



GRACE
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Grace *for* Today

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PATTERNS, CHAOS AND ACTIVE HOPE.....by Pastor John Cunningham

We are used to patterns in life. Often there is a beginning, a middle and an ending. Often there's repetition. We get so accustomed to the patterns that we take them for granted.

Daily routines are examples. So are traditions. Fourth of July is fireworks and parades. Thanksgiving is turkey with family and friends.

It's no exaggeration to say that just about all of our familiar patterns of life have been disrupted by COVID-19! The pandemic has caused changes that often are difficult, confusing, and painful. Suddenly what was routine can be life-threatening. We have experienced (or seen) work and study transformed. We feel confined and separated from others.

Worship, too, is nothing like it used to be. And now we are coming to Christmas. What will that be like?

At Grace, worship leaders have been working hard to provide weekly and special worship services. You will notice plans for Advent and Christmas in this newsletter. Meanwhile the reopening team has presented information to the Council, for a plan for safely reopening our building again.

But we also know that the pandemic is now spreading more. We don't know how much better or worse it will get until finally, sufficient vaccines are available. As a result, some of the plans made now may have to be changed or put on hold. And that can happen with very short notice.

Advent is a time for hope. It is not a time for giving up, but for active waiting (doing what we can while we wait) and alert watching for opportunities. We can be encouraged by the many Bible references of God's caring presence with people in all kinds of times. There is an exodus from slavery, through a wilderness to the promised land. There is a return from exile. God was with the people all along the way.

Christmas is all about a gift from God who is Emmanuel ("God with us"), a Savior who brings healing and wholeness and life even beyond death. It is good news of great joy for all people. What looked like a baby in a manger, or later, a man on a cross, was actually something much more!

As we watch and listen for God, trusting God's ever-present care in these difficult times, we may well find a deeper appreciation for what really matters in life. In the days ahead, as much as patterns and traditions may be disrupted, we can continue to hope, to worship, to live faithfully. Some ways to celebrate this season by giving are described in this newsletter.

Whatever the circumstances may be for you this year, may you experience a Merry Christmas, and a blessed New Year!

REOPENING TEAM UPDATE— Grace’s reopening team has continued meeting weekly to prepare plans for increased building usage. A draft document has been presented to church council for consideration. Grace’s church council continues to follow IDPH guidelines for implementation. Thank you for your prayerful support, as we all look forward to gathering again.

–Nancy Kreznor, Mike Liedtke, Matt Meiners, Bill Nattress, Pastor Amanda & Pastor John.

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 November 15th through the end of December. There will be a red drop off box outside the upper level entrance. Look for the tree in the window! Your gifts will be much appreciated by families in our community! If you have any questions, please contact Adeline Arana at adelinearana@gmail.com.

THANK YOU- Thank you for donating 539.59 pounds of food in the Thanksgiving Food Drive to give to the Woodstock Food Pantry!

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, 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), Nicholas Karasch (nephew of Jamielynn Wedoff), Steve Kosmen (loved one of the Koehn family), Elayna Kuipers (friend of the Wedoff Family), Colleen Laird, 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 Deborrah Evanoff), Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahan), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Bev Visconti, Addie Jo Wedoff, Nick Wedoff, Esther Wienke, Ruth Zirves

Joys: Baptisms of Lauren Marie Huffer and Harrison Jay Learman (son of Lauren Huffer & Michael Learman)

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 **December 11th**. Please send articles to Lauren Kleinjan at Kleinjan@gracewoodstock.org, or the church office. Questions: Call the office at 815-338-0554.

DREAMS.....by Pastor Amanda Bergstrom

In a different worship setting, I would often hear a worship leader, at the end of the prepared petitions for the Prayers of the People, ask “for what else do the people of God pray?” Then people in the worshipping community would take turns sharing different prayer petitions, speaking the prayers of their hearts out loud for the assembly to share in prayer to God.

Grace Lutheran Church, for what do you dream? What are the prayers of your hearts and dreams for this faith community? In this transition time, this liminal time of still not yet being fully physically gathered in one space, what are your dreams for the mission and ministry of Grace Lutheran Church?

