

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH



JANUARY 2024
GRACE VINE
NEWSLETTER



Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Mark 1:14-20

Letter from Pastor Kris

Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord

Building off of the 2024 Tournament of Roses parade theme, “Celebrating a World of Music: The Universal Language,” this year’s Lutheran Hour Ministries float is entitled, “Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord.”

Psalm 98 calls forth a new song from the entirety of the creation: a universal song of victory proclaimed with voices, lyre, trumpets and horns. This is the song of God’s victory which He has achieved through the death and resurrection of His Son, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, God brings hope of life eternal to a people who are otherwise entangled in death, who are on a trajectory towards death from the moment we’re born. But God sends His only Son, Jesus, who takes human brokenness (a.k.a. sin) and death upon himself, suffers death, and three days later rises victorious over both.

For this reason, the people of God – the Church of Jesus Christ – sing a new song. It is a song of hope, a song of joy, a song of praise. No longer does death have any power over us; death has lost its sting (1Cor.15.56). Yes, we still mourn the death of those we love, but we do not mourn as those who are without this resurrection hope (1Thess.4:13). What this means is that we do not become lost in grief, overwhelmed by the darkness of grief and death; instead we grieve with hope, we mourn our dead with a glimmer of light in the midst of the darkness because “those who believe in (Jesus), even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in (him) shall never die” (John 11:25b-26).

This year’s Lutheran Hour float features three heralding trumpets proceeding from a song-book. Hanging from the trumpets are banners featuring the great mantra of the Lutheran Reformation which is God’s plan of salvation: Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone. Salvation is a gift (grace) from God given to those who believe (faith) that Christ’s death and resurrection is *for you...* that it takes away your sin and death and thus raises you to new and eternal life (Eph. 2:4-9).

Watch for the float in the 2024 Rose Parade on New Year’s Day and may our Lord, Jesus Christ who is Himself the New Song, bless you and keep you in his peace.



Blessed New Year,
Pastor Kris

Letter from Pastor Smee

Give us this day our daily bread...

He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. – Luke 1:53

What sort of bread has God given you this last year? What blessings has He poured out upon you? What are the things that you recognize that were not accomplished or gained by you, but actually came to you from the Lord?

This petition about daily bread is one of the most overlooked petitions in the Lord's Prayer. It is a petition that makes us ask God to give us the bread we need for today, or more specifically the thing we need that is necessary for existence. It is a petition that should cull our appetites for entitlement or apathy. Entitlement makes us think we deserve something more than we do. Apathy can make us not care about daily needs, or think that asking God just for what we need is somehow not enough.

I love the little verse from Mary's song, the Magnificat in Luke 1, that gives a little taste of what God does. It speaks of God satisfying the ones who are hungry with good things. The Greek is a little more specific, speaking to those who have the pains of hunger, are lacking the needed essentials, and God comes to them and fills up the empty space, to satisfy the need. It doesn't mean that He lays out a buffet so that we can gorge ourselves and have to spend the next two hours laying on our left side. It means that those who are missing that which they should have receive it freely from God. While the rich, or the ones who have enough and are full are sent away lacking.

Think of that picture. Two people. One has nothing and is given something. One has everything but has something, not everything, taken away. What attitudes do you usually find accompanying those two kinds of people? The one who has nothing and is given something often feels loved, blessed and thankful. The one who has everything and has something taken away, maybe a flat tire, a car accident, a flooded basement, a refrigerator that goes out and all the food is spoiled, the attitude can lead to anger and even hatred because they feel slighted or even cursed.

The question, as we look at this petition, which one might we become? Are we to join the majority of Americans who have this sense of entitlement that causes us never to imagine that God might love us, because we don't see each day, each moment, as a gift? Or are we to be overcome by the Holy Spirit and echo Luther's explanation to the 1st Article of the Creed – "I believe that God has created me and all that exists. He has given me and still sustains my body and soul, all my limbs and senses, my reason and all mental faculties. He provides me daily and abundantly with food and clothing, house and home, family and property, along with all the necessities for this body and life. He also protects me from all danger and preserves me from all evil. All this He does out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy"? May the Lord save us from the former and nurture us in the latter.

