



GRACE

LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Grace for Today

JANUARY 2021 • VOLUME 20, NO. 1

STARS.....by Pastor Amanda Bergstrom

Over the past few years at Grace, we have shared 'star words' at Epiphany by receiving a word printed on a paper star to prompt one's prayers, discernment, and reflection in the year ahead.

This year, perhaps you will find a word to center your prayers and reflection, a starting point for conversations with God. Here is an online option for a word of the year generator that a colleague found online, <http://wordoftheyear.me/>. Or if you'd like a paper star, please send me an email or call the office and leave a message- I'd be glad to randomly choose one to send to you for Epiphany, January 6 and for the year ahead!

Considering how many new words we have had to learn in the past year, a word randomly selected in January 2020 seems so far away right now. Even Oxford Languages this year opted to report "Words of an Unprecedented Year" instead of a singular "word of the year," noting words such as stay-at-home, doomscrolling, systemic racism, reopening and self-quarantine.

And here we are, exhausted perhaps by the past year, weary of new words and changes, ever so ready for a new year to begin. What will January bring? And then, what Lenten journey and promise of spring awaits? What are the words we will use in the new year ahead, what good news will God speak into our lives and relationships and communities?

As we keep trying to wrap our minds around the language of this time and keep adapting to changing seasons and pandemic precautions, I wonder if we might adopt the posture of one who looks to the stars. There is a vulnerable openness to venturing into a dark night to look up into the sky, perhaps your neck strains a bit as your shoulders open, maybe you feel exposed to the elements, perhaps you experience awe and wonder. Maybe you feel lost or incredibly connected to the grand scheme of creation. And perhaps, as we gaze through what may seem endless and dim, we might keep our focus on the light.

As stars in the sky illuminate the night, we recall the wonder of Jesus' birth and the continued guidance we find in the light of Christ. Let's keep our sight and hopes set on Christ this year. As the bright and enduring light of Christ continues to shine, I look forward to seeing what words we'll find along the way to share God's grace in 2021.

Merry Christmas & blessings on the new year ahead.

SAVE THE DATE! CONGREGATIONAL MEETING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7 AT 11:00 AM

We will need a quorum to pass the budget and elect Council members, so please plan on attending. The meeting will be conducted via Zoom, with in-person or parking lot options added as circumstances permit. There will also be a budget forum on Sunday, January 31 at 11:00 am via Zoom only for those who would like to ask questions about the budget proposal beforehand. Zoom links will be sent with the meeting package.

-The Council and Pastors

MITTEN TREE UPDATE FROM ADELIN ARANA—Our Mitten Tree 2020 was a great success! Thank you to all those who took the time to donate socks, underwear and cold weather gear. The collection was distributed between PADS, Family Health Partnership, D200 and our Woodstock Library. Thanks again for your contribution!

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 John Cunningham & his family; Pastor Amanda Bergstrom & her family; Grace Staff; Grace Council

Health Concerns: Charlie Bell (friend of Jamielynn Wedoff), Mary Sue Boerner (friend of Paul Lockwood & Diane Baker-Lockwood), Myron Callihan (brother of Susan Payton), Jim Davis, Nancy Davis, Lori Dechant, Patrice Dunn, Stephane Fylpaa-Asher, Robert Giron (brother of Patty Kozlow), Tom Goggin, Hal Goodman (friend of Bob & Janice Laird), Becca Guenther (niece of Gretchen & Claude Hutchens), Tamasa Gutierrez (mother of Patty Kozlow), Denise Hoover, Nicholas Karasch (nephew of Jamielynn Wedoff), 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), 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, Carol Raffel, Carol Rank, Shawn Rank (son of Carol Rank), Barbara Readell, 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), Maria Rossini (family friend of Heidi Olsen and Tammy Goggin), 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), Nathaniel Shipp (family friend of Brian Meyers), Ann Sinnett (friend of Shirley Berna), Elsie Stoddard, Andrea Strayer (mother of Lisa Wahkowiak), Ginny Stroh (mother of Fay Wilson), Dave Sundby (brother-in-law of Deborah Evanoff), Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahon), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Bev Visconti, Addie Jo Wedoff, Nick Wedoff, Esther Wienke, Ruth Zirves

Sorrows: Chuck Sinkoske, Carol Jarnecke

Joy: Baptism of Hudson Alexander Skyte (son of Dylan Skytte)

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

JANUARY IS EPIPHANY TIME!.....by Pastor John Cunningham

Ready for a revelation? A new year has just begun, and before the week is done is the feast day of the Epiphany (January 6). The Bible text is Matthew's story of the magi ("wise men"), who recognize the significance of Jesus and travel far to honor him with their gifts.

The Epiphany season that continues into February celebrates ways Jesus is revealed to be the Savior, God with us. Over and over, people are astonished by what happens wherever Jesus is.

