

DECEMBER 2023 • VOLUME 22, NO. 12



This Advent

This Advent feels soon and needed. This time of faithful waiting and watching, longing for Jesus' peace and presence and love to draw near, feels so necessary in our lives and this world.

This Advent demands we not look away, but instead pay attention and pray and give voice to Jesus' call for peace and well-being, for o, the little town of Bethlehem is not so still this year, the hopes and fears of all the years and people there this day cry out for all to hear.

This Advent may feel shorter. We will not gather in the morning for the fourth Sunday of Advent as it is also Christmas Eve, so we'll gather at 4:00 & 7:30 p.m. this year on Sunday, December 24.

Each Advent invites us to pause, a countercultural invitation in a season of demanding schedules and expectations, we slow down, if even for a moment, in anticipation of Jesus' birth.

This Advent, I really hope you will show up for each other as we gather together in community during a busy time of year. Take a look throughout this newsletter for more information about our upcoming Advent PrimeTime Dinner & Holden Evening Prayer Service on December 6, our Second Intergenerational Christmas Sunday School on December 17, and a quieter Longest Night Prayer Service on December 21.

As you enter into December and prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth this Christmas, below are a few resources that are available in the narthex for you to pick up.

This Christmas, I pray you'll join in sharing the joy of Jesus with loved ones. Invite a neighbor, friend, or family member to worship with you, extend kindness and generosity to yourself and others, and be moved once more by the wonder of these seasons. May the joy of good news for all people be a blessing to you this Advent and Christmas, and always.

Peace,
Pastor Amanda

Liturgical Calendar	Daily Devotional	Advent Calendars
<p>Happy New Year! On November 26 we observed the Reign of Christ Sunday and entered into a new liturgical year. Calendars are available for you to note the changing of seasons in the church year ahead.</p>	<p>Let's bless the Advent we <i>actually</i> have. In a daily devotional prepared by Kate Bowler you are invited to read and reflect, around 20 minutes each day leading up to Christmas. Printed copies are available for pickup or visit here to access daily prompts or download a PDF.</p>	<p>If you are looking for a paper Advent calendar with short daily prompts, we have additional copies of these available at Grace, too. Each window opens to a prompt for reflection. Blessings on the waiting and preparing.</p>

Prayers

Please lift up these petitions in your prayers—To become a praying member of the Friends in Prayer, please submit name and e-mail address to dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org.

World: Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, the Rev. Michael Burk, churchwide staff & their families, Bishop Stacie Fidler, synod staff & their families, those serving in military conflicts, Arusha Town Lutheran Parish in Tanzania (our companion parish)

Woodstock: Pastor Amanda Bergstrom & her family; Grace Staff; Grace Council

Health Concerns: Charlie Bell (friend of Jamielynn Wedoff), Bob & Carolyn Brackett (parents of Kari Gippert), Nancy Brown, Myron Callihan (brother of Susan Payton), Barb Carmichael, Jim Davis, Lori Dechant, Patrice Dunn, Joe Evanoff, Lucille Fergen (mother of Karen Hansen), Connie Fischer, Barbara Gehrke, Robert Giron (brother of Patty Kozlow), Tom Goggin, Becca Guenther (niece of Gretchen & Claude Hutchens), Tamasa Gutierrez (mother of Patty Kozlow), Liz Henniges, Gloria Holy, Denise Hoover, Dwight Jensen, Nicholas Karasch (nephew of Jamielynn Wedoff), Steve Kosmen (loved one of the Koehn family),

Tiffany Kurth (niece of Sue & Al Beckman), Amanda McNally (grandniece of Diane Baker-Lockwood), Tom Meyer, Ben Miller (nephew of Jerry & Mary Johnson), Kem Moran (friend of Barb Aavang), Linda Nogan (sister of Sheila Readel), Gloria Ogle, Georgia Petersdorf (sister-in-law of Gladys Renner), Pat Peterson, Dorothy Potoczky, Ila Randolph, Barbara Readel, Sheila Readel, Jayne Reicher (great niece of Barb & Wayne Japp), Herb & Bev Renner (brother & sister-in-law of Ken & Gladys Renner), Nick Resek (son of Tammy Resek-Goggin), Jessie & Sue Robertson (friends of Ron, Mary & Kimberly Koehn), Diane Rouse (cousin of Lisa Washkowiak), Nathan Ruffino, Nicholas Ruffino, Joan Russell (mother of Sheri Conover), Sally Sheahan, Nathaniel Shipp (family friend of Brian Meyers), Hollis Shutt, Ann Sinnott (friend of Shirley Berna), Kathy Stone, Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahon), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Bob Tonkin, Bev Visconti, Addie Jo Wedoff, Nick Wedoff, Caitlin Wilcox (niece of Anne Johnson)

Sorrow: Marlene Teuber (mother of Bob Teuber)

Joy: Marriage of Sierra Meiners and Cody Smith

Prayer Requests

If you wish to add a prayer request for the newsletter, please call the church office at: **815-338-0554**.

