

GraceNotes



A Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Newton, NC
Volume 219, Number 1 January 2016



Let your new beginning
begin with JESUS!

On January 6 the Christian Church celebrates the Festival of Epiphany in commemoration of God's revelation to the Magi, by the Epiphany Star, that Jesus was the Son of God who had come into flesh. The Epiphany Star reminds us that Jesus Christ is the epiphany (revelation, manifestation, display) of God for a fallen world. Jesus Christ revealed the love of God for sinful humanity through his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven. He conquered sin, death, and hell and provided salvation for all who believe (John 3:16). It is our prayer that we daily show forth this glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives and worship.



Baptism of Our Lord
Sunday, January 10th

"and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'" Luke 3:22

From the Pastor's Pen...



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ at Grace Church,

Happy New Year! As we begin this new year together, I want to summarize some very important items that will need your attention in January related to the actions of the Leadership Board and the newly revised Constitution.

The Constitution Task Force (Randy Fulbright, Herb Travis, Gene Biggerstaff, and myself,) spent roughly 3 months going through the entire Grace Constitution, line by line, and comparing it to the revised NALC Constitution for additions and revisions. That work was completed in September and the revised updated Constitution was unanimously approved by the Board at its October meeting.

The Constitution was sent to the Constitution Advisory Board at the NALC for their final approval. You may have noted that we did not hold another Annual Congregational Meeting in December, as has been the custom. Since we are in a transition period "between" Constitutions, the Board voted, in order for a smoother transition, to delay or postpone a meeting during the holidays until the new Constitution could be approved and distributed to each of you. After the Constitution Information Meetings (see below) a Congregational Meeting will be called for the purpose of approving the new Constitution.

According to the NALC, we understand that the Constitution has met all the necessary requirements, but we have not yet received the approval letter in the mail. We were informed that there is one item that needs attention and that is the congregation needs to be incorporated as defined by the Constitution. (this is to legally protect the Congregation). To become incorporated as a non-profit religious institution, we will need to make application to the North Carolina Department of Records and Deeds and that must be done through a local attorney's office. We are in the process of obtaining an attorney to do that paperwork for the congregation. The cost is under \$100 for the State, in addition to what an attorney will charge for the filing.

During the month of January, each household will receive a copy of the Grace Constitution with the necessary changes. There will be several information meetings for the Constitution at Grace where members can come and learn of the revisions and ask questions for clarification. The dates for these information meetings will be announced soon. So I ask that you keep your eyes open in the mail for your Constitution and if you are interested, to come to the meetings which will be held several times during the month - in the morning and evenings - so everyone will have an opportunity to come and be informed. It will be an exciting and informative way to start off the new year!

God's Blessings be upon each of you in the New Year!

Pastor Gil Gilbert

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR JANUARY

- ❖ Communion Assistants - Ricky and Cindy Bivens
- ❖ Ushers - Cole Leatherman, Gary Leatherman, Harvey Leatherman, Dennis Leonard
- ❖ Greeter - Pat Dietz
- ❖ Altar Preparation - Jo Doris Frye, Jackie Jarrett
- ❖ Children's Church - Phyllis Biggerstaff, Samuel Biggerstaff
- ❖ Nursery - Sherry Biggerstaff, Lynette Momier

FLOWER CHART FOR JANUARY



- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| 1/03 - Lorene Heavner | 1/10 - OPEN |
| 1/17 - Malinda Leatherman | 1/24 - OPEN |
| 1/31 - Gil and Karen Gilbert | |

If you wish to give the flowers for a given Sunday, please list your name on the chart in the narthex. The liturgical color of the day is listed to assist you in selecting flowers appropriate for that Sunday. You should contact the Church

Office so that the correct information is placed in the bulleting for that Sunday. Please notify the Church Office the Thursday prior to your selected Sunday. You can call the Church Office between 9 AM and Noon each weekday, leave a note on the desk, or send an email to let us know the occasion or memoriam for this wonderful gift of beatification of the worship.

