

# Grace Notes



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH • 7300 W DIVISION • RIVER FOREST IL 60305 • 708-366-6900 • WWW.GRACERIVERFOREST.ORG

**December 2017**

## Relighting candles ...



## ... renewing hope

**by Pastor Dave Lyle**

Advent is upon us, and the Lyles have been busy decorating. I'm struck every year by how even the oldest treasures can seem new after spending eleven months in the basement. We carefully unwrap ornaments to hang on the tree and arrange old pictures of the kids on Santa's lap. We place the nativity sets and hang the stockings with care. We place the Advent wreath on the dining room table and relight the candles, day after day, week after week, until the coming of Christmas morn.

During this season of shortened days and deep nights, we need these little lights flickering on candlewicks. They remind us that

However you mark the waiting of Advent, my prayer for you is that it would be an active waiting that relights the gift of faith in your heart and renews the hope of Christ for your life.

the Light of the World has been born and still burns for us. They remind us that hope is renewed in treasured trinkets and traditions that bear the meaning of Christmas for us. And this

*Continued on page 2*

# The themes of our Advent scripture readings: Restore, reorder, release, rejoice!

*Continued from page 1*

year, those four candles will remind me of the great themes of our Scripture readings appointed for Advent as we relight candles and have our hope renewed:

• **Restore.** On the First Sunday of Advent, we cry out with the psalmist, “Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.” We are people in need of restoration, people bound in sin and suffering. Advent is a time to cry out to God that our lives may be restored by God.

• **Reorder.** As we move to the Second Sunday of Advent, we look to the great civil engineering project in the wilderness, when every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain be made low. Advent is a time to let God reorder our lives, pushing back against unrelenting calendars to focus on what truly matters.

• **Release.** In week three, Isaiah looks to the day when the anointed Messiah will bring good news to the oppressed, healing to the brokenhearted, liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners. Advent gives us the opportunity to reclaim hope in the

midst of hurt, and to know that Jesus has come to free us and move us into God’s good future.

• **Rejoice.** Finally, on the final Sunday of Advent, we join in the song of Mary, with souls that magnify the Lord and spirits that rejoice in God our Savior. Christ is born! May you rejoice in the Christ Child, the One born to save us from sin and death, giving us instead life abundant and eternal.

However you mark the waiting of Advent, my prayer for you is that it would be an active waiting that relights the gift of faith in your heart and renews the hope of Christ for your life. Light your candles against the darkness. May you be restored to faith in God’s promises. May you be reordered by God’s priorities. May you be released from all that binds you. And then, as Christmas dawns, may you rejoice in the gift of Emmanuel, the God who lives with us.

With hope renewed,  
Pastor Lyle

## Advent Thankoffering

What excites you about ministry at Grace? What feeds you? Where do you see God at work? And how will you respond? Your gifts empower our ministry here at Grace Church and School and help to make Jesus known in our community and beyond. Our 2017–18 fiscal year, however, has gotten off to a slow start. At the end of November, Church giving was \$228,000 below budget and \$52,000 below last year’s giving.

**As the end of 2017 approaches, please consider giving a special Advent Thankoffering gift to Grace,** beyond your

Make a special gift to Grace Church in December, in thanks for God’s abundant gifts to you.

usual weekly giving. Give online, or place a check in the offering plate. Please write “Thankoffering” on the memo line of your check. Thank you!

I believe that faithful, cheerful giving of our tithes and offerings to the Lord through Grace Church is the way to show our gratitude for what God has done, is doing, and will do by transforming our lives to be more and more like Jesus.

Grace member Carol Prinz

**Grace Notes** is published monthly by Grace Lutheran Church and School, 7300 Division St., River Forest, Ill. It is mailed to Grace members, parents of students at Grace School, and friends of the congregation. The newsletter is online at [www.graceriverforest.org](http://www.graceriverforest.org). This issue was mailed via U.S. Postal Service Bulk Mail on Friday, December 1, with the hope that it will arrive in your mailbox no later than December 8. Copies are also available at Grace.

**Deadlines and submissions.** The January issue of Grace Notes will be mailed on Friday, January 5. The deadline for copy is Wednesday, December 27; the issue covers events through early February. Send news to [ggotsch@graceriverforest.org](mailto:ggotsch@graceriverforest.org). Please limit your submissions to news relating to Grace Lutheran Church and School, its mission, ministries, and the benevolences the congregation supports. Articles should be no longer than 500 words. Submissions may be edited for length, clarity, and relevance.