I believe that God’s faithfulness endures, from past to present to future, God is here. And I believe God is calling and speaking good news. In my own reminiscing of memories, my lamenting for what is missing, I keep dreaming—dreaming of ministry possibilities, of faithful and creative ways we may live out God’s call to be church together for the sake of the world.

For what do the people of God pray and dream? I hope that the seasons of life and worship ahead will stir up in you, and in our community a sense of holy discernment. The word of God is filled with people who dream. Perhaps, as we consider these stories of God’s faithful people and prayerfully attend to our own dreams, together we can keep discerning God’s dreams for us as Grace Lutheran Church.

Blessings on the days and weeks ahead. May God’s grace surround you now and always. May the joy of Jesus’ birth fill you with love and peace.

CHRISTMAS FAMILY SHARING—I had my first peppermint mocha today! Christmas is coming and along with that Grace’s Christmas Family Sharing (CFS) ministry!

The celebration of Christmas is going to look different this year for most of us, but the meaning of Christmas remains the same no matter how we end up celebrating God coming to live among us. And, while it may also look a bit different, we are most certainly still called to share that Love. Grace has a long history of caring and generosity through our CFS ministry, and it is needed just as much if not more than ever before.

This year our CFS support for our community partners will be offered completely online. We are again partnering with the Family Health Partnership Clinic (FHPC), Turning Point, and ELCA Good Gifts. We have created a website, www.GraceCFS.org, which provides direct links to ways to give to our ministry partners. Each way of giving looks a little bit different, but it is all clearly outlined on the website.

You may support FHPC by purchasing items from their Amazon wish list with the items being delivered directly to the Clinic. Turning Point has requested gift cards from local stores which they will share with their families. Donations to ELCA Good Gifts can be made directly from their website with an even wider variety of options available than in previous years.

If you prefer not to use the website or are unable to access the website, feel free to make a monetary donation which will be used to purchase gift cards. Make checks payable to Grace Lutheran Church with a notation of FHPC, Turning Point, or CFS and mail them to Grace at 1300 Kishwaukee Valley Road, Woodstock, IL 60098. If possible please have monetary donations to Grace by December 20, 2020.

Please visit www.GraceCFS.org to explore how you can support our ministry partners this year. It truly is easy and the need is great! If you have any questions, please contact me, Mary Beth Martin-Bellavia, at 815-245-1242 or MaryBethCFS@gmail.com. Thank you so very much for your continued support of our CFS ministry!

WORSHIP THIS DECEMBER



We invite you to journey together around the theme “Those Who Dream” through the seasons of Advent and Christmas through Epiphany. Beginning with worship on the first Sunday of Advent, November 29, we’ll hear the word of God, pray, and sing of God’s good news this season.

Those Who Dream *keep awake, prepare the way, sow joy, and are not alone.*

Sunday morning worship services will continue to be available online through our website, and soon livestreamed through Grace’s YouTube channel. We hope you will keep checking Grace’s website or Facebook to find each weekend worship service, as well as subscribe to the new [Grace Lutheran Church YouTube Channel](#) to receive notifications for livestreamed services. We will also plan to continue FM radio transmission to the parking lot, and dependent on volunteers and weather, communion elements will be available for pick up before Sunday worship at 9 A.M.

Drive-Thru Communion Pick-Up. On Sunday, **December 6**, you are invited to drive-thru Grace’s parking lot from 10-11 A.M. to pick up consecrated Holy Communion elements from the morning worship service. Home Communion ministers are also invited to pick up home communion kits on this 1st Sunday of the month for delivery.

Daily Devotional. This season we invite you to share in a daily devotional. A printed booklet was available during November’s Drive-Thru drop-off and pick-up event, and additional copies are still available for pick up in the box in front of the main entrance. You can also request a tablet/computer version of the devotional by emailing Denise in the church office (dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org)

Wednesday Midweek worship services will be around half an hour, each Wednesday evening at 7 P.M. on Zoom on December 2, 9, 15, 23. We will gather for prayer and contemplative reflection on scripture, poetry, and art. Please watch for the Zoom link in a *Grace Constant Contact* email.

