

Grace Community Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)
2751 Grant Street
Lower Burrell, PA 15068

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December

CROSSCURRENTS





December 2023 Newsletter

Dear Grace Family,

Faith is a way of waiting – never quite knowing, never quite hearing or seeing, because in the darkness we are all but a little lost. There is doubt hard on the heels of every belief, fear hard on the heels of every hope... But faith waits even so, delivered at least from that final despair which gives up waiting altogether because it sees nothing left worth waiting for. *Frederick Buechner*

As I write this letter I am waiting for the furnace to warm up the office and for the coffee to be ready. Waiting. Sometimes it seems as if we waste a lot of our time waiting. We wait in lines at stores (the lines get worse the closer we are to Christmas). We wait in our cars for the light to change, for the microwave to finish heating our food.

Yet the real waiting of our lives is often the hardest work we ever do. We wait for the doctor to call us with information about our health concerns. We wait for loved ones to call us telling us they are safe. We wait for a letter from a long-lost friend so we can renew a relationship that once meant so much. We wait for our children to grow out of the "phase" they are going through. Grace Church is waiting for the next called pastor to come and lead the church. Waiting is hard, but, like it or not, waiting is part of our lives. And in our waiting we wonder; what is God doing in all of this? Why doesn't God hurry up and answer us?

Why do God's blessings arrive late so often? Maybe it is because waiting for a blessing is the best way for our faith to grow strong and courageous. By waiting, our souls are given time to turn away from the thing we most want and to turn back to the God from whom all blessings flow. Then we realize that the real blessing isn't that we may finally get what we have long wanted, but that we are receiving it from the Blesser. *Craig Barnes*

Isn't waiting what Christmas, and all of life, is about. The Christian life involves a lifetime of faithful waiting and hoping. "For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness." (Galatians 5:5) I would like to suggest three ways we can be faithful in our waiting. 1) Trust in God's love for us. Christmas reminds us that God loved us so much that he sent his son into our lives to save us. Christ has come to us. 2) Look for the presence of Christ in our daily lives. We need to take time every day to become aware of God's presence in our lives. Christ comes to us. 3) Expect a better future. No matter how good, or how bad, our lives may be, God has a wonderful future planned for us. That is what the return of Christ is all about. He will come and establish the Kingdom of God on this earth and in our lives. Christ will come again.

The Christmas season is a time to remember that Christ has come, Christ comes, and Christ will come again. Our past, our present, our future are all in God's hands.

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).

May God help us to trust in His love, to be aware of His presence, and to wait with joyful anticipation for the future.

Doug

*Together let's honor and celebrate
Doug's tenure at Grace Church*



It's time to express our gratitude, love, and appreciation for the spiritual guidance, unwavering support, and profound wisdom that Doug has shared with us throughout the past two years. Join us in honoring Doug at a reception immediately following worship on Sunday, December 17th.



Glenn Nordmark submitted the following book report(s):

In the Grip of Grace
by Max Lucado

Referencing the book of Romans, Lucado addresses the question Paul basically asked, Can anything separate us from the love Christ has for us? The three parts of Lucado's book are: What a Mess, What a God and What a Difference. He invites you to walk on the heights of God's mercy.



We would like to thank those that hosted coffee fellowship and to our greeters for the month of November Darlene Artman, Cindy Irvin, Elsie Deem, Lisa Edwards, Marcia & Rich Sackett: Dee Shaffer, Todd Taylor, Dan & Teresa Howard,-Stephanie Tutka. Again, thank you so much for volunteering for coffee fellowship and being a greeter each Sunday.



To: My Church Family,

I would like to extend my sincere and heartfelt thanks during the time of my knee surgery and recovery. Your prayers, cards, phone calls and food dishes were greatly appreciated. It is wonderful to have such a loving and caring Church!

Thank you all,

Sincerely, Marcia Sackett



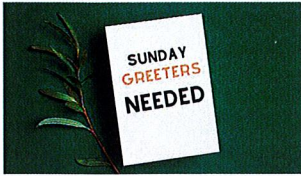
The Fellowship and Nurture Committee likes to remember our college students during the academic year. Please provide Wendy with the college address for your students. Thank you!



Join the GCPC Chancel Choir

- ♪ Open to members and friends of Grace
- ♪ Join with people who want to praise God thru music
- ♪ Wednesdays at 7:00pm

If you are interested, please call 724-339-9661 or email secretary@gracecommunitypresbyterian.org



9:40am Sunday Greeters Needed

Church greeters are very essential for our church. A greeter spreads hospitality throughout our church as part of an effective first impression. Please consider volunteering to be a 9:40am Sunday Greeter.

