



**GRACE
LUTHERAN CHURCH**

1300 Kishwaukee Valley Rd
Woodstock, IL 60098
815 338-0554 - Fax 815 338-0913
E-mail grace@gracewoodstock.org
www.gracewoodstock.org

Grace *for Today*

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ANOTHER YEAR.....By Pastor Ken Gibson

As we enter the month of February, I am remembering that on Feb 13th I will begin my 11th year here as Senior Pastor at Grace. I thank you for these years of life together and for the many moments of sharing that we have had together, and still yet to share!

Recently, I once again spent a week at my annual retreat in NE Iowa with seven of my seminary classmates, an event that many of you know is near when you see my good friend Scott Brents show up. This year at the retreat we did a serious amount of discussing the future for each of us. One of my fellow retreaters had just begun serving at a new call in Wisconsin where he would now be serving a 4-point call. He had been in a church the size of Grace but, in all honesty, it proved to be a real challenge. He is so very much happier now serving in a much smaller less “anxious” (his words) setting. Still others were contemplating calls to locations nearer children and grandchildren. Seems we are all now getting to a point in our lives when another year means another chance to think again about where God is calling us all to be.

Another reward of our retreat was how I had the opportunity to read uninterrupted at a level I have so longed. It was nice to read, reflect, pray, laugh, and to enjoy the love we have for each other for another year. This retreat was the 18th in a row for our location in beautiful NE Iowa and our 26th year of at least some of us getting together in January. We started while still in seminary and next year we will all celebrate our 25th year in service to the church.

As I shared in the annual report I repeat here now. It is my intent to live life a bit less stressed, if only in the sense of not less work load, but more in the sense of my reaction to all of it, by embracing, as much as I can, a sense of gratitude. I am also thinking about what another year may bring for us all as we consider faithfully who we are as a Grace community and what our role in the greater community might be. How might God be calling us to a sense of gratitude, mission, and ministry for another year and beyond.

So then, another year? What might we be sharing and what might God be seeking of us all? Time will tell I am sure, as for me I am grateful for it all.

ANNUAL MEETING– Be sure to save February 10 for the Annual Meeting following the 10:45 a.m. service at 12:05 P.M. A Ministry Matters presentation will follow the Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting is an important time for everyone in the congregation to know what is happening in our church and to familiarize themselves with the budget. Annual reports will be emailed and available at the Information Center as of February 3.

SENIOR LUNCHEON- February 26 – Do you worry about Identity Theft? Frank, our speaker is an expert in this subject and will tell us about the 10 things you can do to help reduce your risk of Identity Theft. Come and learn!! Our menu this month is Swiss Chicken Bake, Lemony Red Potatoes, Spinach Salad, Croissants and Stoney's Famous Rhubarb Crisp with Ice Cream. Cost is only \$5, so bring a friend! Sign up in the Activity Binder by February 24 Questions, call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063.



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 Jeff Clements, synod staff & their families, those serving in military conflicts, Arusha Town Lutheran Parish in Tanzania (our companion parish), Scott Bunch serving in the military.

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

Health Concerns: Rev. Jim Berg (friend of Marlene Botts), Lois Bloese, John Bloese, Angela Boe (friend of Hanlin Family), Mary Sue Boerner (friend of Paul Lockwood & Diane Baker-Lockwood), Sheila Boggess (friend of Kathy Stone), Frank Bunch, Allison Clark (niece of Martha & Bill Fleck), Dot Clark (mother of Martha Fleck), Jim Davis, Nancy Davis, Patrice Dunn, Zebadiah Fenneman, Robert Giron (brother of Patty Kozlow), Tom Goggin, Becca Guenther (niece of Gretchen & Claude Hutchens), Tamasa Gutierrez (mother of Patty Kozlow), Sue Hanson-Smith (friend of Barb Aavang), Liz Henniges (wife of Al Henniges), Baby Jaxson L. (friend of the Wedoff family), Nancy Knieja (friend of Martha Fleck), Elayna Kuipers (friend of the Wedoff Family), Anna Larsen (sister of Al Henniges), John Mahoney, Wilma Malinasky (mother of Janice Laird), Amanda McNally (grandniece of Diane Baker-Lockwood), Renee Merklin (friend of Rachel Bratanick), Karen Millman, Tammy Millman (daughter of Karen Millman), Kem Moran (friend of Barb Aavang), Carl Neubaum (son of Donna Neubaum), JoyAnn Oberman, Kayla Oberman, Riley Obenchain, Carol O'Brien (sister of Bill Larsen), Gloria Ogle, Arne Olson, Andrea Paetsch (aunt of Debbi Lynd), Clark Phillips (father of Cindy Meyer), Vicki Pilgard, John Potoczky, Carol Rank, Shawn Rank (son of Carol Rank), Sheila Readel, Therese Rebman (mother of Mary Koehn), Herb & Bev Renner (brother & sister in law of Ken & Gladys Renner), Jessie & Sue Robertson (friends of Ron, Mary & Kimberly Koehn), Joan Russell (mother of Sheri Conover), Colton Sciluffo (infant son of a friend of Joy Oberman), Bill Seger, Eleanor Setser, Linda Sprenkle (friend of Ron & Mary Koehn), Orion Stine (friend's grandson of Kathy Stone), Elsie Stoddard, Ginny Stroh (mother of Fay Wilson), Doris Sunday, Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahan), Ellie Mae Thompson (great niece of Gladys & Ken Renner), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Bev Visconti, Bud Winter, Ruth Zirves

