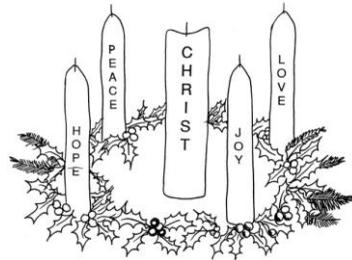


GraceNotes



A Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Newton, NC
Volume 218, Number 12 **December 2015**

The Advent of Our God



Celebrating Christmas at Grace

Christmas Program, December 13th at 4:00 PM in the Sanctuary
Caroling, December 12th at 5:30 PM, meet at Grace
Grace Senior/Adult Group, December 16th at Noon in Fellowship Hall
Community Candlelight Worship, December 20th at 5:00 PM in Union Church
Christmas Eve Worship, December 24th in the Sanctuary with
Music Prelude at 6:30 PM and Candlelight/Communion Worship at 7:00 PM



CHRISTMAS IS THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS, THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND

From the Pastor's Pen...



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A lot of Christian people today are worried by reports that the church is losing its young people. At the current rate, they say, the faith could become a thing of the past within the next thirty or forty years.

I've got some good news for you: That is completely inconsistent with the testimony of Scripture!! The Bible bears witness to a faithful God "who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Deuteronomy 7:9). What's more, these rumblings don't match up with the findings of some of the best contemporary research. The truth is that it's not so much a matter of kids, or even us adults, holding on to the faith. It's really a question of the faith holding on to us. If youth come from a home where Christ is taken seriously, they usually won't turn away from Him when they're old enough to make up their own minds.

We need to recall that there was a baby born in a smelly, old stable in that little town of Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. Many were not ready for him then. Many will not be ready for him when he comes again. The question we have to ask ourselves is: Am I ready if He were to come tonight? Have I given my all to His Church? Am I faithful to the study of His Word? Do I constantly love neighbor as much as I love self?

When He comes again in His glory, the whole world will know it in an instant...at that very moment. He will come with a winnowing fork in His hand to separate those who really know Him - from the ones who have not taken the time to have a relationship with Him. At the time of His coming, it will be too late for relationship building.

I pray that as we face a new year, that you will commit yourself to a deeper and richer relationship with the Lord Jesus. That you will dig into His Word. That you will be in worship when the church doors are open. That you will learn His precepts and commands by being in a Sunday morning class or weekly Bible study. And that you will pray - so that the relationship deepens beyond anything you can imagine. That is my Advent and Christmas prayer for each of you.

Come, Lord Jesus, Come!

Pastor Gil Gilbert

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR DECEMBER

- ❖ Communion Assistants - Doug & Jackie Jarrett
- ❖ Ushers - Jacob Jarrett, Tim Leatherman, Jonathan Moss, Johnny Moss
- ❖ Greeter - Juanita Haas
- ❖ Altar Preparation - Belinda Wilfong
- ❖ Children's Church -
- ❖ Nursery - Frankie Crouse



FLOWER CHART FOR DECEMBER

12/06 - Phyllis Biggerstaff
 12/20 - Joy Heavner

12/13 - Violet Hatchett
 12/27 - Nicky Jarrett

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 OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2015

	10/25/15	11/1/15	11/8/15	11/15/15	11/22/15
SCS	41	34	47	40	44
Worship	89	71	100	92	88
General Offering	1,361.00	4,441.00	2,670.00	2,352.01	1,800.50
Learning Hour	23.00	20.00	16.00	41.05	38.15
Building Fund	100.17	155.00	255.00	215.00	.08
First Sunday Lunch	0.00	146.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Contemporary Service	0.00	0.00	0.00	122.00	0.00
Poinsettias	0.00	26.50	68.00	54.00	75.50
Adult Bible Study Material	0.00	0.00	30.00	0.00	0.00
Thanksgiving	0.00	0.00	10.00	0.00	0.00
Second Sunday Breakfast	0.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	0.00
Scanner	0.00	0.00	0.00	150.00	0.00
Use of Fellowship Hall	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00	0.00
Cemetery Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	33.54	0.00
Music Ministry	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
Shoe Box Shipment	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	14.00

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.