Your prayer concern will run for one month and may be renewed. Submissions to the *Friends in Prayer* email may be submitted by telephone to the church office or via email to grace@gracewoodstock.org.

Due to confidentiality laws, hospitals no longer notify churches or pastors when a member is hospitalized.

If you or a member of your family have a medical procedure planned or is admitted to the hospital, please call the church (**815-338-0554**).

Bulletin & Presence Light Sponsors

The Grace 2024 Bulletin & Presence Light sponsor sheets are available in the white binder at the Welcome Center. A month prior to your sponsorship, a form will be sent to you requesting information plus a \$20 donation for the Bulletins or a \$10 donation for the Presence Light. Some dates still are available in 2023, if you are interested. Thank you for helping Grace fund the weekly bulletins and presence lights.

Appreciation Reception for Tammy Baier

Please join us in the narthex after the 9 a.m. service on Dec. 3 for a "thank you" reception for Tammy Baier. Tammy concludes her role as director of the Cherubs and Joyful Messengers choirs at the end of 2023. We have been blessed by her talent and love of working with our youngest singers.

Revised Constitution Update

Our first congregation vote on our revised constitution was held at a Special Congregation Meeting on Sunday, Nov. 12. The revised constitution was strongly supported by the attending voting members. Per the synod requirements, we need to have a second and final congregation vote of approval. This will be held during our annual 2024 congregation meeting in February. The revised constitution includes required ELCA churchwide assembly changes from 2019 and 2022, plus required Grace Lutheran Church specific additions.

GRACE FOR TODAY—The deadline for the **January 2024** newsletter is **December 15**. Please send articles to Kari Gippert at kgippert@gracewoodstock.org, or the church office. Questions: Call the office at **815-338-0554**.

Current Job Opening

Applications are requested for the following part-time job:

• Director of Worship & Music

We invite you to encourage interested candidates to submit a cover letter and resume; this job description is posted on the front page of the website until filled.

Worship Gatherings this Advent & Christmas

See you soon for worship on Sundays **9:00 A.M.*** in the sanctuary, or worship wherever you are via YouTube livestream or the posted worship videos on our website. (**no 9 a.m. service on December 24*)

Advent Wreath & Nativity Candle Lighting

Sundays, December 3, 10, & 17, 9:00 a.m.

During worship we light candle(s) on the Advent wreath as we prepare for Christmas, and then light a Nativity Candle on **Christmas Eve**. Visit <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050544A5AB29A0F94-advent#/> to learn more and sign up for an upcoming worship service, or call the office to sign up.

Advent PrimeTime Dinner & Holden Evening Prayer Service

Wednesday, December 6

Join us on Wednesday, December 6 for an evening of food, fellowship, and worship. In the midst of full schedules and a season of preparing to celebrate Jesus' birth, we hope you will find a moment to pause on this first Wednesday in Advent.

Dinner will be served downstairs from 5:15-6:30 p.m., and then we gather for a beloved worship service, Holden Evening Prayer, from 7:00-7:30 p.m. This prayer service invites time for prayerful reflection, silence, and song.

All Are Welcome!

Grace Center

Dinner served 5:15 - 6:30 p.m.

Sanctuary

Evening Prayer 7:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Small Group Meeting Schedule

Sanctuary

Cherubs 5:30 - 5:45 p.m.

Joyful Messengers 5:45 - 6:15 p.m.

Meet in youth room

Confirmation Class 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

YSJ Drop-In 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Rejoice! 3rd Sunday in Advent & Intergenerational Sunday School

Sunday, December 17, 9:00 a.m. & 10:00 a.m.

This Sunday in worship we welcome new members, rejoice in the promise of baptism, and sing with joy as we draw near to Christmas. Please make plans to stay for our Intergenerational Christmas Sunday School at 10 a.m. in Luther Hall (gym). All ages invited to share in this time of celebrating Jesus' birth.

Before service on the 17th, all are invited to bring a nativity scene from home, all scenes will be displayed around Luther Hall. If you can bring cookies to share and be enjoyed by all after the service that would be appreciated. As able, please set up or drop off in the gym before worship.

Longest Night Prayer Service

Thursday, December 21, 7 p.m.

