



CROSS OF GRACE NEWS

September/October 2023



Looking Back on Nadia and Looking to the Future!

I do not know about you, but for me I find it hard to believe that we are talking about Pr. Nadia Bolz-Weber in the past tense! It is hard for me to believe that we not only were able to successfully put on an event where we sold over 500 tickets and saw hundreds of people travel from all over West Virginia, and even from out of state to see Pr. Nadia speak in person. We did this as a very small church, one that had never done anything quite like this before - and thanks be to God (and an incredible amount of hard work) it was a great success! Now that we have had some time to recover after Sept. 8th and 9th, I think it is time for us to take pause and celebrate the great success of our endeavor and to reflect on the impact it has had on our community, as well as the work that we are called to do next.

On September 8 and 9 we hosted Pr. Nadia at WV State University, and we had well over 400 folks in attendance. Our crowd included a large number of clergy from several denominations (Lutheran, Episcopal, United Methodist, Presbyterian, and many more), but more impressive was seeing the number of friends and acquaintances that attended that currently do not worship ANYWHERE.

When was the last time the church had an activity that drew incredible numbers of non-church folks? In the more evangelical tradition, there is an emphasis on revival, on reigniting our own faith for God on a constant basis, but for me these revivals have always left me wanting. Like this is a great place to start, but there is so much more to this beautiful thing called faith than just feeling conviction, going forward, and praying a prayer.

Usually when revival is referenced, it is with the hope of getting boatloads of non-Christians to come, feel convicted, and then join the community of faith, the church. From the outset, we have named that we know that this will likely not bring anyone new to Cross of Grace directly - while many of us may secretly have this hope, we have named from the outset that we were called to bring Pr. Nadia not as some quick church growth tool, but to instead faithfully say yes to God and welcome a perspective that has not been a common one in the greater discussion of faith in and around WV.

In all the years I've attended revivals, I have always longed for more, that was until Pr. Nadia came, and quite honestly, she preached the best revival I have ever seen. Now was it a revival in the traditional sense, BY NO MEANS, but I think it was a revival at its core. While most "talks" or "speeches" from pastors and theologians include scripture, usually a talk or speech goes light on the scripture and draws heavily on other sources like great thinkers and stories. With Pr. Nadia, she preached directly from scripture and spent a rather large portion of the time reading and reflecting on God's word. This reflection, on the central belief of Christian forgiveness, drew incredibly heavily on scripture, and yet Pr. Nadia did not thump her Bible or scare away non-Christians.

Instead, she engaged scripture in a way that breathed life into it and made it so very relevant to our lives here and now. She spoke in a way that our world does NOT speak, and offered forgiveness and hope to everyone who heard her, and this definitely included a large number of non-Christians. THIS is how we are called to share the good news. Not to force it upon anyone or guilt them into attending worship, but instead to share the story of what God has done for us, **each of us personally as well as communally**, and offer that life giving promise to anyone and everyone!

Now, that being said, where do we as Cross of Grace go from here? I can honestly say that I have no idea what is next other than we dutifully continue our practice of weekly worship and constant openhearted and vulnerable discussions in public places. America today is so divided, that discussion between individuals from alternative perspectives is rare, and when it happens it is often done in a way that very little good comes from the interaction (aka, things get rather heated). And yet, in our open discussion, we are modeling what it means to be the body of Christ. Many people from many different backgrounds, experiences, places, and traditions come together and open themselves to God and one another. In doing so, we often experience God in such a profound way that the Holy Spirit breaks down the barriers of differences so that we unite in our love of God and one another. When we have open, honest, and vulnerable discussion, the Holy Spirit is at work, breaking open our hearts and helping us to better know and understand those we disagree with.

