

Grace Notes



A Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Newton, NC
email: gracencalnewton@aol.com website: www.gracelutheran-newton.org Church Office: 704-462-1035
Volume 227, Number 12 **DECEMBER 2024**



Join us for an Advent Bible Study
Each Sunday in Advent at 9:15am



Saturday, December 14th
Grace Cemetary 11:00am



Please join us for Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 4:00pm

Christ's Holy Family – You Too Are Loved and Included!

Setting out the Nativity Scene or Creche is a tradition that reminds us of the beautiful Christmas Story of God's love and salvation in Christ. As we set out each figure, we are reminded of how God came to each one, announced the good news of God's love, and by grace included them in the Holy Family of God. When did this tradition begin? After visiting the Holy Land in the early 13th Century and seeing the humble place of Christ's birth in a Bethlehem cave, St. Francis of Assisi was inspired by the Holy Spirit to do something special for Christmas Eve in 1223. He recreated the scene of Christ's birth in a cave near the city of Greccio, Italy. He had a manger with straw and a live baby along with the traditional animals. Members of the church took on the roles of Mary, Joseph, and the Shepherds. As all of the worshippers gathered on Christmas Eve, the Gospel story came alive in a new way. Standing outdoors before this beautiful scene, Francis preached the Good News of Christ's birth and they celebrated Holy Communion. From that year forward, the use of the Nativity Scene spread across Europe and eventually the rest of the world. Many churches place a nativity scene outside, or participate in a live nativity scene or children's Christmas play to remind them of the Good News of Christ's birth.

In this season of Advent and Christmas we are going to unpack each member of the Nativity Scene and place them in the Nativity Scene as we reflect upon the Good News of God's love in Christ. On the First Sunday of Advent, December 1, we will welcome Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-25, 57-80). Now wait a minute, they are not in the Nativity Scene normally; but they should be! On December 8 we will add John the Baptist, the messenger of God who calls us to prepare the way of the Lord (Luke 3:1-20). On December 15, we will add Mary (see Luke 1:26-56), the faithful mother of our Lord who said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, Dec. 22, we will add Joseph, the faithful earthly father of Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25). The Angels get included throughout the story and we will add the Shepherds on Dec. 24, Christmas Eve, when Jesus (Luke 2:1-20), the Word made flesh, is added to the scene. On December 29, the First Sunday after Christmas, we will include Simeon and Anna (See Luke 2:21-40). On January 5, we will celebrate Epiphany with the story of the Magi or Wise Men (see Matthew 2:1-12). As we add each faithful person to the Nativity Scene and reflect upon their story, I pray that you will be reminded that God in Christ also graciously and lovingly invites us to be a beloved part of His holy family, the Church, the body of Christ. As we take this Advent – Christmas Journey together, I pray that more than ever you will know and rejoice that you are a beloved member of Christ's Holy Family! God loves us so much that God came to be with us, that's why Jesus is called Emmanuel, God with us. We are not alone; God is with us even in the valleys to bring us peace and hope. Jesus came to be our Savior; He died for us so that we could experience forgiveness, new life, and a right relationship with God and one another. Jesus rose again defeating sin and death to give us victory and the hope of eternal life. ***This good news is for you*** no matter what you are going through this time of year or what new challenges you may be facing. May God's gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love rekindle your faith and your life this Advent and Christmas as we celebrate ***what Christmas is all about: Jesus!***

I look forward to experiencing and growing in God's love in Christ during this blessed season!
May you all have a blessed Christmas full of Christ's love, joy and peace, Pastor Doug Hefner

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR DECEMBER

- ❖ Lector Stormy Shull
- ❖ Ushers James Hall & Jack Wilfong
- ❖ Communion Assistants Rick & Cindy Bivens
- ❖ Altar Preparation Herb & Libby Travis
- ❖ Offering Tabulators Todd Childers & Sheila Drum

*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

12/1		12/15
12/8		12/22
	12/29	

If you wish to place flowers on 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. Please notify the Church Office by the Tuesday prior to your selected Sunday to ensure correct information is printed in the bulletin.

