan monies from the Senegal group. We found a farmer in the Philippines - Elizalde Cainguitan - who was the recipient of a \$100 loan. His story:

An industrious man, 41-year-old Elizalde has been a farmer for five years. Although it is a difficult occupation, Elizalde has worked persistently to continue to improve it. Now requesting a loan of P25,000 to buy fertilizers and corn seeds and to pay for labor costs, he wants his crops to grow well in order to surpass his profit of P15,000 last cropping season. The father of five children, Elizalde needs to work hard to grow enough crops for his family. Hopefully, through his perseverance and patience, he will lift his family out of poverty.

Schools for Peace Updates*submitted by Greg Johnson*

An anonymous donor has offered a Schools for Peace challenge to Oak Grove. Any amount we raise, as a congregation, up to \$10,000, by the end of March 2013, will be matched by the donor. Thanks to the anonymous donor, and thanks to all supportive participants!!

On March 25, Veeda Javaid, Executive Director of PEB (Presbyterian Education Board), will be back at Oak Grove to preach and to lead an Adult Education talk.

Chadwick cont'd from p 1

Our warm welcome and inclusivity.

- While we have a lonnnng ways to go, yet to my knowledge we are today the most racially diverse Protestant congregation in Bloomington. People from six different countries joined Oak Grove in 2011.
- Very few congregations in our area provide a true welcome to LGBT folks.

Our music program. 'Nuff said.

Our willingness to wrestle with tough questions and avoid easy answers.

God has work for us to do today! Let us concentrate on that and not worry about tomorrow. Jim Lichtenberger's memorial service bulletin had this quotation on the back: "Life's journey is not to arrive at the grave safely, in a well-preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, totally worn out, shouting, 'Holy cow! ... What a ride!'" I think that attitude is appropriate for congregations as well. I'm more concerned about discipleship than membership.

Fourth, the high number of older people in our congregation is not a negative; it's a wonderful asset!

They/you bring wisdom, time and financial resources. Many of our older folks are still roaring with energy and serve so very actively and well in every facet of the congregation. We would be HUGELY diminished without the chronologically gifted folks!

Fifth, 500 members is huge compared to the typical Protestant church of the 21st century (well under 200 members). Most of my clergy friends are envious of the size and vigor of Oak Grove. We have 250-300 people in worship each week, hundreds of folks in vital ministries, a beautiful mortgage-free building, some money in the bank and a terrific staff. This remains a strong congregation looked to for leadership by the presbytery and by other congregations in the community.

Sixth, I think we are a nice size. I like to say we are small enough to have a family feeling, but large enough to accomplish a lot of exciting things and offer a wide range of opportunities to people.

Seventh, perhaps we have turned the corner on membership loss. We have showed a small net increase in actual membership each of the past three years. (In 2010 we discovered and corrected some long-standing bookkeeping errors that previously showed us with a membership figure 70 higher than we actually had names of real people on our membership list, so we showed a statistical loss for the year. But in fact, we had more real people on our membership rolls in 2010 than in 2009.) *(is this correct, Beth?)*

Eighth, I am so grateful for each and every one of you.

Please mark your calendars for these upcoming events:

February 10th, 6 pm **Family Fun Night:** Come in from the cold and enjoy a night of food and fun with your family right here at Oak Grove.

Sunday, February 19th **Intergenerational Class:** Protecting Our Planet. Children and adults will share time together in Gideon Pond Hall doing "hands-on" projects and learning about the earth.

March 11th **Open House in Sunday School:** the congregation is invited to come and see what goes on in God's Kingdom. Snacks will be provided!

Adult Education Opportunities
Sunday Mornings

Feb. 5 Oasis Update Join the team from Oasis for Youth on a tour of the Oasis area downstairs, and learn about the great things that are happening in this important ministry right here at Oak Grove.

February 12, 26th and March 11th: Rich Miller and Bill Chadwick will introduce us to the theology of Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong, a contemporary theologian of progressive Christianity. His book titles include *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*, and *Jesus for the Non-Religious*. Spong's ideas are both compelling and controversial. These sessions will lead to lively discussion.

Feb. 19 Intergenerational Sunday in Gideon Pond Hall "Taking Care of God's Creation" All ages will gather to participate in hands-on learning about our earth and how we can be faithful stewards of God's beautiful creation.

Wednesday Evenings

Feb. 1, 8, and 15 Rev. Mary Pol will lead us in a discussion of the lectionary scripture readings which will form the basis for the following Sunday's sermon.