# Waiting with the saints this Advent

*During this busy season, come to Wednesday evening worship to pause and center yourself in Jesus Christ.*

The season of Advent is often one of the busiest seasons in our lives each year—final exams and papers for those in school, holiday parties, gifts to be bought. Worship during Advent can be so meaningful for us precisely because the world around us is so very busy. The brief services of worship at Grace at 7 p.m. on Wednesday evenings during Advent offer a chance for us to gather intentionally and prayerfully.

Midweek worship this year will focus on three saints who are commemorated on or around the days we meet for worship. We

will reflect on Saint Nicholas, Saint Lucia, and Katie Luther on three consecutive Wednesdays during Advent (December 6, 13, and 20).

In addition to considering these particular saints and how they have contributed to our Christian story, we will also focus on the theme of waiting. We will ponder the symbol of a wheel—the inspiration of the original Advent wreath—and how this image might help us pause this season. We will engage in personal, quiet reflection moments. Each family will receive a take-home ornament for their Christmas tree that commemorates the theme for each Wednesday evening.

Join us for midweek worship this Advent. Don't miss the meals beforehand, either. It's a most wonderful time of the year, a most busy time of the year, and a time when worship together truly shapes us and centers us in Jesus Christ. See you Wednesday evenings—dinner at 6 p.m. and worship at 7 p.m.

In Christ,  
Pastor Lauren Wegner



*According to legend, Lucia (above) brought food and aid to Christians hiding in the catacombs, using a candle-lit wreath to light her way and leave her hands free to carry as much food as possible. Her feast day on December 13 has become a Christian festival of light. (Lucy by Cosimo Rosselli, Florence, c. 1470, tempera on panel.)*

*Saint Nicholas was a historic Christian saint and Bishop of Myra, in Asia Minor (modern-day Demre, Turkey). Saint Nicholas's legendary habit of secret gift-giving gave rise to the traditional figure of Santa Claus ("Saint Nick"). The Russian icon at left depicts Saint Nicholas with scenes from his life. (Late 15th century or early 16th century. National Museum, Stockholm.)*

*Katarina Von Bora, a former nun, married Martin Luther in 1525. (Portrait by Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1526.)*



# WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

## SUNDAY MORNINGS

December 3

### FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.

Isaiah 64:1-9, Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19, 1 Corinthians 1:3-9,  
Mark 13:24-37

December 10

### SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.

Isaiah 40:1-11, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a,  
Mark 1:1-8

December 17

### THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24,  
John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 24

### FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Holy Communion at 10 a.m.

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55, Romans 16:25-27,  
Luke 1:26-38

Sunday, December 31

### FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.

Isaiah 61:10--62:3, Psalm 148, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:22-40

Sunday, January 7

### BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.

Genesis 1:1-5, Psalm 29, Acts 19:1-7, Mark 1:4-11

## FESTIVAL SERVICES

Sunday, December 24

### NATIVITY OF OUR LORD: CHRISTMAS EVE

**Lessons and Carols**

**led by the children of Grace**

4:15 and 6:00 p.m.

**Holy Communion, 8 p.m. and 10:45 p.m.**

Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-20

Monday, December 25

### NATIVITY OF OUR LORD: CHRISTMAS DAY

**Holy Communion, 10 a.m.**

Isaiah 52:7-19, Psalm 98, Hebrews 1:1-12, John 1:1-14

Sunday, December 31

### NEW YEAR'S EVE

**Holy Communion, 7:00 p.m.**

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13, Psalm 8, Revelation 21:1-6a,

Matthew 25:31-46

Monday, January 1

### NAME OF JESUS — NEW YEAR'S DAY

**Holy Communion, 10 a.m.**

Numbers 6:22-27, Psalm 8, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:15-21

Saturday, January 6

### EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

**Holy Communion, 4 p.m.**

Isaiah 60:1-6, Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12,

Matthew 2:1-11

### Note these differences from our usual worship schedule:

- There is only one service on Sunday morning, December 24, and it begins at 10 a.m.
- The Epiphany service begins at 4 p.m. on Saturday afternoon, January 6.



## Annual Christmas concert on Sunday, December 10, 4 p.m.

Join the Grace Senior Choir, the Grace School 5–8 Choir, Joyful Voices, and the Adult Handbell Ensemble for the annual Advent/Christmas concert, “Out of Darkness We Have Light,” on Sunday, December 10, at 4 p.m.

