

JANUARY 2024 ▪ VOLUME 23, NO. 1

It is Time Now

Last January, I heard this song, “We Shall Be Known,” during a closing reflection at an important continuing education course and since then, I have been listening to it every Sunday morning before worship.

“We Shall Be Known,” MaMuse

By: K. LONGAKER

We shall be known by the company we keep
By the ones who circle round to tend these fires
We shall be known by the ones who sow and reap
The seeds of change alive from deep within the Earth

It is time now
It is time now that we thrive
It is time we lead ourselves into the well
It is time now
And what a time to be alive
In this "Great Turning" we shall learn to lead in love
In this "Great Turning" we shall learn to lead in love

I listen, and I pray as I think of all the faithful people who *circle round to tend these fires* of faith and ministry in the mission of Grace Lutheran Church. You who are reaching out, showing up, giving of time and talent and resources—caring and tending to the life of this faith community; thanks be to God for you.

I think too, of you who know what it is to patiently wait and trust in a labor of love and faith in action, *sowing and reaping seeds of change*—nurturing the life deeply present in and around us.

And I think of God’s timing, how it’s not always our sense of time, and yet here we are. The time is now. A time to *thrive* as we dive deep into the *well* of God’s sustaining grace, the waters of baptism that wash over us and claim us as

beloved, the depths of God’s love that restores us and promises *life*.

In the gift of new beginnings, as we are daily forgiven and daily rising to newness of life in Christ, we enter now into a new year and I pray that it is a time surrounded by the company of God’s faithful people. We’ll face challenging questions in the year ahead, preparing for a budget where there’s a gap between estimated giving and anticipated costs for ministry. We’ll sing, and break bread, we’ll serve and offer care and compassion. We’ll make mistakes, extend and receive forgiveness, we’ll laugh and cry and wonder together about this time we are living in—and I pray that we will keep learning how to lean into Jesus’ call to love one another.

We recently studied the story and witness of Esther during confirmation class—what if we have been called for such a time as this? Such a time as life and being church in 2024—with all its hopes and unknowns and changes and faithful possibilities? When Mary sang in anticipation of Jesus’ birth, she gave witness to a world about to turn. As we rejoice in the joy of Christmas and pay attention to God’s time and call right now—may we continue to see Jesus at work transforming the world through peace, justice, and wholeness.

Peace,
Pastor Amanda



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), 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 Nolan (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 Sinnett (friend of Shirley Berna), Kathy Stone, Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahon), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Bev Visconti, Addie Jo Wedoff, Nick Wedoff, Caitlin Wilcox (niece of Anne Johnson)

Sorrows: Joan Struck (sister of Dorothy Potoczky), Fred Learman, Tom Conover (brother and brother-in-law of Mike and Sheri Conover), David Nellesen (brother of Andy Nellesen), Tom Brink

Joy: Baptism of Hudson John Potoczky (son of Jessica & John Potoczky)

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. Thank you for helping Grace fund the weekly bulletins and presence lights.

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.

2024 'Bread for the Day' Devotional

"Bread for the Day" is a daily-use devotional resource filled with rich treasures; such as a brief scripture reading, a prayer and hymn for each day and more. The devotions begin Jan. 1, 2024. If you are interested in having a copy, the devotional books are available for purchase at the Welcome Desk for \$10.

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.

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

Worship this January

The day of Epiphany is January 6 and you are invited to stop by the narthex in early January to pick up a star word, a word to pray and reflect on in the year ahead. You are also welcome to pick up a piece of chalk and prayer sheet for a blessing of the home.

On Sundays in January, we begin with Baptism of Our Lord Sunday, and then continue through Sundays after Epiphany until an early beginning of Lent (Ash Wednesday is February 14).

May the revealing light of Christ shine brightly in your lives this January. We hope to see you soon for worship on **Sundays at 9:00 a.m.** in the sanctuary, or worship wherever you are via [YouTube livestream](#) or the posted worship videos on our website.

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.

COUNCIL INVITATION FOR JANUARY, FEBRUARY 2024 EVENTS

Dear Members of Grace Lutheran Church,

Greetings to you as we share in the blessings we have as the family of God at Grace Lutheran Church. Please join us as we review our 2024 budget, complete the approval of our revised constitution, and have our annual congregational meeting. We thank you for your participation in the life of Grace Lutheran Church through your commitments of time, presence, volunteering, and giving.