Feb. 22 Ash Wednesday Service

Feb. 29 Taize type meditation

Fellowship Committee Members Needed

The fellowship committee is back! If you are interested in helping plan activities to help bring Oak Grovers together, we want you. Some events will be just for fun, others may have a more meaningful impact. If you want to be part of this, contact Ron Dubis @887-6852 or rojiti@aol.com.

Invite a friend Sunday

Submitted by Sandy Crum

Once again, we invite you to invite a friend to church on Sunday, March 18 to learn about and share in the wonderful worship at Oak Grove. We have found that the best way to spread the word about Oak Grove is through personal contact. Please help us to grow!

P.S. You can invite multiple friends that Sunday...one, two or more! (On ANY Sunday!)



Presbyterian Women News

submitted by Mary Jones

CIRCLE NEWS – Evening Star Circle meets Tuesday, February 2 at 7:00 p.m. at church. Call Mary Jones, 952-831-7655. Goodrich-Nord Circle meets Wednesday, February 8, at 9:15 am at church. Ruth Circle meets Thursday, February 9, at 9:15 am at Gideon Pond Activity Room. Call Ethel Furuli, 952-844-0435.

Financials

submitted by Jack Kley

| Through Dec 31st | 2011 | | Act vs Budg | 2010 |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| | Actuals | Budget | Fav/(Unfav) | Actuals |
| Income YTD | \$635,990 | \$626,000 | \$9,990 | \$626,384 |
| Expense YTD | \$654,760 | \$668,891 | \$14,131 | \$625,865 |
| Income – Expenses | (\$18,770) | (\$42,891) | \$24,121 | \$519 |

We had a good December. Our income for the year came in ahead of budget and our spending was below the plan, resulting in a significant positive comparison to the 2011 budget. See the Annual Report for more details. Thanks to all. We have an ambitious program for the New Year. Let's get off to a good start - - - remember the Per Capita for 2012 is \$31.63

Steve St. Martin to Share Childhood Stories at Pond House

"I Grew Up in the Pond House"

Sunday, February 19, 2 pm

Gideon and Agnes Pond's great grandson, Steve St. Martin, lived on the Pond family farm for 21 years. Hear him tell the stories about Gideon and Agnes that have been passed down for generations, as well as his own touching and hilarious stories of growing up as a Pond. Suggested donation \$2; youth through high school and Pond Dakota Heritage Society members are free.

2011
Women's
Retreat



Stewardship Corner ...*submitted by Sharon Solomon*

Included in this month's Oak Leaves is a survey from the Stewardship committee to gauge last year's campaign and learn how we might better communicate with you. Please take a few minutes to complete it and return it, either to the church office or in the offering basket, by February 14. If you wish to complete this form electronically, it is available on the Oak Grove website or Facebook page. Thanks for your input.

The ministry and mission of Oak Grove is love God and care for God's people. The Stewardship Committee is responsible for interpreting the call to participate in this endeavor not just during a pledge campaign but throughout the year. Stewardship is about helping shape the legacy of Oak Grove – will be known as the church that helps our community and beyond? Please consider joining the Stewardship committee. We meet the 2nd Tuesday of most months at 5:30 pm. If you're interested, please leave your name and phone number with the church office (bangerhofer@oakgrv.org or 952-888-4621) or call Sharon Solomon (952-892-1563).

Legacy Gift Giving made the easy way*submitted by Al Netten*

Would you like to include a gift to Oak Grove through your will? You don't have to revise your entire will. You can simply use a document called the **codicil**. A Codicil is a simple one page amendment to your Last Will and Testament. You can use it to easily change one or two items in your will without incurring the expense of revising your entire will. A Codicil will meet the same formal requirements as a will: it must be in writing, be signed by the person making the will, be signed by two witnesses and notarized. It's that simple. If you are interested in including Oak Grove in your Legacy Gift Giving through the use of a codicil, please feel free to contact Jim Dutcher 952-996-0509 or Mark Pridgeon 952- 829-5586.

February Birthdays

(If you don't see your birthday, we don't have that information or you requested that it not appear.) *Important birthday ** Significant birthday

