

DECEMBER 2019 • VOLUME 18, NO. 12

GOLLY IT'S COLD OUTSIDE!.....by Pastor Ken Gibson

Penning this month's article for December on November 12, it is not hard to envision what December might look like from my office window. Our grounds are covered with white and our expected high of 21 has been lowered to only 14 degrees and the phrase "Golly it's cold outside!" or perhaps even some phrases a bit more descriptive, are being shared all over our area this day. It seems such lines are a bit of a ritual almost, where we complain in such a way that we seem to align ourselves with real suffering, when in truth, the snow and cold do not come close to true suffering.

Real suffering does come to you and me, and as Garrison Keillor recently wrote on this subject, "Genuine suffering is on its way sooner than you think." He shares how one day his legs will buckle and strangers will call 911 and when he awakes, he will not be able to remember the words to his favorite hymn, "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide." I love the way he writes and shares of his love of singing hymns. I can relate to such feelings and in my calling to serve as a pastor, I know all so well, and so do all of us I think, that he writes of truth with regard to this subject. A little cold and snow are not even close to the human realities we all face in our lives.

I, for one, am OK with cold and snow and the reality of what it brings to me. I know for one that I am far more productive in cold weather than I am in hot weather. The cold season in some way causes a warmth in me that my words fall short in describing. I prefer snow scenes over beach scenes, I prefer sweaters over t-shirts, and I am ok with the warmth of a fireplace vs the warmth of a hot sun. I think I have always been like this. Now please know my dear Florida friends that this does not mean I won't be coming to see you in the winter. I will. But you should know that while I have always thought that retirement in Florida would be nice, in honesty, retiring in the UP of Michigan has a greater appeal to me. The only trouble with that idea is that I would be retiring alone up north and that doesn't sound appealing at all.

So then, before we start another Advent and eventual Christmas season, let us be honest with regard to suffering. While the snow and cold may not be pleasant, true suffering is that which we mentally and physically endure as humans. And as such, let us embrace the truth of hymns like "Abide with Me" and find solace together. What could be better than singing wonderful hymns in the warmth of a loving congregation who care for and support each other. Join us and be filled with the warmth and love of others through togetherness and song. See you in the warm pews!

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY- Lifetouch will be photographing all our households at Grace for a new directory.

Dates/Times: Thursday and Friday, December 5 & 6 – 2:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 7 – 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

To reserve your photography time slot please sign up online via our website: www.gracewoodstock.org or stop by or call the office at 815-338-0554 during office hours.

Each household receives one free standard 8 X 10 print and a free directory for participating . Photos will be received before Christmas!

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: Charlie Bell (friend of Jamielynn Wedoff), Rev. Jim Berg (friend of Marlene Botts), Shirley Berna, Lois Bloese, Angela Boe (friend of Hanlin Family), Mary Sue Boerner (friend of Paul Lockwood & Diane Baker-Lockwood), Dee Bohn, David Brugger (friend of Shirley Busse), Frank Bunch, Myron Callihan (brother of Susan Payton), Dot Clark (mother of Martha Fleck), Jim Davis, Nancy Davis, Lori Dechant, Patrice Dunn, Robert Giron (brother of Patty Kozlow), Tom Goggin, Becca Guenther (niece of Gretchen & Claude Hutchens), Tamasa Gutierrez (mother of Patty Kozlow), Jace Hanlin, Sue Hanson-Smith (friend of Barb Aavang), Liz Henniges (wife of Al Henniges), Steve Kosmen (loved one of the Koehn family), Elayna Kuipers (friend of the Wedoff Family), Anna Larsen (sister of Al Henniges), Bill Luallen, Elizabeth Lynd Loser, Amanda McNally (grandniece of Diane Baker-Lockwood), Karen Millman, Tammy Millman (daughter of Karen Millman), Kem Moran (friend of Barb Aavang), Gloria Ogle, Andrea Paetsch (aunt of Debbi Lynd), Linda Page (friend of Joe Evanoff), Georgia Petersdorf (sister-in-law of Gladys Renner), Bruce Randolph (husband of Ila Randolph), Carol Rank, Shawn Rank (son of Carol Rank), Sheila Readell, Jayne Reicher (great niece of Barb & Wayne Japp), Herb & Bev Renner (brother & sister in law of Ken & Gladys Renner), Jessie & Sue Robertson (friends of Ron, Mary & Kimberly Koehn), Nicholas Ruffino (brother of Nathan Ruffino), Joan Russell (mother of Sheri Conover), John Rust (Aavang family friend), Colton Sciluffo (infant son of a friend of Joy Oberman), Eleanor Setser, Orion Stine (friend's grandson of Kathy Stone), Elsie Stoddard, Ginny Stroh (mother of Fay Wilson), Dave Sundby (brother-in-law of Deborrah Evanoff), Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahan), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Bev Visconti, Gino Visconti, Addie Jo Wedoff, Esther Wienke, Bud Winter, Ruth Zirves

Sorrows: Dr. William Larsen, MD, Brittney Long (granddaughter of Roger & Carole Long), Doris Sunday

Joys: Baptism of Faith Noelle Potoczky (daughter of John & Jessica Potoczky), James Owen Reilly (son of Katie & David Reilly)

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.