When he is baptized by John the Baptizer a dove descends and a voice from heaven announces: "this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased".

Jesus calls disciples, bringing together a diverse community who will spread the good news of who he is and carry on his work.

Jesus announces the good news that God's kingdom has come near. People are amazed: he speaks with God's authoritative power! He does miracles, healing and ridding people of the demons that are hurting them. He even forgives sins!

The Epiphany season ends with a high point: Jesus on the mountain, transfigured and revealed to be divine.

These epiphanies lead us to consider what it means for us to be Christians, called by his name. A tradition is to celebrate the worldwide meanings of discipleship, since the magi came from a distant land and even were of another religion.

Jesus' baptism reveals that in baptism God is adopting each person as a beloved child.

As the calling of disciples reveals, Jesus gathers unexpected people (such as fishermen and a tax collector). His community means we have brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world!

As Jesus reveals God through his message and his acts such as healing, we see ways we called to join in his mission. His eagerness to travel to spread good news shows that mission is not only local, but everywhere we can reach.

The epiphanies show an extent of God's love that awed people. In this extraordinary time of a pandemic, we trust God's love reaching us even when we need to find new ways to gather as God's people, to worship, and to live out our discipleship.

Winter weather adds another complication in terms of worship. We do not expect anyone to stand out in bitter cold to be a parking lot greeter. So please consider a new way to celebrate Holy Communion.

Now that we are livestreaming our worship services, we can enjoy an immediacy that is lost in recordings. We can all worship together at the same time as the pastors are actually leading the service.

So, consider preparing for worship in your home, by doing more than switching on a video screen. Print out a copy of the service (posted on the Grace website). Light a candle. Set out some bread and wine (or grape juice). Pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit before the service begins.

Then participate in the service by saying the responses aloud and singing along. When the time comes for Holy Communion, trust what the Bible says about God's Word: it always is fulfilled. As the Words of Institution are spoken by the pastor over the bread and wine on the altar, God certainly can consecrate the bread and wine (or grape juice) you have prepared. Luther explained in the Small Catechism that the Words of Institution, along with eating and drinking, convey the benefits of the sacrament—and everyone who believes the words is "worthy and prepared" for it. Although we don't see each other, we will all be hearing the words and eating and drinking together as the body of Christ. We can be thinking about that.

However, if you are not comfortable communing in this way, that is fine. Communing each time it's offered is not a requirement. And we are all eager for the time when we will be able to gather again in person and commune at the altar. This way of communing at home is only for the meantime, because of the pandemic circumstances.

If you want to bake special bread for communion, the recipe in this newsletter on page 4 is one that has been used at Grace. (But this is not necessary.)

May this Epiphany season fill you with joy as we celebrate ways God was, is, and will be with us!

PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM (PPP) GRANT FINALIZED—In November Grace submitted an application to have our PPP loan of \$76,900 converted to a grant. Now the grant has been awarded for all but \$3,131. We could have retained that as a low interest loan but elected to pay it off immediately.

The PPP grant is a blessing to help us mitigate the financial effects of this difficult period. That, plus the continued generous giving by those still able to do so, leaves us in a strong position to serve our community both now and as we come out of the pandemic. While there is promise that we will finally see an end to the virus over the course of the following months, the scars left behind won't heal so quickly. Grace will be needed more than ever. Through the time, talents, and treasure you have all been sharing, we will, with the help of God, be there.

-The Council and Pastors

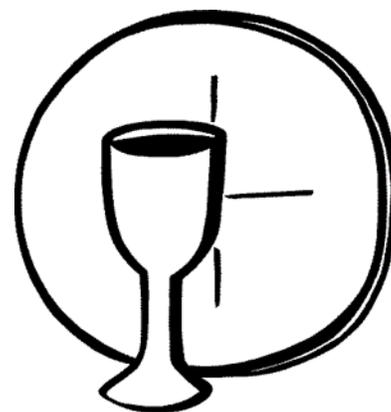
BUILDING ENTRY & COVENANT OF CARE—At Grace we are asking everyone who enters the building to commit to care for one another through posted guidelines and entry procedures. All staff and building guests are to practice health safety precautions, including wash/sanitize hands, wear a mask, and stay a minimum of six feet apart. If you test positive for COVID-19 within the next two weeks of being in the building, you commit to informing the church office ASAP. We ask everyone to review three screening questions about COVID-19 diagnosis, exposure, and symptoms within the last 14 days each time you arrive at the building. Please call the office first at (815) 338-0554 if you need to stop by during the week.

