

JANUARY 2025 ▪ VOLUME 24, NO. 1



Beloved of God, dwelling in the good news of Jesus' birth this Christmas—cling close to the Word who dwells among us, the light of Christ that cannot be overcome.

As we teeter on this edge, of endings and beginnings, giving thanks for what has been and anticipating what is yet to be—keep looking for God's guidance through paths as yet untrodden and adventures yet unknown.

In the new year ahead, I pray you'll find wisdom and a path forward, filled to the brim with God's call to loving kindness, mercy, justice, and peace.

On Epiphany, January 6, we rejoice in the star of wonder and light that led people to overwhelming joy as Jesus was revealed to all. From there, though, the route home looked different than expected. In an act of resistance, the wise ones worshipped the newborn king, gave offerings, and then took another route, choosing life over death and traveled home another way.

I recently heard this song "May You Find a Light" by The Brilliance, and I offer it here as my prayer for you—may you find a light to guide you home. The path may surprise you, but whether you feel lost, weary, alone, or yearning to be known—may the light of Christ guide you home.

May you be guided home to yourself—living authentically in the new year, home to your loved ones—living in healthy and reconciled relationships, home to community—living as recipient and giver of Christian care and connection.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year, Grace Lutheran Church!

Peace,
Pastor Amanda

"MAY YOU FIND A LIGHT"
-THE BRILLIANCE

"Lost and weary traveler
Searching for the way to go
Stranger, heavy-hearted
Longing for someone you know

May you find a light . . .
to guide you home."

Prayers

Home Communion

If you are unable to gather for worship and would like communion to be brought to you at home, please reach out to the church office. Grace has a team of home communion ministers who visit and bring communion from worship to you.

Senior Phone Calling

If you are interested in joining the senior calling team or are a senior who would be interested in learning more about this ministry of conversation and prayer, please call the church office.

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, 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: Phyllis Aavang, Susan (Kyle) Bates (friend of Barb Aavang), Charlie Bell (friend of Jamielynn Wedoff), Bob Brackett (father of Kari Gippert), Nancy Brown, Myron Callihan (brother of Susan Payton), Barb Carmichael, Jim Davis, Lori Dechant, Patrice Dunn, Patricia Erickson (friend of Carrie & Kevin Jarnecke), Lucille Fergen (mother of Karen Hansen), Connie Fischer, Robert Giron (brother of Patty Kozlow), Tom Goggin, Becca Guenther (niece

of Gretchen & Claude Hutchens), Tamasa Gutierrez (mother of Patty Kozlow), Gloria Holy, Denise Hoover, Wayne Japp, Nicholas Karasch (nephew of Jamielynn Wedoff), Steve Kosmen (loved one of the Koehn family), Tiffany Kurth (niece of Sue & Al Beckman), Carolyn Liedtke, Beverly Limbaugh (friend of Carrie & Kevin Jarnecke), Amanda McNally (grandniece of Diane Baker-Lockwood), Ben Miller (nephew of Mary Johnson), Natalie Miller (sister to Mary Johnson), Kem Moran (friend of Barb Aavang), Karen O'Brien, Jenny Perrone (friend of Cindy Walters), Pat Peterson, Anna Pienschke (granddaughter of Joe & June Pienschke), Dorothy Potoczky, Ila Randolph, Sheila Readel, Jayne Reicher (great niece of Barb & Wayne Japp), Herb & Bev Renner (brother & sister in law of Ken & Gladys Renner), Ken 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, Nathaniel Shipp (family friend of Brian Meyers), Hollis Shutt, Ann Sinnett (friend of Shirley Berna), Kathy Stone, Susan (friend of Michelle Anderson), Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahon), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Marilyn Vanskike, Bev Visconti, Addie Jo Wedoff, Nick Wedoff, Caitlin Wilcox (niece of Anne Johnson)

Sorrow: Barbara Readel

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**).

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 Grace's website at

<https://www.gracewoodstock.us/current-openings/>.

.....
GRACE FOR TODAY—The deadline for the **February 2025** 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

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

Isaiah 60:1

Gather for worship at the start of the new year as we observe Epiphany on January 5, remember the promises of baptism on Baptism of Our Lord Sunday, January 12, and continue into the season of Jesus' revealing presence being made known.