GIVING INTENTIONS

As we make plans for the future and mission of Grace in 2024, your "estimates of giving" are an important reflection of your giving intentions for the year ahead and allow us to more accurately prepare our 2024 budget. Thank you for your generosity in giving and faithfulness in serving God and our neighbor. If you still need to communicate your intentions, please drop off or mail your card to the church.

BUDGET REVIEW FORUM

We are planning our budget review forum on **Sunday, January 28, 2024 at 10:15 a.m.** in Luther Hall or via Zoom. This is an opportunity to review our planned 2024 budget and ask any questions in preparation for our annual meeting.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

We will have our annual congregational meeting on **Sunday, February 4, 2024 at 10:15 a.m.** in the church sanctuary. Please plan to attend this year's annual meeting where we will vote on the 2024 budget, give final approval to our revised church constitution, and elect voting members to the June 2024 Northern Illinois Synod assembly. This meeting will be held in person or Zoom with a quorum of 50 voting members needed.

Blessings to you as we share in the life and ministry of Grace Lutheran Church.

Grace Lutheran Church Council—Pastor Amanda Bergstrom, Diana Frisbie, Carrie Jarnecke, Kevin Kleinjan, Nancy Kreznor, Amanda Kurka, Matt Meiners, Mark Miller, Mary Noe

Sewing Circle 2023 Year-end Update



By Tammy Hansing

Thank you to Sewing Circle members for all your hard work, and thank you to the congregation for sharing your gifts of sheets, fabric, pillow stuffing, batting, yarn, bread, and Thrivent Action Team cards. Because of your generosity, Grace Sewing Circle was able to help numerous people this year, both locally—10 nursing homes in the area as well as a few extra side projects—and globally through Lutheran World Relief.

We distributed two times in 2023: in May and November. Local distribution numbers: 239 lap quilts, 65 crocheted blankets, 130 small pillows, 158 neck pillows, 434 walker bags, 223 wheelie bags, 323 cell phone bags, and 297 poly bags. Lutheran World Relief (LWR) received 210 quilts from our group last year. Praise God!

Our group works together on creating all of our items for distribution, with several people working on each item with a few exceptions. A few fun facts ... one Circle member cuts all our quilt squares for us. We've been keeping a running total since 2019. As of Dec. 10, 2023, she has cut 108,238 squares...and counting. Another member sews all our bag items. In 2023, she sewed more than 1,250 bag items in addition to over 200 LWR quilt tops. A third Circle member crochets all our blankets. She crocheted 65 in 2023.

Most members “come when they can, leave when they must” and are welcome to do as little or as much creating as they wish, resulting in “many hands make light work.”

Our group continues to meet on the first and third Tuesday of the month from 8:30 a.m. - noon and we always welcome new members. Come check us out! We have projects for sewers and non-sewers alike and kits you can use in the comfort of your own home and at your leisure. Contact Tammy Hansing at 815-338-5387 with questions.

Senior Phone Ministry Kept Busy with 2023 Kindness Project

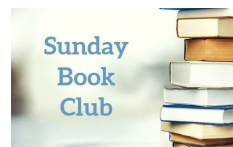
By Sally Sheahan

Greetings to you from Grace's “unofficial” kindness coordinator! Grace's Senior Phone Ministry had been busy during the last nine months of 2023, putting together a 12 days of Christmas package surprise for our church's seniors.

About 80 bags were successfully delivered in early December! A big thank you to all those involved, from the planning to the preparation, wrapping and delivery of these gifts. I would like to acknowledge those who made major donations for this undertaking:

- Pastor Amanda and other church staff
- Church Council for delivery help
- Grace Sewing Circle and Tammy Hansing
- Grace Children's Sunday School and Tyler Palak
- Judi Mason, Cindy Rowe and Kathy Zank
- National Arbor Foundation
- Senior Phone Ministry, especially Elaine Burcham, Judy Reilly & Judy Rooney
- Jim Sheahan, my husband
- Woodstock Walmart Grant Fund
- YSJ High School Youth and Carrie Fiorina

As you can see from the list above, it really was a whole church activity. It has been a blessing for me to be involved in this during a year of dealing with physical challenges. It was easy to find cheerful helpers and it kept my mind off mobility issues! One last thought - if you are not receiving phone calls from a Grace senior Phone Ministry volunteer and would like to, please contact me at 314-910-0541.



