

# GraceNotes



A Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Newton, NC  
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## HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Epiphany is a Christian festival, observed on January 6th, that commemorates the manifestation of Christ to the gentiles in the persons of the Magi.



The Baptism of our Lord

The Baptism of Our Lord, commemorating Jesus Christ's baptism by St. John the Baptist, celebrates the revelation of the Trinity.

# From the Pastor's Perspective...



Dear Friends at Grace Church,

Greetings! What a year 2021 has been! All of us had our ups and downs. There are several lessons we can learn from 2021:

>>>Trials come to all of us. They seem to be custom designed for each of us.

>>>Every trial has a life-cycle. Kinda like the flu!

>>>The outcome may not be to our liking, but it will be for our best.

>>>The ultimate purpose of trial is to get us to turn to Christ. The sooner, the better!

>>>God is faithful. He always has and He always will. He will never forsake His people.

As we look to 2022, it is easy to become discouraged and negative. Let me urge you to trust God to make it the best one ever! In fact, Hebrews 11:6 reminds us that “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a supporter of those who diligently seek Him.” Just when things seem to be hopeless, God does His miracles! He wants to do that in your life, your family, your work, and even our nation. He is already doing some exciting things at Grace! As you read this, the Board is obtaining bids on projects all over the church facility. Paint the sanctuary was only the beginning! We are committed to making sure we are good stewards of what God has given to us, and the maintenance and upkeep of these magnificent facilities is just part of our faith journey. Let me remind you again – this is not about the buildings!!! It is about lifting up Jesus Christ so that people may see Him and come to Him. Our goal at Grace is to “Make Christ Visible.”

Let me urge you to do the following: Pray that God will guard us against the enemy. Satan always has something up his sleeves. Resolve to know Christ better in 2022. Further resolve to lean upon Him and trust Him. Resolve to give your tithes and offerings to the Lord. He doesn't need it, but you do!

Remember to reach out and witness to people with the Good News of Christ. Karen and I pray for you daily. We look forward to continuing our journey with you in 2022!

In Him,  
Pastor Gil Gilbert

## WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR JANUARY

- |                        |                                |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ❖ Greeter              | Libby Travis                   |
| ❖ Lector               | Stormy Shull                   |
| ❖ Communion Assistants | Rick and Cindy Bivens          |
| ❖ Ushers               | Mike and Debi Pisko            |
| ❖ Altar Preparation    | Herb and Libby Travis          |
| ❖ Offering Tabulators  | Todd Childers and Libby Travis |

*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 JANUARY



01/02	Open		01/16	Open
01/09	Open		01/23	Open
			01/30	Open

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 Tuesday prior to your selected Sunday. You can call the Church Office between 8:30 AM and Noon on Monday - Thursday, 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, 2021

	11/28/21	12/05/21	12/12/21	12/19/21	12/24/21	12/26/21
Learning Hour	13	17	17	16		15
Worship	41	48	54	49	70	41
General Fund Offerings	\$1,360.00	\$4,355.00	\$4,526.00	\$3,036.00	\$256.00	\$1151.00

Needed Each Week = \$3,268.54

General Fund **Offerings, November, 2021** = \$11,898.48

General Fund **Expenses, November, 2021** = \$10,429.57

Difference = \$1,468.91 (offerings exceeded expenses)

**THE FRED T. FOARD SENIORS** will meet for lunch at noon on Wednesday, January 5, 2022, at Wesley Chapel. All senior citizens and young at heart are invited and welcome to these gatherings.

**THE MEN OF GRACE** will meet on Saturday, January 8, at 9:00 AM at Four Peas in a Pod Restaurant on Highway 70 in Conover. Great food and great fellowship! Please come and bring a friend!

**UNHANGING OF THE GREENS** will take place on Saturday, January 8th at 11:00 am after the Men of Grace Prayer Breakfast. This includes taking down the tree and sanctuary decorations. We need and appreciate your help!

**LEADERSHIP MINISTRY BOARD WILL BE ON RETREAT** - Please keep in mind that the Leadership Ministry Board will be on their Annual Planning and Training Retreat, January 14-16. Keep these elected leaders in your hearts and prayers before and during their time together and that this retreat will bear much good fruit for the congregation.