ATTENDANCE AND GIVING TO OUR LORD'S WORK FOR NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015

	11/29/15	12/6/15	12/13/15	12/20/15
SCS	37	45	43	47
Worship	102	99	86	105
General Offering	4,060.00	2,620.00	1,674.01	2,264.00
Learning Hour	145.00	26.75	24.50	198.00
Building Fund	3.00	515.00	70.00	145.00
First Sunday Lunch	0.00	175.00	0.00	0.00
Carpet Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
Poinsettias	68.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Thanksgiving Meal	63.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Thanksgiving	537.50	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cemetery Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	76.65
Christmas Decorations	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Use of Fellowship Hall	25.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Christmas	0.00	5.00	0.00	127.00
Cookbooks	0.00	645.00	660.00	185.00
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	0.00	600.00	0.00	0.00
Memorial Fund (P. Yoder)	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00
Memorial Fund (B. Hewitt)	0.00	0.00	0.00	55.00

NOTE: The financial report will be in the newsletter each month and will be not be published in the weekly worship bulletin. Because the newsletter is distributed the last Sunday of each month, the attendance and giving figures for the last Sunday will be carried over to the next month's newsletter.

FIRST SUNDAY LUNCH will be served Sunday, January 3rd, following Worship. The Christian Education Ministry Team will be serving BBQ, baked beans, slaw, potatoes, and dessert.

THE WOMEN OF GRACE will meet Sunday, January 3rd following the First Sunday Lunch.

THE FRED T. FOARD SENIORS will meet at Noon on Wednesday, January 6th at Trinity Lutheran.

MEN OF GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST will be held on Saturday, January 9th, at 9:00 AM at the Blue Moon.

SECOND SUNDAY BREAKFAST will be served Sunday, January 10th, at 9:00 AM. Frankie Crouse, Doug & Jackie Jarrett, Martha Johnson, and Scott and Carolyn Whisnant will prepare the breakfast.

THE GRACE SENIOR/ADULT GROUP will meet in the Fellowship Hall on Wednesday, January 20th, from noon until 2:00 PM.

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY, love and prayers are extended by the People of God at Grace to the family of Bruce Hewitt. May God comfort all who mourn in their hour of grief.

CONGRATULATIONS to Joshua Fulbright upon his graduation on December 12th with a Bachelor of Arts in Criminology from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Notes may be sent to him at the address in the new church directory. Congratulations, Josh! (KH)

THANK YOU FROM TERRY AND STEPHANIE RATTTS: Thanks to each and every one of you who were part of the baby shower. We appreciate all the gifts greatly. We are truly blessed! (SR)

THANK YOU FROM PASTOR BLUME: Please express my appreciation to the congregation for the concern shown by members of Grace Church at the recent death of my brother, Harry. The bulletin announcement and recent cards and notes were greatly appreciated. Harry was greatly loved by the members of Calvary Lutheran Church, Concord, as was evidenced by the congregation filling the 750 seat sanctuary for his funeral. Sincerely, Pastor Harvey Blume

ECCCM NEEDS your continuous help to keep the Food Pantry and Homeless Shelter supplied. They are asking for items for children (toys, blankets, and clothing), food, toiletry items (shampoo, tooth paste, tooth brushes, combs, brushes, etc.) and grocery bags. Any items brought to the church for this ministry will be delivered to ECCCM. (JB)

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD SHOEBOXES were delivered to the Samaritan's Purse warehouse in Charlotte on Monday, November 30th. Grace sent 85 shoeboxes. The children from around the world say thank you. We still have many empty shoeboxes at the church so we will begin to fill them in 2016. Watch the newsletter for more details. (KH)

THANK YOU for all of the lovely gifts and cards you blessed me with during the Christmas season. It meant more to me than you can imagine to be remembered. And the gifts of all sorts were an added

blessing. I truly appreciate the opportunity to serve our Lord here at Grace. May God richly bless each of you as you continue to serve Him in all aspects of your lives. - Kathy Hefner

REGISTRATIONS FOR VIA DE CRISTO WEEKENDS are filling fast for 2016. For more information or to register for an upcoming weekend, please speak with Sherry Biggerstaff, Sheila Drum, Don or Nicky Jarrett, David or Iris Sigmon, or Pastor Gil or Karen Gilbert.

NOTIFY THE CHURCH OFFICE as events occur, such as illness, surgery, births, weddings, funerals, etc. so that the prayer list can be updated, or information added to the monthly newsletter. All events are important in the life at Grace Church and can easily be shared with friends and neighbors by bulletin, newsletter, and/or phone tree. (KH)

REQUEST FOR MENUS when hosting meals at the church has been received. Due to dietary restrictions, it is helpful to some if the menu for an event can be published in the newsletter and/or bulletin prior to the event. Thank you for your help in being considerate of others needs. (KH)

New Items for January



IT OUT!!!!