THE FRED T. FOARD SENIORS will meet at Noon on Wednesday, December 2nd at Laurel Hill.

FIRST SUNDAY LUNCH will be served Sunday, December 6th, following Worship. The Christian Education Ministry Team will be serving spaghetti, salad, bread, and dessert.

THE WOMEN OF GRACE will meet Sunday, December 6th following the First Sunday Lunch.

MEN OF GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST will be held on Saturday, December 12th, at 9:00 AM at the Blue Moon.

DRESS REHEARSAL for the Christmas Program will be Saturday, December 12th at 10:00 AM in the sanctuary. It is important that all involved be present. Volunteers to help with costumes are also needed. Please speak with Joy Heavner if you can help with costumes. (JH)

SECOND SUNDAY BREAKFAST will be served Sunday, December 13th, at 9:00 AM. The Biggerstaff families will prepare the breakfast.

THE GRACE SENIOR/ADULT GROUP will meet in the Fellowship Hall on Wednesday, December 16th, from noon until 2:00 PM. A meal will be served consisting of sub sandwiches, chips/dips, cookies with ice cream, and drinks. Games and Christmas carols will follow the meal. Each attendee is asked to bring a \$5 gift for the "Silly Santa" gift exchange. Please join us for food, fun, and fellowship! (PB)

A CHRISTMAS CAROLING PARTY will be held by the Daisy & Brownie Troop in Fellowship Hall on Monday, December 14th, at 6:15 PM. They would like to extend an invitation to all the members of Grace to attend this Christmas celebration. So that they can be prepared with enough food, please RSVP to either the Church Office or directly to Theresa Beevers, Scout Leader, at 828-455-3412 by Monday, December 7th. (TB)

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)

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY, love and prayers are extended by the People of God at Grace to David and Faye Lane and their family, upon the death of David's brother, Jerry Lane; to Lorene Heavner and Nell Leatherman and their families, upon the death of their niece, Rita Coffey; and to Rev. Harvey Bloom and his family upon the death of his brother, Harry Bloom. May God comfort all who mourn.

THANK YOU from Glennie & Carl Beam for the many prayers, cards, and acts of kindness upon the death of Glennie's sister, Polly. Everything was very much appreciated.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE is normally the 22nd of each month. However, due to the Christmas holiday and Kathy taking time to go to Pennsylvania to visit family between Christmas and New Year's, ***early submission of articles*** would be most appreciated. (KH)

DONATIONS OF CANDY AND FRUIT are needed for the gift baskets to those homebound and in nursing homes and also for the treat bags for the children at the Christmas Party. It has been asked that no candy be given to the seniors in the nursing homes due to medical reasons. (The same is probably true for our homebound folks.) Please place donations downstairs by Saturday, December 12th. (JJ)

CHOIR VOLUNTEERS would be most appreciated for the upcoming Christmas services. Practice is each Wednesday at 6:00 PM. (JH)

REMEMBER MEMBERS OF GRACE that are in nursing homes, homebound, or sick. Your visits, cards, and calls this Christmas season are a blessing. Share the love of Christ with a smile or note.

ADDITIONAL CORRECTIONS TO ROSTER IN PICTORIAL DIRECTORY:

Removed from membership, Joshua Hood and his family per his request.

Removed from membership, Angela Rembert per her request.

Removed from membership, Charlie Wright and his family per his request.