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE—The deadline for the January newsletter is **December 15**. Please send articles to Lauren Kleinjan at lkleinjan@gracewoodstock.org, or the church office. Questions: Call the office at 815-338-0554.

ADVENT.....by Pastor Amanda

This year, December 1st will mark the first of four Sundays of Advent. We'll gather in worship to watch, wait, prepare, and stay awake for Jesus. This year we will hear gospel readings from the gospel of Matthew as we anticipate the Son of Man coming at an unexpected hour, John the Baptist will cry out 'Prepare the way of the Lord,' we may wonder and ask questions while we wait, and we will remember the angel's announcement of the coming Son who shall be named Emmanuel, which means "God is with us."

I hope you will know God's enduring presence even as you wait, listen, wonder, and yearn for Emmanuel. Each year, my appreciation grows for the stillness and resistance of Advent. Already, December seems full with events and expectations and traditions and things to do; and yet, the church season of Advent is a steady and slow time that points to Jesus in the midst of all the other busy-ness. We light one more candle at a time on the Advent wreath each weekend. Even if the days seem too short and weeks fly by, it's one more candle at a time, there's only so much hurrying one can do.

It is my prayer that you will encounter a source of calm and quiet in God's nudging presence in this season. May your active waiting and preparing be paired with the steady reliability of God's love. And then, as Christmas Even and Day do arrive, may the joy of Jesus be known in some way in your life, in the life of our congregation and surrounding community, and throughout the country and the whole world. The story of Jesus' birth is a story worth waiting to hear again, a gift worth remembering and sharing. Peace, joy, and blessings to you in this time of waiting and rejoicing.

ADVENT WORSHIP AT GRACE– We will gather for special mid-week worship services beginning at 7:00 p.m. on **December 4, 11 and 18th**. Each service includes scripture, prayers and music.

Week One– December 4: Congregational singing of Haugen's Holden Evening Prayer

Week Two– December 11: Woodstock High School Madrigal Singers

Week Three– December 18: Marian Central Catholic High School Madrigal Singers



THE PROPHECY AND COMING OF JESUS

Sunday, December 15, 2019

One Sunday Worship Service at 8:30 a.m.

(Regular worship on December 14, Saturday, 5:00 p.m., No 10:45 a.m. service on December 15)

A special service of Scripture, original readings, singing of congregational carols and anthems lead by our Grace choirs and contemporary vocal singers – music for all! A festive social hour will follow this single service with holiday treats and seasonal activities of interest to adults, children and families.

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.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING THE GOOSE IS GETTING FAT! You can't actually give a goose, but you can give a chicken or a goat or a pig or a pillow or food or any number of other items to help people in our local community and throughout the world. Stop by to visit the Christmas Family Sharing (CFS) Giving Tree and table display in the narthex for more information starting November 23 and continuing until final gift collection on **December 15**. We have several different ways to help support our ministry partners:



Family Health Partnership Clinic: The CFS Giving Tree will have ornaments with items that FHPC can use in their clinic and food pantry. Also, look for information at the table about ordering from Amazon and shipping directly to the Clinic. Doesn't get much easier!

Turning Point: Ornaments on the CFS Giving Tree for Turning Point will help supply the ongoing needs of their shelter. There will be ornaments for specific items which are used in the shelter and to help families as they set up new households.

ELCA Good Gifts: Ornaments on the CFS Giving Tree for ELCA Good Gifts will have envelopes attached. You can choose from a wide variety of items – from chicks, to goats, to school uniforms – to help support people in need around the world. Please indicate on the envelope what item you would like to sponsor, and after we have collected all the envelopes, we will place an order with ELCA Good Gifts. You can also order online at ELCA.org/goodgifts. New this year are cards from ELCA Good Gifts. If you are giving a Good Gifts gift in honor of a friend or family member, please take a card to share the message.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the Christmas Family Sharing program! If you have any questions, stop by the table, or feel free to contact Mary Beth Martin-Bellavia at 815-245-1242 or mbmartinbellavia@gmail.com.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE WALK- Once again Grace Lutheran Sunday School students and Grace Lutheran Preschool students have made ornaments that adorn one of the beautiful trees at the Woodstock Opera House. The Christmas Tree Walk runs from **November 29th thru December 31st** and is open to the public whenever the Opera house is open. Please take a few minutes to stop in and enjoy the little bit of joy our students have shared this Christmas season, call 815-338-5300 to check the hours of operation.