Did you know you can give Grace Church via your online banking account? Follow the following set-up instructions for most banks. Consult your bank if it is different than below.



- *Go to your online banking tab
- *Pay Bills
- *Add a Company or Person
- *Type "Grace Community Presbyterian Church" as the Company or Person Name
- *Enter Address: 2751 Grant Street, Lower Burrell, PA 15068
- *Enter Phone Number 724-339-9661
- *Save

You are now ready to enter your contribution amount and the date to send it to the church just like if paying your electric or gas bill online.

From the Stewardship & Finance Committee



October YTD Income:	\$171,407
October YTD Expenses:	\$184,995
October YTD Deficit:	\$13,588

We encourage you to continue (or increase) your giving to God to support the ministry of Grace Church. Year-end gifts need to be given to the church by December 31. Thank you.



Volunteers are needed to bake cookies and/or be a Santa helper for the Kids Party on Saturday, December 16. The sign-up sheet for your contribution is on the bulletin board outside of the office. Thanks



DECEMBER GRACE HIGHLIGHTS

Updates from Session

- † Session accepted donation of two 75-inch TVs to be mounted in the Sanctuary to enhance our worship service. Installation should be complete by the end of the year.
- † The session approved wedding fees and facilities use for members and non-members. The wedding policy and facilities use can be reviewed at the Church office.
- † Session approved the wedding of Ryan Gott and Melissa Negley on June 15, 2024.
- † Deacons report that Christmas stockings will be delivered to shut-ins after worship on Dec. 17.
- † Rev. Skip Noftzger will be filling the pulpit for the month of January 2024.
- † Property reports that the carpet in the elevator will be replaced. \$300 has been pledged toward that project.
- † Finance has reported that giving has been steady and has a positive outlook for the end of year report.
- † An anonymous large donation was made to be disbursed over the next three years and directed to expenses and salary of CE director.
- † A reception to thank Rev. Marshall for his ministry to Grace will be held after worship on December 17.
- † There will be an installation of Elders David Briscoe and Cheryl Landis during the service on December 10.

DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS



December 03	Todd Taylor
December 06	Linda Johnson
December 07	Chick Chickarella
December 15	Suz Pish
December 21	Dee Shaffer
December 27	Darlene Cochmour
December 30	Michael Cochmour

If your name does not appear, or if the listed information is incorrect, please contact the church office so that the records can be updated.

Heartfelt 
THANKS
TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!



October Knead Cafe Team

Barb and Ken Foust, Glenn Nordmark, Sharon Rupert, June Cicola, and Sheri Cieslinski

“We honor God when we serve others. His desire was for us to use our diverse types of gifts from Him to benefit those around us.”



November Knead Cafe Team

Stephanie Tutka, Cathy Christoforetti, Deb Roskey, Sharon Rupert,
Kellie Newcomb, Glenn Nordmark, and Sue Pish

Will you be included in our next team? No experience needed. Our next volunteer dates are December 16th and January 27th. The sign-up sheets are in the hallway near the restrooms. Looking forward to seeing you!



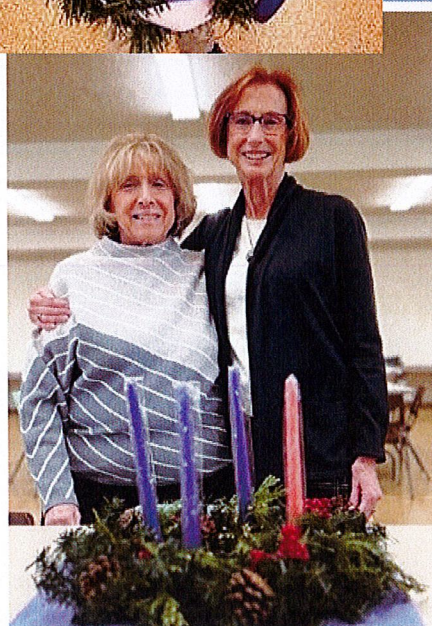
Advent Wreath Building

“The word Advent means
“Expectation.”

What Advent can do for us is
create a sense of hope.”

Louie Giglio





Life is Advent; life is recognizing the coming of the Lord.



It is finished! The last of the shoeboxes left Grace Church the Monday before Thanksgiving. In all, 1,647 shoeboxes were collected here during National Collection Week (- 1%), Thank you to all who helped staff the drop-off

center and load the truck, including our Puckety Church volunteers. Special thanks to Jack and Shirley Trinclisti for providing a U-haul truck to transport the cartons to Greensburg. A total of 14,825 shoeboxes were collected in Westmoreland County (+4%). From there they went to one of eight processing centers, most likely Baltimore, MD.

