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# December In Touch with Grace



Dear friends and family of Grace,

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18a “Rejoice always, pray continuously, and give thanks in all circumstances.”

It sounds so easy when things are going well but sometimes, we really struggle to find reasons to rejoice and give thanks - and who can pray continuously anyway? I often encourage people to find the blessings in every situation. For example, if you have a car accident, of course it is horrible. Praying might seem much more accessible at moments like this. But where are the blessings? Sometimes, we have to look hard. One blessing might be that we have insurance. Another might be no injuries or for medical care. If we look, we can find the blessings.

The way we live our lives with an attitude of gratitude and prayer really makes a difference. Studies have shown that those who live this way have increased health benefits both physically and mentally. Taking moments for rejoicing, laughing, breathing deeply in prayer, and being thankful are ways that God has given us that help us live life more fully.

The angels of Advent remind us to not live in fear for with God, all things are possible. As we move into the season of Advent this month, let's remember these celestial messengers who encourage us to rejoice, to have a relationship through prayer with God who dwells among us, and to give thanks at all times. I encourage you to try this each day. Making faith a daily habit like brushing your teeth changes our minds and

behaviors for the better in very positive ways.

Just as God comes to us in human flesh at Christmastime, we embody Christ in our everyday attitudes and behaviors. Christ dwells within us, among us, and around us. For this we give thanks and praise. Two key words for me right now are words of adaptability and flexibility. Within this framework, I am thankful that we are still church, that we have several ways to worship that fits for each person – either in person, online, on the phone, or recorded to fit each schedule – and that together, we can rejoice in the many gifts that God has given all of us. Most of all, let's rejoice with the Advent story of a promised Savior as together, we pray for the indwelling of the Word made flesh among us, and then, give thanks for all that is still possible both now and in the new year to come.

May God's blessings be abundantly visible for each of you this month.

Pastor Karen



## Announcements

Worship news! As we go forward, Grace will continue to offer the following worship experiences:

Sanctuary worship at 9:30 a.m.

S. Tower Room livestream worship for those with young children

Livestream worship which will also be recorded for later viewing

Audio phone system for those without internet to call a local number and listen to the worship service (833) 579-2830



### Advent and Christmas Schedule

Join us weekly as we journey towards Christmas. We will light the Advent Wreath each week. We will hear the prophets and angels. We will sing carols. Holy Communion will be offered each week.

Advent 1 - Sunday, Nov. 28 - Isaiah

Advent 2 - Sunday, Dec. 5 - Ezekiel

Advent 3 - Sunday, Dec. 12 - Angel, Angel Family Christmas

Advent 4 - Sunday, Dec. 19 - Advent Lessons and Carols



Christmas Eve, Friday, Dec. 25, Festival Worship at 4 and 9:30 p.m.

Christmas Day, Saturday, Dec. 25, Festival Worship at 9:30 a.m.

Carol Singalong - Sunday, Dec. 26 at 10 a.m. (note the time change)

New Year Epiphany - Sunday, Jan. 2 at 10 a.m. (note the time change)





#### 4 Wednesdays in Advent - Cozy Vespers, 7 p.m., Dec. 1, 8, 15, & 22

Join us on Zoom each Wednesday at 7 p.m. for Cozy Vespers using Holden Evening Prayer. The theme for these is "The Light and Darkness." We will worship for 30 minutes with our neighbors from Arlington Hills, Hope, and Our Redeemer. Our shared pastoral intern, Per Halaas, will bless us with a meditation each week. We will send out Cozy Advent Devotions and Family Devotions with activities. These will be made available at church and mailed out. Request yours from the office. May this month of preparation be a blessing to you as we rejoice, pray, and give thanks!

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/827570129> (Passcode: 1340)  
(this will be the same for all 4 Wednesdays of Advent)

#### **From the Intern's Desk -**

##### **Greetings Collaborators!**

During this holy season of Advent, as we await the coming of Christ Jesus, we will be gathering together to join in a series of midweek "Cozy Vespers". We will gather virtually via Zoom (see above info) at 7:00 pm on the first 4 Wednesdays in December to pray, sing, and reflect together.

Each worship service will follow Mary Haugen's Holden Evening Prayer. Please free to use the digital copies available or just sit back and enjoy. Each of the 4 congregations of the EastSide Collaborative (Hope, Arlington Hills, Our Redeemer, and Grace) have contributed parts of the service and I will be providing the reflection each week.