GRACE COMMUNION BREAD RECIPE

3-Loaf Communion Bread Recipe

1 ½ cups whole wheat flour
½ tsp salt
¼ cup oil
¼ cup honey

½ cup white flour
1 tsp baking soda
½ cup water



Instructions:

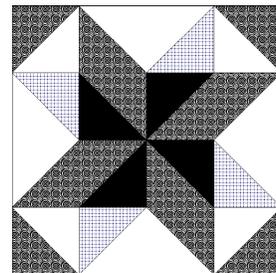
- 1) Preheat oven to 350
- 2) Mix dry ingredients (wheat flour, white flour, salt, baking soda)
- 3) Add wet ingredients (oil, water, honey), combine in a mixer
- 4) If dough is too sticky to roll or press out, knead in some more wheat flour
- 5) Divide into 3 equal parts
- 6) Roll & cut/shape into 7 inch circle approximately ½ inch thick. For a circle, you can shape the dough with your hands or use a bowl and cut around the dough like a cookie cutter.
- 7) Press a knife part way into the center of each loaf to make the mark of a cross.
- 8) Place on greased cookie sheet.
- 9) Put in 350 degree oven and bake 10-12 minutes

SUNDAY BOOK CLUB – The Sunday Book Club has been meeting every Sunday from 10-11am on ZOOM. We will begin a new book on Jan 3. Discussion questions are emailed out weekly. All are welcome! Please call Shirley Busse at (815) 338-9063 to receive the questions and for the link to join in.

MLK INTERFAITH PRAYER “BREAKFAST” - This year on Monday, **January 21**, from 8:00-9:30 AM, FaithBridge’s 11th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. “Breakfast” will be a virtual interfaith prayer event. For more information and to register, visit <https://www.faithbridgeinterfaith.org/> .

GRACE SEWING CIRCLE YEAR END REPORT—Grace Sewing Circle, leader Marge Birk, has been very busy creating this year. Instead of the previous twice a month meeting at church, sewing has been done in individual homes, meaning a MUCH more productive year. Different ladies have different jobs creating these projects, involving dropping items on doorsteps for the next phase in production to make the final projects, so we are working in community, even though we are apart. In addition to creating useful items to be donated both abroad and locally, there is an added benefit of keeping these ladies and a few gentlemen busy at home during this very trying year of isolation. This is a note of **thanks and praise** for the work of these members, and a **thank you** to the congregation who has been generous in sharing sheets, batting, yarn, fabric, and other items with our group. (We are always ready to accept more donations of materials.)

The total finished items donated this year of 2020 are as follows: quilts for Lutheran World Relief (260), items for local nursing homes and our own senior members of Grace, including quilted (288) and crocheted (51) lap robes, walker bags (194), small pillows (120), neck pillows (37) & poly bags (85). The storage closet continues to fill with completed items for next year, as this group just keeps producing. **Praise God!**



Sewing Circle Contacts: Marge Birk (815) 338-0958, Faith Watkins (815) 245-7977 or Tammy Hansing (815) 338-5387. (Marge said to say thank you to Tammy for being her co-leader and supporting this group.)

BREAD FOR THE DAY 2021—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 January 1, 2021. If you are interested in having a copy of the devotional book, they will be available for purchase in the office/vestibule, for \$8.00. You will need to call (815) 338-0555 and plan with the church office.

SENIOR MINISTRY—Delivered 107 Christmas Gift Bags to members over 75. Over 25 volunteers from Grace participated in this project. We hope these gifts were able to cheer our seniors during this difficult time.

2021 CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCING EVENT—You are invited to save the date & look for more information as the Northern Illinois Synod has begun to plan the 2021 Congregational Resourcing event as an online Resourcing Event, to be held on **March 13, 2021**. Current plans include an online gathering for worship and workshops around various ministries.

GRACE PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR—Are you creative? A self-starter? Looking to make a difference? A believer in faith-based education? Grace Lutheran Church is looking for a motivated individual to serve as Preschool Director. This position would be part-time (25 hours per week) beginning in January to help re-establish the preschool for the fall of 2021 following a hiatus in 2020. The director would work collaboratively with an established preschool board.



Grace Lutheran Church is a welcoming community of faith rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ and dedicated to our mission of **Sharing God's Grace**. We achieve this mission by living out our vision of worship, outreach, ministry with the poor, spirituality, discipleship, youth and leadership.

Qualified individuals will be over 21 and possess the required State of Illinois and DCFS certifications; have excellent oral and written communication skills; a knowledge of early childhood curriculum and pedagogy; a working knowledge of finances; and a commitment to faith-based education. To apply, please submit a resume to Ikleinjan@gracewoodstock.org.

January 2021

Presence Light Sponsors:

January 3

In honor of our daughter Abigail's birthday, January 6, given by Nancy & Bill Kreznor

January 10

In memory of Russ Freeman on his 85th birthday, given by Donna Freeman

January 17

To the glory of God for gifts given, blessings received, given by Diane Schulz

January 24

In honor of our 50th wedding anniversary, given by Doug & Mary Noe

Bulletin Sponsors:

January 24

In honor of our 50th wedding anniversary, given by Doug & Mary

We currently have many openings available in 2021, for bulletin & presence light sponsors

Even though we are not in the church building yet for our services, this ministry continues. It is a great way to celebrate occasion's, and honor or grieve loved ones with your church family.