In His name,
Pastor Smee



Based on Matthew 2:1-12, 3:13-17, 4:12-23 & John 1:29-42

Welcome to Epiphany, the Great Reveal.

“Epiphany” comes from a Greek word that means “appearing” or “revealing.” The Gospel for Epiphany tells of the Magi, wise men from far away who followed a star to find the newborn King of the Jews. Find Him they did, just as prophets promised. The Great Reveal of Immanuel, God-With-Us in the flesh, was truly underway.

Each church year, Epiphany points us to the rest of the story about the Messiah in the manger. Gospel readings for Epiphany and the remaining Sundays in January move us quickly, over the decades, from the visit of adoring Magi to our Lord’s Baptism and the beginning of His public ministry. The Little One adored by shepherds is recognized as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The newborn King, once announced by angel choirs, now issues His own compelling invitation: Drop everything! Follow Me.

To celebrate this Great Reveal over the years, some of my congregations have observed an old custom, the Epiphany house blessing. As pastor, I’d visit residences to chalk the following on entry door sills: 20 C+M+B 20. The letters CMB denotes this blessing: Christus mansionem benedicat (Christ bless this house), while the numbers represent the millennium and century. CMB also recalls traditional names given to the wise men (Casper, Melchior and Balthasar). Prayers are offered for the house and all who reside therein. Some households gather other family and friends, including the blessing as part of their end-of-Christmas festivities.

Whether it’s a single-family dwelling, an apartment, a room in a skilled nursing facility, or another place, these chalk-marked doors bear witness to the world that Christ is Lord of this home. The blessing also reminds us, coming and going, to put Christ and His Church first in all of our discipleship, including our stewardship of all God’s gifts — time, talent, treasure and testimony. So, may it be for us as we celebrate Epiphany, the Great Reveal, and look forward to the year ahead. Amen.

Written by the Rev. Dr. Cathi Braasch, STS. Rev. Dr. Braasch represents the North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents and the NALC Living and Giving Stewardship Team. She is a member of St. John Lutheran Church – Lake Township, Fort Wayne, Ind.

OPEN HEARTH 2024 COASTAL YOUTH RETREAT

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA

FEBRUARY 16TH-19TH

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. - 2 Corinthians 12:9

The 3rd Annual Coastal Youth Retreat is coming up, February 16th-19th. We will make our way to San Luis Obispo again, with time for prayer, learning, ministry, fellowship, and relaxation. There will be a family meeting, Sunday, January 14th at 5pm in the Grace Center. Any students 7th-12th grade and their parents, that are interested in going on the retreat are urged to attend.

Naomi's Friends meet the 2nd & 4th Thursday of each month at Bernadino's Ridgecrest @ 11 am.

Naomi's Friends



Church Council meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm in the Conference Room. If a regularly scheduled council meeting needs to be rescheduled, the congregation will be notified through the weekly MailChimp mass emailer as well as the bulletin.



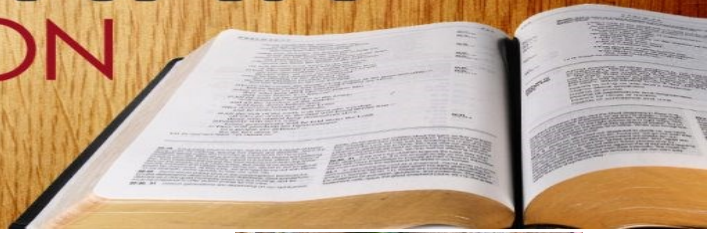
Grace Care Center

Grace fulfills an important need in our community for assistance with non-perishable foods and hygiene items. (SOCKS are always needed). They are in need of men's and women's winter clothing, baked beans, cranberry sauce, stuffing, and canned yams and donations of cat and dog food for their people and pets program. Bring contributions to the church office or the care center during their regular hours.



(Older Wiser Lutherans)
Meets for games, fun, and entertainment in the Fellowship Hall the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 1:30 pm. All are welcome to attend.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



Peace Bible Study meets the third Wednesday of the month at 9 am in the CR. The study is called *Speaking for Christ*. All are welcome.

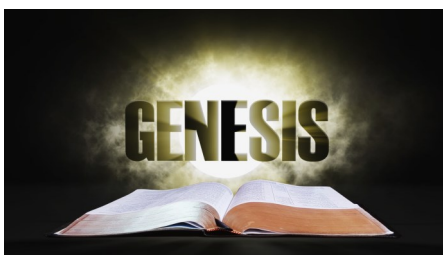


LIMBO Young Adult Life group meets Mondays at 6:30 p.m. at the Smee's home.

TEAM 784

*...tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD...
Psalm 78:4*

Join us each Sunday morning at 9:15 am in the conference room for a time of intergenerational fellowship, study, and prayer.



Join "A Bible and a Pencil" Bible study via Zoom on Tuesdays at 1:00 pm. The study is on the book of Genesis. Please contact Mark Brynestad for further information regarding this class.

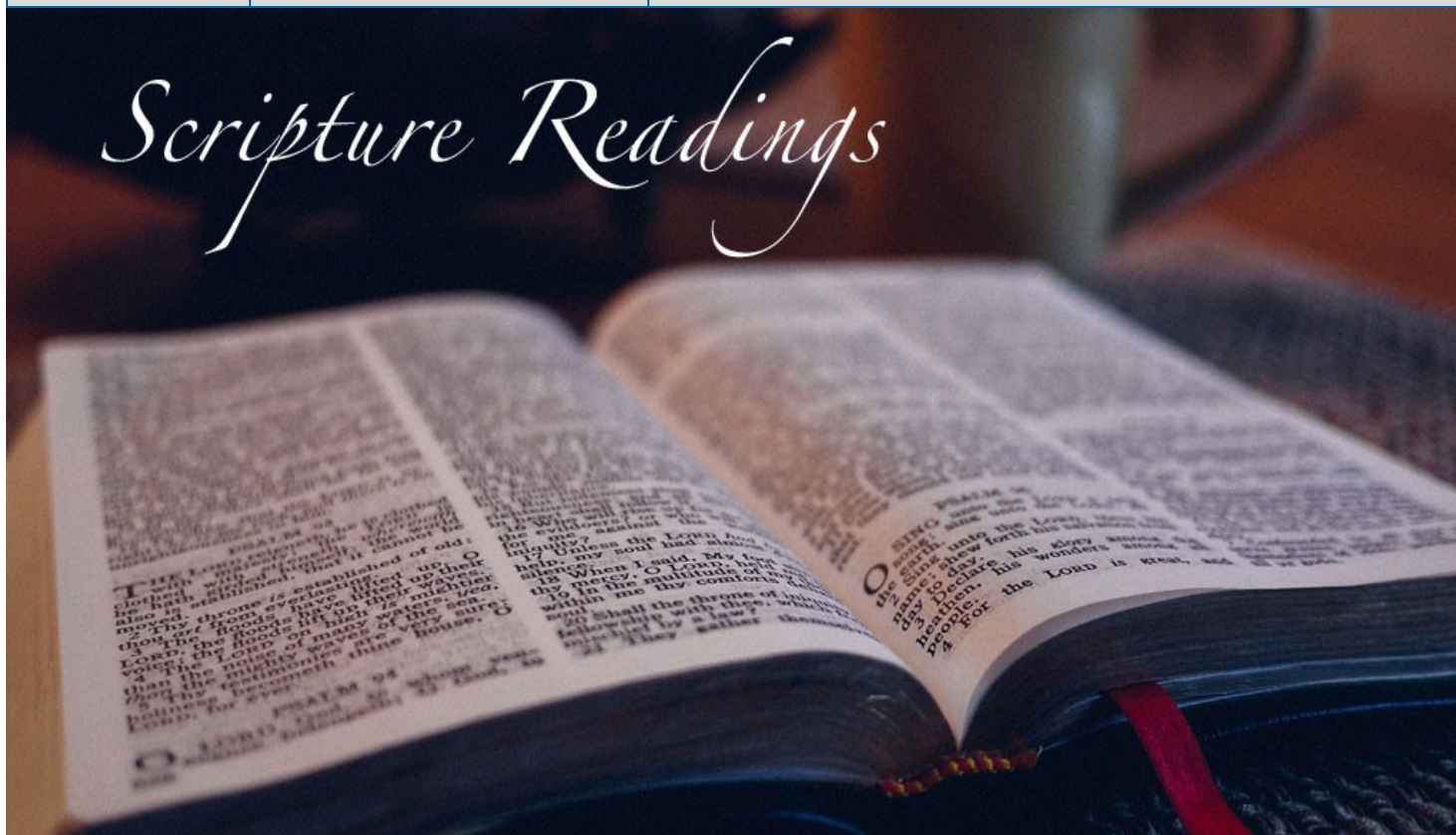


An in-depth Bible study of The Gospel of Matthew via Zoom on Tuesday nights, 7:00, under the instruction of Mark Brynestad. Please contact Mark Brynestad for further details.

Scripture Readings for January

Date	Gospel Reading	Additional Readings
Jan 7th	Mark 1:4-11	First Reading Genesis 1:1-5 Psalm 29 Second Reading Romans 6:1-11
Jan 14th	John 1:43-51	First Reading 1 Samuel 3:1-20 Psalm 139:1-10 Second Reading 1 Corinthians 6:12-20
Jan 21st	Mark 1:14-20	First Reading Jonah 3:1-5, 10 Psalm 62 Second Reading 1 Corinthians 7:29-35