CHRISTMAS PARADE- Please plan to attend the Christmas Parade on **December 1st** at 2:00 p.m. at the Woodstock Square and watch as Grace Youth participates in this festive event!

MITTEN TREE- 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 **now through Christmas**, and hang them on the mitten trees in the narthex and lower level. Your gifts will be much appreciated by families in our community! If you have any questions, please contact Adeline Arana at adelinearana@gmail.com.



WELCOME CENTER HOST- There is a need for a welcome center host the 4th Sunday of the month before the 10:45 a.m. service. Substitutes are always needed and welcome as well. If you are interested in spreading the Grace, please Janette Hess at rdbj210@gmail.com or the office.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES-

Christmas Eve, December 24; 4:30, 7:30, 11:00 P.M.

Holy Communion and candle lighting at all worship services

At **4:30 P.M.** we share in a joyous Christmas worship service led by our children's choirs. A children's music recital begins prior to the service.

At **7:30 P.M.** we share in a contemporary Christmas worship service led by Youthful Spirit, Laudate & friends, our middle school and high school choirs & alumni.

At **11:00 P.M.** we gather for a traditional festival Christmas worship service led by Chancel Choir culminating with a group sing of "Hallelujah Chorus" (Handel's Messiah).



Christmas Day, December 25; 10:00 A.M.

Holy Communion and Christmas hymn sing

We gather on Christmas morning to hear the good news of Jesus' birth, share Holy Communion, and sing favorite Christmas carols with solos provided by Laura Miller.

CHRISTMAS EVE YOUTH RECITAL—You can sign up musically talented children to present a short (1 - 3 minute) sacred Christmas piece before the 4:30 pm Christmas Eve service. Participation in the recital will be set up on a first come basis. We **MUST** have all of the following information: Person playing or singing; which instrument or voice, title, composer, timed length of piece; phone contact. Please sign up in the Activities Binder by **December 8th**.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS- 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." Forms are available in this week's bulletin or at the Welcome Center in the Narthex. All forms and donations of \$14.00 are due by December 15, 2018. Following our 10:00 a.m. service on December 25th, poinsettias may be taken home or to our shut-ins.

VITALITY SURVEY DISCUSSION- Between services on **December 8th** the Council will share the results and key takeaways from the Vitality Survey we took earlier. A lot was learned about our congregation's relationship to God and each other. Come hear the results and take the opportunity to ask questions.

COOKIE SWAP— Please save the date, get together your favorite recipes and share some delicious cookies with your church family. If you bring a dozen, you take a dozen home! The cookie swap will be held on December 22 after both services in Grace Center.

SENIOR LUNCHEON—CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION— Come join us on **December 17** at noon for a fabulous Christmas Dinner: Cheddar Baked Chicken, Cranberry Rice, Roasted Brussel Sprouts, Hawaiian Rolls, and Waldorf Astoria Rose Cake. This year we will provide a Christmas Gift for everyone, and have a fun game to play to distribute them. Please be sure to sign up in the Activity Binder by **December 15**. If you have any questions, please call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063.

SUNDAY BOOK CLUB— Meets between services in Room 102 and is continuing with the book "7 Great Men." December 1 & 8, we will read & discuss Pope John Paul II and December 15 & 22 will be on Charles W. Colson. If you have any questions, please call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063.

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.

UPDATED PHONE AND ADDRESSES— Please contact the church office if your contact information has changed, or you no longer have/use a landline phone.

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.

SAVE THE DATE-

Christmas Parade- DEC 1
Afternoon Bible Study- DEC 3
Sewing Circle/Comm. Night- DEC 3
Advent Service- DEC 4
DAP- DEC 5
LifeTouch Dir. Pictures- DEC 5-7
Youth Group Christmas Party- DEC 7
Vitality Survey Discussion- DEC 8
Boy Scout Holiday Party- DEC 9
Afternoon Bible Study- DEC 10
Advent Service- DEC 11
BSASycamoreDis. Roundtable- DEC 12
Special One Service-DEC 15
Senior Luncheon- DEC 17
Afternoon Bible Study- DEC 17
Advent Service- DEC 18
DAP/Council- DEC 19
BSA Patrol Leader Conf.- DEC 19
Preschool Christmas Program- DEC 19
Christmas Eve Services- DEC 24
Christmas Day Service- DEC 25
Church Office Closed- DEC 26

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

Lauren Kleinjan

lkleinjan@gracewoodstock.org

Director of Music Ministries

Ron Fredriksen

rfredriksen@gracewoodstock.org

Parish Musicians

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

Director of Preschool Ministry

Dawn Domanus
ddomanus@gracewoodstock.org

Preschool Staff

Tammy Baier, Jessica Hanlin, Lauren Kleinjan,
Nancy Mojica

Director of Educational Ministries

Jen Freeman

jfreeman@gracewoodstock.org

Building Supervisor/Ken Zank

Custodians/Chris & Kim Ethridge

Officers & Council

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

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