The program includes Bach's cantata "Mein Seel erhebt den Herren" (BWV 10) based on the text of the Magnificat, and Ralph Vaughan Williams' "Fantasia on Christmas Carols" featuring baritone soloist Douglas Anderson.

There will be a free-will offering. Childcare is available in the church nursery during the concert. A reception hosted by Women @ Grace follows the concert in Grace's gym.



# ADULT EDUCATION

Adult Education classes meet at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday mornings at Grace. There are no classes scheduled for December 24 or 31. Classes resume on January 7. December classes meet in the Seminar Room.

If you have ideas or suggestions for Adult Ed programming, please contact Ted Anton, chair of the Adult Education Committee (tanton@depaul.edu) or Pastor Dave Wegner (dwegner@graceriverforest.org).

## December 3

### Putting Christ Back Into Christmas

Ellie Schnack, Evie Tiemann

In the rush and stress of our society's celebration of a commercial holiday season, how can we remind our families and ourselves that Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ?

## December 10 and 17

### Making Sense of the Christian Faith:

#### God *con Carne*

Pastor Dave Wegner

Today the Incarnation seems about as scandalous as fruitcake, but in the fourth and fifth centuries, no issue more divided Christians than the assertion that almighty God had been joined to frail and fickle human flesh. By probing three early objections to the Incarnation we can better understand its startling assertions about the scandalous lengths to which God will go to redeem us.

## Coming in Adult Ed in January

David Heim, Grace member and editor of *The Christian Century* on "Christians Engaging Israel."

Gayle E. Woloschak, Associate Director of the Zygon Center for Religion and Science at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, on the ethics of gene-editing technology.

Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois, with a report titled "See the Change."

### SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY

Led by Bob Jandeska the Bible study group meets every Sunday morning at 9:45 a.m. in the Conference Room on the lower level.

## Bake a batch of treats for the Cookie Walk on December 10

Like to bake cookies? But don't want too many in your house?! Dig out a favorite recipe, dust off that mixer and give it a whirl! Women @ Grace need dozens and dozens of cookies for a Cookie Walk between services on Sunday, December 10, and for the reception following the Advent/Christmas concert that afternoon. Please drop off your cookies in the atrium on Saturday, December 9, 9 a.m.-noon, or on Sunday, December 10, before 9:30 a.m. Thank you!

**Come to the Cookie Walk on Sunday morning, December 10.** For just \$10 you can wander among tables of scrumptious cookies of all shapes and sizes, and fill a box with the ones you find most tempting. (And why stop at just one box?!) Some of the congregation's most able bakers will share the fruits of their labors (see above), and for this we thank them!

Proceeds from the Cookie Walk will benefit a Women @ Grace benevolence.



# Church Council approves report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

## *A message from Pastor Lyle*

The Grace Council, at its October meeting, approved the final report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity by a vote of 7 to 4. The report notes that Grace is “a faith community comprised of individuals from a wide array of theological and personal perspectives.” In the midst of our diverse views, “we receive our unity in Jesus Christ as a gift that transcends differences, calling us together in worship and praise of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” It is this God-given unity in Christ that undergirds the report and its recommendations to more intentionally welcome those individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning.

The report notes that those who identify as LGBT or Q are made in the image of God and therefore should be accepted by Grace. While acknowledging that biblical passages related to homosexuality are subject to alternative constructions, the report notes that God’s acceptance of all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, can be inferred: “And I,” Jesus says, “when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32).

Finally, the committee’s report recommends that Grace reach out to persons regardless of ethnicity, race, class, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or gender identity; that the boards, committees, and staff of Grace consider how to implement this

**Our common faith in the Triune God, centered in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, defines who we are. This does not change.**

recommendation in appropriate ministries; and that the pastoral staff of Grace, in consultation with the Board of Elders, be fully entrusted with decisions related to the ministry of marriage.

Through several years of studying the Scriptures, holding conversations, and fervent praying, I have come to believe that the rite of Christian marriage should be made available to all people, regardless of orientation or identity. So I celebrate this decision. That said, our opinion on matters related to marriage need not be uniform nor does it define who we are as a congregation. Our common faith in the Triune God, centered in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, defines who we are. This does not change. It is my hope that our more intentional posture of welcome will draw many others to the grace of Jesus Christ.

