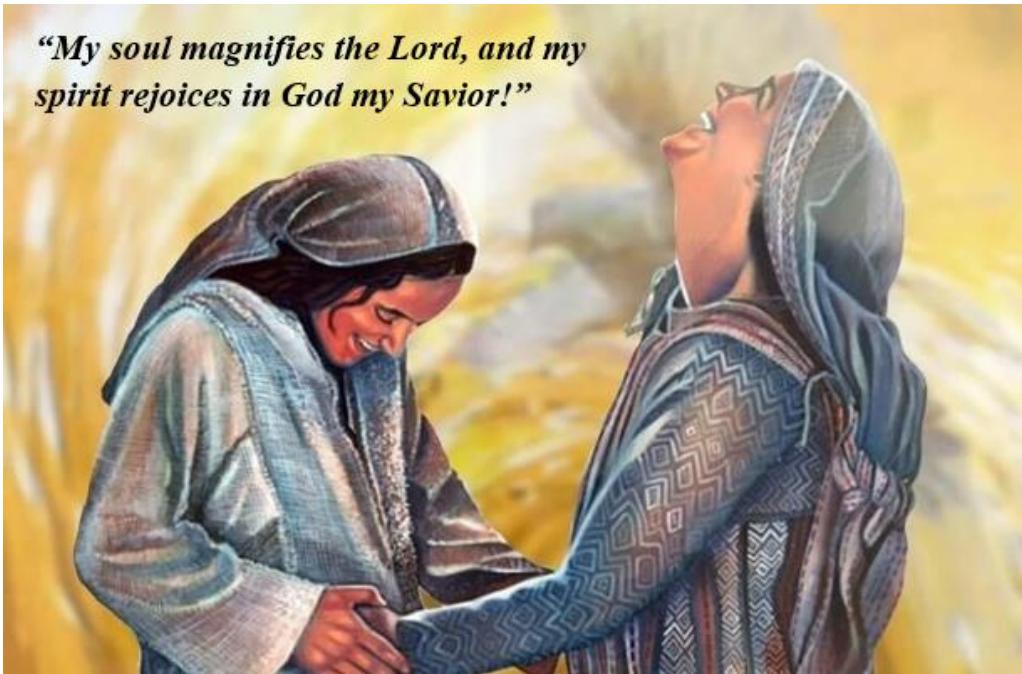


Third Sunday of Advent

December 14, 2025 10:30 AM

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!”



Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church



4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway, Newton, North Carolina 28658

Church Office: (704) 462-1035 email: gracenalcnewton@aol.com
www.gracelutheran-newton.org

Rev. Doug Hefner cell: (980) 234-8848 email: pastorhefner@aol.com

Sandi Tallant – Organist Todd Childers – Administrative Assistant

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 9am to 1pm

Tuesday and Thursday 12pm to 4pm

WELCOME TO ALL WHO WORSHIP at Grace Church this morning as we gather to worship the Father, + Son and Holy Spirit in truth. As you entered the sanctuary today, you received this bulletin containing the order for worship and announcements. Please also notice the Prayer List where you will find a listing of all the known prayer concerns. You are invited to use this as a guide for your personal prayers throughout the coming week. If you need information about our congregation or if you'd like to update your information, make sure to fill out the yellow Worship Today Form and place it in the offering plate at the time of the offering. If you have a prayer concern, indicate that on your Worship Today Form at the bottom or on the reverse side. If you are seeking a Church Home or would like more information about Grace, please contact Pastor Doug (980) 234-8848.

***Stand** *Hymnals in Pew Rack: LBW = Green WOV = Blue TCH = Burgundy*

PRELUDE *Please observe silence for meditation and prayer.*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*** BRIEF ORDER OF CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

P: In this season of intentional waiting and watching for the return of Christ, we are gathered together to worship in the name of the Father, Son, + Holy Spirit.