Scronce, Shelly - change address to 1758 Magnum Road, Hickory, NC 28602 and add email address of shelscronce@gmail.com

Biggerstaff, Mary - correct her address to The Lutheran Home, 1265 21st Street NE, Hickory, NC 28601 (previous correction listed 21st Street ND)

THANKS TO ALL WHO PREPARED the Thanksgiving Eve supper for the Grace family. The turkey, dressing, green beans, sweet potatoes, coleslaw and rolls were delicious, and everyone's participation was most appreciated. The dessert table was totally filled with an outstanding variety of sweet delights. (JH)

CAROLERS NEEDED! On Tuesday, December 15th, we will be caroling at the local nursing homes (Lutheran Home, Kingston, Abernathy) to visit our members. The bus will leave the church at 5:30 PM. Wear warm clothing and make it an adventure as we share the love of Christ through the songs of Christmas. The nursing homes have also asked that we might want to supply the residents with gifts of new white socks. We plan to go to a local restaurant following our singing to eat supper. (JH)

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)

CHRISTMAS CARD "MAILBOXES" will once again be available. There will be folders in the back pew of the church to put Christmas cards in for those that regularly attend worship. It is asked that you place the cards for your friends in their folders. It is also requested that you check YOUR folder on a regular basis and take home any cards you may have received. This is a way for you to save some postage while you send greetings to your church family. The "mailboxes" will be put in the pews December 6th. (JJ)

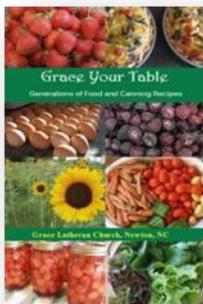
AN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY is posted on the bulletin board outside the Pastor's Office. The job opening is at MTSI in Newton. There is also an opening for the position of Church Secretary at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Claremont. (KH)

A GRACE CHRISTMAS WISH LIST FOR ITEMS IN FELLOWSHIP HALL is usually created each year. In most cases this wish list contains items that you might have at home and no longer use. This past year we were blessed with numerous donations of glass serving dishes and table decorations. Our wish list this year is for the following: Lids that will fit our gallon jars that hold tea, several large water pitchers w/lids, a toaster oven that holds at least 4 slices of bread, red pillar candles, and a large ice cooler that holds at least 3 gallon jars standing. This is for when our refrigerator is full, and there is a need for additional space for cooling tea or beverages. (JH)

THE 2015 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL, based on Year II of the LBW and written by Pastor David Wendel, is now available in the Narthex. You may also sign up to receive the Advent devotional material as a daily text/email message. This option is available by texting **ADVENT** to 614-333-0334 or go to <http://2hoots.com/users/add/61> and complete the information to receive the daily email. As we journey through Advent together, it can be challenging to integrate our daily devotions with everyday life. For those receiving the daily text/email messages, there is an option at the conclusion of each Advent reflection to help live into this time of Advent preparation. This tangible, small step is offered up only as a suggestion to assist in living into that particular day's meditation. Together with your meditation on the daily devotional text, pray for the person listed each day, and then intentionally take the time to write a note, send a text message or email, or post a message on Instagram or Facebook for that person. If you choose to use social media, please use the hashtag **#ComeLordJesus** to help us track this initiative. Blessings on your Advent journey! Those who take a hardcopy will find the Intentional Response and Action Step Guide enclosed. (KH)

“Grace Your Table” Cookbooks

Sale Starts Sunday, December 6



Save the date!
Mark your calendars!
Invite your friends!
Shop for Christmas gifts!

The date is about to arrive! The Grace cookbooks will be ready for sale on December 6 during the First Sunday Lunch. The cookbooks will sell for **\$15.00** each. If you do not regularly come to the First Sunday Lunch, be sure to stop by in the Fellowship Hall to get your copy (or copies) and sample some recipes directly from the book.

All proceeds go to the Sanctuary Project Fund (carpet, painting, removal of bee hives, etc.). The cookbooks will make great Christmas gifts and there will be plenty of copies available. Come and support Grace Church with this awesome cookbook that includes recipes from your congregation!

Many thanks to all who have volunteered to make this fundraiser a reality.

Karen Gilbert

GOOD TIMES

We all want to have good times. Right? Yeah! But what about Grace Lutheran Church? It wants to have a good time also, but that good time depends on you. It can't go alone. There are so many different areas and opportunities here for you to shine in. All it takes is for you to give back some of the time that was first given to you. Time was given to each of us freely and with love. We should do the same without excuses. What if Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John hesitated? "What do you mean 'go with you'? Who will take care of our nets, watch our boats, feed our families, where will we stay, what will we eat?" Instead they immediately got up and went with Jesus when he asked for their time. And Matthew who was at work sitting at his tax collector's table. "But! But! Wait a minute now!! You want me to follow you? Who's going to spend my money? I just bought a two humped camel. I am adding another room to my home and we are going to celebrate with a feast. Tonight is bath night. Jobs are hard to find these days." He just stood up, asked no questions and left with Jesus.

