

Listening With Grace, Fall 2016

Grace University Lutheran Church

Grace University Lutheran Church is at an exciting juncture in its history in the fall of 2016. Having grown in members and staff over the past few years and just recently completed the sale of our church parking lot, we decided to once again go directly to Grace members and **listen**. Listen... to create new and deepened relationships and listen... to members' hopes, fears, dreams and desires as a church community. Who are we and what are we called to do and be at this time and in this place? What we heard was inspiring, challenging, heartfelt and informative.

Sixty listeners completed over 220 intentional listening sessions. Listeners consistently shared how powerful and moving the experience of deep listening was for them, and how much they experienced Grace to be an interwoven community. While it's nearly impossible to include all that was shared and heard in these conversations, what follows is our humble attempt to summarize and synthesize. We organized the content of the conversations around four unifying themes that emerged repeatedly in these conversations: fostering community, working for social justice, exploring and nurturing spirituality, and embracing beauty and joy.

Fostering community

We are people who:

- Believe that belonging to a faith-based community is incredibly valuable
- Value open-minded and open-hearted hospitality to all
- Journey together across the lifespan
- Nurture intergenerational relationships

So we want to:

- Welcome growth in our congregation
- Maintain a "small congregation feel" in our relationships with one another
- Engage children and youth actively in our worship and church life
- Seek opportunities to support and nurture each other through all of life's transitions
- Build on the strong partnership we have with Lutheran Campus Ministry
- Consider expanding our building to widen our welcome
- Ensure that our building and garden remain open and welcoming to all

Working for social justice

We are a people who:

- Care deeply about social justice issues of the day
- Seek greater knowledge about and insight into justice issues
- See our faith as a call to action

So we want to:

- Work for racial and economic equity
- Help people in need, addressing issues of homelessness and poverty

- Provide support and advocacy for refugees and immigrants searching for a better life
- Engage with Muslim and other faith communities in our city
- Practice being good stewards of the environment
- Advocate for adequate health care for all

Exploring and nurturing spirituality

We are people who:

- Respect and welcome all people on their individual faith journeys
- Practice and appreciate ritual in worship and daily life
- Seek healing for individuals and communities, in body, mind and spirit

So we want to:

- Practice living and acting out our faith in our daily lives
- Explore our individual and collective Christian identity
- Be a brave and welcoming community where we can ask and explore together life's most profound questions
- Care for one another, physically, spiritually and emotionally

Embracing beauty and joy

We are a people who:

- Appreciate and support the arts
- Find joy and inspiration in music
- Value creative expression in all its forms
- Seek both inspiration and challenge in our worship

So we want to:

- Invite and encourage all members to share their artistic gifts
- Strongly support our leaders in creative worship and music
- Provide opportunities for members of all ages to participate in the creative arts at Grace
- Listen and respond to prophetic voices from our leaders, encouraging and inspiring us to engage actively in the radical call of the Gospel