In addition to the Holden Evening Prayer there are additional resources available to help you further explore and reflect on the theme for these "Cozy Vespers" - In Light AND Darkness. Included are a series of questions to help us dig deeper into what the Advent themes of light and darkness mean to us as followers of Christ. There is even a craft activity that you are welcome - even encouraged - to participate in as we worship together.

As we prepare to gather these Wednesday evenings, I encourage you to take some steps to set the scene and make these "Cozy Vespers" even more special: Light a candle, prepare a hot beverage, put on your favorite sweater, or whatever makes you most comfortable.

We'll all settle in this Wednesday, December 1st, at 7pm and in the weeks to follow to explore what it means to be an Advent People, wandering and wondering in the darkness, waiting for a child to be born.

See you Wednesday!

Per, the Intern

## DECEMBER MISSION OF THE MONTH

Houses for Haiti is the mission of the month at Grace Lutheran Church for December. Houses for Haiti was founded by two sisters from the eastside of St. Paul after participating in a mission trip to Haiti. A few facts about Haiti - Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, 80% of the population lives under the poverty line, the infant mortality rate is 62%, 6 million people are unemployed, and 50% of the adult population is illiterate.

Houses for Haiti is dedicated to building houses for homeless families living on the streets of Cite Soleil, the poorest slum in the Western Hemisphere. Each family is hand picked by a trusted pastor in Cite Soleil. They have to meet certain requirements to be considered. Out of every dollar, 98 cents is applied towards a new home for a deserving family, the 2 cents is applied towards administration costs. This is a volunteer organization.

Please prayerfully consider a donation to this organization that believes that every person deserves to live in a safe environment, free from disease and filth that is ever present on the streets of Haiti. Please use your blue multi-purpose envelope, mark mission of the month and place in Sunday's offering plate or mail to the church office. Thank you.

### Christmas is Coming!!!!

A tradition at Grace Lutheran Church has been to put up a giving tree in the Good Shepherd Lounge with ornaments placed on it with suggested gift donations. The members take 1,2,3 or as many as they would want, purchase the item(s) and place unwrapped under the tree.

The tree will be up by Sunday, November 28 and gifts collected through Sunday, December 12. The organizations need time to disburse the gifts prior to Christmas. We will be collecting children's outdoor clothing (hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, sweaters etc.) for Merrick Community Center and gift cards for Cub, Target, Aldi's and personal items for East Side Elders. Please participate as you are called and able..



## Music Notes:

There have been many teams who have written well known songs i.e. the Sherman brothers who wrote the music to *Mary Poppins*, the Gershwin brothers, or Rodgers and Hammerstein who wrote so many musicals. But who were Jay Livingston and Ray Evans? They not only wrote TV theme songs such as *Bonanza* and *Mr. Ed* but a favorite Christmas song—*Silver Bells*. Livingston and Evans had been commissioned to write the music for Bob Hope's movie *The Lemon Drop Kid*. It takes place around Christmas time. Other famous Christmas songs such as *White Christmas* were set in the countryside, but this one needed to be about city life. Amazingly, the original name for this standard was *Tinkle Bells*. Fortunately, Jay Livingston's wife burst out laughing after first hearing the song, explaining that the word "tinkle" was just not going to work; therefore it was changed to its' memorable name *Silver Bells*.

Last year's Christmas time was filled with fear and trepidation. May we experience the warm words this musical team imparted to us --Children laughing, People passing, Meeting smile after smile. Trivia: Jay Livingston's tombstone has inscribed words of another of his hits—**Que Sera, Sera**.

## FROM THE LIBRARY:

Use of the inside library has been curtailed during the pandemic but book and financial donations continue to be made. New book additions are purchased with this money. Science Fiction is a new discipline, located and labelled on the top shelf of the middle section. Happy Holidays to everyone.

<u>Caste: The Book of Longings</u>	Sue Monk Kidd
<u>Ordinary Wolves</u>	Seth Kantner
<u>Traveling to Utopia</u>	Michael Moorcock
<u>Wartime Sisters</u>	Lynda Cohen Loigman
<u>The Power of One</u>	Bruce Courtenat
<u>The Four Winds</u>	Kristin Hannah
<u>When the Apricots Bloom</u>	Gina Wilkenson
<u>The Sound of One Hand Clapping</u>	Richard Flanagan

## Grace Book Club schedule -

For December 2nd: *Wolf Hall* - Hilary Mantel  
For January 6th: *My Life and Hard Times* - James Thurber  
For February 3rd: *People We Meet on Vacation* - Emily Henry  
For March 3rd: *The Alice Network* - Kate Quin



## President's Message

### GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO!!

As we ponder the arrival of the Christ Child, I am reminded of the magnificent miracle that God sent us! Christ, God's Son, came to us as a human, a human infant. This **miracle** infant brings a message of hope and love to the world. Angels, shepherds, kings, couldn't contain their awe and wonder at this remarkable gift! We too cannot contain our awe and wonder as we claim God's Gift of the infant who brought eternal life. We, at Grace, claim God's salvation through this miracle.

