

# GraceNotes



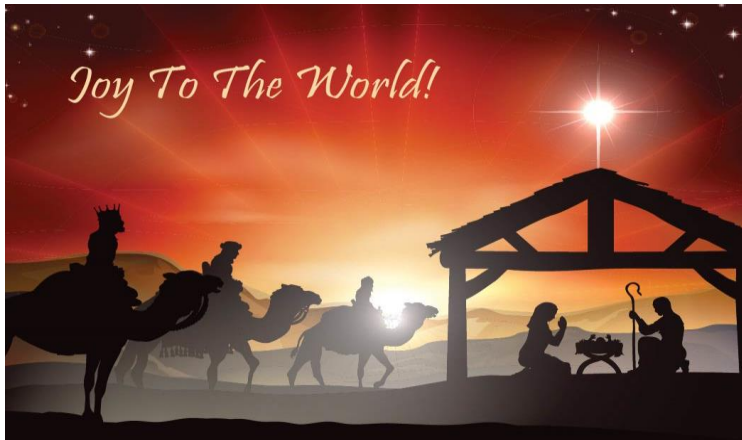
A Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Newton, NC  
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Volume 224, Number 12 **DECEMBER 2021**

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**December 18, 2021 at 11:00 AM**  
**Grace Cemetery**



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**Christmas Eve Candlelight and Communion Worship**  
**December 24, 2021 at 4:00 PM**

# From the Pastor's Perspective...



Dear Brothers and Sister at Grace,

Greetings to you in the name of the Christ Child! What a blessing it is to celebrate another Christmas season with the faith community of Grace Church! My heart is filled with much joy as we prepare to celebrate, once again, the birth of the Christ Child. And with that joy comes a confident hope in knowing that we also await the return of Christ and the coming of God's Kingdom!

As our family lives in the parsonage directly next door to the church, it gives me a distinct vantage point from which to view the church steeple – at all times of the day and night. On early mornings I watch the first light dance off the spire, as crooked as it may be, and many times over the summer, I witnessed the sky darken and storm clouds roll by. But I most love the view at night when the spire is illuminated by a full moon and surrounded by stars.

When I'm outside with our Golden Retrievers, Michael and Gabriel, on those starlit nights, I can't help but be reminded of the wondrous star that led the wise men to a stable in Bethlehem. And I ponder all the people throughout the centuries who have looked to the heavens for God's guidance. It fills me with a sense of great awe. The stars and the moon make the world seem so very small – a place where we can reach out our hands in peace and love to each person who calls the earth home. God created the moon as the brightest light in the night sky, just as the nativity star was so long ago.

That star symbolizes the light that Christ brings into our world; a light of love and salvation to reconnect us to God and to one another. The candles we light in church and in our homes at Christmas brings Christ into our midst. Isaiah 60:1 tells us, "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you."

I hope you will worship on December 24 at 4:00 pm for the Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship and the sacrament of Holy Communion. May the Light of Christ shine brightly in your hearts this Christmas and into 2022! God Love You!

Pastor Gil Gilbert

## WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR DECEMBER

- |                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| ❖ Acolyte              | Herb Travis                  |
| ❖ Lector               | Herb Travis                  |
| ❖ Communion Assistants | Alan Shull and Herb Travis   |
| ❖ Ushers               | Michael Hall and James Hall  |
| ❖ Altar Preparation    | Herb and Libby Travis        |
| ❖ Offering Tabulators  | Todd Childers and Alan Shull |

*Please be mindful of your commitment to serve. If you are unable to fulfill that commitment, be reminded that it is **your** responsibility to find someone to serve in your place.*

## FLOWER CHART FOR DECEMBER



12/05	Open	12/19	Frankie & Gene Crouse
12/12	Marjorie McDaniel	12/26	Mike & Debi Pisko

If you wish to give the flowers for a given Sunday, please list your name on the chart in the narthex. *You are responsible for ordering the flowers from a florist of your choice; we do not have a standing order with any florist.* 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 bulletin for that Sunday. Please notify the Church Office the Wednesday 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 memorial for this wonderful gift of beatification of the worship.

