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# December 2025 In Touch with Grace



Dear family and friends of Grace,

December is a time of celebration and giving. We decorate, sing carols, eat lots of good things, and get ready for Christmas and the coming of Jesus as a baby. In the church, it all begins with Advent and the start of the new church year. The word ADVENT means "coming." The Advent Season is a time for the coming of Jesus at Christmas, preparing our hearts and homes to welcome His coming. The Advent Season is also a reminder that Jesus will come again to bring about a new heaven and a new earth. Advent always includes the four Sundays prior to Christmas. Four candles represent those four Sundays. – the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love. Traditionally, the Advent seasonal colors blue, the color representative of hope. At this time of the year, we also look ahead to the Advent of a new year. We make resolutions, let go of the past, and find renewed purposes for our lives.

This season, Advent begins on November 30 which is also Thanksgiving weekend. As we bask in the glow of so much to be thankful for, that glow will carry us through the coming weeks. We well anticipate the birth of Jesus who came into the world to bring us peace, hope, joy and love. We are to live these out in our lives and share them with others. Sometimes, it

is not easy to experience what Advent brings to us. That is when prayer will help us through. Let's live as children of the light, the light that has come into the world to shine light into the darkest of places. Jesus is that light that shows us the way.

Thank you for being a part of the ministry here at Grace! I am so thankful for each one of you and the joy that you bring to our mission as we step out in faith, awaiting the coming of Jesus – who after all, is the reason for this season.

Join us this season and find the hope, peace, joy, and love that the world is seeking.

Wishing you a Season of Blessings,

Pastor Karen



## Announcements

- Sunday, Nov. 30, is the first Sunday in Advent. We will celebrate the coming of the Messiah with a special Holden Worship Service during our 9:30 a.m. worship service followed by our annual Advent Potluck. See you there!
- Advent Potluck - the Community Connections Committee is sponsoring a Potluck to celebrate the beginning of the Advent season which begins on November 30th. We will supply coffee, lemonade & water as well as all the plates, napkins & silverware. Please bring a dish to share if you can but join us anyway. See you then!

## Advent/Christmas Schedule

Advent I - 11/30 - 9:30 am Worship

10:45 am Advent Potluck

12/3 - 5:30 pm Midweek Meal & Worship

Advent II - 12/7 - 9:30 am The Greening of the Church Worship

12/10 - 5:30 pm Midweek Meal & Worship

Advent III - 12/14 - 9:30 am Music Ministry Program/Worship

12/17 - 5:30 pm Midweek Meal & Worship

Advent IV - 12/21 - 9:30 pm Sunday School Program/Worship

Christmas Eve Worship - 4:00 & 9:30 pm Candlelight services

Christmas Day - 12/25 - No services - Christmas Eve service online

## Stir us Lord!



Here is a Challenge for all members of Grace Lutheran Church to increase their giving through the congregation by 1% of their annual income, and to consider similar growth in percentage giving annually after that, moving toward and beyond tithing (10%). Are you in?!

**The Giving Tree** - a Christmas tradition at Grace - will be up in the narthex on November 30., On it will be ornaments with a specific item to purchase for the students in LSS preschool at Grace and for clients of Project Home (people in transition from homelessness). Please take an ornament or two, purchase the item and return under the tree unwrapped prior to Sunday, December 14. The Mission committee will separate the items and deliver to the two designated organizations.



As we as Christians celebrate the greatest gift of all, our Savior Jesus Christ, please consider sharing a gift with those in need and spread the love and joy of the season.

**The first Sunday of each month is Food Collection Sunday. December 7th this month**

## DECEMBER MISSION OF THE MONTH

The Mission of the month for December at Grace is Second Stork. Second Stork provides families in need with essential newborn care items to give their baby a safe and healthy start.

Welcoming a newborn into the world should be a joyous and hopeful time! The reality is that many new parents are financially stretched, anxious and unprepared to bring their baby home from the hospital. Often, they don't have the basic supplies to keep the baby safe and healthy during those first few weeks of life. By basic, they mean a safe place to sleep, an adequate supply of diapers and wet wipes, newborn clothing and blankets. Second Stork can bridge an approximate 2 week gap from the time a newborn is discharged from the hospital to when family support or social services become available. Second Stork believes every baby should have a safe and healthy beginning.

Please prayerfully consider making a donation to this wonderful organization who reaches out to the newest of God's children and their families to ensure that they have the items necessary to get a healthy and safe start in life. Please use your blue multi-purpose envelope, mark mission of the month and place in the offering or mail to the church office. Checks should be made payable to Grace. Thank you!