Why did these grown men give up everything to follow Jesus? Were they looking for adventures in far-away lands, running away from trouble at home, hiding from the law? No! No! They felt the Holy Spirit move inside of them saying "Go and serve the Lord, it is the right thing to do and you will be loved and cared for many times over".

Grace Lutheran Church cannot fulfill its purpose, its mission, without your help and this is so sad. Let's turn this frown upside down. Listen my friends, Jesus is asking and the Holy Spirit is looking for your surrender. Please answer the call to serve and give the Church and all of us...a good time.

Your Brother in Christ,
Ricky Bivens

REVELATION CLASS

There are some myths that need to be dispelled that surround this book we know as "Revelation". There are far too many such foolish notions about this book which this note will hardly suffice, but here goes. Get yourself into the Revelation Class on Sunday mornings!

If you have heard the book called "Revelations," or if you have called it that, you and they are wrong. The opening word of the book is the singular noun "revelation." More literally, the word means "unveiling," a revealing of something that has heretofore been hidden. The book purports to reveal something that all must know. What that something is is the reason for the writing.

It was written by a man named John (a name as common then as it is now) who was spending some time on the lovely island of Patmos, a few miles off the coast of modern Turkey. But in John's day, it was not so lovely a place. It was in fact a Roman prison where the Romans sent persons, or certainly this person, to get him out of the way, to isolate him from the Roman populace. Why? John's answer is that it is "because of the word of God and the testimony of (or to) Jesus" (Rev 1:9). And because of that - we all, as good disciples of Jesus, should be studying this wonderful and exciting writing of John.

The Revelation Class, facilitated by Glennie Beam, is deep into the study of John's Revelation. It is not to be feared, but to be cherished as a great treasure of the Church. Glennie is using a text written by a pastor and theologian and the study really digs into each chapter of Revelation. The class is made up of folks just like you, who are inquisitive about Revelation and they are enjoying the text and discussion a great deal every Sunday.

Avail yourself the opportunity to learn about Revelation and join this class for the Advent season and beyond. You'll be glad you did! (PG)

WHAT GOD CAN DO

Siblings Gabe and Livvy Feinn picked up the mail for their family in Louisville, Kentucky, and found a Samaritan's Purse Gift Catalog addressed to their grandmother, who lives with them. Intrigued, Gabe, 13 at the time, and Livvy, 9, decided they wanted to raise \$14 to buy chickens for an impoverished family overseas. Selling cupcakes at a garage sale, they made more than twice their goal. Encouraged by their success, they decided to support a family by paying for a goat. It took them just two days to raise the money.

Gabe then told his mom, "We want to do something that takes a lot of faith." They looked at several possibilities and set their hearts on a far bigger goal: \$35,000 to renovate a mission hospital. Gabe posted on his Facebook page that he would give a cake to anyone who donated to the cause, using skills he learned in a homeschool class in cake decorating. "I make the cakes and Gabe decorates the cakes," Livvy said. Gabe became known as "Gabe the Cake Man," and donations came pouring in.

The Lord blessed their many months of effort, and Gabe and Livvy reached their God-sized goal. Samaritan's Purse has used their funds to rebuild the maternity ward at Nyankunde Hospital in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which serves hundreds of moms and babies each year.

Recently, Gabe and Livvy returned from Nyankunde, where they celebrated the dedication of the new ward. While they were there, the first baby was born in the maternity ward, a little girl delivered via Caesarean section. Her mother was so grateful for the medical care she received that she decided to name her daughter Gabriella.

This is what God can do with those who are willing to act. The efforts of Gabe and Livvy were sponsored by Samaritan's Purse (Franklin Graham) in Boone NC.