Sorrows: Florence Shawl, Bob Unglaube, Donna Dufar (wife of Rev. Terry Dufur), James Kassner (grandfather of Jamielynn Wedof)

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 week and may be renewed. Submissions to the *Friends in Prayer* e-mail and phone teams may also be submitted by telephone to the church office or by e-mail to 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 office.

GUIDING LIGHT.....by Pastor Amanda

Lent starts later this year, after a festive Transfiguration Jazz worship weekend on **March 2 & 3**, we will gather on Wednesday, **March 6** for Ash Wednesday worship services. For now, in these extended weeks after Epiphany, I keep feeling drawn to the length and light of this season.



Even though it is cold and snowy, there have been stunning moments of sunlight this winter- blinding at times while driving, captivating on the icy trees, heart-warming after a day of rain.

At the beginning of the year, we celebrated the guiding light of the star that led the Magi to meet the newborn king and then celebrated baptism and the call to 'Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.' And now we get to journey through this season for the whole month of February.

While listening to a newer album of one of my favorite bands, Mumford & Sons, I heard these lyrics that keep drawing me into this theme of light, "[be]cause even when there is no star in sight; You'll always be my only guiding light." And though I'm not sure what these words mean to the artists, for me they articulate the theme of this season and in my heart right now.

Even when there is no star in sight, God will always be our guiding light. Even when something happens, and nothing makes sense, and a way forward seems unclear, God will always be our guiding light. For even when directions and decisions appear without a bright shining star to definitively identify which way to go, God will always guide the way, God will shine light into our lives and world, God will guide us even when God's promised presence is imperceptible.

Peace to you in these days, may they indeed be filled with joy and peace as we walk in the light, the beautiful light of Jesus, the light of the world.

MAMA'S BOOK CLUB- On Sunday mornings when Sunday school meets, 9:45-10:30 A.M., a small group of moms meet for discussion and fellowship in the nursery. You are invited to join in conversation around a short devotional reading from Pressing Pause: 100 Quiet Moments for Moms to Meet with Jesus. Talk to or email Jamielynn Wedoff with any questions (jamielynn@wedoffphotography.com).

CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCING EVENT- Mark your calendars for the Congregational Resourcing Event (CRE) **March 9, 2019** at Kishwaukee Community College, Malta, Illinois. Our keynote speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Dave Daubert. This event is an opportunity for leaders and members of congregations across the Northern Illinois Synod to learn and share resources. Save the date and look for further details about registration and carpooling from Grace and visit <http://nisynod.org/cre/> to learn more.



BUDGET REVIEW- Please join us for an Adult Forum on **February 3, 9:45 A.M.** in Luther Hall where we will have a Budget Review. We will look over the upcoming budget in preparation for the Congregational Meeting.

SUNDAY BOOK CLUB- The Sunday Book Club meets weekly in room 102 between services. Here are February's upcoming topics: Feb. 3 - Social Media; Feb. 10 - Family; Feb. 17 - Politics; Feb 24 - Race. Come, relax and enjoy some homemade treats and some lively discussions.

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE-The deadline for the March newsletter is **February 15**. Send articles to Tammy Baier at tbaier@gracewoodstock.org, or the church office. Questions: Call the office at 815-338-0554.

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING- February 2 & 3. On Super Bowl Weekend, Grace's Youth Group will be collecting money in soup kettles as a part of the nationwide youth group effort to gather donations for hungry people. Coins, bills, checks are all welcome to make a joyful noise and donation to ELCA World Hunger after worship.

LENTEN SOUP LUNCHESES- Lent begins **March 6** and we are looking for some cooks willing to make a large pot of soup to serve after the noon service. For more information or to sign up, see the Activity Binder at the Welcome Center.



