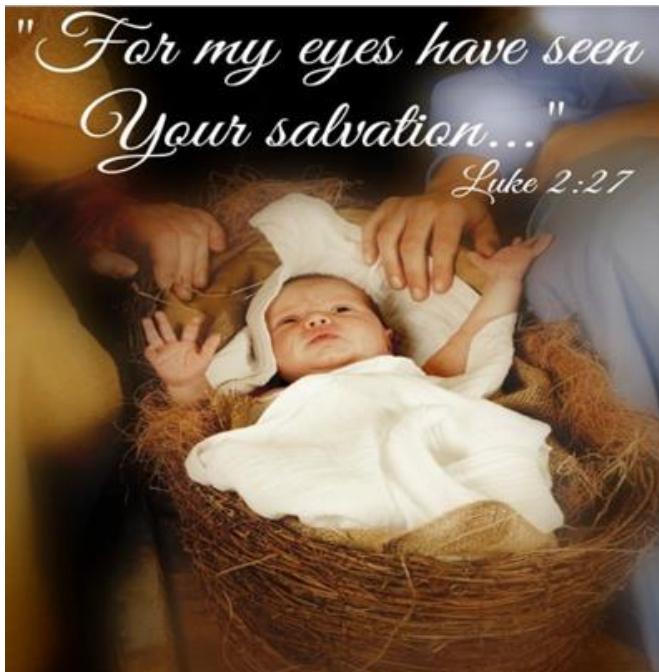


First Sunday of Christmas

December 28, 2025 10:30 AM

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church



NORTH AMERICAN
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway, Newton, North Carolina 28658

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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: Blessed by the holy Trinity, Father, Son + Holy Spirit, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Word made flesh, the Lord and giver of life.

C: Amen

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another trusting in God's gift of grace and forgiveness through His Son our Lord Jesus.

Silence is kept for reflection and confession.

God of Glory, God of peace,

C: We confess that have shunned the light that reveals the truth about us. We cling to worldly things rather than sharing the gifts of this earth. Instead of putting our trust in You we have put our trust in ourselves and worldly things. Save your people, O God: renew us and Your whole creation and free us to live boldly in the light and truth of Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

P: The grace of God shines upon us, bringing salvation to the whole world. We are saved, our sins are washed away, not because of anything we have done, but according to God's mercy in Jesus Christ. Renewed by the Holy Spirit, let us live in hope, love, peace and joy as our sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

*** GATHERING HYMN “Once in Royal David’s City”**

WOV 643

GREETING:

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Almighty God, you have given us your only begotten Son to take our nature and be born of the Virgin Mary. Grant that we, having been redeemed and made your children by grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C: Amen.**

The congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 52: 7-10

⁷How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” ⁸The voice of your watchmen – they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the Lord to Zion. ⁹Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

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

PSALM: 111

¹Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

²Great are the deeds of the Lord!
they are studied by all who delight in them.

³His work is full of majesty and splendor,
and his righteousness endures forever.

⁴He makes his marvelous works to be remembered;
the Lord is gracious and full of compassion.

⁵He gives food to those who fear him;
he is ever mindful of his covenant.

⁶He has shown his people the power of his works
in giving them the lands of the nations.

⁷The works of his hands are faithfulness and justice;
all his commandments are sure.

⁸They stand fast forever and ever,
because they are done in truth and equity.

⁹He sent redemption to his people; he commanded his covenant forever;
holy and awesome is his Name.

¹⁰The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
those who act accordingly have a good understanding; his praise endures forever.

SECOND READING: Hebrews 1: 1-6

¹Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,
²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, who he appointed the heir of all things, through whom he also created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. ⁵For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? ⁶And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”

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

The congregation is invited to stand.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: “Away in a Manger” (verse 3)

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven, to live with Thee there.*

***GOSPEL: Luke 2: 22-40**

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

²²When the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, {Joseph and Mary} brought {Jesus} up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹*“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”*

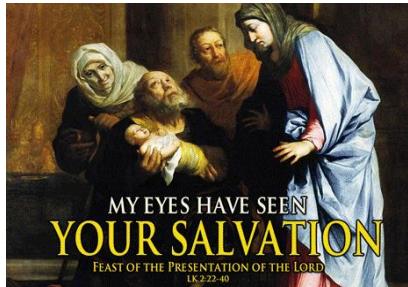
³³And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” ³⁶And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. ³⁹And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

P: The Gospel of the Lord. C: Praise to you, O Christ!

The congregation may be seated.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

SERMON



“My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation, the Light of the World”

Pastor Doug Hefner

*

HYMN OF THE DAY: Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

LBW 44

***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.

* **OFFERTORY**

What Feast of Love (verses 1 & 3)

WOV 701

*What feast of love is offered here, what banquet come from heaven?
What food of everlasting life, what gracious gift is given?
This, this is Christ the King, the bread come down from heaven.
Oh, taste and see and sing! How sweet the manna given!*

*What wine of love is offered here, what crimson drink from heaven?
What stream of everlasting life, what precious blood is given?
This, this is Christ the King, the sweetest wine of heaven.
Oh, taste and see and sing! The Son of God is given!*

* **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.

* **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

LBW PG. 68

P: The Lord be with you. C: And, 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 our thanks and praise.

* **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; grant us peace.

The congregation is invited to stand.

* COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER

P: God of mercy and grace, we thank you for feeding us with the sacrament of Christ's body and blood – that which strengthens us in faith and assures us of new life now and in eternity. As we wait and watch for the return of the Messiah in these last days, continue to feed us with the life-giving bread and the cup of salvation, in the name of Jesus.