To read the whole story of Gabe and Livvy, go to the Samaritan's Purse web site at www.samaritanspurse.org. (PG)

THANKS TO:

Nancy Leonard for supplying hand sanitizer in the pews:

Mike Pisko for building a new Christmas tree and flower stand using wood from the shortened pews:

Tricia Panek for being Sunday School Coordinator:



Debi Pisko for not getting right back up on the ladder after falling:

Joy Heavner for being Joy Heavner and doing all the things she does:

for Grace Lutheran church:

Karen Gilbert for working late nights on the cookbooks:

The Bible, The Lord's Prayer, and Jesus Christ:

To all the ushers, greeters, communion assistants, altar preparers, teachers, cooks, dish washers, leaders, crafters, readers, bingo callers, money handlers, inventory counters, paper pushers, preachers, workers, music makers, coordinators, believers, morning coffee makers, behind the scene heroes, organizers, prayer lifters, volunteers, drivers, singers, planners, thinkers, worshipers, children, bell ringers, healers, listeners, helpers, watchers, followers, conventioners, quilters, shoe box fillers, flower givers, assistants, witnesses, promoters, visitors, friends, neighbors, grass cutters, repairers, acolytes, and to anybody and everybody else that I missed but played a vital role in discipleship during the year of 2015.

From Ricky Bivens

THE 'SECRET' MEANING OF THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS...

From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their church. Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality which the children could remember:

The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.

Two turtle doves were the Old and New Testaments.

Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.

The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.

The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.

The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit--Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.

The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit--Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control.

The ten lords a-leaping were the ten commandments.

The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.

The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed. (KH)

DIFFICULT CHALLENGES WITH THE DECISION OF THE SUPREME COURT

As one of only 3 NALC pastors in all of New England, and one that does not have a parish, I most certainly can relate with the "... need to pray for congregations and pastors who are going to be placed in difficult situations" due to the Supreme Court's decision on gay marriages as mentioned by Pr. Dennis Nelson in the Issue 5 of the "Core Voice." I had a very interesting conversation recently with a woman whom I've known since we were kids. She is a Justice of the Peace in the State of Connecticut and has an extremely successful business in performing marriages. I asked her, since she is an officer of the law in the state, "What becomes of clergy who refuse to perform gay marriages based on their religious beliefs?" She was shocked by the question! She replied by saying that she is a Christian and she will marry anyone because it doesn't matter to her who loves who. She is only one example of the many, many people who just do not understand but place their whole stand only on their feelings. I know that, if I had told her that I am one of those pastors, I would have gotten a good "tongue lashing" but we were at someone's birthday party so it was neither the time or the place to discuss it.

The fact is that we are ALL in difficult situations at this time and need to pray for all of us. We need to pray that our brothers and sisters hear and comprehend the REAL meaning of the Gospel. The challenge is there for us all and we have no choice but to face it. Many thanks to the NALC and to Lutheran CORE for the stand they make.

Rev. William Hodge

(from the November issue of the Lutheran CORE) (PG)

We don't change the message, The Message changes us.

WOULD JESUS BOMB ISIS?

I have two big problems with this analogy: First, I am not Jesus. And neither are our political leaders. Far from it. Jesus came to earth for the express purpose of sacrificing Himself to provide a means of restoring us to God, “the Just Judge of all men.” He permitted Himself to be killed for our salvation because He was God. He knew exactly what good it would do because he had planned it from all eternity.

But the second issue is the bigger one, frankly, that has to do with how shallow our evangelical theology pool has become. Someone is missing from the analogy. God, the Father, the Just Judge of all men. He was the one standing in the place of authority at the crucifixion. Our national rulers act with authority ordained by Him as they enforce the law and protect people charged to their care. God the Father did not stand idly by when sinners killed Jesus. He did not engage in self-loathing as some leaders do. He presented us with the same option I proposed that we give these jihadists — change your ways or face the consequences. To put it bluntly, repent or die. Be reconciled through the cross and empty tomb or face your own destruction.