As we move forward, we do so together in Christ. Grace is a place of wide welcome. We are a community of enough depth and breadth to welcome one another even in the diversity of our opinions and beliefs. At the center of it all is Jesus. His arms, outstretched upon the cross, are open wide to all of us.

In Christ,  
Dave Lyle

## Save the date for the Slovak dinner on January 27

Grace will sponsor its second annual Slovak dinner Saturday, January 27, benefiting our benevolence partner the Center for Christian Education (CCE) in Martin, Slovakia.

Hosted in Fellowship Hall and beginning at 5:30 pm, the event will include an authentic Slovak dinner, a cash bar, entertainment, and a raffle of exciting items.

CCE leaders will present a 2017 update of their ministry.

The cost is \$50 per person, with proceeds to benefit CCE’s Lutheran High School. To reserve your space and pay online, go to [GraceRiverForest.org](http://GraceRiverForest.org) and click on the Slovak dinner.

Tickets will also be available for purchase in the atrium between services on January 7, 14, and 21.







## FEAST gatherings in December

Conversations around FEAST tables continue. It's exciting to think about all of these gatherings happening throughout our congregation. Nearly 200 people are participating in Grace's FEAST fellowship groups, meeting regularly for food, fellowship and faith-filled conversation. In December groups are encountering Mary's joy, expressed in the Magnificat in Luke 1:46-55. How will you share your joy in Christ's birth with others?

If you would like to be part of a FEAST group in the months ahead, please contact Beth Smoots (macbeth839@gmail.com). Additional groups may be formed in January if enough people are interested.



## High school youth news

Grace youth have gathered monthly this fall for exciting events and service to God's people.

**In October,** 17 youth gathered for the Amazing Race @ Grace, where teams raced to stations around the Grace neighborhood to complete various challenges. After the race, the teams gathered in the youth room for deep dish pizza. Ten adults helped to create and organize this event—we are so grateful for our adult volunteers who love and support our youth!

**In November,** 15 youth and 5 adults packed meals with Feed My Starving Children. Our youth believe that service is an important part of our Christian faith and life, and this event was one way for them to live that out. We look forward to more service opportunities in the spring.

**Every Sunday morning at 9:45,** our high school students gather in the youth room for Teen Talk. Perhaps the biggest draw is the amazing breakfast provided each week by our loving volunteers, but we also have great discussions on how our faith connects with our daily lives. Hard questions are welcomed, and easy answers are avoided. We are committed to maintaining an open, welcoming, safe space for teens to be who God made them to be. Join us!

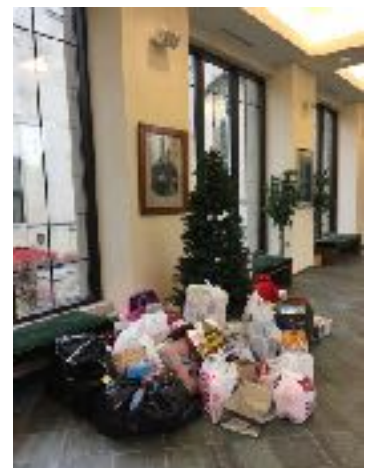


## Donate a sleeping bag to homeless people

The Social Ministry Committee is collecting new and like-new sleeping bags for the sisters of Fraternité Notre Dame to distribute on Christmas Eve to the homeless people they serve.

Please place sleeping bags in the bin in the atrium from December 3 through 17.

**Thank you.** The many tags on the Giving Tree in Grace's atrium have been transformed to presents under the tree, as well as a generous stack of gift cards. Your donations help to bring the good news of Christmas to clients of many local social service organizations.



# Emergency preparedness planning at Grace Church and School

by Pastor Lauren Wegner

There's no doubt that houses of worship are vulnerable to emergencies just like any other public space. Fire, severe weather and medical emergencies can and do happen anywhere.

Tragically, recent mass shootings at churches remind us even more of our vulnerability and the horrific devastation that can occur in a matter of minutes.

Earlier this year, a team of five Grace staff members began to meet regularly to review current emergency and safety protocols at Grace. Grace School has had emergency protocols in place for years now, but we knew it was time for Grace Church to have formalized plans as well. We updated the school policies, and drew upon them in order to create an action plan for possible emergency situations at church activities.

We met with the fire chief and police chief of the Village of River Forest, and we sought input from insurance companies, safety trainers, medical personnel, and other churches and

schools with solid emergency plans in place. The result is an easy-to-read guide for emergencies posted in every meeting area and classroom at Grace.