400 of the shoeboxes were packed right here at Grace Church – 352 of which were packed at our packing party on November 5th. From the picture below, we had a great turnout and lots of fun. We had originally thought there was shipping for only 352 shoeboxes, so that is what we packed at the packing party. But funds were there to reach 400 shoeboxes, and the remaining shoeboxes were assembled during National Collection week. Thank you to all who made this possible.



During collection week, Don and Sharon Andree, the Area Coordinators for Westmoreland County OCC, presented Grace Church an award recognizing our church for being a Drop-off Location for 15 years! It is a beautiful reminder of what all of us do year round for the children of the world who are in the greatest need of God's love. The statue will be in the Narthex for you to see, and please pay particular attention to the children's faces and feet. In those 16 OCC Collection Weeks, 20,588 shoeboxes have been safely transported from our church to Greensburg!





Hosting Coffee Fellowship Changes for 2024

Are you someone who would be interested in serving coffee and tea with some sweet treats, but has no interest in baking? Are you someone who enjoys baking but not interested in serving coffee and tea with some sweet treats? The Fellowship and Nurture Committee is making some changes in how we provide an opportunity for fellowship with our church family at coffee fellowship each Sunday.

As of January, if you enjoy baking, you can sign up to be a Goodie Giver who provides the goodies for coffee fellowship but does not need to serve beverages and sweet treats on Sunday morning. Just drop goodies off in the kitchen on Sunday morning. If you enjoy serving but not baking, you can sign up to be a Beverage Brewer who serves beverages and sweet treats on Sunday morning.

Of course, if you prefer baking and serving, you are welcome to sign up for both on any given Sunday.

The newly formatted signup sheet can be found on the bulletin board outside the church office. Won't you consider contributing to this important part of church life?

Come Join The Fun At The Annual Congregational

LAST CALL



CHRISTMAS DINNER

*Sunday, December 3, 2023
5:00 PM in Cana Hall*

An evening of entertainment is being planned for your enjoyment. Santa is also expected to make an appearance. Bring your friends!

Please bring a covered dish that serves at least 12 people. Table service will be provided. Please use the tear-off box to indicate your attendance or contact Wendy in the church office at (724) 339-9661.

Name _____

Number Attending _____

We will be providing (Circle One):

Salad Vegetable Dessert

Please Join us for our free Community



Santa Clause will be there

🎄 Arts & Crafts

👴 Cookie Decorating

🎄 Face Painting

👴 Letter to Santa

🎄 Story Time

👴 Cookies and drinks will be provided

Saturday, December 16 11am -1:00pm


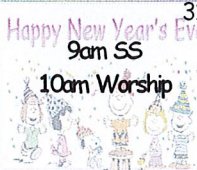
Grace Community Presbyterian Church

2751 Grant Street

Lower Burrell, PA 15068

724-339-9661

DECEMBER 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Office Closed	2 10:00am Christmas Decorating
3 9am SS 10am Worship/Communion 6pm Youth Group 5pm Christmas Dinner	4	5 1:00pm Bible Study	6 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	7 6:00pm CS Den Mtg. 6:30 Ladies Club	8 Office Closed	9
10 9am SS 10am Worship 6pm Youth Group	11 6:00pm CS Comte Mtg. 6:30pm Mission Meeting	12 1:00pm Bible Study	13 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	14 3:00pm CE Mtg. 6:00pm CS Pack Mtg.	15 Office Closed	16 11am - 1pm Kids Christmas Party
17 9am SS 10am Worship 11am Deacons Mtg. 6pm Youth Group	18	19 1:00pm Bible Study	20 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	21 <i>Happy First Day of W!</i> 6:00pm CS Den Mtg. 6:30pm Ladies Club	22 Office Closed	23
24 9am SS 10am Worship 7:30pm Christmas Eve Services	25  Office Closed	26 1:00pm Bible Study	27 No Choir Rehearsal	28 6:00pm Men's Club 6:00pm CS Den Mtg.	29 Office Closed	30
31 <i>Happy New Year's Eve</i> 9am SS 10am Worship 						

Coffee Fellowship Host(s)

December 3 No Coffee Fellowship
 December 10 Margie Bistline
 December 17 Volunteer(s) Needed
 December 24 No Coffee Fellowship
 December 31 No Coffee Fellowship

Greeter(s)

Beulah Brown
 Elsie Deem
 Beulah Brown
 Volunteer(s) Needed
 Terri Ludwig

CALENDAR SUBJECT TO CHANGE