C: 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

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

LBW 41

***DISMISSAL**

P: Like the Shepherds, let us go in peace to share the good news of the birth of Christ and to love and serve the Lord.

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, family of Tim Childers, family of Wendy Cloninger, Sonya Elliott & family (car accident, recovering at home now), Ryan McMullen & family, David Moses, Randy & Rita Neill, Anita Sabino, Scott Speagle, and Todd Wilfong. 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 22 – Susan Setzer

December 28 – Kim Parker

December 4 – River Stainback

December 25 – Faye Lane

COMING UP AT GRACE THIS WEEK

Today: First Sunday of Christmas

9:30am – Sunday School

10:30am - Worship Celebration

Thursday: Happy New Year 2026!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sun, 1/4/26 Celebration of the Epiphany of Our Lord (Matthew 2)

Wed, 1/7/26 Fred T Foard Senior Luncheon All Invited 12 noon at Hebron United Methodist Church – Vale

Sun, 1/11/26 The Baptism of Our Lord (Matthew 3:13-17)

Sun, 1/18/26 Grace hosts first service of Week of Christian Unity at 6pm, Dinner following (we provide soup, sandwiches, dessert afterwards)

Wed, 1/21/26 Grace Senior Luncheon and Program 12 noon All Welcome

Wed, 1/21/26 Ebenezer hosts Christian Unity Service at 6pm, Dinner following

Sun, 1/25/26 Daniels Lutheran hosts Christian Unity Service at 6pm, Dinner following

Sun, 2/8/26 Friendship Sunday, Everyone asked to invite your friends to worship. We will have a special gift for friends who join us. Theme of the service and sermon will be about the blessings of Christian friendship!

Sun, 2/15/26 Transfiguration Sunday

Wed, 2/18/26 Ash Wednesday Service, Imposition of Ashes/Communion

Sunday School: We Continue “The Story” Finding Your Story in God’s Love Story!

The Story Bible Study gives us a way to journey from Genesis to Revelation together in 31 Bible Studies so everyone understands God’s story and how their story intersects with it. It is true that God’s Word, the Bible, is “The Greatest Story Ever Told” and it is an amazing story of God’s love for us! A Gallup survey reports the average American household has four Bibles. However, research by [Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life](http://pewforum.org/religion-and-public-life) (2008) found that only 16 percent of Americans read the Bible every day. At Grace we are hoping to reverse this trend! I believe that *The Story* is the right tool to increase Biblical literacy, helping readers understand God’s story from Genesis to Revelation and how their own stories intersect with God’s. We have finished the Old Testament, the first 21 Sessions. Starting on December 28 we will begin the New Testament with the following

chapters: **New Testament:** **22** The Birth of the King; **23** Jesus' Ministry Begins; **24** No Ordinary Man **25** Jesus, the Son of God; **26** The Hour of Darkness; **27** The Resurrection; **28** New Beginnings **29** Paul's Mission; **30** Paul's Final Days; **31** The End of Time. *The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.**Isaiah 40:8*

RIGHT NOW MEDIA

Grace would like to extend to you a free gift: Use of Right Now Media, which comes with 25,000 teaching videos and downloadable Bible Study guide resources for the whole family. There are resources for a wide variety of Bible Studies and for topics like marriage, parenting, men, women, finances, and youth/children. Follow this link to register:<http://app.rightnowmedia.org/join/glcnc>.

Or you can set it up on your phone, iPad, tablet by texting GLCNC to 49775. You can use this resource on any smart device, including your TV.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY



The costumes that were used for the Christmas play are in need of some care. Is there a volunteer who would spend some time washing and folding them so that they are ready to be stored in plastic tubs for future use? If you are up for the challenge, please let Todd Childers know. If cared for properly they should last a long time.

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

Sola Publishing – Weekly Devotions

First Sunday of Christmas – December 28, 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.
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“Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.”

- Psalm 111:1 -

Praise the Lord!

Simeon and Anna both recognized that Jesus was the one for whom they were waiting. They knew He was the Messiah and they praised God for His faithfulness. Simeon boldly proclaimed what Jesus came to do, that He would be the salvation of Israel and a light to the Gentiles. This was an amazing thing to say. Simeon knew by the power of the Holy Spirit that the boy Jesus would die, and that his death would pierce the very soul of His mother. Those are powerful words. Anna came upon the scene as Simeon told Mary and Joseph about their son’s future and she began praising God loudly and telling everyone about Jesus. “He’s the one we’ve been waiting for! He’s the promised King!” Simeon quietly shared the story of Jesus, but Anna loudly proclaimed the Good News.

Simeon and Anna committed their lives to the promises of God. They waited patiently to see the God’s faithfulness. Their sacrifice was not blood and death, but their whole lives of hope and faith. When they received the fulfillment of God’s promise, they praised God with thanksgiving.

Psalm 111 was a hymn for Passover concerning the Lamb that teaches us to give thanks and praise to God, like Simeon and Anna. Their lives of humble patience and joy when they see Jesus, help us focus on the God’s gracious goodness. His works are great, they are meant to be pondered and marveled at. He is righteous and faithful. He has provided for His people, and He remembers His covenant. His works are truth and justice. He is our Redeemer, His redemption was sent to us through the baby born in the manger, who lived and died for our sake. He ordained His covenant forever. His name is holy and awesome. We are called to live like Simeon and Anna, in hopeful expectation as we sing thankful praise because God is faithful to all His promises.