We experience the **mystery**. This gift from God arrived as a baby. God sends the message that small things signal a huge change for the world. Where there was darkness, light; where there was hatred, love; where there was war, peace. The mystery changed the nature of civilization both in the here and now and for eternity. God works in mysterious ways and sends the message of hope to Grace Lutheran Church. We live with God Moments all around us. "Do not fear the future, for God is already there."

The enormity of this gift of eternal life must translate in a **manifesto** of change. God's message requires action. We are called to justice and acts of kindness. We are called to serve. We are called to be Christ in the world. And, so the church is being challenged to change. To reform and recommit to the great commandment to "Go and make disciples." God says, "And remember that I am always with you **until the end of time.**" Matt. 28:20 Grace Lutheran responds, Amen, let it be so.

### GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO!





### **Grace: A Community of Caring**

We all want to have the fear of COVID to be gone. We have worked through almost two years of the pandemic. Many have been ill and many of died. While the communities in Minnesota have opened up, we are facing increasing rates of COVID. As of mid-November, Minnesota has the highest incidence of Covid cases in the nation. Hospitalizations are up and ICU beds are reaching capacity. We see some schools closing again due to COVID and some people are choosing not to be vaccinated. COVID is not done. Grace needs to stay vigilant to protect our members, provide a safe environment, and preserve a community of caring.

- We reopened Grace based on the COVID rates going down and the majority of the congregation being vaccinated.
- The Reopening Task Force established safe practices for worship and meetings:
  - ◊ Wash Hands
  - ◊ Maintain Social Distancing including spacing in the pews.
  - ◊ Wear Masks
  - ◊ Use Hand Sanitizer
  - ◊ Stay Home if you don't feel well.
  - ◊ Get vaccinated and get the booster when available.
- These practices are still critically important as we move into winter.

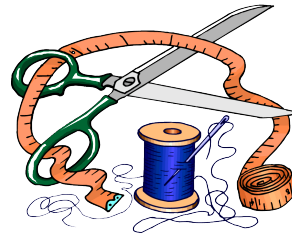
During the Annual Meeting, members expressed concern that we seem to have relaxed the practices to help keep our community safe. The Reopening Task Force and Council have determined that we will request that we honor the safe practices of maintaining social distancing and wearing masks. We will be doing a survey to see how members feel about worshipping in the sanctuary and online. We will continue to offer choices in services including in the church, online, and on the phone.

Grace is a Community of Caring. Help our community stay safe.  
The Reopening Task Force

# Community Connections - ongoing projects!!

## Internal, Local and Global

While we are still not back to our usual pace, we have managed to move forward with a few projects and there will be more as we go forward.



We are again serving refreshments following Sunday worship for those who are comfortable with it. Please consider signing up for a Sunday at some time in the future. If no one volunteers, there may be no coffee or treats on some Sundays.

### **Mission 2021 Lutheran World Relief Collections:**

**Circle of Welcome needs** - The kit lists are available on the grey bin in the Narthex. Please consider helping with this project for newly arrived refugees!

**Quilts, baby care kits** (Note: soap size accepted for baby care kits is 3.5 and 4 oz gentle soap; soap in each kit has to total 8 or 9 oz);

Other on-going collections at Grace - used eye glasses and cancelled stamps. Please find the small collection baskets on the library shelf. Thank you!

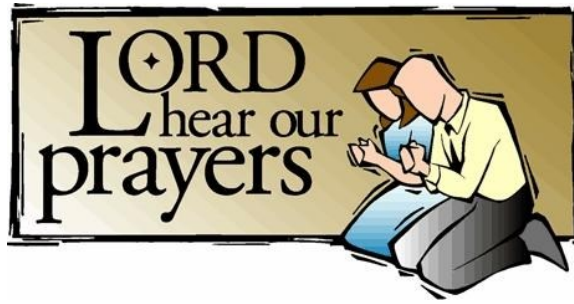


We have again begun assembling quilts for LWR. We will be gathering on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays most months in the S. Tower Room at 10 am for 2 hours, Everyone is welcome. We provide supplies and even training if needed. The coffee pot will be on and maybe even some treats. Call the office or Linda Sackreiter at 612-747-7783 if you have questions. See you on **December 11th at 10am! (We will not meet the 25th as it is Christmas weekend)**