ADULT FELLOWSHIP EVENT – Sunday, April 14 “Nonsense” at the Woodstock Opera House, 2:00 performance. We have seats reserved on the main floor, second to fourth row. Cost: \$23. Afterwards, you may join us for supper on your own at The Pub. Please sign up in the Activity Binder, pay by March 10.

MITTEN TREE - Thank you for donating hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, underwear, and socks to help families in our community stay warm. Because of your generosity, we were able to give more than 200 items through the Family Health Partnership Clinic, Woodstock Public Library, and Woodstock schools.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY- Please join us between worship services on **February 10** for a reception to celebrate Pastor Ken’s 10th Anniversary here at Grace. Help us celebrate all the joys the past 10 years have brought.

CHRISTMAS FAMILY SHARING- A huge thank you for your generosity in supporting the Christmas Family Sharing ministry! Thanks to your giving, we were able to purchase almost \$2000 worth of ELCA Good Gifts items. At least one of each possible item was donated – including the latrine! We delivered 13 boxes of food, 1 box of hats and mittens, and 1 box of medicines and other nonfood items to the Family Health Partnership Clinic. And, we delivered 6 boxes of donations plus 5 additional sets of dishes to Turning Point. Wow and thank you!

AMAZON SMILE- Do you shop online at Amazon? If you do, Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Grace Lutheran Church. You can learn more and start your shopping at smile.amazon.com.: just search Grace Lutheran Church Woodstock, IL.

DIXIELAND WEEKEND IS COMING- Our Annual celebration of Jesus' Transfiguration which closes the church's emphasis on the birth of Christ and moves us into Lent, paralleling Mardi Gras is joyfully celebrated with Dixieland instrumentalists, all of the choirs, and our singing of hymns in New Orleans' Jazz style. Mark your calendar for this once a year worship expression on March 2nd and 3rd at all three services.

CHILI FEST- March 3. You are invited to Chili Fest following the Transfiguration Dixieland Jazz worship services on March 3. Please sign up on the Activity Board and note if you’ll be bringing chili or cornbread. We will share in a friendly chili fest competition, share a good meal & fellowship, and there will be raffle baskets to raise funds for the High School Youth Group’s summer trips. We hope to see you there!

FALL 2019 PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION- Registration for the upcoming fall semester is currently open to all preschool families and Grace Lutheran Church members. We have a place for all God’s children, ages 2-5 years old, in this loving Christian school where we learn, play, grow, and share Jesus’ love. Help us spread the word with other families with young children. Registration forms can be found on our website and at the Welcome Center.

Preschool Registration



THRIVENT ACTION TEAMS- Are you a Thrivent member? If yes, would you be willing to share an Action Team for ministry? Several Grace members have shared this great resource for exciting mission opportunities (PADS, youth ministry, senior ministry, service activities, educational events, and more), and we would love for additional opportunities! Please contact one of our pastors if you would be willing to share in an Action Team effort at Grace, or for more information or any questions.

Here is more information about Thrivent Action Teams:

-All Thrivent members are eligible to lead a Thrivent Action Team (Benefit Members are eligible to lead two Thrivent Action Teams per calendar year, and associate members are eligible to lead one per calendar year).

-A Thrivent Action Team is a way to kickstart a project for an unmet need in your community (a one-time fundraiser, service activity or educational event that can be completed within 90 days).

-Thrivent members can apply through their online Thrivent account access, and once a project is approved you will receive a Thrivent Action Kit, including t-shirts, thank-you cards, and a \$250 Community Impact Card you can use as seed money to get your project off the ground and make a bigger impact.

e-GRACE — To receive your *Grace For Today* newsletter online just stop by the Information Center and sign up for this service. No one will be removed from the “hard-copy” mailing list unless they have formally subscribed to the e-newsletter.

BULLETIN & PRESENCE LIGHT SPONSORS- 2019 Bulletin & Presence Light sponsor sheets are available in the green binder at the Welcome Center. 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 the weekly bulletins and presence lights.



PRESCHOOL NEWS- Effective immediately, applicants are being accepted to fill the Director Position. Please contact the church office or preschool office for the job description and qualifications. Information is also posted on indeed.com When applying please submit a resume, transcripts and any additional qualifications.

LENT ADULT FORUM- Mark your calendar for a Lent Adult Forum on April 7 at 9:40 A.m. in Luther Hall. More info to come.



