



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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WE NEED A LITTLE CHRISTMAS.....by Pastor Ken Gibson

As I pen this January article for our Grace for Today newsletter, my ears are being filled with Christmas music streaming from the speakers on my desk. I will admit that I have been listening to these tunes since before Thanksgiving. Now before you insist that we should all wait until Thanksgiving is over to listen to Christmas music, let me remind everyone that Thanksgiving was later than usual this year. And, while I know that as I pen this article it is Advent...a time for waiting...try as I might, I cannot find a station that plays just Advent tunes. I guess minor keys and meters which are perhaps only appreciated by Lutherans during Advent are not what stations want to play. I am as much a traditionalist as anyone else these days, however, as the words of one of the tunes I was listening to expressed that “we need a little Christmas,” I suggest that “we need a little Christmas now and forever.”

Christmas is a time of remembering Christ’s birth and claiming his birth as the gift for the world. The Child born on that starlit night long, long ago in Bethlehem, (I know, another Christmas song), is the reason for the joy of the season. For me, Christmas means gathering with family and friends but it also means worship. A time when we as a family of sisters and brothers in Christ worship together and sing hymns in congregational harmony. It brings such joy to my heart. I write then knowing that, once again, as you read this newsletter, we will be remembering the joy filled worship services we shared. We will be recalling the voices we lifted in unison and the special memories we created together.

But let us also remember that the Christmas season in the church runs right up to January 6, the start of the Epiphany season. Furthermore, we are to claim the gift that comes to us at Christmas all year round. The gift of Christ, whose life, death and resurrection is ours to receive, is also a gift for us to carry in our hearts as we remember Christ from cradle to grave and beyond.

May the season of Christmas and the child of God be with you all, always.

EPIPHANY ADULT FORUM– Please join Judy Rooney for an Epiphany Adult Forum on **January 19th** at 9:40am in Luther Hall. This will be a time of informal reflection, sharing and maybe even some moments of quiet. All are welcome! If you have any questions, please call Judy Rooney at 847-961-6775.

CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCING EVENT- Mark your calendars for the Congregational Resourcing Event (CRE) **March 14, 2020** at Kishwaukee Community College, Malta, Illinois. The keynote speaker will be our ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. 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.

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 & cousin of Marge Birk), 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), Elizabeth Lynd Loser, Amanda McNally (grandniece of Diane Baker-Lockwood), Karen Millman, Tammy Millman (daughter of Karen Millman), Kem Moran (friend of Barb Aavang), Collene Nelsen (cousin of Debbi Lynd), Gloria Ogle, Andrea Paetsch (aunt of Debbi Lynd), Linda Page (friend of Joe Evanoff), Georgia Petersdorf (sister-in-law of Gladys Renner), Pat Peterson, Bruce Randolph (husband of Ila Randolph), Carol Rank, Shawn Rank (son of Carol Rank), Sheila Readel, 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), Michael Schnepf (nephew of Sue & Terry Aavang), Colton Sciluffo (infant son of a friend of Joy Oberman), Eleanor Setser, Elsie Stoddard, Ginny Stroh (mother of Fay Wilson), Dave Sundby (brother-in-law of Deborah Evanoff), Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahan), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Bev Visconti, Addie Jo Wedoff, Esther Wienke, Bud Winter, Marilyn Zaranto (friend of Marge Birk), Ruth Zirves

Sorrows: Bill Luallen, Marion Reese, Marietta Wilson

Joy: Baptism of Lincoln Douglas Smith (son of Caleb & Abigail Smith)

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 February newsletter is **January 15**. Please send articles to Lauren Kleinjan at lkleinjan@gracewoodstock.org, or the church office. Questions: Call the office at 815-338-0554.

EPIPHANY.....by Pastor Amanda

The light of Christ shines throughout this beautiful weary world, thanks be to God! I hope and pray that in the midst of all that these days and nights may hold that you have been able to rejoice in the celebration of Jesus' birth this Christmas. I pray, too, that the light of Christ may reveal anew the glory, peace, love, and good news of Jesus to you.

January 6 in the church calendar year is the Epiphany of our Lord, the celebration of the revelation of Christ to all nations. As we enter into January and the continued winter season, I invite you to stop by the Information Desk in the narthex in early January for a couple ways to engage in this Epiphany celebration.

Epiphany Home Blessing. One option is to pick up a piece of chalk and short prayer service to participate in the tradition of an Epiphany Home Blessing. May Christ bless each home in this new year!

Epiphany Star Words. Another more recent church tradition is to receive the gift of a star word. You are welcome to choose a paper star from the basket and spend time in prayer and reflection on how this word and the Holy Spirit may speak to you and guide you into the new year ahead.

Peace, joy, and blessings to you. May the light of Christ call and guide us into God's vision for 2020. Thank you for journeying together as a part of this faith community.

CHRISTMAS FAMILY SHARING DONATIONS- Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! I wish I could fully share with you how much your donations mean to Turning Point and the Family Health Partnership Clinic. Both agencies send their heartfelt thanks to our congregation. Additionally, our donations to ELCA Good Gifts were doubled when we placed the order meaning almost \$5000 of help will be shared word-wide! Wow and thank you!

COFFEE MINISTRY- Coffee Ministry has started providing coffee, lemonade, and a treat weekly on Sundays, from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. It is the coffee ministry's goal to continue fellowship between services and that donations are needed to maintain this important fellowship event.

BULLETIN & PRESENCE LIGHT SPONSORS- Our 2020 **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.