They are being published in our newsletter, Grace for Today. Please contact Carrie or Denise in the church office if you are interested in sponsoring. 815-338-0554

eGIVING OPTIONS- In addition to weekly offering envelopes, Grace has additional electronic giving options available. Please give in the way that is most convenient for you and let us know if you have any questions.

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 4 business days in advance of a scheduled contribution.

Give Online at our website: www.gracewoodstock.org

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

1. **Get Started:** Enter the 10-digit GivePlus Text number (877-698-3604) and the amount you wish donate, then press send.
2. **Register:** You will receive a registration link. Click the link and enter your contact and payment information. Tap "Process."
3. **Give:** After registration is complete, you will receive a verification text as well as a receipt via email.
4. **Repeat:** For future giving, simply send a text with the amount you wish to give, and it will process automatically.

Give through Give+ Mobile App by downloading the app

- Download the FREE app on your Apple or Android phone by searching for "GivePlus Church" in your app store
- Make one-time or recurring donations using your debit/credit card or checking/savings account
- Securely and conveniently manage donations using Touch ID/Fingerprint, PIN or password
- Log in or donate as a guest

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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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

**GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS – 2020**



**WE GIVE THANKS TO THOSE LISTED BELOW WHO HAVE HELPED
MAKE OUR CHRISTMAS SEASON MORE FESTIVE:**

IN MEMORY OF:

- MARY FIGARD; GIVEN BY TERRY FIGARD & FAMILY
- MY HUSBAND: VIRGIL BOAL, PARENTS: LEO & ELAINE HAULOTTE AND SISTER: LINDA WILSON; GIVEN BY LAURA BOAL
- LOVED ONES PASSED; GIVEN BY KARL & DENISE KLABUNDE
- ALL OUR LOVED ONES; GIVEN BY JOE & JUNE PIENSCHKE
- LYLE BUNGARD; GIVEN BY DONNA BUNGARD
- MY PARENTS, MARGE AND CARL; GIVEN BY CARYL DIERKSEN
- MY GRANDPARENTS – LELAND V. KILTZ & MAUDE J. KILTZ; GIVEN BY STEPHANIE PIETRZAK
- OUR DECEASED PARENTS; GIVEN BY JOHN & MARY WIDMAYER
- HARLEY & ELOISE BAKER AND REV. GEORGE & HELEN LOCKWOOD; GIVEN BY DIANE BAKER-LOCKWOOD & PAUL LOCKWOOD
- GEORGIA KASPRYK; GIVEN BY JACOB & OLIVIA KASPRYK
- LOVED ONES; GIVEN BY KAREN REINHARD
- OUR PARENTS: MARV AND MARGE PAULSON, REV. ROGER AND DIANE OLSON; GIVEN BY PETER & TERESE PAULSON
- OUR GRANDPARENTS: MARV AND MARGE PAULSON, REV. ROGER AND DIANE OLSON; GIVEN BY HANNAH & PHILLIP PAULSON
- RON ERICKSEN; GIVEN BY ANDY, MB, RACHEL, ZACH, & SARAH
- MY PARENTS, CLARENCE AND GEORGINE JOHNSON; GIVEN BY JERRY JOHNSON
- MY PARENTS, ARNOLD AND LINDA HOLMAN AND IN MEMORY OF MY BROTHER, JOHN HOLMAN; GIVEN BY MARY JOHNSON

IN HONOR OF:

- THE WOMEN OF FAITH CIRCLE; GIVEN BY MARYLEE STEINWEHE
- ROGER & CAROLE LONG; GIVEN BY BETH & MARK MILLER
- OUR PARENTS; DAN & JANETTE HESS
- OUR FAMILY WHO ARE KEEPING US SAFE BY SOCIAL DISTANCING, GIVEN BY BOB & JOYCE SHOOK
- OUR FIRST-RESPONDERS AND MEDICAL PERSONNEL DURING THE PANDEMIC; GIVEN BY BRIAN & JUDY REILLY
- THE CHRISTMAS 20TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY OF JAN & RON FREDRIKSEN WITH THANKS AND PRAISE TO GOD; GIVEN BY RON FREDRIKSEN

TO THE GLORY OF GOD:

- WITH THANKS TO ALL GRACE MUSICIANS COMING TO YOU PRERECORDED IN THIS PANDEMIC YEAR AND THE MUSIC SUPPORT TEAM, OUR OFFICE STAFF, PASTORS AND PROGRAM STAFF WHO HAVE REACHED OUT ELECTRONICALLY IN 2020; GIVEN BY RON FREDRIKSEN