In early January, stop by the Information Desk to pick up a star word and a blessing for the home, a few Epiphany traditions to light and guide our way.

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 by 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.
- **Try a new musical group in the new year** . . . each of Grace's vocal & bell choirs and band meet a couple times before participating in worship. Here are the upcoming first rehearsals in the new year, Reach out to Jan Burns or directors with any questions.

	Ages & Typical Rehearsals	1st Rehearsal in 2025	Director
Cherub	Age 3 – 1 st Grade Youth Vocal Choir; <i>two Wednesdays 5:30 - 5:45 p.m.</i>	January 29, 5:30 p.m.	Cindy Meyer
Joyful Messengers	2 nd – 5 th Grade Youth Vocal Choir; <i>two Wednesdays 5:45 - 6:15 p.m.</i>	January 15, 5:45 p.m.	Cindy Meyer
Laudate	7 th – 12 Grade Youth Vocal Choir; <i>two Sundays 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.</i>	January 5, 10 a.m.	Carrie Filetti
Chancel	Adult Vocal Choir; <i>two Wednesdays 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.</i>	January 22, 7:00 p.m.	Carrie Filetti
Revelation Ringers	Adult Handbell Choir; <i>two - three Wednesdays 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.</i>	January 29, 6:00 p.m.	Terry Aavang
Grace Tones	Youth & Adult Contemporary Band; <i>One-hour weekday evening rehearsal</i>	First week of January	Jon Bergstrom

Mobile Food Pantry

In 2025, we enter into the fourth year of the Woodstock Mobile Food Pantry with St. Ann's Episcopal and local faith communities. Volunteers meet in the Woodstock parking lot on South Street across from Woodstock High School on the second Monday of each month at 3 p.m. to unload pallets from the Northern Illinois Food Bank food truck, prepare boxes, and load cars. Upcoming distribution dates are January 13, February 10 & March 10. Contact Mike Phillips to learn more or to volunteer.

Mark Your Calendar

Grace's Annual Meeting will be held on Feb. 9, 2025, at 10:15 a.m. in the sanctuary & via Zoom. A **Budget Forum** will be held on Jan. 26, 2025, at 10:15 a.m. in Grace Center.

Save the Date

Our Northern Illinois Synod's annual Congregational Resourcing Event will be held on March 22, 8:30 a.m. – 3:45 p.m. at Sauk Valley Community College. Visit <https://nisynod.org/programs/cre> for more information and upcoming registration.

Sewing Circle 2024 Year-End Update:

Thank you to Grace 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, thread and Thrivent Action Team cards. Because of your generosity, our sewing circle was able to help many people this year, both locally to nine nursing homes in the area, plus three other charities, and globally through Lutheran World Relief.

We distributed twice last year: once in July and then in November. We recorded year-end stats as follows:

Locally distributed items include: 212 lap quilts; 51 crocheted blankets; 126 small pillows; 59 neck pillows; 350 walker bags; 152 wheelie bags; 166 cell phone bags; and 260 poly bags.

Lutheran World Relief received 157 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 different stages of each item. Some of our members do work at home and others just work during our twice monthly meetings. Some of us do both. Our 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 a wonderful example of working in community to Share God's Grace.

Our group continues to meet on the first and third Tuesdays of the month from 8:30 a.m. - noon and we always welcome new members.

We have projects for sewers and non-sewers alike, and also kits and other projects that you can do in the comfort of your own home and at your leisure. Come and join us! Any questions, please contact Tammy Hansing or the church office.

--Tammy Hansing



*O God, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.
+ Psalm 104:24*

We are excited to see how God's call will compel Grace Lutheran Church to respond to God's grace and live out our faith in love and service to God and neighbor in 2025.

As members of our faith community have communicated their giving intentions for the year ahead, now the finance committee is preparing a budget for mission and ministry in the new year. Thank you!

If you have not yet completed an Estimate of Giving Card, would you consider returning your giving estimate to the church office?

It is our hope to continue to support faithful and meaningful ministries in an ever-changing time. Thank you for the ways you partner in sharing God's grace and blessings on the new year ahead!



Invite your friends & family, and gather for an all-ages game night, Sunday, Jan. 5, 4 - 7 p.m. You are welcome to bring a favorite game, snack or dessert; or just show up for pizza & fellowship.