We paid particular attention to emergencies that might occur during Sunday morning worship, and all pastors and ushers have been trained in how best to respond and direct those affected by an emergency during that time.

Though we may never be fully prepared to face sudden and unpredictable emergencies, we hope that our work on this project can provide awareness and knowledge of the best procedures at Grace should they occur. As baptized and beloved children of God, we do not live in fear but in hope and trust that God remains with us even and especially in the midst of any threats to our safety. While it is wise to be as prepared as possible, we believe God holds us all in loving arms of protection—and that in Christ, we are already prepared for all that is to come.

## Christmas books for all in the church library

Looking for something to help get you in the Christmas spirit? Browse the books on display in the church library and in the cabinet in the atrium. The library has a large collection of Advent and Christmas material, including devotional books for the month of December, picture books for parents and children to read together, and Christmas CDs.

Here are some titles added to the library for the 2017 Christmas season.

**Names for the Messiah: An Advent Study**, by Walter Brueggemann. Westminster John Knox Press, 2016. [232 BRU]

**Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth**

**Behind the Birth of Christ**, by Timothy Keller. Viking, 2016. [232.92 KEL]

**Child in the Manger: The True Meaning of**

**Christmas**, by Sinclair B. Ferguson. Varsa Press, 2015. [242 FER]

**Rise Up, Shepherd! Advent Reflections on the Spirituals**, by Luke A. Powery. Westminster John Knox Press, 2017. [242 POW]

**Unwrapping the Greatest Gift: A Family Celebration of Christmas**, by Ann Voskamp. Tyndale, 2014. [249 VOS]

**A Chic and Simple Christmas: Celebrate the Holiday Season with Ease and Grace**, by Fiona Ferris, 2016. [394.266 FER]

**Christmas Love Letters from God**, by Glenys Nellist. Zonderkidz, 2016. [E 232.92 NE]

**A Night of Great Joy**, by Mary Engelbreit. Zonderkidz, 2016. [E FIC ENG]

Volunteers staff the library on Sunday mornings, and the library is also open for self-service during the week. All are welcome to check out books. Look for a link to the church library catalog online at [GraceRiverForest.org](http://GraceRiverForest.org). Click on Welcome > Learn.



# Coping with grief during the holiday season

by Sue Ames, Parish Nurse

Many people in our church family are experiencing grief this December, following the loss of some of our precious saints. How do we cope with grief during Christmas, when the joy of the season feels shaded by the veil of a loved one's death?

Everything seems to be magnified at Christmas time—joys, sorrows, social schedules with family and friends, church activities, budget demands, needs, wants, expectations, emotions, and losses. Even during the best of times, the holidays can be exhausting and stressful. The hole in the heart left by the loss of a loved one is also magnified during the holiday season, and celebrating may be the farthest thing from your mind. Traditions and rituals may be difficult, things may not be decorated the same way, holiday cards may not have their usual cheery message—and how do you sign them? How do you cope?

## Some thoughts on coping with grief

**Acknowledge and accept your emotions.** Anger, sadness, frustration, guilt, numbness, anxiety, fear, relief: emotions are not right or wrong, but by identifying them you can start to accept them and heal. Remember that everyone grieves differently, and how you feel and how you grieve will be as individual as you are. Try journaling to express your thoughts and feelings.

**Tell the truth about your feelings.** If asked “How are you?” be truthful. The way through grief is by grieving. Also, most people don't know how to support someone who is grieving. They need you to tell them how you actually feel: “Today is hard for me,” “I'd appreciate some company.”

**Eliminate unnecessary stress.** Let others host the party. Shop online, order out, hire a cleaning service or let the house be messy. Keep plans tentative because it is hard to know how you will feel ahead of time. Maybe you prefer to have a small gathering rather than the big open house. You may decide to skip the celebration altogether this year, and that is okay!

**Talk about your loved one.** Most grieving people find that it helps to share their thoughts and feelings with another person—family, friend, clergy, counselor, Stephen Minister. Reminisce, pull out pictures from past holidays. Share your sadness with those who were also close to the person who passed.

**Incorporate your loved one in the celebration.** Purchase a special ornament for the tree in memory of your loved one. Continue to make the favorite dish. Donate to a charitable organization in memory of the deceased person. Sponsor flowers for the church service. My friend had teddy bears made for her grandchildren from her husband's favorite flannel shirts as their Christmas gift. Make a memory book depicting the life of your loved one, maybe with copies for other family members as a gift.