Perhaps there is a way for us to take our discussion to a much greater scale, maybe next year or in future years we not only hear about a topic, but we invite our community to join us in modeling Christian discussion, one based on love and the understanding that EVERY person encounters God and that we all can learn from one another's faith. What if we modelled what it means to unify in Christ even when we hold a wide diversity of views and beliefs? Can we love those that do not think like us, especially when they are not kind or respectful to us?

While I do not know what God's long-term plan currently is, I genuinely believe that God is currently guiding us and we are having a profound impact in our local community and throughout West Virginia. What I do know is that God has been guiding us and will continue to guide us. May we do our best to continue in a posture of openness and anticipation to the Holy Spirit's guiding, and I know that She will never let us down!

-Pastor Darick

From Mike:

Nadia Bolz-Weber was a huge success! Over 480 tickets were sold and approximately 385 people attended the speaking engagement. Ticket Sales and donations for the two charities was \$5,460!

I would like to thank everyone in the congregation that supported this event, from everyone that attended our special congregational meeting in September of 2022 at Barnyard BBQ to the people that worked the event and those that attended. It was a great event and has created a good buzz and energy in the community.



What Does It Mean to Be Lutheran/Catechism/Confirmation

Starting October 3rd and continuing every Tuesday night we will be meeting to discuss what it is that Lutherans believe! Many of those that are worshiping with us regularly have wonderful questions about the liturgy, the belief, and the history of the Lutheran Church. So thanks to the leadership and guidance of Pr. Clifford, we will be discussing what it means to be Lutheran and what Lutherans believe. At the end of this class, anyone wishing to join Cross of Grace as a member will be invited (but NOT expected) to join CoG.

(Note: Regardless of what you end up believing, you always have a place at CoG, whether you are a member or not!) So I'd invite you to join us! We meet Tuesday Nights at Panera, or as I like to think of it, our little local Bethlehem, because Bethlehem literally translates as "House of Bread". Come and be fed, and may God bless our community of faith as we continue to be faithful and grow in our love and knowledge of God!

PRAYER CHAIN



Cross of Grace has a prayer chain. This is a group of people that have volunteered to add people's prayer requests to their routine prayers.

A person with a prayer request contacts Ellen Bragg who is the first contact on the prayer chain and then the need is passed down the chain with Ellen calling the next person and then that person passes the need along to the next person in the chain.

The church prayer chain is alive and well and looking for more members as well as people to pray for. If you have a prayer need please call Ellen Bragg at 304-590-0811.

She is the beginning of the prayer chain and will pass along the prayer request. If you would like to join the prayer chain please drop a note in the collection plate with your name and phone number so that she can add you to the prayer chain.

The current Prayer Chain is:

Ellen Bragg
Debbie Goff
Rose Mary Kutz
Rosa McKinney
Mary Baker

If you need to contact someone on the prayer chain please use the directory for their contact information.

WELCA Fall Retreat

The WELCA Fall Retreat was held
August 27 – August 29 at
Canaan Valley.

Our congregation donated 13 of the 59
total towel sets collected!

The silent auction basket that our
congregation made collected \$50.00.

Thank you, to everyone that helped with
the towel sets and the Italian Basket!



October 27 - Nightmare Before Christmas
(Rated PG) - The stop-motion Halloween/
Christmas classic is celebrating its 30th
anniversary! Come and see this cute, yet dark,
story about what happens when “Halloween
Town” tries to branch out and celebrate Christ-
mas too.

Rated PG for some scary images and scenes.

November - Joyeux Noel (Rated PG-13) -
during World War I, a rare one day
armistice takes place on Christmas day and
the two sides celebrate with one another -
based on a true story.

This movie is Rated PG-13 for war violence
and a brief scene of sexuality/nudity.

January – TBD





Card Ministry

We have a thriving card ministry that attempts to send a card and recognize important Anniversaries in members of our congregation's lives. If you want to be included in this ministry please return the following information by placing it in the collection plate.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____

Birthday: _____

Baptism Date: _____

Wedding Anniversary Date: _____

Phone Number: _____