We need to dump this portrayal of Jesus as an effeminate wuss who would never raise a finger to protect the innocent and to crush the evil doer. Scripture paints a vastly different picture of God that is both gentle and forgiving AND just and full of righteous wrath. From the first few chapters of the book of Psalms alone:

Psalm 2: “Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ³ “Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.” ⁴ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. ⁵ Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: ⁶ “Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.” ⁷ “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.” ¹⁰ Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear, And rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.” (see also Psalms 3, 7, 9, 10, 11)

Don’t get me wrong. God IS love. Jesus loves the little children. Make no mistake about it.

But you don’t want to mess with Him!

(article by Bill Blankschaen as published in “Faith Walkers”. See www.faithwalkers.org) (PG)

New Items for December IT OUT!!!!

1. The Embarrassed Believer by Hugh Hewitt
Reviving Christian witness in an age of unbelief.
2. Love Finds You by Serena B. Miller (Fiction)
A mysterious outsider casts a long shadow on Ohio's Amish country.
3. Blue Like Jazz by Donald Miller
4. How Good Do We Have to Be? by Harold S. Kushner



Our Christmas books are pulled for you to find them easily. Enjoy reading a Christmas book at this special season! (SB)

BISHOP'S ADDRESS TO WNALC ANNUAL GATHERING

"Thank you for this invitation to be with you. Thank you for your faithful work and ministry.

In Luke's gospel it is the women who are the first to receive the good news of the resurrection. The angels ask, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" The angels encouraged them to remember Jesus words. "The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again." And they did. The women are the first to proclaim the good news to the eleven. They are the first evangelists. The women believed and the men doubted. When Peter went to the tomb scripture says he left wondering what happened. It is important to remember that women of faith have always played an important role in the proclamation of the Gospel.

The text that you have chosen as the theme for your gathering is one of my favorite but it must be seen in the context of the larger story that consumes the entire 9th chapter of the book of John. It is a teaching moment for Jesus. His disciples see a man born blind and want to know why he was blind. Was it his sin or the sin of his parents? Jesus says it is not a matter of sin but that the works of God might be displayed in him! This man was living in darkness, but the light from above was about to shine on him. Without the light of Jesus presence we cannot work. Without Jesus there is only darkness. Jesus professes that he is the light of the world.

Jesus has compassion on the man and then he takes action to heal him. He spits on the ground, makes mud and puts it on the man's eyes. He tells him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam and the man obeys, that is, he believes in Jesus. And he went home seeing for the first time in his life, he can see. Can you imagine?

People start asking him what happened, how can you see? And he told them about Jesus. He is a witness, who quickly becomes an evangelist. The Pharisees haul him in to hear his story and to undermine Jesus saying he cannot be from God because he healed on the Sabbath. Some said how could anyone do such an amazing thing apart from God? So they asked the man what he thought. He said Jesus had to be a prophet. The Pharisees bring in his parents to be sure that he was actually born blind. They want to know what they think about Jesus. They are afraid and tell them to ask their son. If you acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah you would be put out of the synagogue. So the Pharisees brought him in again, telling him to give glory to God by telling the truth. They contend they already know the truth and they accuse Jesus of being a sinner. The man is strong and deliberate in his position. One thing I know I was blind and now I see.

Their doubt turns into more questions trying to ridicule both this man and Jesus. What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? The man sees through their questions, their rejection of Jesus. And he is even more firm in his conviction, I have told you and would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too? They hurl insults at him. You are his disciple. We are disciples of Moses... we don't know where this man came from?

Now look at the power of this man's testimony. It is bold and it had to be nothing less than the Holy Spirit giving him the words to speak. John 9:30-34: ³⁰ "The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. ³² Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴ To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out."

After he is thrown out Jesus comes to the man. He tells him that He is the Son of Man, the savior, the messiah. And the man believes in Jesus and worshipped Him. Then Jesus said I have come into the world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind. Spiritual blindness can hit any one of us. When we move away from Jesus and think that we can see apart

from Him we become blind. But when we turn to Jesus the light comes on and then we truly see because He is the light.

The implications for ministry are many here. To be laborers in the harvest we need to be like this man who was born blind.