Second Stork  
Helping new parents in need

## Music Notes -

A Christmas carol that is not in our hymnal but known by everyone, was written by a poet with a Minnesota connection. The lyrics to "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" were written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the author of "The Song of Hiawatha". There's even a Longfellow Park. He never visited Minneapolis, but he wrote a story poem which was based on Ojibwa and Dakota legends. Parts of his poem are not necessarily accurate, but the style is very readable.

Longfellow's personal life was filled with tragedy. His first wife died from a miscarriage; he remarried 7 years later and together they had 6 children. But that marriage ended in tragedy also; she died from something horrendously painful-- her dress caught on fire. Longfellow went into a long period of depression. The Civil War started about two years after her death. He wrote many poems concerning his feelings toward slavery and the numerous moral issues that divided families. The Christmas carol is based on his poem "Christmas Bells", written on Christmas Day in 1863. The movie "I Heard the Bells", dealing with the circumstances on how he wrote his poem, came out in 2022 and can be rented from the Saint Paul Public Library. Here are the original words, found at *poets.org*. Academy of American Poets, retrieved in 2019.

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along  
The unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,  
Their old, familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime,  
A chant sublime  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth  
The cannon thundered in the South,  
And with the sound  
The carols drowned  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent  
The hearth-stones of a continent,  
And made forlorn  
The households born  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong,  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

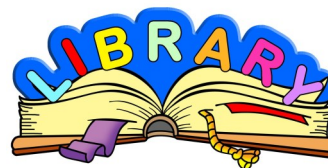
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

In 1872 the organist John Calkin set the poem to the tune "Waltham" as a processional. There have been other musical versions of it, the most recent being by the Christmas composer Johnny Marks (Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree, Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer, etc.). It has since been recorded several times by such singers as Bing Crosby and Johnny Cash.

And Longfellow's message, as so many carols do, continues to resonate, continues to hold meaning, looking past the gift buying and the stressful hassle, zeroing in on the central meaning of the celebration we call Christmas.

## FROM THE LIBRARY:

Here's the latest from our libraries!



## **BOOKS FOR SALE:**

The "Books for Sale" basket has gotten a refresh!

Due to some recent donations of brand new or like new books, we have a great selection in our basket! Feel free to browse and if you find one you just need to have, all donations are welcome!

## **NEW FEATURED TITLES:**

**A Step of Faith by Richard Paul Evans** - After the death of his beloved wife, after the loss of his advertising business to his once-trusted partner, after bankruptcy forced him from his home, Alan Christoffersen is a broken man. Leaving everything he knows, he sets out on an extraordinary cross-country journey; with only the pack on his back, he is walking from Seattle to Key West - the end of the map.

Along the way, Alan begins to heal, meeting people who teach him lessons about love, sacrifice, and forgiveness. But in St. Louis, Alan faces another life-changing crisis, and now the Journey is in jeopardy.

**The Boys In The Boat by Daniel James Brown** - It was an unlikely quest from the start. With a team composed of the sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers, the University of Washington's eight-oar crew team was never expected to defeat the elite teams of the East Coast and Great Britain, yet they did, going on to shock the world by defeating the German team rowing for Adolf Hitler. The emotional heart of the tale lies with Joe Rantz, a teenager without family or prospects, who rows not only to regain his shattered self-regard but also to find a real place for himself in the world. Drawing on the boys' own journals and vivid memories of a once-in-a-lifetime shared dream, Brown has created an unforgettable portrait of an era.

**Pillsbury Annual Recipes** - With the cooler weather approaching, treat yourself to a new recipe!

## **LITTLE LIBRARY:**

The little library at Grace is back!

## **Grace Book Club -**

Here are the latest titles chosen -  
For discussion on:

December 4	<u>The Nurse's Secret</u>
January 1	<u>The Great Gatsby</u>
February 5	<u>My Friends</u>

Amanda Skenandore
F. Scott Fitzgerald
Fredrik Backman

## Sunday School

.The Sunday School kids are continuing to learn about more Heroes and Heroines of the Old Testament. In December we will switch our focus to the Christmas Story and getting ready for the Christmas program. It is a great gift every year to see what the kids have to share with all of you.

Mark your calendars for **December 21st** and don't miss this annual tradition.

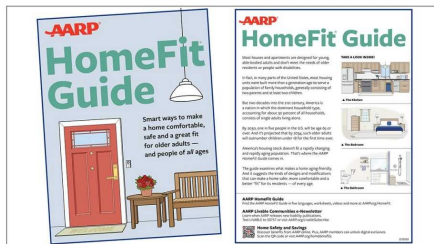
**XYZ's** - Our December Holiday luncheon at Lake Elmo Inn is near. We will meet at the Inn at 11 am for a fun gathering and great food! The sign up and menu selection has been out as we needed to have a count and menu choices by the November 19. Hope you are joining us!