LUMINARIES FOR CHRISTMAS EVE—Tammy Baier will be collecting clear gallon milk jugs and glass containers (spaghetti sauce size and larger) for luminaries to line the drive for Christmas Eve. These can be dropped off in a bin outside of the main church entrance, or you can arrange a pick up by contacting Tammy at (815) 687-6910.

ADVENT PLAYLIST—If you listen to music on Spotify, check out the [“Those Who Dream- Songs for Advent- Epiphany \(Year B\)”](#) playlist prepared by A Sanctified Art, filled with songs to accompany you on this season. May the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ be with you in these seasons.

SUNDAY SCHOOL VIA ZOOM— Please join us at 10am on December 6 and December 20 via zoom. If you were previously signed up for Sunday School this year, you will be sent a link via email. If you’re not sure or would like to submit a different email, please inform me at jfreeman@gracewoodstock.org. I will also be bringing kits to your door on December 18. You don’t need to be home and feel free to send me a little note if you have a special location on your property to leave the kit.

CONFIRMATION—Attention 7th and 8th graders! Confirmation will be starting in December! We will be using a new curriculum, Colaborate, as we consider what it means to be a Lutheran Christian. (Hint: Grace has a lot to do with it.) And yes, they spell collaborate with just one L!

We will meet on Zoom from 6:00-7:00 p.m. Wednesdays, beginning December 2nd. Each week there will be a presentation followed by breakout small group discussion. Watch for an invitation with the link! Please contact Jen Freeman at jfreeman@gracewoodstock.org for more information.

colaborate
Lutheran Confirmation

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 lkleinjan@gracewoodstock.org.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICES



**At this time, we are looking forward to the following worship opportunities. Please watch Grace's website and emails for any changes or updates.*

CHRISTMAS EVE—FULL WORSHIP SERVICE

We are preparing a full pre-recorded Christmas worship service for you to worship at home this Christmas Eve or Christmas season. We hope you will set aside time with loved ones to worship God as we dream, hear the story of Jesus' birth, and sing treasured Christmas carols.

CHRISTMAS EVE—BRIEF PARKING LOT WORSHIP SERVICES

On Christmas Eve you are invited to gather in the parking lot for worship services at **4:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.** Tune in to 89.3 FM before worship begins to hear Christmas carols from Grace singers & musicians, and then each service will be around 15 minutes in length as we pray, hear scripture, share Holy Communion, and light candles during "Silent Night." We ask all vehicles to please enter from Kishwaukee Valley Road and exit out the back of the parking lot for these worship services. Please look for a greeter as you arrive, and you can tune in to the radio station from any of Grace's parking lot spaces.

"Those Who Dream" Image credit | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Presence Light Sponsors:

November 22

- In celebration of Benjamin's 15th birthday on November 21, given by Larry & Laura Lagerhausen

December 6

- In memory of my wonderful parents Marian & Wencil Dostal and sweet son Blake Panos, given by Anne Panos

December 13

- To the glory of God, given by Diane Schulz

December 20

- In memory of my grandfather, Paul Miotto, whose birthday is the 27th and to the glory of God our Father!, given by Dee Brown & family

December 27

- In memory of our grandson, Alex Zank-Bauman, given by Ken & Kathy Zank

Bulletin Sponsors:

December 6

- To the glory of God, "Lord, let our hearts be good soil" on this World Soil Day, December 5., given by Bill & Nancy Kreznor

December 13

- To the glory of God, given by Diane Schulz

December 20

- To the glory of God with thankfulness for blessings received, given by Vernon & Borgie Stenoien

December 24/25

- In memory of our grandson, Alex Zank-Bauman, given by Ken & Kathy Zank
- To the glory of God, given by Don & Marylee Steinwehe

December 27

In memory of our grandson, Alex Zank-Bauman, given by Ken & Kathy Zank

In memory of John Sorensen, given by his family

In memory of Bob Unglaube, given by Bev Unglaube & family

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

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