C: Amen

P: A voice cries in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a pathway for our God.” Let us come humbly before our Lord, asking for forgiveness and mercy for our sins, known and unknown, trusting in God’s promise of reconciliation and new life in Christ. (Isaiah 40:3)

(Silence for self-reflection and examination)

P: God of grace,

C: We confess that we have not been attentive to the call to prepare for the coming of your Son. We have focused our vision on things of the moment and neglected to wait and watch for his return. We have neglected to notice the plight of our neighbors near and far, and instead we have thought more of ourselves rather than others. Grant us, we pray, the gift of your forgiveness and mercy, that we may be restored to a new and right relationship with you. Amen.

P: Our Father who loves us with an everlasting love promised of old that he would send us a sign saying, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” God is with us in Christ our Lord, the word made flesh, and hears our

confession and grants us undeserved mercy; be confident in his forgiveness, in the name of the Father, and of the Son + of the Holy Spirit. (Isaiah 7:14)

C: Amen

*** GATHERING HYMN “Angels From the Realms of Glory”**

LBW 50

LITANY FOR LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES: THE CANDLE OF JOY

L: We have lit two candles which remind us of God’s gifts of hope and peace that come to us in our Savior, Christ Jesus. Our hope in Christ is like an anchor to our souls, firm and strong in the midst of storms. In Christ we have peace with God and one another. The third candle of Advent is the Candle of Joy. When the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would give birth the long-awaited Messiah, she was filled with joy.

C: She sang a song of joy: "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." (Luke 1)

L: When Jesus was born, the angels announced the good news of great joy to the shepherds:

C: “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. (Luke 2)

L: Jesus said that “the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.”

C: “When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.” (Matthew 13)

L: Jesus came “to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—

C: to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.” (Isaiah 61)

L: Jesus said, “If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”

C: “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” (John 15)

L: As we continue our journey in the Advent Season, we ask God to restore our joy.

C: Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. (Psalm 51)

We Light the Advent Candle of Joy as we sing “*A Candle is Burning*” to the tune of “*Away in a Manger*”

*A candle is burning, a candle of joy.
A candle to welcome brave Mary's new boy.
Our hearts fill with wonder, and eyes light and glow
As joy brightens winter like sunshine on snow.*

L: Let us pray. God of hope, peace and joy, we thank you for the gift of joy that comes to us in Christ who has restored unto us the joy of our salvation. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by You, that we may walk in the light of Christ and joyfully shine the light of Christ’s love. As we continue our Advent journey, help us, like Mary, to joyfully worship You, to hear Your Word and to do your will so that our joy may be complete in Christ, for it is in Jesus’ name that we pray. **C: Amen**

The congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING Zephaniah 3: 14-20

¹⁴“Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! ¹⁵The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil. ¹⁶On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. ¹⁷The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. ¹⁸I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach. ¹⁹Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. ²⁰At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,” says the Lord.

L: The Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God**

Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat Luke 1:46-55

⁴⁶ And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰ **And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.**
⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
⁵² **he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;**
⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
⁵⁴ **He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,**
⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

SECOND READING: Philippians 4: 4-7

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

L: The Word of the Lord. C: Thanks be to God

The congregation is invited to stand.

*** GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

O Come O Come Emmanuel Verse 4

***O come, Thou Day-spring, from on high, And cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

***GOSPEL: Luke 1: 26-45**

P: The holy gospel according to St. Luke. C: Glory to you, O Lord.

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you

have found favor with God.³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”³⁵ And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.”³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.³⁹ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

L: The Gospel of the Lord. C: Praise to You O Christ!

The congregation may be seated.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SERMON



“Have a Mary Christmas by Receiving God’s Gift of J.O.Y. in Jesus!”

Pastor Doug Hefner

***HYMN OF THE DAY** “Joy to the World”

LBW 40

***THE APOSTLES' CREED**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Response at the end of each petition. P: Lord in your mercy, C: Hear our prayer.

***SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always. C: **And also with you.**

Worshipers may greet one another with "the Peace of Christ."

The assembly may be seated.