- board games & card games in Grace Center
- video games in a classroom
- basketball or bag toss in the gym
- sardines?

See you soon in the new year!

MLK Interfaith Prayer Breakfast

Tickets are available online for Faithbridge McHenry County's annual prayer breakfast, January 20, 7:30 - 9 a.m. at the Holiday Inn, Crystal Lake. Visit <https://faithbridgeinterfaith.org/> for more information.

2025 Bulletin, Presence Light Sponsors Needed

The 2025 Bulletin & Presence Light sponsor sheets are available in the white binder at the Information Desk.

A month prior to your sponsoring, a form will be sent to you requesting information and a donation of \$20 for the Bulletins & \$10 for the Presence Light. Thank you for helping us fund these weekly.

Grateful for Tyler Palak's Service

It is with gratitude and sadness that Grace's Church Council received the resignation of Tyler Palak, Director of Youth Education, which was effective on December 24, 2024. We are very appreciative of the 1 ½ years that Tyler was a part of Grace's youth education ministry.

People in Need Forum

On Saturday, January 25, 2025, from 8:30 a.m.–1 p.m. at McHenry County Community College, you are invited to learn about the abundance of resources and support for yourself and for others at the annual People in Need Forum. 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. Visit <https://www.mchenry.edu/pin/#> for more information.

Pinochle

Daytime Pinochle usually meets the first and third Wednesdays of the month. However, the first Wednesday of the new year is January 1! The church will be closed for New Year's Day, and there will be no pinochle at the church. Our daytime group will meet on Wednesday, Jan. 15 at 1 p.m. in room 101. Evening Pinochle meets on the second Tuesday of the month (Jan. 14) at 6:30 p.m. Enter through the lower level for all church Pinochle. Contact Sally Sheahan for any questions.

--Sally Sheahan



We resume Jan. 5 with a new book, by popular request, "Kitty, My Rib," written by E. Jane Mall. A historical fiction about Katharine Luther, the wife of Martin Luther, it's "the heartwarming story of a woman of courage and devotion." Come join our small group in the parlor after church on Sunday mornings, as we share this novel about our Lutheran history and look back from the 21st century. Contact Paul Lockwood or Sally Sheahan with questions.

--Sally Sheahan

Sunday School

Sunday School meets twice this month. On Sunday, Jan. 5, a service project will be dedicated to MLK.

On Jan. 19, the children will return to regular Sunday School.



Anyone interested in volunteering in a leadership capacity for VBS. We are holding a planning meeting on Sunday, Jan. 12, 2025, at 10 a.m.

Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia: Feb. 23

The Alzheimer's Association will offer an education program titled *Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia* on Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025, from 10:15 - 11:15 a.m. in Grace Center. The event is open to the congregation and the public and will provide an opportunity to learn about Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and the free care and support resources available to families impacted by these conditions.

RSVP is not required, but please email Carrie Steckl at Carrie.Steckl@gmail.com to indicate interest so we can estimate attendance. Carrie is also happy to answer any questions about the event.

Presence Light Sponsors:

Jan. 5

- In honor of our daughter Abigail's completion of her PhD, given by Bill & Nancy Kreznor

Jan. 12:

- Given to the glory of God

Jan. 19

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

Jan. 26:

- Given to the glory of God

Bulletin Sponsors:

Jan. 5:

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

Jan. 12:

- Given to the glory of God

Jan. 19

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

Jan. 26:

- Given 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

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

GRACE STAFF & COUNCIL

Lead Pastor

Rev. Amanda Bergstrom
abergstrom@gracewoodstock.org

Administrative Secretary

Denise Klabunde
dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org

Financial Secretary & Asst. Administrative Secretary

Carrie Fiorina
cfiorina@gracewoodstock.org

Communications Coordinator

Kari Gippert
kgippert@gracewoodstock.org

Organist & Interim Coordinator of Worship & Music

Jan Burns

Music Group Directors

Terry Aavang, Jon Bergstrom,
Carrie Filetti, Cindy Meyer

Building Supervisor

Ken Zank

Custodians

Chris & Kim Ethridge

Council

Michelle Anderson, Brian Gerloff,
Carrie Jarnecke, Nancy Kreznor,
Luigi Licastro, Michael Liedtke,
Mark Miller, Mary Noe

Treasurer

Jane Gerloff