1. We must have our own story to tell of the difference Jesus has made in our life. "I was blind but now I see."
2. We must be certain in our conviction of who Jesus is. (The Son of Man, Savior, Messiah, Lord of all, etc)
3. Be bold and unrelenting in your witness trusting in the Holy Spirit to give you the words to speak (We have become much too quiet and accepting)
4. Keep the focus on Jesus in your proclamation. It is Jesus they most need to know!
5. (Continued from page 2)
6. Be ready to face rejection, insults and ridicule (We need one another for support, nurturing and care.)
7. Have compassion on others as Jesus had compassion on this man born blind. Jesus didn't see him as one who was just a worthless sinner. Jesus saw a person who could have a profound witness and make a difference in the lives of many others.
8. Avoid spiritual blindness. We are the Body of Christ, not an organization or an institution. We are a movement. If we fail to let Jesus lead and think the strength of what we are about will come from us we will be among those who become blind. We have left the past for this very reason. Let us never return.

Given those seven realities let me suggest ways you can equip one another for the harvest. (By the way, the harvest is all about reaching those who are blind and in desperate need to see! And they are all around us!) Whenever you come together in for any meeting no matter what other business you need to conduct make sure you include the following:

1. Encourage people to tell their stories of the difference Jesus is making in their life
2. Study what the scripture and confessions teach us about who Jesus is. The most important question you can ever answer is the one Jesus asked his disciples, who do you say that I am?
3. In your ministry go to places where a witness is needed where there are blind people and speak to them, touch their lives with the powerful love of Jesus. Remind one another to trust in the work of the Holy Spirit to do amazing things when you make yourself available to Him.
4. Keep your focus on Jesus in all your work. This is not about you. It is not about gender. It is about Jesus. There are no agendas in Jesus. There is only Jesus.
5. In the midst of difficulties... and they are sure to come. Offer support and care to one another. The battle should not be within the church but with those overcome by the blindness of life without Christ.
6. Have compassion that motives you to action. Local mission, national mission, international mission have always been on the hearts of faithful women in Christ. Remember your identity as the first evangelists.
7. Never become so caught up in organization that it replaces the mission. That is the sure sign of a dying church, when simply surviving becomes the mission.

Having said that, I also want to remind you that you will need to have sufficient organization and structures that keep you focused on accomplishing Christ's mission of making disciples. Remember that is what the blind man became, a disciple of Jesus, follower of Christ. In order to make the Women of the NALC a vital part of the mission of the Church you must each take personal responsibility for its work, its purpose and its mission. You cannot wait for someone else to do that

for you and then decide if you want to stay with it. This blind man took personal responsibility for proclaiming Christ. No one had to ask or demand it. He just did it! It came as a response to what he received from Jesus. So may it be with each one of you that you will find a way to invest yourself in this important mission and equip others to also be laborers for the harvest!

In the name of Jesus, Amen." Bishop John Bradosky (KH)

THE YEAR IS 1915

What a difference a century makes! Here are some statistics for the Year 1915:

- The average life expectancy for men was 47 years.
- Fuel for cars was sold in drug stores only.
- Only 14 percent of the homes had a bathtub.
- Only 8 percent of the homes had a telephone.
- The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.
- The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower.
- The average US wage in 1910 was 22 cents per hour.
- The average US worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year ... A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2000 per year, a dentist \$2,500 per year, a veterinarian between \$1,500 and \$4,000 per year, and a mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year.
- More than 95 percent of all births took place at home ... Ninety percent of all Doctors had NO COLLEGE EDUCATION! Instead, they attended so-called medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press AND the government as "substandard."
- Sugar cost four cents a pound.
- Eggs were fourteen cents a dozen.
- Coffee was fifteen cents a pound.
- Most women only washed their hair once a month, and used Borax or egg yolks for shampoo.
- Canada passed a law that prohibited poor people from entering into their country for any reason.
- The Five leading causes of death were:
 1. Pneumonia and influenza
 2. Tuberculosis
 3. Diarrhea
 4. Heart disease
 5. Stroke
- The American flag had 45 stars.
- The population of Las Vegas, Nevada, was only 30.
- Crossword puzzles, canned beer, and iced tea hadn't been invented yet.
- There was neither a Mother's Day nor a Father's Day.
- Two out of every 10 adults couldn't read or write and only 6 percent of all Americans had graduated from high school.
- Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all available over the counter at local corner drugstores.
- Back then pharmacists said, "Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, regulates the stomach and bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health!" (Shocking?)
- Eighteen percent of households had at least one full-time servant or domestic help.
- There were about 230 reported murders in the ENTIRE U.S.A.!