Jan 28th	Mark 1:21-28	First Reading Deuteronomy 18:15-20 Psalm 111 Second Reading 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Scripture Readings



January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Office Closed	2	3	4	5	6
7 Worship 8:00 & 10:15am 9:15am TEAM 784 9:15am Catechism Class 6pm Youth group	8 LIMBO 6:30pm	9 OWLS 1:30pm	10	11 Naomi's Friends @ Bernadino's 11am Parkinson's Support Group 2:30pm	12	13
14 Worship 8:00 & 10:15am 9:15am TEAM 784 9:15am Catechism Class 6pm Youth group	15 LIMBO 6:30pm	16 Council Meeting 7pm	17	18	19	20
21 Worship 8:00 & 10:15am 9:15am TEAM 784 9:15am Catechism Class	22 LIMBO 6:30pm	23 OWLS 1:30pm	24 Peace Bible Study 9 am	25 Naomi's Friends @ Bernadino's 11am	26	27
28 Worship 8:00 & 10:15am 9:15am TEAM 784 9:15am Catechism Class 6pm Youth group	29 LIMBO 6:30pm	30	31			

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Equip
Share
Grace
Lutheran Church

502 N. Norma
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

For God so loved the world that
he gave his only Son, so that eve-
ryone who believes in him may
not perish but may have eternal
life.
John 3:16 (NRSV)



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www.facebook.com/gracelutheran.org

We're on the Web at:

Rev. Kris Madsen, *Senior Pastor*
Rev. Carleton Smece, *Family, Youth, and Education*
Michelle Koenig, *Office Manager*
Jane Kuhlman, *Music*
Paul Jauregui, *Custodian*



Phone: 760-375-9768
Fax: 760-375-1313
E-mail: gracelutheran@gracelutheran.org

Worship Services Sundays at 8 & 10:15 am
Team 784 Sundays at 9:15 am