Throughout this month, the Sunday Book Club will meet every Sunday to study “The Chosen Book I, I have Called You By Name” by Jerry Jenkins. On Feb. 4, the last chapters of that book

will be covered, a potluck brunch will be served, and a vote will be held to determine the next book the group will study.

During the next few weeks the club reviews from the point where Jesus begins to “choose his disciples” and starts his ministry.

“This book brings it up close and personal in a thought-provoking way,” said Sally Sheahan, one of the book club coordinators. All are welcome. Contact Sally Sheahan at 314-910-0541 for more information.

Sunday School, Confirmation This Month

This month, confirmation reconnects for the second semester of classes on Jan. 10 after a two-week Christmas break. Winter and spring dates will center around the New Testament and the life and teachings of Jesus.

On Jan. 7, Sunday School will continue to learn about the life of Jesus through the story of his journey to Nazareth. On Jan. 21, the lesson celebrates the life of Martin Luther King Jr.

Last month, Sunday School celebrated Christmas at its Dec. 17 Intergenerational Sunday School. All ages were invited to bring cookies and/or their personal nativities. We were amazed at and enjoyed seeing the variety and distinctive creches.

Summer Camp Scholarship

We'd love for families with elementary age children to consider summer camp as a part of their faith formation. Sunday school families have received information about financial support for registration fees, and how to learn more about two local ELCA camps: [Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center](#) in Oregon, IL and [Lutherdale](#) in Elkhorn, WI.

Join us in worship and during the Sunday School hour following worship on January 21, to meet with Lutherdale's Executive Director & Program Director to learn more about summer camp opportunities in the year ahead.

If you have questions about summer camp, or about this camp scholarship opportunity, please contact Pastor Amanda or Tyler Palak.

Nominations Requested

As we look ahead to our Annual Meeting in early 2024, Grace's Nominating Committee invites you to prayerfully consider submitting a nomination form for Voting Members from Grace to participate in the Northern Illinois Synod's Synod Assembly (June 14-15, 2024, at Augustana College).

Synod Assembly is a gathering of members and rostered leaders from across the synod for meetings, conversation, and worship. We encourage anyone who has not had an opportunity to participate to consider this opportunity to connect and represent Grace. Please reach out to Pastor Amanda with questions about Synod Assembly. **Completed nomination forms are due to the church office by Dec. 31, 2023.**

You can download a nomination form at Grace's website [here](#): You also can pick up a printed copy at the Information Desk in the narthex.



Northern Illinois Synod Dates & Events

See <https://nisynod.org> about these Northern Illinois Synod upcoming events:

- Synod Epiphany Worship with Rite of Ordination—Jan. 6, 2 p.m. in Rockford
- Congregational Resourcing Event—March 16, Sauk Valley Community College

Pinochle

Please join us in the afternoons for our pinochle card parties at 1 p.m. on the first and third Wednesdays of each month in 2024. We meet in room 101 in the lower level of the church.

This month, we meet on Jan. 3 and 17.

Evening pinochle is in the process of reorganizing. The group will meet informally at each other's homes. There's always room for one more at a table! Call Sally Sheahan at 314-910-0541 for more information on daytime pinochle or evening gatherings.

14th Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Interfaith Prayer Breakfast

Monday, Jan. 15, 2024
7:30 - 9 a.m.

Tickets are available online [here](#) for Faith Bridge's Interfaith Prayer Breakfast, "What does it mean to belong?" You are invited to join in this dynamic talk about belonging, which will include aspects of housing, race and gender.

People In Need Forum At McHenry County Community College

Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024
8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

The public is invited to learn about the abundance of resources and support for themselves and for others at the annual People in Need Forum each January at MCC. Exhibitors showcase essential community resources available to help those in need and present workshops to address topics such as immigration, senior issues, caregiver resources, LGBTQ, substance abuse and addictions and homelessness. The event is free and open to the public. Registration is encouraged but not required.

Presence Light Sponsors:

Jan. 7:

- In memory of my husband Russ, given by Donna Freeman

Jan. 14:

- To the glory of God

Jan. 21

- To the glory of God

Jan. 28:

- To the glory of God

Bulletin Sponsors:

Jan. 7:

- To the glory of God

Jan. 14:

- To the glory of God

Jan. 21

- To the glory of God, given by Doug & Mary Noe

Jan. 28:

- 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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Jan Burns

Music Group Directors

Terry Aavang,
Jon Bergstrom, Carrie Filetti

Building Supervisor

Ken Zank

Custodians

Chris & Kim Ethridge

Officers & Council

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