It is hard to imagine what it may be like in another 100 years. (PG)

LEADERSHIP BOARD NOTES

The regular monthly meeting of the Grace Leadership Ministry Board was held November 8, 2015 at 4 PM. Devotions were given by Gene Biggerstaff sharing a teaching by Rev. Charles Stanley.

The Board moved further in their study of the book, "Healthy Congregations", Chapter 6, as recommended by Bishop John Bradosky.

Dedication Sunday was set for November 22 in which all Time and Ability Forms would be received by the congregation.

Reports will be collected from all the Ministry Team leaders for the Annual Congregation Report to be distributed to the Congregation after the first of the year.

Learning/Education: Team will sponsor the First Sunday Lunch in December (spaghetti, salad, rolls, drink).

Property/Facilities: Deep fryer has been removed from the kitchen in Fellowship Hall. Water tests were returned as being good; dehumidifier will be placed in the storage room in Fellowship Hall. Plans to paint storage room is planned for spring; base for the sanctuary Christmas tree is being constructed by Mike Pisko and Rick Bivens.

Praise/Worship: Thanksgiving worship and dinner planned for Nov. 25; Advent begins Nov. 29; Children needed for Christmas program;

Witness/Evangelism: signage sites being determined; volunteers needed to erect signs in spring. Board agreed that this was needed ASAP. A&R Graphics in Maiden will be making the signs for \$58 per sign, as they have the NALC logo already on file from other areas church signs.

Finance/Stewardship: Gene Biggerstaff distributed reports of projected year end. A -\$57,468 deficit for the 2015 year can be expected. We all need to give a little more to correct this shortfall.

Staff Support: Evaluations are being done for all staff positions. Report will be given at the December meeting. Board Appreciation Dinner will be held December 11 at 6 PM for all Board members/spouses/guests. The dinner is sponsored by the staff of Grace: Pastor Gil and Karen, Joy and Bill Heavner, Kathy and Rev. David Hefner.

Next Board Mtg. December 6, 2015 at 4 p.m.

Inherit the Mirth

By Cuyler Black



By Bill Keane



**Treasurer's Report for
October
2015**

YTD

General Fund	
Beginning Balance	8,860.53
Deposits	10,329.43
Expenses	10,465.12
Ending Balance	8,724.84
Memorial Fund	
Beginning Balance	20,982.76
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	20,982.76
Building Fund	
Beginning Balance	-982.05
Deposits	420.17
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	-561.88
Cemetery Fund	
Beginning Balance	140,467.08
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	370.92
Ending Balance	140,096.16
Union Church Restoration	
Beginning Balance	44,730.77
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	25.64
Ending Balance	44,705.13
Playground Equipment Fund	
Beginning Balance	3,109.52
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	3,109.52
All Funds	
Beginning Balance	217,168.61
Deposits	10,749.60
Expenses	10,861.68
Ending Balance	217,056.53

General Fund	
Beginning Balance	32,617.90
Deposits	106,491.64
Expenses	130,384.70
Ending Balance	8,724.84
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	4,385.95
Expenses	2,829.75
Ending Balance	-561.88
Cemetery Fund	
Beginning Balance	89,418.20
Deposits	54,709.53
Expenses	4,031.57
Ending Balance	140,096.16
Union Church Restoration	
Beginning Balance	45,013.64
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	308.51
Ending Balance	44,705.13
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	167,922.12
Expenses	145,188.67
Ending Balance	217,056.53

Grace Notes

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

Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly