

The *intetc.com* In Church and Community



From the Senior Pastor A Season of New Beginnings

At Our Savior's, we are eager to be in partnership with other ministries and organizations that align with our sense of purpose. We recognize that we can't do everything by ourselves and that we stand a pretty good chance of becoming a better expression of the church God calls us to be when we develop and rely upon collaborative relationships.



In fact, this is what our faith teaches. For instance, we believe in a Three-in-One God, a divine unity of three distinct expressions that exist in community as one being. What's more, our scriptures teach us that God created all things to be in relationship to the extent that, in regard to humanity for example, human beings are to care and steward all of creation and live as partners (Genesis 2:18). What's more, Jesus himself, at the very beginning of his public ministry, chose twelve disciples to assist him with his mission. He also sent out 70 "partners" at one point to extend the reach of his ministry beyond what he could accomplish himself. After Pentecost and the birth of the church, those early apostles and missionaries also depended on key partners who could carry on the work of establishing churches throughout the region even in the absence of key players like Paul, Peter, and all the others.

Our budding relationship with ACE Academy is such a partnership. It is true that ACE is renting space in our facility but

the relationship we envision together is so much more than that of a lessee and a landlord. We are excited to learn from each other because we recognize that our differences have value. At a time when we have identified a desire to become more diverse as a community, welcoming ACE into the spaces we use presents us with opportunities for interaction and community-building that would not otherwise exist at Our Savior's. We also are envisioning numerous opportunities for ACE and OSL to collaborate that will greatly enhance what both of us do while presenting to the broader community an example of how two distinct organizations with similar values can coexist and cooperate for the sake of the common good.

We will surely be better as a church because of ACE's presence among us. They will be stronger as a learning community because of their presence at Our Savior's. In that spirit of becoming the church God is calling us to be, I invite you to look for opportunities this summer to introduce yourself to our new neighbors and welcome them to OSL. Give them some of that famous Our Savior's hospitality and enjoy this season of new beginnings.

Have a wonderful summer! See you in church.

Randy

Pr. Randy Gehring

Ministry Spotlight

New Neighbors!

OSL Partners with ACE Academy

In Luke 10, a lawyer stands up to quiz Jesus.

“Teacher, he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’”

In the dialogue that follows, Jesus and the lawyer agree on a simple guide for those who seek eternal life: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”

Yet the lawyer is not satisfied. He asks, ‘And who is my neighbor?’”



Jesus sees into the man’s heart. The fellow already knows how to inherit eternal life. But

there is a limit to his love, and he wants to narrowly define his community so he can justify those limits.

After the lawyer asks his questions of Jesus, Jesus tells the story we call the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which calls us to love our neighbor despite differences in spiritual commitments, economic disparities, or divides in race and culture. Jesus presses the lawyer to recognize that loving our neighbor is inconvenient. Loving our neighbor requires we limit ourselves so we can make room for someone else’s healing.

So why do it?

Because loving our neighbor is love. Because when we love someone, love increases. When we love someone, we grow where we were stunted. When we love someone, we experience the love God has shown us.

Here at Our Savior’s, we’ve entered into a new season of loving our neighbor.

You may have heard we’ve welcomed ACE Academy into our midst as tenants. No, as *more* than tenants—as neighbors. ACE Academy joins the Augustana Campus Learning Center as the second educational facility on our campus.

Today I wanted to introduce you to these new neighbors: their story, their philosophy, and some of their great pictures.

Describing the school, Director Chloe Clements writes, “ACE Academy is an out-of-system educational program that seeks to provide learners and their families with a unique and transformative educational experience. With a focus on youth aged 3 through 18, ACE Academy is dedicated to creating a cooperative learning community centered around equity, community wellness, and authentic relationships.



How does this work in practice? I can tell you: it’s a lot of fun. Summer programming features a different theme and many activities to match. For instance, the second unit of summer camp is “Ride: Come Ride the Sound Wave and Get Ready to Rock.” The week features special visits from musicians who introduce their instruments, exploring rhythm, using percussion instruments, playing with musical instruments, listening to many genres of music, tinkering with songwriting and other creative musical outlets, and developing a deeper appreciation for the joy that comes from making music together.

In the midst of all the fun there’s also plenty of academic rigor, too. Students receive special assistance as they have need; and as proof of concept, the school benchmarks student prog-

ress using the same standardized testing administered in our public school system. They manage this while emphasizing strengths-based learning and working to accommodate each student's needs for greatest growth.

Beyond that, the school emphasizes parental and community involvement. Parents are more than just spectators at ACE. They must volunteer for the school, and they intentionally engage together to build a positive, solutions-focused community. Together, Chloe explains, they're striving to shape "compassionate citizens and empathetic human beings who are equipped to make a positive impact on society."

In other words, they sound to me like a big community of Good Samaritans, neighbors in every possible sense—but especially in the sense that Jesus provides: They cross divides to help heal the wounds of the world.

Chloe explains, "ACE Academy firmly believes that embracing different perspectives enriches the learning journey for all individuals involved. With this in mind, we intentionally seek out youth with varying ethnicities, family structures, gender identities, races, religions, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Over 80% of our students identify as belonging to marginalized groups, creating an environment that celebrates diversity and cultivates respect.

"One of the key pillars of ACE Academy's approach to education is its commitment to viewing the world through a decolonized lens. We recognize that traditional systems and structures perpetuate inequities, and we strive to dismantle these barriers." The goal is to "create an environment that values and respects diverse cultures, histories, and knowledge systems."



Some at church have wondered why it makes sense to welcome an intentionally secular institution like ACE into our building; and to give over so many of our resources to them. In fact, if you've seen our recent communication about ACE's launch at Our Savior's, you may have already learned that OSL has proven less than welcoming to these new neighbors. ACE children, staff, and parents alike have received suspicious questions, inconsiderate intrusions, and even overt hostility from our community at OSL.

This is especially painful for these new neighbors, many of whom have come to an out-of-system school like ACE to escape the inequities or prejudice their children experienced in the public school system.

Like the lawyer seeking to justify his behavior before Jesus, we might reach for any number of



explanations for our own behavior. But then we find Jesus, once again spurring us to love our neighbor; and bringing forward the example of the marginalized Samaritan who outdid the faithful.

Despite our early missteps, our new neighbors at ACE have given us grace we did not deserve so we can continue to find our footing together. As in Jesus's parable, a neighbor does not need to share the same creed to spur us on in love. It is enough that we are neighbors; and that we follow Christ's calling to work together to make this world a safer, more just, more loving place for all.

—Pr. Justin Kosec

Thanks to ACE Academy for the photos!



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Festive Worship – 10:15 A.M., Sanctuary

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