## ATTENDANCE AND GIVING TO OUR LORD'S WORK FOR OCTOBER/NOVEMBER, 2021

	10/31/21	11/07/21	11/14/21	11/21/21
Learning Hour	16	21	15	17
Worship	49	58	50	50
General Fund Offerings	\$2,370.00	\$6437.00	\$1,814.00	\$1,480.00

Needed Each Week = \$3,268.54

General Fund **Offerings, October, 2021** = \$21,111.84  
 General Fund **Expenses, October, 2021** = \$16,737.04  
 Difference = - \$4,374.80 (offerings exceeded expenses)

**THE FRED T. FOARD SENIORS** will meet at noon on Wednesday, December 1, 2021, at Sardis Lutheran Church. There will be a covered dish meal, and all seniors are invited to these gatherings.

**THE MEN OF GRACE** will meet on Saturday, December 11, at 9:00 AM at Four Peas in a Pod Restaurant on Highway 70 in Conover. Please come and bring a friend!

**TOYS FOR TOTS DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup>!** There is a box located in the Narthex, and another is downstairs. Let's fill these boxes with **NEW** and **UNWRAPPED** toys. The mission of the USMC is to provide toys, books and other gifts to less fortunate children in Catawba County.

**CHRISTMAS CARD "MAILBOXES"** are now available. There are folders on the back pew of the church to put Christmas cards in for those that ***regularly attend worship, whose family attends, or are homebound***. No addresses are needed as *nothing gets mailed*. 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 DISCIPLES OF GRACE DONATED 994 POUNDS OF FOOD TO EASTERN CATAWBA COUNTY CHRISTIAN MINISTRY THIS YEAR!** Thanks be to God for your generosity in feeding the poor!

### **NEW LEADERSHIP MINISTRY BOARD**

Congratulations to the new members of the Leadership Ministry Board of Grace Lutheran Church. At the Annual Congregational Meeting held on November 7, the following were elected/re-elected to serve as our leaders: Tim Eckard, Jason Yoder, Jeff Scronce, and fulfilling terms will be Alan Shull, Michael Hall, Libby Travis, Todd Childers, Gary Leatherman, and Matt Speagle. The new Board will be attending the Annual Leadership Board Training Retreat in January 14-16 at Lutheridge. The Board Retreat is required for ALL Board Members. As a Board Member, this retreat will be instrumental in teaching the fundamentals of how the Board operates within Grace Church and the NALC Constitutions. Goals for 2022 will be formulated and shared. Ministry Teams will be assigned. It will be a great time together! Installation of Board will be Sunday, Dec. 26 during worship.

## **THE GRACE CONGREGATION IS URGED TO ATTEND & ASSIST**

On Saturday, December 18 at 11:00 AM, The Daughters of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the Confederacy will come to Grace to honor those who gave their lives in the service of our country with the Wreaths Across America.

Each December on National Wreaths Across America Day, our mission to Remember, Honor and Teach is carried out by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as at more than 2,500 additional locations in all 50 U.S. states, at sea and abroad. Wreaths will be placed on each grave of veterans who fought in the wars to protect our freedoms. There will be full military honors and a brief order of prayers and commemoration. Wreaths Across America's mission touches the lives of thousands of school, scout, civic and religious groups across the country through wreath sponsorships. These groups help us ensure that we reach our goal to place a wreath on each hero's grave. Because this is a national event, many people not connected to Grace will hopefully be in attendance on December 18. The Grace Cemetery is listed on the national website for Wreaths across America as one of the 1,200 locations taking place on December 18 for this ceremony. This will be a wonderful witness to the Grace Congregation and Cemetery Ministry.

The Grace congregation will be hosts to all who come as we will serve coffee, hot chocolate, cookies and doughnuts in Union Church following the Rite of Commemoration. Grace disciples are urged to help host with the serving coffee and refreshments. Contact Herb Travis if you are willing to help.

## **COMMUNICATION IS THE VITAL KEY**

As we have been formed as a congregation who worships the Living Lord, Jesus Christ, we have to be mindful of how important communication is in our community of faith. This is most important when there are emergencies or hospitalizations that need to be communicated to the Pastor or to the Stephen Ministry. If you have an emergency, accident, or health condition which takes you to the hospital, PLEASE CALL THE PASTOR IMMEDIATELY. DO NOT DEPEND ON EMAIL TO THE CHURCH OFFICE. The email address and the Pastor's email address are different. Please use the phone to contact the pastor directly. If the Pastor is not in town or is not available, call the President of the Congregation or a Stephen Ministry Leader. The Pastor will always inform the congregation of another pastor who is "on call" if he is out of town. These guidelines will enable the Pastor and others to be present with you when a crisis occurs. CHURCH OFFICE: 704-462-1035 (M-Thurs. 8:30-12 Noon) PASTOR'S PHONE: 704-236-5483.