FOR YOUNG GIRLS

1. Real Girls of the Bible by Mona Hodgson
A 31 day devotional to help young ladies be their best!
2. Brave Girls Bible Stories by Jennifer Gerelds
Celebrating great women of the Bible.
3. God's Beautiful Daughter by Tasha K. Douglas
Discover the love of your heavenly Father.

FOR ADULTS

1. Believing God by Beth Moore
A must read!
2. Life Application Study Bible
Large Bible - a great resource for one and all!

ADDITIONAL GIFT

Kirk Walden, the author of "The Wall", recently spoke at the Fund Raising Dinner for the Caring Hearts Pregnancy Center in Taylorsville which Kathy Hefner attended. Those present were given a copy of his book. Kathy is donating her copy to the Grace Library. Mr. Walden has had more than 30 years of experience in the pro-life arena. His efforts span from political campaigns and public policy to his current work with hundreds of crisis pregnancy ministries across the United States.

At a time when our social and political structure is aligned against the most innocent among us, "The Wall" brings tremendous hope and vision. Though we've experienced a generation of tragedy following the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, "The Wall" reminds us that it is often when hope seems lost that God orchestrates extraordinary victory through ordinary people. In addition, "The Wall" shows that surprisingly, today is the perfect time for creating a new culture of life in America. Get ready to be inspired; and be prepared to take your place building "The Wall". (KH)

At Sunday School they were teaching how God created everything, including human beings. Little Johnny seemed especially intent when they told him how Eve was created out of one of Adam's ribs. Later in the week his mother noticed him lying down as though he were ill, and said, "Johnny, what is the matter?" Little Johnny responded, "I have pain in my side. I think I'm going to have a wife."

SCENES FROM THE CHRISTMAS PROGRAM



LEADERSHIP BOARD NOTES

The Grace Leadership Ministry Board met on December 5, 2015 at 4 p.m. The meeting was called to order and President Tim Eckard gave the opening devotions. There were 3 members absent. The Board continued the study on the book with Chapter 7 from Healthy Congregations, as prescribed by Bishop Bradosky.

The Minutes of the November meeting were reviewed and approved.

Old Business: The results of the Time and Talent forms were compiled and distributed to the Board. The listing will be included in the Annual Report to the Congregation.

New Business: The Constitution has been tentatively approved pending the incorporation of the congregation by the State of North Carolina. The Board will seek an attorney to complete the paperwork as required.

There will be Constitution Meetings held during the month of January for all members of Grace to review the Constitution and the required changes.

A Called Congregational Meeting to approve the Constitution will be held as soon as the Constitution Meetings have been completed. Hence, the Board voted to postpone (table) the Congregational Meeting scheduled for December in light of this transition and the holidays being upon us.

Ministry Team Reports:

Learning: No Report

Property: Fireplace in Fellowship Hall has been cleaned, Kudos to Don and Nicky Jarrett for the yard work done in November; Women's bathroom sink is slow; toilet in women's downstairs bathroom keeps running.

Outreach: Children's Christmas Tree - all tags have been taken. Thank you to all. Pastor Gilbert delivered the Children's Shoeboxes collected at Grace to the Christmas Shoebox Distribution Center in Charlotte and worked as a volunteer there separating boxes and placing the boxes in larger boxes to be loaded on pallets.

Witness: No report

Finance: No report

Staff Support: Staff evaluations were completed in November. Joy and Kathy are doing exceptional jobs. Much appreciated by the Staff Support Team whose members are: Marjorie McDaniel, Joe Monier, David Sigmon, Tim Eckard, Pastor Gilbert.

Other: The Leadership Board Appreciation Dinner for Board members and spouses will be held Dec. 11 at 6 p.m. in appreciation for the Board and their service in 2015. Dinner sponsored by Pastor Gil and Karen Gilbert, Joy Heavner, Kathy and Rev. David Hefner. The menu for the dinner will be rib-eye steaks, baked potatoes, salad, beverages and desserts.

Treasurer's Report: Received as information

Next Meeting: January 10, 2016 at 4 p.m.

REFERENDUMFUN.COM COPYRIGHT GGL INC.