- 1 *Katherine Jacobson (10 yrs old)
- 2 *Brendan Hobbs (14 yr old)
- 3 *Kai Coogle (8 yr old)
- 4 *Karin Bull (18 yr old); Jim McCarl
- 5 *Shannon Fay (8 yr old)
- 6 Sharon Nolte; Rick Schuette
- 8 Michael Glausser; Mary Pond; Mark Rysavy
- 10 Pat Boehne; Sue Greimel
- 11 Katie Johnson; **Audrey St. Martin (88 yr young)
- 14 *Michael Bliss (18 yr old); Jen Henriksen; *Emma Lang (6 yr old)
- 15 *Alta Alonzi (19 yr old); Yvonne Smith; Janice Wright
- 16 Sharron Meier; **Georgia West (90 yr young)
- 17 *Douglas Duvall (13 yr old)
- 18 Jeanne Castle; **Dallas Lindblom (88 yr young)
- 19 Bev Heise; Sandra Sunde
- 20 **Betty Johnson (90 yr young); **Hilda Pridgeon (86 yr young)
- 21 Annalisa Pearson
- 22 Cal Chadwick
- 24 Stephen Jones; *Madilyn Rae Michael (3 yr old)
- 25 Jeri Anderson; Steve Lang; Penny Nesbitt; Lisa Stanford
- 26 Jennifer Marrone
- 28 Lois Burnes; Nancy Hoaglund

**Know Someone****Who is Hospitalized?**

Please note that because of government privacy laws, hospitals and care centers no longer are allowed to notify churches that a person has been admitted (even if the person lists his/her home church at admission). So the only way that the church staff will know if someone is hospitalized is if a family member or friend lets us know. (And we'd rather get 20 calls about the same person than none.) Thanks for your help!



Our whole family appreciates the out-pouring of cards, visits and prayers during Jim's short illness. Needless to say, we miss him terribly and are doing our best to keep on an even keel. The support of friends and family is a big help. Gratefully, Jan Lichtenberger and family.

Thank you SO much to everyone for their help, support, and prayers over the past six months. We can't thank you enough! Emma is thriving at home and we're looking forward to the day that we can introduce her to our Oak Grove family.

James, Becca, Madilyn, and Emma Michael

The PC-(USA) wants to thank the members of Oak Grove for their generous contributions to the Christmas Joy Offering (totaling \$2352.50).

We appreciated the opportunity to have Lillian Johnson's funeral at Oak Grove. Lillian had been a member of Oak Grove for over 60 years and we would like to extend an invitation to all members who knew Lillian to visit her Guest Book at Legacy.com. Go to www.legacy.com; click on the obituaries & guest book tab; type Lillian Johnson. The state is MN and the time is Past 6 months.

The Lillian Johnson Family

A big thank you from Children's Ministry to: Don Dunham for making wooden figures for Children's Church; to Milissa Carter for supplying washable cups and bowls for a snack for the children between Sunday School and Church; to all parents who have supplied snacks for the children during that in-between time; to the Glusser family for providing books for our Children's Library. *Mary Koon*

Condolences to the families of:

Colin Callister, Pat Boehne's brother, died December 23 in Cannon Falls.

Maggie Elliott, Micky Decknatel's niece, died December 26.

Jim Lichtenberger, Oak Grove member, died December 26. Memorial service was at Oak Grove on December 29.

Tuftsie, Mary Koon's Uncle Dick's wife, died in December.

Alex Wilson, Oak Grove member, died December 31. Memorial service was at Oak Grove on January 5.

Ardella Frank, member, died January 4. Her service was at Oak Grove on January 8.

Michael Gillies, brother of Marc and Jill (Noble) Gillies, died suddenly on January 8.

Jean Anderson, member, died January 14 at the age of 90. Her service was at Oak Grove on January 20.



It is difficult to describe how thankful and blessed we feel with the improvement of Tom's vision in the past month. We thank all of you from the bottoms of our hearts for the thoughts and prayers for Tom and our family. His eyesight continues to improve each day.

Also, thank you for remembering and praying for the family of the young man who made the corneal transplant possible. Please continue to keep them in your prayers.

With love, Nancy and Tom Christianson (Jack Kley's daughter and son-in-law)



A Publication of:

OAK GROVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

2200 W. Old Shakopee Rd.
Bloomington, MN 55431

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PERMIT NO. 90-191

Phone: 952-888-4621
Fax: 952-888-2523
Email: ogpc@oakgrv.org



Choir Spring Concert

Friday, May 18th at 7:00 pm

Please come to hear our choir join with the choir from our neighboring church, St. Luke's Lutheran. Each choir will sing a couple solo anthems and then join together for a few anthems.

The concert will conclude with a powerful piece, **Gloria**, by John Rutter. We've already begun working on this challenging and inspiring choral work. Brass, timpani and organ accompany this piece.

Please mark Friday, May 18th, 7:00, on your calendar. The concert will be performed here at Oak Grove.

If you missed our first guitar group rehearsal, you have another chance to join us. We'll rehearse on Saturday, Feb. 18th at 10:00 in our sanctuary. We're planning to play in worship on Sunday, March 4th. The songs we are playing use simple chords (D, A, G, C, Em, Am).

Contact Judy Cooper (jcooper@oakgrv.org or 952-835-3783) with questions.

submitted by Judy Cooper