**Volunteer.** Volunteer your time or resources to help others, perhaps in a way that relates to the person you lost, or simply do something that makes you smile and feel good inside.

**Continue old traditions and make new ones.** You may find traditions are comforting, or you may want to make a new plan this year. I have a friend who went to Galena with her family to celebrate Christmas the year her mother died, instead of having the big family dinner that had always been hosted by her mom.

**Self-care.** Use a planner to schedule time to exercise, eat healthy meals and get the rest you need. Avoid excess alcohol. (There are many other ways to distract yourself from painful feelings.) Say no to invitations that you don't have the emotional or physical energy to deal with. Surround yourself with those special people who lift you up and make you feel supported. Relax with a fragrant candle, a warm bath, a facial or massage. Watch your favorite Christmas movie, read a book by the fire, wrapped in your loved one's favorite blanket. (My mom wears my dad's old favorite sweatshirt to feel warm and cozy.)

**Feed your spirit.** Delve into devotional writings, prayers or meditations, sermons, poetry, hymns. Spend time in the Bible, especially the book of Psalms, the Gospels, or Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Write your own poems, letters to God, and letters to your loved one. Get out in nature and take in God's creation.

**Invest your loved one's possessions in others.** When the time is right, distribute things you wish others to have. Certain cherished possessions will hold special meaning for close family friends or family members. Clothing or other articles may benefit someone you know or someone you've never met.

**Seek support.** “Surviving the Holidays” at GriefShare.org offers articles, videos, and tips on coping with grief during the holiday season. Consider a grief support group. Here at Grace Stephen Ministry offers one-on-one support. (Talk to a pastor if you'd like to be assigned a Stephen Minister.) There are many books in the church library on grief, and I have copies of “Good Grief” by Granger Westberg to share. (Email me at [sames@graceriverforest.org](mailto:sames@graceriverforest.org) if you'd like one.)

**References:** “Handling the Holidays” by Therese Rando; “Holidays after the Death of a Loved One” by Amy Newman; “Seasons of Grief and Healing” by James E. Miller, “Good Grief” by Granger Westberg, “The Art of Dying” by Rob Moll.

**How can you help someone who is newly bereaved?** Offer your compassion, send a note, bring a meal, make a phone call. Be mindful of the person's needs, and show up! Avoid pat answers or clichés. The best thing to say is that you care. Actions speak louder than words.

## GRACE NEWS

**SANDWICH-MAKING AT FRATERNITÉ.** Grace members will be packing lunches at Fraternité Notre Dame, 502 N. Central, on Monday, December 18, at 7 p.m. Contact Kate Hogenson to arrange a ride.

**KNITTING/CROCHETING GROUP** will not meet in December. Stitchers will gather again on January 16 at 1 p.m.

**LECTIO DIVINA** meets on Monday, January 22, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. in the church library. Contact MaryBeth Buschmann.

**RETIRED LEADERS AND OTHERS** meet on Tuesday, December 12, 10 a.m., in the Seminar Room, for a presentation from Carl Schalk on “The Music of Advent and Christmas.” Guests are welcome.

**GRACE NOTES MAILING CREW** will be at work on the January newsletter on Thursday, January 4, at 9:30 a.m. They welcome more help!

**CORNERSTONES BIBLE STUDY.** Come for treats and conversation at 10 a.m. on Wednesdays, followed by Bible study at 10:30. There is Advent Morning Prayer on December 6, 13 and 20. Because of the kitchen remodeling, the cooks have adjusted the lunch schedule: lunch will be served in the church library on December 13, but not on December 6 (as previously scheduled).

**FINDING HOPE,** the chronic illness support group, meets at Grace at 7:15 p.m. on Tuesday, December 5.

**RELIGION IN LITERATURE.** The book discussion group meets on Friday, December 15, 8 p.m. for a reading of Lowell Swartzell’s “The Shepherds of Saint Francis: The Story of the First Christmas Pageant in 1223.” Copies of the play are available at the Grace reception desk. Jeff and Claudia Wood are the hosts (1027 Thatcher Ave., River Forest).

**YOGA,** led by Ackli Howell, meets at Grace on Thursday evenings at 6:30 p.m. through December 14. Classes resume after the holidays. Bring a yoga mat and a blanket or beach towel to sit on. Dress comfortably for movement.