**WORSHIP OF LESSON AND CAROLS** - On Sunday, January 16, the congregation will come to worship with Lessons and the singing of Carols as the Christmas-Epiphany season comes to a close. What a great way to celebrate the wonderful story of Jesus' birth and sing praises to His holy name. Stormy Shull will be our reader for this service as we recall the prophecies, the Visitation of the Wise Men, and celebrate the birth of God's Son. Come and share the Spirit!

### **THE SEASONS OF CHRISTMAS AND EPIPHANY**

Mary must have been most deeply conscious of the presence of God. For here was God's own, dear Son lying before her on that first Christmas night. How do you think Mary felt as she gazed upon her newborn Child? Like at no other time in her life, God must have felt very, very real and very, very close to her. When has been the time in your life when God felt the most real and the most near to you? My hope and prayer for you is that God will feel very real, very near, and very close to you during this Christmas-Epiphany season. In the joy and love of family life. In the warmth and beauty of Christmas carols. In worship and fellowship with other believers.

Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. My hope and prayer for you is that during this Christmas-Epiphany season you will experience many things that you will treasure, keep, and ponder in your heart. Things like the love and loyalty of those closest to you. The magic and mystery and miracle of human life. The way in which God sometimes works in ways we would never expect. And the presence of God. All these things are more than enough to fill our hearts to overflowing this Christmas season with love and joy and peace and hope and goodwill.

--- Dennis D. Nelson, Executive Director of Lutheran CORE

## **2022 NALC PASTORS' CONFERENCE, FEB. 15-17 IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA**

"Always be Ready: Apologetics in Real Life" is the theme of the 2022 NALC Pastors' Conference set for Feb. 15-17 at the Crowne Plaza Orlando-Universal Boulevard in Orlando, Florida. The theme of the conference is based on 1 Peter 3:15 (NRSV): "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you." Pastors are encouraged to come for two days of presentations and conversations about apologetics.

According to the Lutheran Cyclopedia, "Apologetics concerns itself with errorists outside the Church ... the classical period of Christian apologetics is the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, a period of widespread persecution of Christians by Romans. The apologists defended Christianity against various charges." In the same way that Philip Melancthon presented an "apology" or "defense" of the Augsburg Confession against its detractors, pastors today may find themselves challenged to "always be ready" to present a defense of the faith as North America is full of "errorists" and those who deny the reality of the Triune God, the Christian faith, the Word of God and Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

The conference format will provide extended time for conversation, questions and interaction between speakers and pastors. Pastor Gilbert will be attending the conference as part his Continuing Education allowance.

### **FROM FRANKLIN GRAHAM.....**

We praise God for the extraordinary opportunities He gave Samaritan's Purse this year to serve in Jesus' Name around the world. We could not have done this important work without your prayers and support. Thank you!

Samaritan's Purse deployed to Kentucky and Arkansas earlier this month to bring relief and comfort to homeowners after a swarm of tornadoes caused catastrophic damage. We set up Emergency Field Hospitals in North Carolina, California, and Mississippi to treat hundreds of patients suffering with COVID. We also set up our Field Hospital after the deadly 7.2 magnitude earthquake in Haiti in August. We responded in the wake of hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding, wildfires, and an ice storm in 11 different states from the Deep South to the Pacific Northwest. We fed and sheltered displaced families in Colombia and in Ethiopia; and provided Afghan evacuees with primary medical care, hygiene items, clothing, and more. Millions of Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes were distributed to boys and girls in over 100 countries, including many hard-to-reach places where the Name of Jesus had never been heard. These are just some of the ways we were able to help hurting people and share God's love with them.

Thank you to the members of Grace Lutheran Church in Newton NC for partnering with us to help suffering people and share with them the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As He commanded us, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Sincerely,

Franklin Graham, President, Samaritan's Purse

## **MESSAGE FROM BISHOP DAN SELBO**

Thank you for your good and faithful ministry and for your partnership in the work of the Gospel. It is my deepest and most sincere desire and prayer that this Christmas-Epiphany season will be one in which we offer a strong and encouraging word of hope to a world that is in desperate need of what only our Lord Jesus can give.

There is little doubt that we are living in challenging times. Our world continues to be threatened by a global pandemic that appears to be with us for an uncertain amount of time. Our nations continue to be torn by politics that tend to separate and divide rather than unify and lead to peace. The uncertainty of the stock markets, the threat of increased inflation, the tension that exists between some of our world's strongest nations — these are but a few of the many reasons why people are concerned for their futures and find little reason for hope for the generations that will follow.