* **OFFERING** In response to God's blessings, we offer our tithes to the Lord

HOLY COMMUNION – MEAL OF GRACE

*** OFFERTORY** **What Child is This**

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come, peasant, king, to own him.

The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone him.

Raise, raise the song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby;

joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary!

*** OFFERTORY PRAYER**

P: Good and loving God, C: we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, who came among the poor to bring the riches of your grace. As you have blessed us with your gifts that we offer now with thanksgiving, let them be blessing for others. We rejoice to be invited to your table of grace and with all earth and heaven, we shout for joy at the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

***DIALOGUE AND PREFACE**

P: The Lord be with you. C: **And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts. C: **We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. C: **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

*HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might:
Heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
san - na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Blessed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

* WORDS OF INSTITUTION

* LORD'S PRAYER

* INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: The Gifts of God for the People of God. C: **Thanks be to God!**

The assembly may be seated.

All are invited to receive Holy Communion.

COMMUNION SONG Lamb of God

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; grant us peace.

The congregation is invited to stand.

*** COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER**

P: Gracious God, in this meal of grace you give us a foretaste of the everlasting peace of Christ our Lord when sin, sorrow, and death will be no more. Send us forth to be peacemakers and to make known your deeds and the greatness of your name, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace. Amen.

***SENDING HYMN “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice!”**

LBW 55

***DISMISSAL**

P: Jesus calls us to abide in Him and in His Word, and His gift will be His abundant joy! (John 15) Let us go in joy and peace as His disciples to proclaim the Good News of Christ's love in word and deed. **C: Thanks be to God!**



In the Grace Church Family:

Jeffry Bivens, Rick & Cindy Bivens, Glenda Childers, Pat Dietz, Allen and Kay Hatchett, Larry Heavner, Lorene Heavner, Larry & Brenda Jarrett, Martha Johnson, Faye Lane, Harvey Leatherman, Phil & Malinda Leatherman, Tim Leatherman, Betty Matheson, Joe Momier, Jane

Moss, Christine Norman, Michael Norman, Tricia and Dan Panek, Mike, Debi & Stephen Pisko, Helen Smith, Ethan Starnes, Sandi Tallant, Libby Travis, Shirley Warlick, Ken & Tirzah Welch, Scott & Carolyn Whisnant, and Nancy Willis.

Nursing Home: Juanita Haas (Trinity Village), Ted Whisnant (Trinity Village)

Friends and Relatives in our Prayers: Pray for Peace in Israel and the World, New Covenant Lutheran Mission Church, Ashlee Bumgardner, Bill Bumgarner & family, Jessica Cassells & family, Clinton Childers, Evelyn Childers, Sonya Elliott & family (car accident, recovering at home now), family of John Lentz, Ryan McMullen & family, Chris Medlin, David Moses, Randy & Rita Neill, Anita Sabino, Scott Speagle, and Donald Smith. Prayers for world peace and for our church, the United States of America, and especially the families of those who have given their lives in the service of our country and those who continue to protect our freedoms and for all members of our Armed Forces. Prayers also for an unspoken prayer request and for visiting family.

HAPPY DECEMBER BIRTHDAY TO:

December 3 – Dan Panek, Matthew Hefner December 4 – River Stainback
December 22 – Susan Setzer December 25 – Faye Lane
December 28 – Kim Parker

COMING UP AT GRACE THIS WEEK

Today: Third Sunday of Advent

9:30am – Sunday School 10:30am - Worship Celebration

Special Congregational Meeting to follow Worship

Monday – 6:00pm – Leadership Ministry Board Meeting

Wednesday

12:00pm – Grace Prayer Luncheon in Fellowship Hall

6:30pm – Midweek Advent Service

GRACE PRAYER LUNCHEON

Please join us for the Grace Prayer Luncheon on Wednesday 12/17 at noon in Fellowship Hall. The menu is meat loaf, sugar peas, potato salad, cookies and ice cream. Please bring a \$5 gift for the gift exchange.

