



Grace United Methodist Church

901 N. Main St. ■ Decatur, IL 62521 ■ (217)429-5374 ■ www.decaturchurch.org

Open hearts ■ Open minds ■ Open doors

David Newhouse and Jeney Park
Office of Admissions
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
2121 Sheridan Rd.
Evanston IL 60201
May 11, 2005

It is my pleasure and privilege to write this letter of recommendation for Ryan D. Neaveill for admission into Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. I have known Ryan for nearly two years now, as we have worked together on the staff of Grace United Methodist Church in Decatur planning worship, doing evangelism, ministering to our community and making music.

Ryan is an extraordinarily gifted person. His most obvious gifts are musical; he sings beautifully, plays piano and guitar, writes and arranges music (including anthems, worship music and Communion settings), directs and accompanies choirs and soloists. I've found his musical arrangements of sacred texts to be as singable and beautiful as any I've heard, and he makes church music accessible to laypeople by learning and sharing the stories behind the songs. He has contributed greatly to our worship here at Grace (both traditional and contemporary worship) through the designing of power point presentations, serving as regular liturgist and occasional certified lay speaker, and keeping us connected to the United Methodist church year and liturgical calendar. (He is also a lot of fun to perform with; he and his wife and my spouse and I have formed an informal singing quartet which has so far entertained a district clergy party and a church Mother's Day banquet.)

Ryan's gifts for ministry extend beyond the musical, however; he writes inspiring devotionals, produces a congregational information booklet, maintains our church website, helps with the youth (including chaperoning summer trips and directing youth choir and "Worship Arts Ministry"), provides clown entertainment for the annual street festival, and much more. Truly Grace UMC is blessed by his many talents and his willingness to serve.

Ryan is a valuable colleague in ministry because of his easy-going personality and patience. He is flexible and appreciative of others' contributions; yet he is always willing to offer another creative idea of his own. He takes his faith very seriously, as well as his social conscience. Yet he is never intolerant or pushy, but honors others' backgrounds

and beliefs as his own. Ryan is a good leader, and shepherds his own "flock" (the choir) with prayer and devotion.

I was delighted to learn that Ryan is pursuing deacon's orders in order to fulfill his calling as minister of music. He is truly an ideal candidate for ordination and for admission to G-ETS, and I am excited for him to have this opportunity.

With great enthusiasm I recommend Ryan Neaveill for admission to Garrett-Evangelical, and can promise you that you will be glad he came to seminary!

Sincerely,



Rev. Sara L. Isbell
Associate Pastor