At the same time, as followers of Jesus, we know that the troubles of this world are only of this world. As real as they are, and as challenging and troubling as they might be, they do not and never will have the final say. The final say belongs to God. The final word is always and only His. And the Word He has given to us, in His Son, Jesus Christ, is one in which we find real and lasting hope.

In his letter to the believers in Galatia, the apostle Paul points to the confidence we can have in our God who knows and sees and responds to our deepest needs in a timely manner. "When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).

Our hope is in Jesus. Our security is in Christ. We have been redeemed, bought back, justified, and made right with God in what has been accomplished for us in His Son. Christmas offers a word of needed and lasting hope to all who are willing to place their trust in Jesus. It is always helpful, in troubling times, to remember the context of the world into which our Lord Jesus was born. People were fearful of the political powers. Although there was a Roman peace, it was one brought about by a singular power instead of a shared unity. Countries were divided. Families were being torn apart. Racism was real. Life was fragile. There was as much anxiety and fear in Jesus' day as there is in ours. Although much has changed in our world in the past 2,000 years, little has changed when it comes to this world's troubles and the need people have for a real and lasting word of hope. For these reasons, and many more, we are and will always be a people of hope. As a result, let us be bold in our witness and confident in the words we share. We carry a message our world needs to hear, and we follow the One who has called and claimed us for eternity.

Thank you for your faithful witness. Thank you for the partnership we share in Christ. Thank you for persevering in what has been another challenging year. I look forward to the year ahead and to continuing the work that is ours in Jesus. It is a joy and an honor to serve as your bishop. Know that my prayers are with each of you. -----Bishop Dan Selbo

## **THANK YOUs.....**

Dear Grace Congregation....Karen and I want to thank you, the disciples at Grace, for the generous gifts given to us for Christmas. Your love and faith in Christ keep us motivated all year. Thank you for the financial gift, cards, food items, candies, fruit and especially your love. It all was greatly appreciated!

Thank you from Pam Tallent - Administrative Assistant, Chris Abernethy – Custodian, Sandi Tallant - Organist and Ernie Bowman - Groundskeeper for the generous Christmas gifts. They were very much appreciated!

## BOARD NOTES

### BOARD NOTES (for the regular December Meeting)

The regular Leadership Board Meeting was held December 19 at 4:00 pm.

Meeting was called to order by Alan Shull, President

Devotions were given by Pastor Gilbert followed by prayer.

**Roll Call:** All members were present including newly elected Tim Eckard. Absent: Matt Speagle  
Minutes of the November Annual Congregational Meeting were read and approved.

#### OLD BUSINESS

Procedure for the receiving of bids for the selling of the church bus was shared. Bids must be in by January 28, 2022 at which time the bus will be awarded to the highest bidder.

Discussion around the purchase of a portable defibrillator was discussed. Jason Yoder will report back at the next meeting with the best defib and price so we can purchase.

#### NEW BUSINESS

Leadership Board Retreat will be January `14-16@ Lutheridge in Arden NC. All members of the Board are expected to attend. Pastor Gilbert shared the particulars and goals of the retreat. Installation of the Board will be in worship on December 26.

#### MINISTRY TEAM REPORTS

**Learning:** The Sunday morning classes are going well and are very fulfilling. Every member of Grace needs to be in a class as directed by scripture. The benefits are priceless.

**Property:** Custom Coating will submit a bid for sandblasting, cleaning and painting all steel rails and stairs. The side entrance platform needs to be welded. Gary Leatherman will follow up. Suggestion for all electrical to be inspected and repaired by Dale Boger, electrician, due to problems with the lights during the Wreaths Across America service. Parsonage also had some electrical problems in the past week that were repaired.

**Praise & Worship:** Christmas Eve Candlelight worship, Dec, 24 at 4:00 pm.

Service of Readings and Carols will be Sunday, Jan. 16. Reader: Stormy Shull

De-Hanging of the Greens and storage of decorations and tree will be January 8 at 11:00.

**Community Outreach:** Toys for Tots, Christmas Shoeboxes, Tornado Victims, Wreaths Across America, Christmas Card files.

**Stephen Ministry:** Current Training Class ends 12/20. New Stephen Ministers to be commissioned during worship on 12/26.

**Ministry Resource :** Motion to give each staff member a Christmas gift of \$100. Pastor to receive gift equal to one week's salary. Approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** Received and approved.

**Next Meeting:** Retreat on Jan. 14-16. Devotions: Todd Childers

# Grace Notes

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