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 24 (Wed.) Christmas Eve – Candlelight Service & Holy Communion 4:00 pm

ADVENT VESPERS WEDNESDAYS at 6:30pm (12/10 and 12/17)

For our Bible Study Sermon time we are using "Faithful: Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph" by Adam Hamilton. Please join us as we worship, pray, sing, and reflect on God's Word.

SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

There will be a special congregational meeting immediately following worship today. The purpose of the meeting is to vote on a proposed amendment to the Constitution which was approved by the Board at the regular November meeting on November 17th. A motion was made and seconded to amend the bylaws of the Constitution such that the following portion of section B12.02 line 2 be stricken: "Immediate family members (family of origin = parent/child; husband/wife; siblings/blood or step; grandparents/grandchildren) shall not serve on the Board at the same time."

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS PLAY



During worship on Sunday, Dec. 21 at 10:30am, Grace members will present Silent Night: Celebrating Christmas in the Luther Household. This play will feature Martin Luther and his wife Katie and their children as they celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus. Luther loved the beautiful meaning of Christmas and wrote hymns and started traditions to help his

family receive the Good News of God's love in Christ at Christmas. Pastor Doug will be playing the part of Martin Luther. We will need 3 or 4 children/youth to participate along with someone to play Katie Luther. If interested, please let Pastor Doug or Stormy know as soon as possible so that we can get you the script and set up a practice. The congregation will join in singing some of the Christmas hymns that are a part of the play.

OFFERING ENVELOPES

There remain a number of boxes of offering envelopes for next year on the back pew. Please take yours if you haven't already done so. Also, if you could deliver a box to someone you know that would also be appreciated. Thank you!

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA



Ministers of Grace – All the People of Grace
Pastor – Reverend Doug Hefner Board President – Tim Eckard
Lector – Tim Eckard Youth Leader – Stormy Shull
Altar Preparation – Cindy Bivens
Communion Assistants – Sheila Drum & Lula Ingle
Ushers – Jeff Scronce & Jason Yoder
Offering Counters – Todd Childers & Jason Yoder

Listening for the Promise

Third Sunday of Advent – December 14, 2025

SOWeR Site — Weekly Devotional © Sola Publishing: www.solapublishing.com, 2024, written by Peggy Hoppes. Scripture taken from ESV Bible® (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright ©2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
(permission granted to active subscribers to reproduce this sheet for local congregational use)

“His mercy is for generations and generations on those who fear him.”

- Luke 1:50 -

Just Like Mary

God chose Mary to bear the baby Jesus in her womb and in her arms, but Mary's story is not about a woman of sinless perfection. She didn't need to be. She was chosen by God to bring the good news of salvation into the world.

Her life was not pain free. She was just a child when she became pregnant. She was mistreated as a whore. She gave birth in a cold stable, and then went on the run with her husband and young child to save his life. When Joseph died, her position as a widow in society was quite low. She deeply loved her son, but at times he seemed to disregard and disrespect her. Think about the stories: the day they could not find him because he went to the temple, the wedding at Cana where He told her that it wasn't time, the time she and Jesus' brothers went to talk to Him and He told her that those listening were His mother and brothers. And then, after all this, Mary watched her son die a horrible death: execution on the cross.

Mary deserves to be remembered not because she is greater than you and me, but because she is just like us. Her story as a sinner and saint is just like ours. There were times when she was an obstacle to His ministry, but she remained humble and faithful to the God she loved. We are just like Mary, blocking Jesus' work in this world, and yet God is able to use us to bear the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

Mary knew that Jesus offered a life-changing gift, the gift of forgiveness and eternal life. True faith comes to those with a humble heart. It comes to those who recognize their need for mercy and grace which Jesus won for us in His life, death, and resurrection. Despite her moments of failure, Mary knew Jesus came to do God's will and she humbly accepted His call on her life. Jesus calls us to share the good news of His salvation with the world, just like Mary.