On this longest night of the year, the winter solstice, you are invited to a quiet prayer service. We look to the promise of Jesus' birth while naming honestly that not all is merry and bright. For all who are weary or carrying heavy burdens, for all who are navigating grief, illness, loneliness, stress, or loss; come dwell in God's word for a time of respite and solace.

Christmas Eve

Sunday, December 24, 4:00 & 7:30 p.m.

Invite your family, friends, and neighbors to gather for worship on Christmas Eve. We gather for worship at 4:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Each worship service includes Holy Communion, Christmas carols, and candle lighting. A children's recital precedes the 4 p.m. worship service, and both services will be livestreamed. Merry Christmas!

First Sunday of Christmas

Sunday, December 31, 9:00 a.m.

On December 31, we return to Sunday worship at 9:00 a.m. and gather for a service of lessons and carols with Holy Communion. (*continued on page 4*)

(continued from page 3)

Thank you to all who volunteer their time in support of weekly worship. If you have questions or would like to learn more, please reach out to people listed below, or call the office if you'd like assistance in signing up for an opening.

- If you have questions about volunteering as an Usher, Greeter, Reader, or Communion Assistant, please contact Fay Wilson.
- There are currently four people who facilitate worship being audible in the sanctuary and accessible via livestream. If interested in joining this A/V team rotation, please contact Bill Nattress.
- The altar guild teams are setting up before or cleaning up after worship, and there's room for you to join or form a team. To learn more, please contact Karen Reinhard.
- Please contact Jan Burns if you are interested in learning more about a choir, band, or opportunity to share your gifts with a vocal or musical instrument solo/ensemble.

Christmas Flowers At Grace

Help provide decorations for our sanctuary this Christmas. Give a gift in "honor of someone" or "in memory of a loved one" or "to the glory of God."

Mail in or drop off your coupon below, along with your \$16 gift to

Grace Lutheran Church, 1300 Kishwaukee Valley Rd., Woodstock, IL 60098

Please print clearly, as you want it to appear in the bulletin. Payments due in the office by **Monday, December 11, 2023.**

Amount: _____


CHOOSE ONE PER COUPON: (Please print)

In Memory Of: _____

In Honor Of: _____

To the Glory of God: _____

GIVEN BY: _____



Christmas Family Sharing Wraps Up Soon

Our Christmas Family Sharing (CFS) ministry put up the CFS Christmas tree last month. You still have time to visit the tree before or after worship but the deadline for donations is near. All donations must be returned to labeled bins in Grace's narthex by Dec. 3.

Call Mary Beth Martin-Bellavia at 815-245-1242 or email mbmartinbellavia@gmail.com with

questions. CFS ministry thanks you for your support.



Thank you for being church together and thank you to all who have returned an estimate of giving card to communicate how you plan to give in the year ahead. As we give in response to God's grace, our gifts are gathered together to support Grace Lutheran Church's ministries. If you have not yet returned a commitment card, we would be grateful for your time and sharing. Please return a card to an offering plate during worship or drop off or mail to the church office.

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Winter is approaching, and it's time to collect NEW mittens, hats, gloves, scarves, socks, and underwear for children and adults in need.

Please bring these items to church from now until Dec. 24 and hang them on the mitten tree in the narthex.

Your gifts will be much appreciated by families in our community. If you have questions, contact Maren Filetti at marenfilet@gmail.com.

YSJ—High School Youth

“Youth Standing with Jesus!” **FUN OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY PUTTING YOUR FAITH IN ACTION!**

High School Families Please check your INBOX for YSJ updates via email ... These postings will include event info., sign-up links, and more. Follow Grace Lutheran Church on Facebook for announcements and to see what YSJ is up to!

Wednesday Drop-In Nights - YSJ meets **EVERY TWO WEEKS** for refreshments, fun connection, meaningful conversation, activities, service planning, and more! (No RSVP necessary and you can even bring a friend) **YSJ Welcomes all high schoolers ... this is YOUR SPACE!** Join the fun from 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. Drop-in dates are every other Wednesday: Nov. 29, Dec. 13, & Dec. 27.

Please attend our Christmas Party - Wednesday, Dec. 13 from 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

RSVP's or Questions Call Kirsten Green at 815-236-6904 or email her at stylin1020@gmail.com.

Your YSJ Co-Leaders are Gretchen Hutchens, Kirsten Green and Tyler Palak.

Music Positions Open

We will have the music director position for the Cherubs Choir and director position for the Joyful Messengers Choir open starting in January 2024. These are both stipend positions. Currently the same person has had both positions. Do you love music and young children? This may be for you! Interested? Please see Pastor Amanda or Mary Noe, church council president.