Thanks to Dad Ringgold (See Genesis 3) 01-03-2002

OUR RESOLUTION LAST YEAR COULD HAVE BEEN
"LESS FRUIT", BUT NO ... WE WENT WITH
"TRUST PEOPLE MORE"



F.R.O.G.
Fully Rely on God

MUCH THANKS TO MANY PEOPLE

Lots of preparation is needed each year as the Grace Congregation travels through the Advent and Christmas season. Many volunteers take time out of their busy schedules to decorate not one but 3 buildings at Grace Church. This year for the very first time, an artificial tree was placed in the Sanctuary at the direction of the local Fire Marshall. Most of you remember the "trial run" in July. a tiered stand was crafted by Mike Pisko to hold the tree donated by Pastor and Karen Gilbert, as well as the Nativity scene and many of the poinsettias donated by members of the congregation. Thanks to all for their participation in the Hanging of the Greens and to Betty Wilfong for preparation of a meal for this event.

The day after Thanksgiving, David and Belinda Wilfong and some of their grandchildren set up the Church yard nativity scene, which has been a welcome addition for the past several years. Bobbie Brendle made repairs to one of the shepherds standing watch beneath the tree, and she also brought her three wise men to mark the journey to Bethlehem.

Tricia Panek completed yet another Advent Banner this year, and we welcome this addition to our banner ministry program, which was begun by Eloise Eckard years ago.

The children's program is always a special event leading up to Christmas, and we welcome their participation each year performing skits, readings, and singing. With new microphones recently purchased we look forward to many more programs throughout the church year. Thanks to all the workers behind the scenes that help make these programs memorable.

Our choir continues to be dedicated and faithful, and performs new music each new season. We thank them for their gifts of song to our Grace family. Jodi and Eric Martin continue to delight us all with their solo events - singing and trumpeting throughout not only the Advent Season but all year long.

The Union Church Christmas Candlelight Service continues to be held the week before Christmas.

This service was begun as a way to utilize the renovated Union Building, and to honor those ancestors who worshiped in this structure many years past. Music and song sounds wonderful in this old building, and we thank all who help in each service held there. Christmas poinsettias placed at the Grave sites provide a ray of color throughout the grounds of the cemetery.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to All of our Volunteers. (JH)

GRACE COOKBOOK UPDATE

Thank you all for your support of the cookbooks! To date we have sold 107 cookbooks - that's 75% of our goal to sell all 140 copies!

Many of you purchased copies as gifts for Christmas. Now it's time to focus on the new year, Valentine's Day, birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, anniversaries, ground hog day - well, maybe not ground hog day, but you get the idea.

What better way to introduce Grace church to a neighbor or friend, who currently does not attend church, by purchasing a cookbook and giving it as a gift! All it takes is one small gesture by us and let God do the rest.

Thank you again to all those who volunteered and purchased copies of the cookbook. It was a joy to share this event with all of you! - Karen Gilbert



God expects spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.

MISSION CONNECT FROM THE NALC

The North American Lutheran Church is Mission Driven. The challenge that we face in this digital age is trying to communicate in "real" time.

Finding our footing in Psalm 107:2, "Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story", Mission Connect was created as a tool that will help connect us as we are "Living on Mission, Telling our Stories".

To receive a weekly text message update, text the word "**mission**" to **619-356-2910**. If you prefer to receive the weekly update by email, please visit: <http://2hoots.com/users/login/60>.

Each week you can expect to receive a new story, prayer request, opportunity, or update from the NALC Mission Office. You may also text a prayer request to the same number listed above to be lifted up by the NALC Prayer Network. Join us as we journey together down this road of discipleship and mission!

IMPORTANT REMINDERS ABOUT THE USE OF CHURCH PROPERTY

Please remember that you are responsible for taking care of equipment and the facilities when using space and items at Grace. This is God's House and should be treated with even more respect than your own homes.

- ❖ Return borrowed items (staplers, toys, books, etc.) to their proper places when finished using them.
- ❖ Be certain classrooms, nursery, Fellowship Hall, etc. are cleaned up, food is properly stored, and items returned to their proper places. (Remember we do have issues with bugs and mice.)
- ❖ If using the van, Fellowship Hall, the Picnic Shelter, or Union Church be certain to contact the Church Office to reserve use of these facilities to avoid conflicts.
- ❖ Be certain to return the van filled with gas, all trash removed, and spills or messes cleaned up.
- ❖ When using Fellowship Hall kitchen, be certain all refrigerators are closed properly, stoves/ovens/grills are turned off, garbage is disposed of properly, and floor and tables are clean. It has been made known that too many items were recently placed in the freezer and the door did not close properly. Therefore, the next group coming in to use the kitchen discovered that everything in the freezer defrosted and spoiled over the holidays and had to be thrown out.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "BECOME MORE LIKE JESUS?"

