

New Youth Director In Place At Gran-Park- Rollag Parish

By: Karen Carpenter

Nestled in the rolling hills of the Rollag area are three smaller Lutheran churches that have stood the test of time.

Gran, Park and Rollag Lutheran congregations formed a three-point parish several years ago allowing them to preserve their heritage and negotiate a future.

Recently they added to their staff Youth Director Andrea Keene. She brings enthusiasm and a loving concern for the youth in the parish.

Pastor Jim Greene ministers to Gran-Park-Rollag Parish (GPR). He has been in that position for 18 years.

Keene hales from Billings, MT, where she grew up in a family of five children. The family was active in the King of Glory Lutheran Church in Billings.

"I was very active in my home congregation in Sunday School and youth group," said Keene. "I enjoyed helping out at church and being there as often as possible."

As a youth, Keene went on a Lutheran College Tour. She was impressed with Concordia College in Moorhead. "I chose Concordia because it felt like home," commented Keene.

After graduating from Concordia College in 2013, Keene went on to Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, IA.

She enjoyed living in the Moorhead area so after finishing her education, decided to make it home. Keene moved to Moorhead in 2016. She worked for three years in child care.

During that time, Keene also worked part-time with the youth at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Moorhead.

In the summer of 2019, Keene accepted the full-time position at GPR, starting August 7. She works with youth from birth through high school.

She works with the Sunday School-age children from three years old to seventh grade. Andrea works with curriculum and program planning. There are about 120 youth in the GPR Parish, including Sunday School, confirmation and youth.

The GPR Parish has been involved in a unique collaboration with Living Grace Lutheran Church in Hawley since March 1, 2017. Pastor Deutscher is the spiritual leader of that congregation.

A dedicated group formed Living Grace Lutheran Church, a mission start church, seven years ago.

Through the collaboration the four church congregations are able to provide more opportunities to their members.

The Sunday School children performed their Christmas program first at Living Grace Lutheran in the Garrick Theater in Hawley where worship services are held. The following Sunday the program was given again at Rollag Lutheran.

Another area where they come together to share their combined efforts is the confirmation program. Keene devotes time and effort into the planning of the program. The teaching duties are shared among Pastor Greene, Pastor Hope Deutscher and Keene.

"It gives a different voice and perspective as each of us share in leading confirmation," said Keene.

Living Grace and GPR have both benefited from the partnership of the youth ministry. Youth from all four congregations are participating in Luther League and other youth activities.

Keene has had wonderful experiences on youth trips during her own youth and working at Our Savior's Lutheran.

"I would like to offer more



Andrea Keene is the new youth director serving Gran-Park-Rollag Lutheran Parish and Grace Living Lutheran Church in Hawley. In her office is this banner that was made and given as a gift to Keene from King of Glory Lutheran Church. That is her home church located in Billings, MT, where Keene grew up and graduated from high school.

youth trips in the future," stated Keene. "I know we will be going to the National Youth Gathering this summer."

She is hoping to provide other opportunities for youth trips. Trips or retreats give kids and adults the chance to get to know each other better.

Confirmation youth will share their faith statements during Lent and help with the service.

"I would like to see the kids more actively involved in worship service beyond serving as acolytes," said Keene.

The response to the new position of youth director has been very favorable.

"This is new to them. They haven't had someone in a full-time capacity in the youth position," said Keene.

It is a sign of growth that the four congregations are able to support added staff to the ministry team.

Keene is beginning a program called Messy Church, which is based on a series of books written by author Lucy Moore. It is a way for families to gather for fun, creative fellowship events. The gatherings include crafts, games and, of course, food.

Keene and the youth partnered with the women of the congregations on a service project.

They filled bags that were donated to children, youth and adults who use the services of Rural Enrichment and Counseling Headquarters. Those services include counseling and food pantry.

The youth filled 29 bags for donation. The bags could be a purse, a drawstring bag or even a reusable grocery bag. Items in the bag included such things as toiletries, gloves, makeup, toys, toothbrush or games.

An additional 15 needy children received Christmas gifts from the youth through REACH.

Andrea Keene helps the youth lead services sometimes. She may, at some point in the future, fill the pulpit giving a sermon.

"There definitely may be chances to do that. It is something I am willing to do," commented Keene. "It will be a growth opportunity for me."

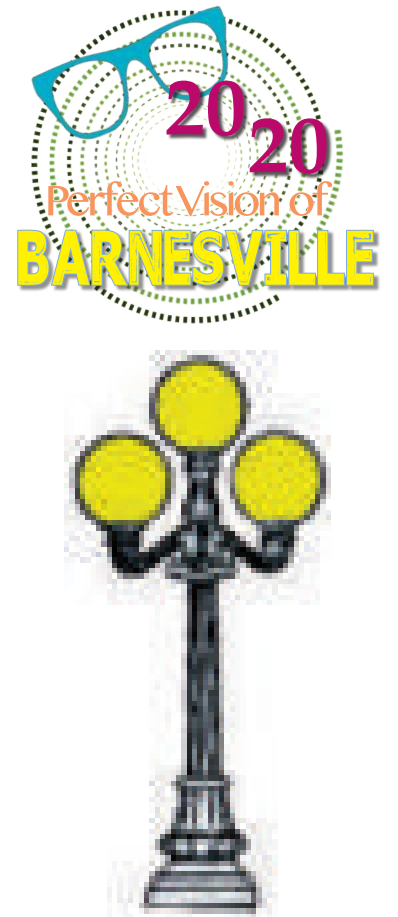
She had a few opportunities to give sermons while studying at seminary.