## PASTORAL CARE

Call 708-689-3032 for emergency pastoral care on weekends, or when the Grace building is closed. Please include a return phone number if you leave a message or send a text.

### In search of a donated vehicle ...

Jeremiah Community Renewal Corporation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded by member Paul Eichwedel to provide transitional housing for returning citizens, is in need of a pick-up truck, van or other vehicle. A car would also be acceptable. If you are willing to donate a vehicle and/or need more information, please contact Paul at 872-233-5963 or via email at paulneichwedel@gmail.com.

## PRAYERS

**WE PRAY** for Nancy Kaufman and her family and all who mourn the death of Grace member Stephen Kaufman.

**WE PRAY** for Susan Messerli and all those who mourn the death of Carlos Messerli.

**PRAYER LIST.** The weekly Prayer List can be found in the worship bulletin on Sunday. Contact Karen Christopher (kchristopher@graceriverforest.org; 708-366-6900 ext 207) to be included on the published prayer list.

**PRAYER CHAIN.** Contact Kathy Lucht (kathy.lucht@gmail.com) or Kathy Garness (708-366-7584; KMGfinearts@comcast.net) with confidential prayer chain requests.

## IN CELEBRATION

We celebrate with Athena Anna Schultz, daughter of Brian and Liz Schultz, to be baptized on December 10.

## ALTAR FLOWERS

**Sign up** at the reception desk to donate flowers to remember a loved one or commemorate a special birthday or anniversary. Flower donations in December:

**December 3** — In memory of Luann Wilkie from the Wilkie Family

**December 10** — In loving memory of Margo Bonebrake and Marjorie Keene from the Bonebrake, Henry, Kaszuba, and Scherer families.

### Sponsor a poinsettia in the Christmas chancel

The Board of Worship is once again decorating the chancel with poinsettias for Christmas worship services. Sign-up at the reception desk by Sunday, December 17, to sponsor a plant in honor or in memory of someone; two-stem plants are \$15. You may take your poinsettia home after the Christmas Day worship service.

# Service projects at Grace School

**Thanksgiving food drive.** Grace School's third grade students coordinated the annual Thanksgiving food drive. Students brought their donations of non-perishable food for local pantries to chapel on Wednesday, November 8. Third graders led the service.

**Stockings for The Night Ministry.** Every December Grace students work with the church's Social Ministry Committee to fill Christmas stockings for homeless teens served by The Night Ministry. The pizza lunch raised \$400 to buy toiletries and other items to add to those donated by members of Grace Church. Students old and young will work together to fill the stockings later this month.

**Strike Team travels to local retirement communities.** On December 15 the school handbell ensemble, known as the Strike Team, will pack up bells, chimes, foam, tables and table coverings and head over to Bethesda Rehab and Senior Care to play a concert. They'll do the same thing on December 18, traveling to Brookdale Senior Living in Oak Park. Students learn skills beyond ringing on these trips as they visit with older adults and work together to organize the packing, loading and unloading of the bus.

**Early Childhood Christmas program.** Children in Grace's preschool and junior and senior kindergarten classes will present their annual Christmas program on December 15 at 10:30 a.m.. They'll tell the Christmas story with songs and costumes and much joy! (The photo is from last year's program.)

**Congratulations to the boys' volleyball team** who took 5th place at the Lutheran Sports Association tournament in Springfield in early November.



## Family Fun Friday December 8, 6–8 p.m.

Join families with kids from kindergarten through sixth grade for an evening of fun and fellowship here at Grace. Open gym, crafts, and games, plus a pizza supper. Make a delicious Christmas tree cone or a snow globe. Click on the link at [www.GraceRiverForest.org](http://www.GraceRiverForest.org) to register by midnight on Thursday, December 7, to register. Suggested donation: \$5/person, or \$20/family.

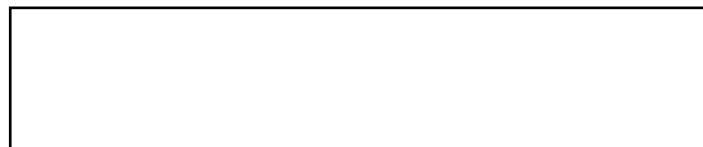


# Out of darkness we have light

Grace Advent/Christmas Concert  
December 10, 2017, 4:00 p.m.

Choirs and Bells of Grace Church and School  
Orchestra and Soloists

Music by Bach, Carter, Christiansen,  
Vaughan Williams and others



7300 Division St.  
River Forest, IL 60305

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