**ATTENDANCE AND GIVING TO OUR LORD'S WORK
 FOR OCTOBER & NOVEMBER**

	10/27/24	11/3/24	11/10/24	11/17/24
Sunday School	12	8	7	4
Worship	34	48	46	49
General Fund Offerings	\$835	\$2181	\$4815	\$1930

Needed Each Week = \$3,268.54
General Fund Offerings, October 2024 = \$9396.00
General Fund Expenses, October 2024 = \$9921.39
Difference = -524.39\$ (expenses exceeded offerings)

Grace Lutheran Church

*invites you to join us as we celebrate
the installation of our new pastor*

Reverend Douglas Hefner

*Reverend Steve Johnson will preach and preside
as we celebrate this blessed occasion.*

Saturday, December 7th at 2:00pm

*Grace Lutheran Church
4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway
Newton, NC 28658*

A reception will immediately follow the service in the Grace Fellowship Hall.



NORTH AMERICAN
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

UPDATE CONTACT INFORMATION - Please make sure that all your contact information is current and accurate with the church office. There is work being done to put together an updated document with current contact information. If any of your information has changed, please update it using the Worship Today Form, email the church office with your current information or call the church and leave a message, Kristi will return your call.

HANGING OF THE GREENS! On Saturday, November 30th at 10:00am, the faithful will gather to participate in the Hanging of the Greens as we prepare the Sanctuary for the Advent/Christmas Seasons. The tree will be placed, as well as all of the banners and decorations needed to get us into the spirit of the season. We will need some strong hands to put up the tree, so please plan to join us.

CEMETERY AND UNION CHURCH CLEAN-UP IN PREPARATION FOR WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA will be held on Saturday, November 30th, following the hanging of the greens. Please volunteer to help make this ceremony a success!

ADVENT BIBLE STUDY – LED BY PASTOR DOUG - “The Journey: Walking the Road to Bethlehem” - Sunday mornings, December 1st, 8th, 15th, and 22nd at 9:15am. We will journey with Adam Hamilton in the Holy Lands as he travels from Nazareth to Bethlehem in this inspiring look at the birth of Jesus Christ. We will follow the footsteps of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and others, gaining insight into our own journey of faith with Christ. Each study will include a 10-minute video clip of Pastor Hamilton teaching on location in the Holy Lands. All you need is your Bible and a desire to grow in God’s Word as you follow Jesus! Our Bible Study will include Bible readings, discussion and sharing, and prayer



Reverse Advent Calendar **Ashure MINISTRY**

Dec. 1 - box of cereal	Dec. 13 - tomato soup
Dec. 2 - peanut butter	Dec. 14 - chicken noodle soup
Dec. 3 - mac and cheese	Dec. 15 - canola or olive oil
Dec. 4 - canned fruit in juices	Dec. 16 - canned chicken
Dec. 5 - canned tomatoes	Dec. 17 - pancake mix
Dec. 6 - canned tuna	Dec. 18 - canned vegetable
Dec. 7 - apple sauce (plastic jar)	Dec. 19 - hearty canned soup
Dec. 8 - canned beans	
Dec. 9 - mayonnaise (plastic jar)	
Dec. 10 - oatmeal	
Dec. 11 - pasta	
Dec. 12 - spaghetti sauce (can or plastic jar)	

FILLED BOXES MAY BE BROUGHT TO
ASHURE MINISTRY
245 EAST N STREET,
NEWTON, NC 28658.
NO GLASS PLEASE. THANK YOU!

For it is in giving, that we receive. ~ St. Francis of Assisi

ASHURE MINISTRY is asking for donations this month by filling a box with all the items listed on their Reverse Advent Calendar. How many boxes can our Grace Church family fill-up for those in need this Holiday season, right here in our own community?

We have donated 1423 pounds to Ashure in 2024!

FRED T. FOARD SENIOR LUNCHEON will be held at Sardis Lutheran Church on Wednesday, December 4th at 12:00pm. All are invited! Pastor Doug will be leading the singing of Christmas Carols.

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD – Our boxes were delivered to the drop-off location this past week. They are now in the process of getting to their destinations to help those in other countries experience the love of Christ through these gifts. We collected and sent a total of **72 boxes** in 2024. Thank you all for your contributions to this ministry.

THE GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST will be held on **Saturday, December 14th 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!

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA – Please join us on **Saturday, December 14th at 11:00am** to honor our veterans in the Grace Cemetery where their bodies have been laid to rest. Also, volunteers are needed to provide refreshments for the event.