Join the XYZ group on Thursday, **January 8 at 1:30pm** to hear our favorite AARP presenter, Joan. She will be talking to us regarding HomeFit.

Most homes and apartments are designed for young, able-bodied adults and don't meet the needs of older adults or people with disabilities. American housing doesn't fit a rapidly changing and aging population.

Learn smart ways to make a home comfortable, safe and a great fit for us as older

adults. Come for the presentation and stay for the fellowship and refreshments.



## Pics from October XYZ outing



**Afton Apple Orchard**



**Selmas's Ice Cream House in Afton**



**Hay Ride!!**

**LSS Early Learning Center** could use our help with a few things. Kids often come to school with clothes and shoes but no undies or socks and often don't have appropriate winter gloves or have lost them. We are hoping to be of help with those things. They have asked specifically for underwear, gloves and socks in sizes for the under 5 years crowd. We now have a bin available for those items in the Good Shepherd Lounge. Thank you in advance!

### **COLLECTION OPPORTUNITY:**

Sandy Abernathy has brought another way to serve the homeless by collecting plastic bags to be crocheted into weatherproof mats for people living on the streets to use for sleeping. She will pick up any donated bags and give to a lady where she lives who makes these for donation to Joseph's Coats & Higher Ground in St. Paul and Union Gospel Mission & the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis. The mats are 3 feet wide by 6 feet long and some have a carrying strap as well. It takes 800 bags to make a mat so all donations are very much appreciated! Drop off any bags in the collection area of the library! Thanks.



Some of you may have noticed this stranger among us a few weeks ago around Halloween. We were happy to welcome her but she is actually a member at Grace. In case you didn't recognize her, it is Betty Castle! Great costume, Betty!



Animals!



Mr. Pumpkinhead!!  
(Guess who)



More Hay ride!



# Community Connections - ongoing projects!!

## Internal, Local and Global

**If you would consider serving treats** on a Sunday morning, we would appreciate your help. Please take a look at the sign-up schedule in the South Tower room and see if there is a date that works for you to help out! If you would be willing to bring treats but would prefer to not serve, please speak with Linda Sackreiter and we can arrange that as well.

Thanks for your help!!

### **NEW COLLECTION OPPORTUNITY!!!**

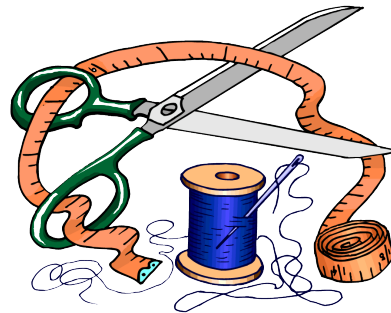
What do you do with all those plastic bags you get at stores these days? You can recycle, but why not upcycle. Sandy Abernathy has a friend that uses plastic bags to crochet mats for the homeless to use. It takes 800 bags to make one mat. The mats are given to locations helpful to the homeless population. If you would like to donate bags for this purpose, bring to church and leave in the library area. Sandy will pick them up and deliver to the person who is doing the crocheting! Thanks for your donations as always!

### **2025 Collections**

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

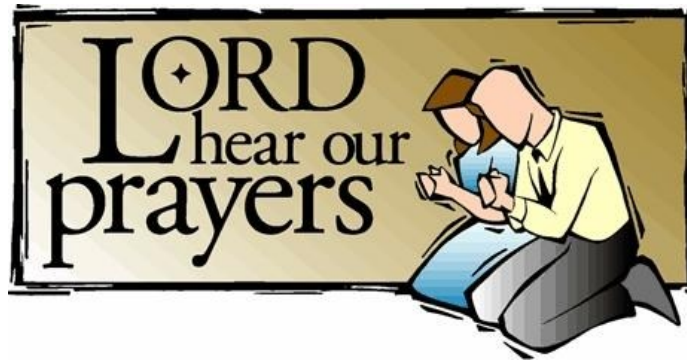
Other on-going collections at Grace - used eye glasses and cancelled stamps. Please find the small collection baskets on the library shelf. Also, Sandy Abernathy will take any American Flags that need to be disposed of properly. These can be left in the collection area in the library. (We are not currently saving soup can labels) Thank you for all donations!