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.

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.

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.

PHISHING SCAM REQUESTS- Grace’s pastors, staff, and leaders will never text or email you to request gift cards or fund transfers. A number of nearby church members have received phishing emails or text messages that seem personalized and appear to be from a pastor or staff member. Please call the church office or talk to a pastor or staff member in person if you receive an odd request; thank you!

SENIOR LUNCHEON- Come ring in the New Year on **January 27th** with a delicious meal of an Italian Salad, Braised Italian Sausage Stew, Italian Bread and Rhubarb Custard Cake for dessert. Our guest speaker is Tim Urness, ELCA Reginal Gift Planner, who will educate us on Planned Giving, Bequests, Legacy gifts and Estate plans. Please be sure to sign up in the Activity Binder by January 25. If you have any questions, please contact Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063

GRACE PRESCHOOL WINTERFEST FUNDRAISER- Grace Lutheran Preschool's Winterfest event and fundraiser is right around the corner! This year's event will be held on **January 31st**. We are asking for donations of products or gift certificates that can be put on display and raffled off at the event. This annual fundraiser helps our preschool to purchase supplies and materials needed for our preschool children to be used throughout the year. Please send in any donations by January 22nd. This is a night filled with fun, games and raffles and is open to all families! If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact our Preschool Director, Dawn Domanus, at 815/338-0554 ext. 213, or at ddomanus@gracewoodstock.org.



SUNDAY BOOK CLUB- Sunday Book Club meets between services in room 102 and is beginning the book “7 Great Women.” On January 5th and 12th, we will read & discuss Joan of Arc and January 19th and 26th will be on Susanna Wesley. Come and learn about these great women! Coffee and homemade treats provided along with a lively discussion. If you have any questions, please call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063.

CRANDALL’S CHICKEN DINNER FUNDRAISER– Save the Date! The Confirmation class is hosting a Crandall’s Chicken dinner fundraiser for their Confirmation Camps. Please support the confirmation kids as they serve up a delicious chicken dinner on **Monday, February 17, 2020** from 4:00pm-8:00pm at Crandall's in Hebron. Tickets can be purchased at the door or from a confirmation student starting January 8th. The cost of a dinner is \$15 for adults and \$10 for kids 8 and under.

ADULT FELLOWSHIP EVENT- Save the date! There will be an adult fellowship event on Sunday, **April 19th** at Fireside Dinner Theatre. This event will include brunch and the play “A Mighty Fortress”, another Church Basement Ladies production. Sign up begins in February.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE VAN GOGH- Calling all painters! We will be doing more painting of the lower level trim over the Christmas break. Please consider helping in taping and/or painting to help with this project. The final painting date is **January 4th** from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Please contact Tammy Baier at 815-687-6910 if you have any questions or have any other times you would like to paint.



CHURCH CLOSINGS AND EVENT CANCELLATIONS- When severe weather arrives, Grace Lutheran Church will follow D200 closing/cancellations and 2 hour delays. All weekday activities, including preschool, will be cancelled if D200 has cancelled classes. Office and church will open 2 hours later on days the district delays school. Please check the [Emergency Closing Center](#) website or any of the radio stations listed on the [D200 website](#) for any severe weather cancellations.

PRIMETIME MEAL TEAMS NEEDED– We currently have the following dates open in our PrimeTime meal schedule: February 19, March 4 and March 11. If you can give a helping hand on Wednesday evenings to join a meal team, please contact Jen Freeman at jfreeman@gracewoodstock.org. It is a great fellowship on Wednesday nights!

FUNERAL PLANNING— Do you have favorite scripture passages and/or hymns? Is there something you hope to have included in your funeral service? We have a simple worksheet where you can note your favorite scripture, hymns, and other details, and we invite everyone to fill one out to share with your family and bring to the church office so we can file it away, and at some point know how to best honor your wishes. Please stop by the church office to pick up a Funeral Planning Worksheet, or you can find a copy on Grace’s website under “Communication & Documents,” and then “Forms and Documents.” Thanks be to God, that even in the face of death, we proclaim the promise of the resurrection.

NEW eGIVING OPTIONS- Many people give their offerings by cash or check, over 50 households currently give through our automatic withdrawal program, and beginning this fall Grace has additional electronic giving options available. You can change, stop, or temporarily hold your giving by contacting Grace’s church office 4 business days in advance of a scheduled contribution. Please give in the way that is most convenient for you and let us know if you have any questions.

New eGiving Options, beginning Fall 2019

Give Online at our website: www.gracewoodstock.org

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

Give through Give+ Mobile App by downloading the app

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-

Church Office Closed—JAN 1
DAP—JAN 2
Church Lower Level Painting—JAN 4
Sunday School Resumes—JAN 5
Preschool Classes Resume—JAN 6
Committee Night—JAN 7
Afternoon Bible Study—JAN 14
DAP—JAN 16
Church Office Closed—JAN 20
Faith Circle—JAN 20
Afternoon Bible Study—JAN 21
Council—JAN 23
Preschool Open House—JAN 25
Senior Luncheon—JAN 28
Afternoon Bible Study—JAN 28
Preschool Winterfest —JAN 31
Afternoon Bible Study—FEB 4
DAP—FEB 6
Afternoon Bible Study—FEB 11
Church Office Closed—FEB 17
Faith Circle—FEB 17
Crandall's Fundraiser—FEB 17
Afternoon Bible Study—FEB 18
DAP/Council—FEB 20

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