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE LEADERSHIP MINISTRY BOARD is scheduled for **Monday, December 16th at 6:00 pm.**

THE GRACE PRAYER LUNCHEON AND CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION will be held on **Wednesday, December 18th from 12-2pm** in the Grace Fellowship Hall. All are welcome to attend and please bring a friend! The menu for December is Finger Foods! Please plan to join us as we celebrate Christmas by singing Christmas Carols and having a fun gift exchange (PLEASE BRING A \$5 GIFT).

CHRISTMAS EVE HOLY COMMUNION AND CANDLELIGHT SERVICE Invite your family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors as we celebrate the birth of Christ! Tuesday, December 24th at 7:00pm.

CHRISTMAS CARD “MAILBOXES” will be available on Sunday, December 1st. There will be 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.

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MINUTES
Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, November 3, 2024

Call to Order Called to order at 10:25 AM by Jason Yoder.

New Business

- A. The spending plan previously approved by the Board was approved by the Congregation in a voice vote. No objections were noted.
- B. Separate votes were held for each of three candidates for positions on the Leadership Ministry Board:
 - Jeff Scronce was elected by the Congregation to a 3-year term.
 - Tim Eckard was elected by the Congregation to a 3-year term.
 - Gary Leatherman was elected by the Congregation to a 3-year term.
- C. There remains one open position on the Board. Jason Yoder asked if there was anyone willing to put their name forward, but no one responded.

Adjournment:

- There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned and the Congregation proceeded to Worship.

Next meeting: Sunday, November 2, 2025.

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MINUTES
Leadership Ministry Board Meeting
Monday, November 18, 2024

Call to Order Called to order at 6:00pm by Jason Yoder

Devotions Alan Shull

Roll Call Present: Pastor Doug Hefner, Jason Yoder, Rick Bivens, Todd Childers, Libby Travis, Sheila Drum, Jeff Scronce, Alan Shull
Absent: Tim Eckard

New Business

- A. Minutes from the October meeting and the annual Congregational meeting were read. A motion was made and seconded to accept them as written. MOTION CARRIED.
- B. A leak in the roof of the Fellowship Hall was discovered after one of the recent storms. A branch from one of the large oaks behind the building fell and damaged the roof. It has now been patched. The trees need to be cut as they are massive. We will ask for estimates for cutting them and review at the next meeting.
- C. The installation service will be held on Saturday, December 7 at 2:00 pm. Dean Steve Johnson will lead the service. A reception will be held in Fellowship Hall following the service.
- D. A total of 72 shoeboxes were collected for Operation Christmas Child (Samaritan’s Purse).
- E. The Hanging of the Greens will take place on Saturday, November 30 at 10:00 am. Union Church will also be cleaned in preparation for Wreaths Across America.
- F. The Wreaths Across America will take place at Union Church on Saturday, December 14.
- G. Pastor Hefner suggested distributing a survey to the Congregation to obtain updated contact information and to elicit time and talent information. He will create a draft survey and share it with the Board.
- H. A motion was made and seconded to move forward with a new non-pictorial Congregational directory. MOTION CARRIED.
- I. Pastor Hefner will teach an Advent Bible study each Sunday in Advent (4 Sundays) called the Journey to Bethlehem. The study will begin at 9:15 am prior to Worship.

Old Business:

- A. Jason Yoder reviewed the results of the Board elections from the Congregational meeting. There remains a vacancy on the Board.

Ministry Team Reports:

- A. Youth Ministry / Christian Education – Alan Shull – Pastor Hefner will meet with Stormy Shull to discuss the Youth Ministry and next year’s Vacation Bible School.
- B. Stephen Ministry – Libby Travis – Stephen Ministry activities will resume after the New Year.
- C. Fellowship / Hospitality –
 - 1. There was a discussion about restarting the Second Sunday Lunch tradition next year. It was suggested to do it once per quarter. The Board will revisit this after the New Year.
- D. Property / Facilities – Rick Bivens –
 - 1. Rick reviewed some minor projects around the campus that need to be addressed.
 - 2. Jason Yoder installed a new computer in Pastor Hefner’s office.
 - 3. The chairs in the Fellowship Hall and the downstairs classrooms have been refurbished with new slipcovers. The cost was approximately \$6 per chair.

Adjournment:

There being no further business ***a motion to adjourn was made and seconded.*** **MOTION CARRIED.**

Next meeting: Monday, December 16th at 6:00 PM

Devotions – Tim Eckard

Offering Tabulators – Todd Childers and Sheila Drum

Grace Notes

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church NALC
4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway
Newton, NC 28658