**Quilt Days**— Our meeting day for December is the 13th. We meet in the South Tower room from 10-12 to tie quilt sandwiches. Everyone is welcome to stop by and help or if you'd rather sew quilt tops for us, that would be wonderful. Talk to Linda Sackreiter in the office or Barb Kinney regarding size requirements for tops. Thank you to all who support this mission for Lutheran World Relief. No experience needed. We can teach.



**Miles of Pennies** The large collection jar in the library is always accepting donations toward giving to the LSS fund for helping homeless Youth in St. Paul. We are well on our way to our goal of \$250. Let's exceed that again in 2025! Thank you to everyone who participates in this important mission. Your generous donations of coins and paper money are appreciated.





**We lift our prayers to God** in times of thanksgiving and times of need, in times of joy and times of sorrow. This month we especially pray for Sandy Abernathy, Patty Young, Josie Meyer, Paul Hesterberg, Phyllis Armstrong, Butch Nelson, and all those we name in our hearts. Both Pastor Paul and Phyllis Armstrong are recovering, but both have much recovery ahead of them. Patty Young is now at home recovering from a stroke.

#### **How to donate other than in the 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, other, etc.) This works best on the Firefox or Edge browsers. 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-2023**

	<u>October Actual</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>
General Fund & Rents	\$ 26,248.19	\$ 268,797.22	\$206,041.70
Expenses	<u>\$ 26,250.02</u>	<u>\$ 237,777.84</u>	<u>\$294,474.90</u>
Deficit/Overage	- \$ 1.83	\$ 31,019.38	-\$88,433.20



2 Foday Kargbo  
7 Jim Baumer  
Coley Gillis  
8 Carol Sabo  
9 Brianna Young  
14 Rick Major  
15 Stephen Abudulai  
16 Rich Castle  
18 Julie Major  
Jim Mohn  
23 Gina Gilgenbach  
24 Michael Schoonover  
28 Carol Goebel  
29 Alraina Ray-Taylor



# Worship Leaders for December 2025 -

<u>Date</u>	<u>Liturgist</u>	or	<u>Communion Asst.</u>	<u>Acolyte</u>	<u>Lay Reader</u>
7				Camryn Alleman	Peg Mathison
14	-----		Sue Atneosen	Kim Childs	Sue Atneosen
21					Kaliska Reed
24 4:00 pm	-----		Kris Mohwinkel		Peg Mathison
9:30pm	Barb Holtan		-----		
28					Dave Hunter

<u>Date</u>	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Greeters</u>
7	Roger Mathison, Linda Sackreiter	Alleman Family
14	Alleman family	
21	Greg & Kris Mohwinkel	
24 4:00pm		Kim Childs & Danita Hanson
24 9:30 pm		
28	Kim Childs, Danita Hanson, Amanda Christie	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Money Counters</u> - (we could use some additional volunteers on our counting teams)
7	Lana Alleman team
14	Amanda Christie team
21	Monique McClure-Hegge team
28	Kate Pray team



**Please see sign-up sheets for Sunday jobs in the Narthex, and the Sunday Fellowship sign-up in the S. Tower Rm.**

## **Come Be a Part of the Worship Team!**

Here are descriptions for each opportunity to join the Worship Team.

**Greeters** - all ages, arrive by 9:10, greet people at the lower level before the service

**Ushers** - all ages, arrive by 9:10, hand out bulletins, gather offering, help direct Communion, tidy Sanctuary after worship

**Acolyte** - all ages (with adult assistance if younger than 5<sup>th</sup> grade), arrive by 9:15, robe for festival services, light candles before the service, assist with communion during service, extinguish candles at end of service,

**Lay Reader** - all ages, arrive by 9:15, read the scripture lesson during worship

**Liturgist** - Confirmed members, arrive by 9:15, robe for most services, assist with leading the service, help serve Communion

**Communion Assistant** - Confirmed members, arrive by 9:20, robe for festival services, assist serving communion during service

**Money Counter** - Confirmed member, count offering money after the service

**Chancel Care Assistant** - all ages (with adult supervision if younger than 5<sup>th</sup> grade), after the service, assist in tidying up the altar area, putting away communion ware.

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1730 Old Hudson Road  
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**[gracelutheranstpaul@gmail.com](mailto:gracelutheranstpaul@gmail.com)**

**Pastor:**

Rev. Karen Williams

**Custodial Staff:**

Linda Denson

**Office Staff:**

Linda Sackreiter

**Music Staff:**

Sabe Dunlap - Director of  
Music Ministries

Kathleen Hollar—Organist

Jan Steingas—Triple G's

Connie Smeby—Joyous Juniors