## DOES GOD NEED US?

I consider it both a strange mystery and a settled matter of the faith that God prefers not to do things alone. Repeatedly, He acts in a manner that involves the actions of others when it would seem, He could have acted alone. Why would God reveal His Word to the world through the agency of people? Why would He bother to use writing? Why not simply communicate directly with people? Why speak to Moses in a burning bush? Why did the Incarnation involve Mary? Could He not have simply become man, whole, complete, adult, in a single moment?

Such questions could be multiplied ad infinitum. But at every turn, what we know of God involves others as well. We may rightly conclude that such a means of acting pleases Him. An Orthodox hymn for the Annunciation says:

“The manner of His emptying cannot be known; the manner of His conception is beyond speech. An Angel ministers at the miracle; a virginal womb receives the Son; the Holy Spirit is sent down; the Father on high is well pleased, and according to their common counsel, a reconciliation is brought to pass in which and through which we are saved.”

At the same time that this conciliar mode of action seems obvious to Orthodoxy, it is frequently denied or diminished by others. There is a fear in some Christian quarters that were we to admit that God shared His action with any other, our salvation would be a matter of our own works and not the sovereign act of God. It is feared that a conciliar mode of action shares the glory of God with mere mortals. It is true. This understanding shares the glory of God with mere mortals. But interestingly, St. Paul says that man is the “image and glory of God” (1 Cor. 11:7). Apparently, we were brought into existence in order to have such a share.

The same is true of the Sacrament of the Altar. We come to the Table to partake of Christ’s Body and Blood in the bread and wine. We do this as the Body of Christ in communion with other worshipers. It is amazing how some seem privileged to exit immediately following coming to the Table. Would any one of us go to a dinner party at someone’s home and get up from the table and leave immediately following the dessert or before? To leave after receiving the sacrament is not only poor theology, it is just bad manners! The blessing and prayers have not yet been said, nor the benediction which blesses us all with His presence. When others decide they should leave before the end of the Communion Setting, what kind of witness does this send to other worshipers? Something to truly think about!

## BOARD NOTES

**BOARD NOTES** (from the regular meeting held 11/21/21)

Meeting called to order by President Alan Shull.

Libby Travis gave the devotion on Thanksgiving.

All members were in attendance except Gary Leatherman and Matt Speagle.

### OLD BUSINESS

> Bids were accepted and approved for the replacement of glass coverings for the stained-glass windows in the Sanctuary. Bid was also approved and accepted for the painting of the main sanctuary by Custom Coatings of Hickory. Work will begin the first week of December. The front doors were discussed at length, and it was shared that it is becoming a challenge to find a contractor who has the time to devote to the project which involves several factors. As several specialists/carpenters have examined the doors, it is becoming evident to the Board that the doors may not be repairable due to extensive water damage and age. The same is true for the threshold which has rotted underneath the flooring of the narthex and will require extensive reconstruction. The Board unanimously agreed to study the options of replacing the present doors with different types of new doors (which will be painted red) and will add security and beauty to the entrance. It was also agreed to remove the present doors and place them in a prominent place in the church as historical fixtures.

### NEW BUSINESS

> Leadership Ministry Board will hold their Annual Training Retreat on January 14-16 at Lutheridge.

### MINISTRY REPORTS:

Learning: More participants are needed to attend Learning Hour on Sunday mornings.

Property: Outside steel stairway needs to have rust removed and re-painted.

Offer by Duke Power to do an extensive inspection of all lighting to be done in December.

Bus bids to be accepted and sold to the highest bid in the next 30 days.

Praise/Worship: Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship will be Dec. 24 at 4:00 pm.

Witness: Committal for Fuad Rihani will be held Nov. 24 at 2:00, Oakwood Cemetery.

Stephen Ministry: New Stephen Ministers will be Commissioned on January 2 during worship.

Cemetery: Wreaths Across America, Dec. 18 at 11 AM. Coffee and refreshments to be offered after the ceremony in Union Church.

Other Business: Pastor will no longer be wearing a mask or gloves beginning in Advent. Communion Assistants are welcome to do the same. Communicants will receive the bread OR be welcomed to take the wafer from the Paten themselves.

Treasurer's Report given and received as information.

Next Meeting: December 19 at 4:00 Devotions: Pastor Gil, Tabulators: Alan Shull/Todd Childers

NOTE: Newly Elected Board Members are urged to be present at the December Meeting.

# Grace Notes

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church NALC  
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