2023 Kindness Project

Our Grace 2023 Kindness Project wraps up on Dec. 1. There is still time to get in on the action! Contact Sally Sheahan at 314-910-0541 for more information.

Pinochle

Afternoon pinochle will host a Christmas potluck at noon on Wednesday, Dec. 6 at the home of Jim and Sally Sheahan followed by cards. See 2023 Telephone Directory for their home address.

If you've been thinking about joining the group, this would be a great time to check it out! Contact Sally Sheahan at 314-910-0541 with questions or to RSVP for Dec. 6 so the group can plan accordingly. Pinochle will also be held in room 101 in the church basement at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 20. Evening pinochle will be held in the same location on Tuesday, Dec. 12 at 6:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve Children's Recital

Children are invited to participate in a Christmas Eve recital before the 4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service. The deadline to sign up is Wednesday, Dec. 6. A sign-up sheet is in a black binder titled "Activity Sign-up Book" at the Welcome Desk.

We seek individuals, duets, trios, or small groups for vocal, keyboard, or instrumental arrangements.

Your selection must be sacred (i.e., not Jingle Bells, etc.) and must be no longer than three minutes. This is open to any child through high school age.

A mandatory practice session will be held on Dec. 21 at 4:30 p.m. Contact Jan Burns at shelty2@sbcglobal.net with questions.

Christmas Hand Chime Choir

We are looking to create a hand chime choir to present an anthem at the 4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service. This is open to all children in second through eighth grades. No experience necessary. The rehearsals for the choir will be:

- **Wednesday, Dec. 13: 6:15 - 6:45 p.m.**
- **Wednesday, Dec. 20: 6:15 - 6:45 p.m.**
- **Thursday, Dec. 21: 4:00 - 4:30 p.m.**

Two out of the three rehearsals will be required in order to participate in the choir on Christmas Eve. A sign-up sheet is in a black binder titled "Activity Sign-up Book" located at the Welcome Desk. Please contact Jan Burns at shelty2@sbcglobal.net for more information.

Sunday Book Club

The Sunday Book Club meets in the parlor after church on the first three Sundays in December. Members continue to read the book "The Chosen, I Have Called You by Name," authored by Jerry Jenkins.

Dallas Jenkins, the TV series' producer, has said "the goal of 'The Chosen' is to authentically show Jesus through the eyes of those who actually met him."
"So far, the book is thought-

provoking," said Sally Sheahan, one of the Sunday Book Club leaders.

The club does not meet on Dec. 24 or 31. Newcomers are welcome any time. Contact Sally at 314-910-0541.

Presence Light Sponsors:

Dec. 3:

- Bill & Nancy Kreznor

Dec. 10:

- To the glory of God

Dec. 17

- Bev Unglaube

Dec. 24:

- Ken & Kathy Zank

Dec. 31:

- Gail Sorensen

Bulletin Sponsors:

Dec. 3:

- Jerry & Mary Johnson

Dec. 10:

- To the glory of God

Dec. 17

- Bev Unglaube

Dec. 24:

- Ken & Kathy Zank
- Marylee Steinwehe

Dec. 31:

- To the glory of God

eGiving Options

In addition to weekly offering envelopes, Grace provides electronic giving options. Please give in the way that is most convenient for you and let us know if you have any questions.

Give Online at our website or via our QR code

Give by Text by texting **877-698-3604**



Enter the 10-digit number (877-698-3604) and the amount you wish to donate, then press send, and follow the prompts to complete your donation.

Give through Vanco Mobile App by downloading the app

- Go to the App Store or Google Play and search “**Vanco Mobile**” to quickly find and download the app for free.
- Search “**Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church**” to select Grace in Woodstock, IL, then select Give to select an amount, General Operating Fund, and frequency, and the app will prompt you through completing your donation.

Give through automatic withdrawal program. To participate, please complete an enrollment form and return to the church office to schedule pre-authorized electronic funds transfer (EFT) from your bank account. You can change, stop, or temporarily hold your giving by contacting Grace's church office four business days in advance of a scheduled contribution.

*Please contact the church office (815-338-0554),
if you have any questions.*

**Visit the Grace website for the most up-to-date information for all
that is happening at Grace! gracewoodstock.org**

GRACE STAFF & COUNCIL

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Jon Bergstrom, Carrie Filetti

Building Supervisor

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Custodians

Chris & Kim Ethridge

Officers & Council

Diana Frisbie, Carrie Jarnecke,
Kevin Kleinjan, Nancy Kreznor,
Amanda Kurka, Matt Meiners,
Mark Miller, Mary Noe,