

## **Grace Gatherings**

*Ministry with people with disabilities Initiative*

*Committed to providing rest, relationship and renewal through home, church and community.*

Grace Gatherings is grounded in an inclusive, expansive Loving God who calls us to become the beloved community. Grace Gatherings is a service and justice ministry to develop rest and relationship with people who are neurodivergent and others with disabilities –and their caregivers.

2022 saw deepening and expanding of our 3 ministry goals.

**1. Developing a Language of Love:** A key finding of the year-one assessment was the lack of shared language among the leadership team enabling them to engage in effective, empathetic outreach to the diverse set of families that fall into Grace Gatherings core population. The language one person may see as appropriate may be uncomfortable or unacceptable to another. We sought to define a “language of love” centered on helping our leadership team have authentic, relationship building conversations along with enabling them to listen intentionally to the stories and needs of those we seek to serve.

The team worked with Emily Ladau’s book *Demystifying Disability* and identified ways to be more accurate and consistent with language. We adapted a “say this, don’t say that” list.

We made plans to bring this list of “say this, don’t say ” to our church community--to empower all ministry leaders with this language awareness as we seek true relationships with people with disabilities.

We’re now contracting with a third party from the “Accessible Altar” for an accessibility audit and series.

## **2. Expanding our Shared Understanding of Sacred Encounters and 3. Building Connections with Purpose**

We are now in active relationships with L’Arche St. Louis and UcitySchools, and the Faith and Light (worship gathering with people with disabilities).

### **In 2022 each month:**

We attend worship of Faith and Light

The L’Arche Community Night – see picture of William Kelly leading the carol singing!

### **We supported and participated in:**

L’arche’s first Walk-n-Roll fundraiser

Wrote Christmas Cards with Faith and Light for the Jesuit Hall infirmed residents

Networked a very special meeting with Synapsory's Terrie Desloge and Kathie Grant to plan a full scale sensory room in the new L'arche headquarters. (more about this)

**A new webpage**

Got a webpage ready in the "wings" tuned to who we are now.

Drafted out a new website for the future: Thanks to Claudia Moran, Lisa Heaner and Rebecca Comas

Team Leaders: Kia Williams, The Rev. Julie Graham

Members : William Kelly, Kari Potts, Kristi Mochow, Marlene O'Brien, Rebecca Comas, Grace Gorski.