**Miles of Pennies** The large collection jar in the library is always accepting donations toward helping the LSS fund which helps homeless Youth in St. Paul. Our goal is \$200.00 for 2021. Thank you to everyone who participates in this important mission. Your generous donations of pennies and coins, are appreciated. *Let's exceed our goal in 2021!*







**We lift our prayers to God** in times of thanksgiving and times of need, in times of joy and times of sorrow. Today, we especially pray for Bill Wood, Ed Holtan, Carol Sprau, and all those we name in our hearts.

#### **How to donate without an offering plate:**

There is always snail mail. The office is open to receive the mail and our bookkeeper will count what comes in each week and deposit it in the bank. Our address: 1730 Old Hudson Road, St. Paul, 55106.

To donate electronically: You can schedule a transfer of funds with your own bank if they have bill pay available and it will come automatically on the date you choose. Otherwise, you can go to our website ([www.gracelutheranstpaul.org](http://www.gracelutheranstpaul.org)) and click on the GIVE page. This site is secure for financial transactions through Vanco which is the Simply Giving program. At the GIVE page you can go through the steps as directed and give whatever amount you wish to several different categories (general, mortgage, etc.) This should now work on any browser. This does get to us electronically in a very timely manner. If you are comfortable using the QR, it will take you directly to the GIVE page on the website. **Please call the office if you have any questions.** Thank you.

Give QR



#### **Financial Snapshot for GLC-2021**

	<u>October Actual</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>
General Fund	\$19,602.85	\$236,460.07*	\$264,895.80
Expenses	\$22,725.71	\$247,367.68	\$285,819.20
Deficit/Overage	- \$13,425.64	- \$ 10,907.61	-\$20,923.40

\*YTD excludes Legacy Gift rec'd in January 2021



2 Foday Kargbo  
 7 Jim Baumer  
     Coley Gillis  
 12 John Luckfield  
 14 Rick Major  
     Glenn Schoonover  
 16 Rich Castle  
     Kim Killeen  
 18 Julie Major  
     Jim Mohn  
 23 Gina Gilgenbach  
 28 Carol Goebel  
 29 Alraina Ray-Taylor  
 31 Andrea Gorton



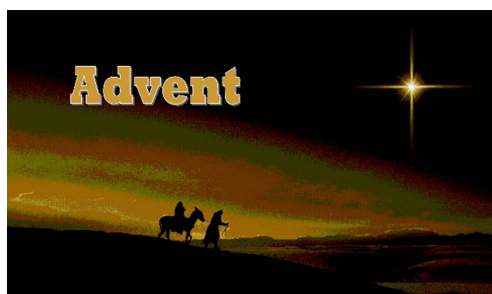
Worship Leaders for December- We are now back in the Sanctuary at 9:30 am each Sunday and online. Stay tuned for any changes going forward. The online services will continue to be posted to the Facebook page and our website. We also have a dedicated phone line to call in toll-free to listen to our services (833) 579-2830

<u>Date</u>		<u>Liturgist</u>
5	Sanctuary 9:30am	Barb Holtan
11	Sanctuary 9:30am	Jeff Oberlander
19	Sanctuary 9:30am	Connie Smeby
24	4:00 pm	Patty Young
24	9:30 pm	Monique McClure-Hegge
26	Sanctuary 9:30am	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Ushers</u>	
5	Team A	Norm Walby, Ron House, Larry Carlson, Ron Swenson, Roger McClure
11	Team B	Rick Major, Julie Major, Karen Boehne-Warner
19	Team C	Brian Jackson, Jonathon Rose, Thomas Rose, Lydia Rose, Violet Rose,
26	Team D	Norm Walby, Jonathan Williams, Joshua Williams, Jim Geister, Randy Nikula



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[gracelutheranstpaul@gmail.com](mailto:gracelutheranstpaul@gmail.com)

**Pastor:**

Rev. Karen Williams

Per Halaas, Pastoral Intern

**Custodial Staff:**

Larry and Linda Denson

**Office Staff:**

Linda Sackreiter

**Music Staff:**

Kathleen Hollar—Organist

Russ Carlson - Sanctuary Choir

Jan Steingas—Triple G's

Peter Zitzewitz—Bells of Grace

Connie Smeby—Joyous Juniors