WOODSTOCK AREA COMMUNITY MINISTRIES- WACM will be hosting a fundraiser on **Sunday, February 24 at 2:00 P.M.** to help the Direct Assistance Program, DAP. Charles Troy will present "Charles Troy's Creation of King and I" at Grace. The tickets will be \$15 per person and includes the presentation, a question and answer session, and some light refreshments. Please join us for this fun learning experience and help DAP at the same time.

CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY SURVEY- As the Church Council prepares to review our strategic plan, we will be asking congregational members to complete a Congregational Vitality Survey prepared by the Northern Illinois Synod and the ELCA. Some might wonder, “Why should we do this?” That is a good question; and the answer is because this is the one tool we have that helps us measure subjective realities about our relationship with God, our relationship with one another in the congregation, and our relationship with the world beyond the congregation.

The survey will take place during worship services on **February 23 and 24** (response time is approximately 15 to 20 minutes) – a handout/paper activity will be available for youth and children during this survey time. Other survey availability will be **February 25 through March 1** in the church office during office hours, at PrimeTime on **February 27**, and before or after worship on **March 2 and 3**.

SYNOD NEWS-

Walking Together is the weekly e-news of the Northern Illinois Synod. Everyone is encouraged to subscribe by using the online form at <http://nisynod.org/pubs/wt/> or by sending names and email addresses to karin@nisynod.org.

CHURCH CLOSINGS AND EVENT CANCELLATIONS -

When severe weather arrives, Grace Lutheran Church will follow D200 closing and cancellations. All weekday activities, including preschool, will be cancelled if D200 has cancelled classes. Please check the [Emergency Closing Center website](#) or any of the radio stations listed on the [D200 website](#) for any severe weather cancellations.

SAVE THE DATE-

Souper Bowl of Caring- FEB 2/3
Adult Forum Budget Review- FEB 3
Trivent Choice Dollars Info- FEB 3
Youth Group super Bowl Party- FEB 3
Men's Bible Study/Sewing Circle-FEB 5
Committee Night- FEB 5
DAP- FEB 7
Annual Congregational Meet.- FEB 10
Men's/Afternoon Bible Study-FEB 12
Pres.Day/Church Office Closed-FEB 18
Faith Circle- FEB 18
Sewing Circle- FEB 19
Men's/Afternoon Bible Study- FEB 19
DAP/Council- FEB 21
DAP/WACM Fundraiser- FEB 24
Men's/Afternoon Bible Study- FEB 26
Senior Lunch- FEB 26
Men's/Afternoon Bible Study-MAR 5
Sewing Circle/ All Committee- MAR 5
Ash Wednesday Services- MAR 6
Lenten Soup Lunch- MAR 6
Preschool Book Fair- MAR 9/10
Men's/Afternoon Bible Study- MAR 12
Midweek Lent Services- MAR 13
Lenten Soup Lunch- MAR 13
Preschool Movie Fundraiser- MAR 15
Youth Group FMSC- MAR 15

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

GRACE STAFF & COUNCIL

Senior Pastor/Rev. Kenneth D. Gibson
kgibson@gracewoodstock.org
Office Phone: 815-338-0554
Cell Phone: 815-861-9554

Associate Pastor

Director of Senior High Ministries
Rev. Amanda Bergstrom
Cell Phone: 630-664-9016
abergstrom@gracewoodstock.org

Administrative Assistant to the Senior Pastor/Secretary-Denise Klabunde
dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org

Office Assistant/Bookkeeper
Carrie Fiorina-cfiorina@gracewoodstock.org

Director of Senior Ministries
Shirley Busse

Director of Communications
Tammy Baier-tbaier@gracewoodstock.org
Director of Music Ministries

Ron Fredriksen
rfredriksen@gracewoodstock.org

Parish Musicians

Terry Aavang, Jan Burns, Dale Carlson,
Tammy Baier, Carrie Filetti

Interim Director of Preschool Ministry

Chris Learman
clearman@gracewoodstock.org

Preschool Staff

Tammy Baier, Barbara Buczek,
Jasmine Stephens

Director of Educational Ministries

Melissa McMahan
mmcmahan@gracewoodstock.org

Building Supervisor/Ken Zank

Custodians/Chris & Kim Ethridge

Officers & Council

Andy Bellavia, Cathy Buhrow, Mike Freeman,
Lisa Gerloff-Banker, Gayle Hoch, Gretchen
Hutchens, Kevin Kleinjan, Mike Liedtke, Matt
Meiners, Hannah Paulson, Jessica Potoczky
council@gracewoodstock.org

Office Hours: 8:30 am-3:30 pm, M-Th
8:30 am-12:00 pm, F