One of Jesus's favorite topics had to do with money. And this got people really riled up. "Sell your possessions, and give to the needy" (Luke 12:33). "Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). He told a wealthy and moral leader to "sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Luke 18:22). In his first—and foundational—sermon, Jesus said he has been "anointed...to proclaim good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). **Not poor in Spirit but actual poor people (cf. Luke 6:20)**. In Matthew 25, one of the most terrifying passages in the Bible, Jesus describes judgment day in detail and His criterion for who's in and who's out has to do with whether you and I have served the poor and needy in this life (25:31-46). Are you a Christian? Are you serving the poor and needy?

If Jesus means what He says in Matthew 25, *will you receive a positive or negative verdict on judgment day?* Some people say that what Jesus *really* means is that we are saved by grace through faith and whether we serve the poor is largely irrelevant for God's verdict on judgment day. The classic evangelistic line, "If you were to die today and God were to ask you, 'why should I let you into my kingdom?' what would you say?" The expected right answer is usually limited to right belief (Jesus) divorced from the right behavior that follows that belief (serving the poor). According to Matthew 25, part of what you *should* say—indeed, what we all need to say—is "I served the least of these." **Part of what it means to become more like (the biblical) Jesus is becoming excessively generous with our material wealth and having the scent of poverty on our hands and feet.**

Jesus's deep friendship with sinners doesn't change the fact that his sermon on the mount (Matt 5-7) still stands as one of the **strictest ethical speeches in all of religious history**, making even Moses look like he was soft on sin.

Jesus's hard-hitting, enemy-loving, harlot-embracing, wild-eyed way of life is captured in his famed call to come die with him. "If anyone would come after me"—that is, become a disciple, a Christian—"let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). As Dietrich Bonhoeffer used to say, "When Jesus calls a man, he bids him to come and die."

Jesus looked very different than the religious and political majority culture. **Do we? (PG)**

THE CHRISTMAS SHOEBOX MINISTRY IS NOT COMPLETED

Franklin Graham is encouraging congregations to consider making available the Children's Shoeboxes throughout the year. At Grace, we will have available the Shoeboxes in the narthex every Sunday throughout the year so you can take a box and fill it - hopefully, one each month. That way we will be sure to meet our goal of more than 136 shoeboxes being filled at Grace in 2016.

Look for the Shoeboxes in the narthex and take one home every chance you get so we can continue to spread the good news to the children who need to know of God's love and compassion. Once you have filled your Shoebox, return it on any Sunday and we will store them until it is time to take them to the Samaritan's Purse Distribution Center in Charlotte.

Treasurer's Report for
November
2015

YTD

General Fund	
Beginning Balance	8,724.84
Deposits	17,186.76
Expenses	14,810.27
Ending Balance	11,101.33
Memorial Fund	
Beginning Balance	20,982.76
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	20,982.76
Building Fund	
Beginning Balance	-561.88
Deposits	628.08
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	66.20
Cemetery Fund	
Beginning Balance	140,096.16
Deposits	33.54
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	140,129.70
Union Church Restoration	
Beginning Balance	44,705.13
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	28.68
Ending Balance	44,676.45
Playground Equipment Fund	
Beginning Balance	3,109.52
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	3,109.52
All Funds	
Beginning Balance	217,056.53
Deposits	17,848.38
Expenses	14,838.95
Ending Balance	220,065.96

General Fund	
Beginning Balance	32,617.90
Deposits	123,678.40
Expenses	145,194.97
Ending Balance	11,101.33
Memorial Fund	
Beginning Balance	26,281.90
Deposits	2,335.00
Expenses	7,634.14
Ending Balance	20,982.76
Building Fund	
Beginning Balance	-2,118.08
Deposits	5,014.03
Expenses	2,829.75
Ending Balance	66.20
Cemetery Fund	
Beginning Balance	89,418.20
Deposits	54,743.07
Expenses	4,031.57
Ending Balance	140,129.70
Union Church Restoration	
Beginning Balance	45,013.64
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	337.19
Ending Balance	44,676.45
Playground Equipment Fund	
Beginning Balance	3,109.52
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	3,109.52
All Funds	
Beginning Balance	194,323.08
Deposits	185,770.50
Expenses	160,027.62
Ending Balance	220,065.96

Grace Notes

**Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church N.A.L.C.
4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway
Newton, NC 28658**

Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly