

# Grace Notes



Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Lutheran Church in Newton, NC

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9:30am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Service with Communion

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## **“What Child is This? Jesus Is Lord and Savior!”**

**An Advent / Christmas Message from Pastor Doug Hefner**

*Isaiah 9:6 “For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

*Luke 2: <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them (the shepherds), “Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”...*

We have come to the wonderful and blessed time of year when we celebrate the advent (coming) of God’s greatest gift, Jesus! During this season we praise God for coming among us in His Son Jesus, the Word made flesh, to be the Savior of the world. We also celebrate that He comes to us in the Holy Spirit, in Word and Sacrament, and in the body of Christ, the Church. And we anticipate His coming again as St. John did when he wrote in Revelation, **“Come Lord Jesus!”** God calls us to be ready and to prepare for His coming among us as John the Baptist proclaimed, **“Prepare the way of the Lord.”** During this time of year there is much preparation to do, not only of our homes, but more importantly, of our hearts and relationships as we prepare for Christ’s coming among us.

Worship is a perfect way to prepare your heart and be reminded of the real reason for the season. Once again in worship we will focus on the Greatest Story (the Bible) Ever Told as we remember that Jesus is the **“Word made flesh.”** We will also praise God through the beautiful and inspiring hymns, songs, and carols of the Advent and Christmas Season. The Good News of Christmas is that God loves us deeply and intensely and shows us His love in sending His Son Jesus to love and save the world.

My sermon series will be based on the beautiful hymn, **“What Child is This?”** As we go through the Advent Season focusing on the disciplines of Advent: worship, prayer, Bible reading and study, acts of service, discipleship, and generous giving, we begin to see who this Christ Child really is. The angels told the shepherds who this Child is: ***“Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>1</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”*** Isaiah the prophet said that the Child would be the ***“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*** John the Baptist called him ***“Lord, the salvation of God, the One of power, the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and the One with the winnowing fork that will judge the nations.”***

The hymn, “What Child is This?” challenges us to ask “Who is Jesus for us and for the world?” Remember when Jesus asked the disciples “Who do people say that I am?” They had different answers that only contained part of the picture. However Jesus said, ***“But who do you say that I am?”*** Simon Peter said, ***“You are the Christ (Messiah), Son of the Living God!”*** In this beautiful hymn written by William Dix in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Jesus is worshipped as ***“The Son of Mary, Christ the King, the Word Made Flesh, and Sacrifice for our sin.”*** William Dix was born in England in 1837 and as a son of a surgeon he was destined to follow in his father’s footsteps. Instead he pursued his passion for writing poetry and prose for Christ. To carry his poetry about Christ in this hymn, Dix chose a 16<sup>th</sup> century tune, Greensleeves, which proved to be a perfect match. Originally the tune was used to describe a man’s yearning for his lost love, Lady Greensleeves. Dix’s words remind us of God in Christ who yearns to love us, to be with us, to deliver us, and to redeem us. During this season, we will answer that question, What Child is This? Take a moment now to reflect on the words of this great hymn:

### ***What Child Is This***

**1**What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?  
***This, this is Christ the king, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!***

**2**Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here ***the silent Word is pleading.***  
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, ***the cross be borne for me, for you;***  
hail, hail ***the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary!***

**3**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!**  
**Text: William C. Dix, 1837-1898**

I pray that the Advent and Christmas season will be a time for you to experience how much God loves you, in His Son Jesus. And I pray that in thanksgiving for God's love and many blessings, you will love Him in return by becoming a living sacrifice of praise and a passionate disciple. Please see the worship themes and schedule below; I look forward to worshipping with you. My family and I wish you all a very joyful and blessed Christmas and New Year! As we come to the close of this year, I want to thank each of you for your partnership in the gospel and for your generous, loving discipleship. I look forward to the new year ahead where God is leading us to new and amazing ways in which He will show us His love and call us to share it with others in Christ's name.

***The Peace, Love and Joy of Christ be with You, Pastor Doug Hefner***  
***Have a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!***

## **Advent / Christmas Sermon Series: What Child is This?**

### **Jesus is...**

***9:30am Sunday School for all ages; 10:30am Worship Service with Communion***  
**November 30, 2025, First Sunday in Advent, Jesus is our Hope**, Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 24:36-44. Advent means "coming" and during this season we remember that Jesus has come among us "Word made flesh", that He comes among us in Word and Sacrament and in the Holy Spirit's indwelling in the Church, and that Christ is coming again. We find our hope that one day Christ will make a new heaven and earth and that the faithful will be gathered together with Christ in His eternal Kingdom. Jesus calls us to be ready and watchful as we do not know the day or hour of Christ's coming again.

**December 7, 2025: Second Sunday in Advent, Jesus is Our Prince of Peace**, Psalm 72:1-7, Isaiah 11:1-10, Ephesians 2:11-22, Matthew 3:1-12. God's gift of love in Jesus brings peace to our hearts, our relationships and to our world as Jesus came to reconcile us to God and to one another. In Matthew 3 many people were seeking the peace of God by coming out to be baptized by John. By confessing their sins and being washed in the river, John challenged them to bear the fruit of repentance in a new way of living. John also declared that one is coming who will baptize us with the Holy Spirit. Baptized in Christ by the Spirit brings new life and peace with God and one another.

**December 14, 2025: Third Sunday of Advent- Jesus is Our Joy** Isaiah 35:1-10, Luke 1:46b-55 (The Magnificat), Philippians 4:1-9, Luke 1:26-45. The Third Sunday of

Advent has traditionally been called the Sunday of Joy, Gaudette “Rejoice” Sunday. We have great reason to rejoice as the angel Gabriel announces God’s plan to send the Messiah to be born of God’s chosen servant Mary. And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” Mary then sang a song of praise called the Magnificat. It is fitting then on this day that our choir along with the choir from Central UMC sing the cantata “Were You There on That Christmas Night?” Please invite your family, friends, neighbors and coworkers for this very special service!

**December 21, 2025: Fourth Sunday of Advent-Jesus is Love for Us.** Isaiah 7:10-17, Psalm 24, 1 John 4:7-12, Matthew 1:18-25. In the Gospel lesson today it is revealed to Joseph that the baby Mary is carrying will be named Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Jesus is also the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of the coming of Immanuel “God with us.” For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son!

**December 24, 2025 (Wednesday at 4pm): “Jesus is Our Savior” - Christmas Eve Candlelight and Holy Communion Services at 4pm,** Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-20. We gather to celebrate the birth of Christ and the gift of salvation Christ brings to the world. We will celebrate the good news that “unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” With the announcement of that great news the angels rejoiced as I am sure the shepherds did as well: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom He is please.” We will join in the praise as well as we hear and receive the Good News of God in Word and Sacrament.

**December 28 (Sunday), First Sunday of Christmas Jesus is the Son of God, the Word Made Flesh** Isaiah 52:7-10, Psalm 2, Hebrews 1:1-12, John 1:1-18. We continue our celebration of the birth of Christ with the reading of John 1 where it is reveal that Jesus is the Word made flesh that came to dwell among us to bring us light and life. There will be no Sunday School on this Sunday but we will have a special Christmas Day service with great Christmas hymns and Holy Communion.

**January 4, 2025: Second Sunday of Christmas / Epiphany- Jesus is the Light of the World and Priest, Sacrifice, and King,** Isaiah 63:7-14, Psalm 111, Galatians 4:4-7; Matthew 2:1-23. Worshipping God and hearing God’s Word -What a great way to start the new year! As we anticipate the new year ahead, like the wise men or magi, we too will be led by the light of Christ. So come let us adore Him and honor Christ with the gift of a life lived for the Lord in thanksgiving and worship.

**January 11, 2025 Baptism of Our Lord**, Isaiah 42:1-9, Psalm 29, Romans 6:1-11, Matthew 3:13-17. We start the Epiphany Season on January 6 (we did on Jan 4) and our first Sunday in the season is the Baptism of Jesus. Epiphany means to “make known or to reveal.” In Jesus’ baptism Jesus is made known as God’s Son as the heavens open up, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus and the Father says, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” In our baptism, our Lord identifies us as His beloved Spirit-filled sons and daughters!



## **THE CASE FOR CHRISTMAS: THE TRUTH OF JESUS’ IDENTITY AND MISSION**

Sunday Morning Bible Study at 9:30am Upstairs  
Bible Study Class – For Youth and Adults!  
Sundays, Nov. 30 – Dec. 21.

**Nov. 30 Session 1: “Setting the Record Straight”** We will read and reflect upon the Christmas Story from Matthew 1. You will learn some new insights into God’s Word. *“The Son of God became a man to enable men (and women) to become sons (and daughters) of God”* CS Lewis *Mere Christianity*.

**Dec. 7 Session 2: “Fake News or the Good News (Gospel) for All”** We will read and reflect upon the Christmas story from Luke 2. *“Christ as born of a virgin, that we might be born of God. He took our flesh, that He might give us His Spirit. He lay in the manger that we might lie in paradise.”* Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*

**Dec. 14 Session 3: “A Mind-Boggling Proposition”** As we study God’s Word we will look at the amazing Truth we celebrate at Christmas. *“I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and He will come to judge the living and the dead.”* Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed

**Dec. 21 Session 4: “The Prophetic Fingerprint”** In this last session we will look at the identity of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, as was foretold by ancient prophecies from the Old Testament. *“We could cope – the world could cope- with a Jesus who ultimately remains a wonderful idea inside His disciples’ minds and hearts. The world cannot cope with a Jesus... who inaugurates God’s new creation right in the middle of the old one.”* NT Wright, *Surprised by Hope*



In November we welcomed the following new members through affirmation of their faith: **Jeff and Tina Hefner** have been worshipping with us for over a year and are very active in the ministry of the congregation. They live just down the road from Grace. Welcome Jeff and Tina!

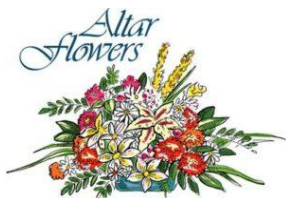
**Sandi Tallant** has been serving as our organist and music director for a number of years. She is a member of St. Mark's in Claremont, NC. She asked to be an associate member here at Grace as she wants to get more involved here at Grace. Welcome Sandi.

### WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR DECEMBER

❖ Lector	Tim Eckard
❖ Ushers	Jeff Scronce & Jason Yoder
❖ Communion Assistants	Sheila Drum & Lula Ingle
❖ Altar Preparation	Cindy Bivens
❖ Offering Tabulators	Todd Childers & Jason Yoder

*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



12/7	<b>OPEN</b>	12/14	<b>OPEN</b>
12/21	<b>OPEN</b>	12/28	<b>OPEN</b>

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.* 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

	10/26/25	11/2/25	11/9/25	11/16/25	11/23/25
<b>Sunday School</b>	9	12	11	10	44
<b>Worship</b>	45	43	41	49	8
<b>General Fund Offerings</b>	\$8,745	\$1,565	\$2,013	\$1,896	\$1,440

**FRED T. FOARD SENIOR LUNCHEON** will be held on Wednesday, December 3 at 12:00 noon at Sardis Lutheran Church. All are invited!

**THE GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST** will be held on Saturday, December 13th at 9:00am at Four Peas in a Pod Restaurant on Highway 70 in Conover. Great food and great fellowship! Please come and bring a friend!

**THE NEXT MEETING OF THE LEADERSHIP MINISTRY BOARD** is scheduled for Monday, December 15th at 6:00 pm.

**THE GRACE PRAYER LUNCHEON** will be held on Wednesday, December 17<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 noon in Fellowship Hall. All are invited!

**WORSHIP ASSISTANT VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED!** - Please offer your services as a Lector, Usher, or Communion Assistant for the upcoming months. Worship Assistants help to make our worship experience more meaningful. If you would like to serve during a particular month, please notify Todd Childers.

**ASHURE MINISTRY FOOD ASK** for the month of December is reverse Advent boxes. We are doing great things at Grace in helping feed the hungry in our own community. Let's try to donate 2,000 pounds in 2025! That would be around 170 pounds per month. We can do it! Let's come together to help reach this goal! Year-to-date the disciples at Grace have donated 1,409 pounds of food.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**December 3, 10, 17** Midweek Advent Services 6:30 pm

**December 6** Breakfast with Santa 9:00 am in Fellowship Hall

**December 13** Wreaths Across America at 11:00 am at Union Church

**December 14** Special Congregational Meeting following Worship

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

## **SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**



There will be a special congregational meeting immediately following worship on Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>. 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 17<sup>th</sup>. 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."

## **BREAKFAST WITH SANTA**

Sat. Dec 6 at 9am Pancakes,  
Crafts, Santa Pictures



Grace is hosting a Breakfast with Santa celebration for the community on Saturday, Dec. 6 at 9am. We will have pancakes with the trimmings. We will share the Christmas story and enjoy a craft, Christmas music and games, and a picture with Santa. If you would like to help with this celebration, please sign up by calling/emailing the office or the sign-up sheet in worship.

## **WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA**

Please join us on Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at 11:00am at Union Church for a brief service to honor our veterans laid to rest in Grace Cemetery. After the service, a wreath will be laid at the grave of each veteran. Families are encouraged to participate in helping to honor their members who served in our Armed Forces. No matter where they served or how, Wreaths Across America strives to ensure that no one is forgotten.



## **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.