Keene has introduced a new liturgy being sung during to the GPR Parish worship service. It is called "Behold I Make All Things New," written by Ben Splichal Larson.

On a typical Sunday, Keene is at Rollag Lutheran from 8:30 a.m. until about 1:00 p.m. About once a month she gets to one of the other congregations. She also takes part in both the Hawley and Barnesville Ministerium organizations.

There is an F-M Area Youth Directors organization which Keene attends. They meet monthly to support youth directors, and they work together on area-wide youth events.

Andrea Keene is meeting a need in the combined congregations of Gran-Park-Rollag Lutheran Parish and Living Grace Lutheran Church.



A group of youth from Gran-Park-Rollag Lutheran Parish and Living Grace Lutheran Church purchased Christmas gifts for area needy children. Those taking part were, left to right, back row - Pastor Jim Greene, Carli Vigasaa, Megan Grieve, Bree Nelson, Austin Pender, Ashton Dunham, Jon Lien, David Spillum, Carl Ekre, Andrea Keene; front row - Teague Carly, Christopher Menze, Alex Lien and Lily Ekre.



A group of fifth graders from Gran-Park-Rollag Lutheran Parish and Living Grace Lutheran Church took first communion. Andrea Keene works along side Pastor Jim Greene and Hope Deutscher to prepare the children. Pictured are, left to right, back row - Pastor Hope Deutscher, Andrea Keene, Madelyn Aakre, Collin Bauman, Piper Thompson, Lexi Halvorson, Mckinze Lien, Pastor Jim Greene; middle row - Avery Strawsell, Allison Axness, Emma Spillum, Kendal LeRoux, Jason Olson, Brayden Dunham; front row - Marley Knutson, Eli Strawsell, Garrett Aakre, Tim Golden, Morgan Grieve, Elliot DuBord and Max Lien.



This is a scene during Andrea Keene's installation as youth director at Gran-Park-Rollag Lutheran Parish and Living Grace Lutheran Church. The installation was held on Rally Sunday, September 15, 2019. The young people were invited to come up to the front and lay hands on and pray for Keene. She began her duties on August 7, 2019.



Welcome To You!

From These Area Churches



Baker-Downer Presbyterian Church

Lorelee Benz,
Commissioned Lay Pastor
Church: 218 789-7368
11927 123rd Avenue South
Baker, Minnesota 56580
bakerdownerchurch@gmail.com
bakerdownerchurch.com



Assumption Catholic Church

307 Front Street North,
Barnesville

Father Todd Arends, Pastor
Church Office: 354-7320
Hildebrand Hall: 354-2489



Hosanna Fellowship

223 Third Street NE, Barnesville

Marlin (Pete) Ackerson, Pastor
Church: 354-7774 • Pastor's Cell: 218 329-2823
nackerson@rrt.net



St. James United Church Of Christ

201 Third Street SE, Barnesville

Rev. Frank Picard, Pastor
Church Office: 354-7198
E-mail: churchoffice.stjames@gmail.com
www.stjamesuccmn.org

Comstock - Hoff Lutheran Parish

One Faith Community, Two Locations
Comstock Lutheran Church, Comstock, MN
Hoff Lutheran Church, Rustad, MN
P.O. Box 7, Comstock, MN 56525

Jill Steichen, Pastor
Church Office: 218 585-4345
chsecretary@live.com



Trinity Lutheran Church

100 Second Avenue W.
P.O. Box 198, Sabin, MN 56580

Brett Hartwig, Pastor
Emmalee Kuphal, DCE
Church Office: 218 789-7259
Email: tlcabin@gmail.com



HOPE Lutheran Brethren Church

Kevin Skaret, Pastor
Church Office: 354-7466 • hopelbc.org
807 Fifth Street Southeast, Barnesville
Email: hopelbc@outlook.com



OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

302 Third Street NE, Barnesville

Pastor: Chris Leach
Church Office: 354-7101
oslstone@aim.com
oursaviorsbarnesville.org

Gran-Park-Rollag Parish

Three Churches One Ministry

GRAN - 11976 230th St. S. PARK - 29464 80th Ave. S.
ROLLAG - 10501 Hwy. 32 S
Hawley, MN 56549

Parish Office - 218 937-5499
Jim Greene, Pastor
Andrea Keene, Youth Director
Website: rollaglutheran.org



St. John's Lutheran Church

Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

1103 4th Ave. NE, Barnesville

Gary Rehborg - Interim Pastor
Church Office: 218 354-7158
Secretary - secretary@stjohnsbarnesville.org