

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH



Grace
Lutheran Church

**DECEMBER 2024
GRACE VINE
NEWSLETTER**



Letter from Pastor Smee

Really Now

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. – John 4:23

What I love about Jesus, and especially about the Gospel narratives, is that it always speaks to you and me today. Yes, it will speak of things in the past, as Jesus and the writers recount history. Yes, the focus of the whole of scripture is on that one day on a hill outside of Jerusalem 2000 years ago, where Jesus died for you. But, when Jesus speaks his parables, when he preaches his sermons, when he meets people like the woman at the well, he speaks to you.

Here, as Jesus is arguing with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, and is explaining to her the way of the kingdom, he opens up the present to her and to you. "The hour is coming and is now here." A particular time is spoken of as on the horizon, but then he blows it all up and says, "Actually, it is here." The word in the Greek is "now." Not yesterday, not tomorrow. Now. A particular thing that we are to be looking for is actually here. A time to do a thing.

What is this thing? It is a thing that is summed up by a word we love to love – worship. But it is not based on music, or liturgy, or even words. Worship, as used here, is the word for kneeling or prostrating oneself before a superior being. It is the honest understanding of who we are before God; not before your neighbor or pastor, but before the Lord. It is the physical manifestation of our dependance and our submission to him. We make it easy when it is shrunk down to songs or personal preference, but you know where I am going here, right? If the word is about loss of our personal preference, and instead is about the true realization that we are small and our God is not, how does that change our approach to church? How do we enter into worship, prayer, scripture reading, sermonizing, etc?

Jesus speaks of this worship being done in a certain way – a "true" way. The word for "true" in the Greek is the word for genuine. Being real. It's not done for show. It is not done out of obligation. It is done from a heart that has connected to the truth that God is God. That he is your God. It is bringing yourself before the Lord as the real you. Not who you want to be, or who you pretend to be, but the sinner/saint you are. Being a true worshipper is one who kneels before the Lord in all their brokenness and knowledge of their own sin. We often don't want to do this though, because we want to believe that what God wants is our piety and religiosity; in other words, the figure we cut as a "good" Christian, because we don't believe that the Lord is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love, even though it is his actual name revealed to Moses in Exodus 34. We can't imagine that he could love the real us, with real sins, real pasts, real trauma, and pain.

But I tell you that you are wrong. He is gracious. He is merciful. He is loving and he is intentional. He is not a God who waits for you to get things right, or to make him happy. No. Instead, as we walk our way through Advent this year, we are reminded that he is a God who comes down to us. He is a God who is the initiator of all that is love and salvation. He is a God who came to you before you ever came to him, and he does not do it in glory and lightning and thundering mountain tops. He does it as a baby. A baby that is small and weak. He does it this way because he wants to bring us to himself in our smallness and weakness. He doesn't look for us to be champions and great image-bearers of virtue and good works. He looks for us as sinners to save, as sheep of his own flock to lead, as children to take hold of to keep us close.

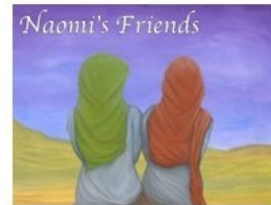
So this Advent, come to the Lord now, not later, as the genuine you. As the real you. Kneel before the Lord, our God, our Maker, and know that he will not be a fearful God of punishment and anger, but one of love and mercy.

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas,
Pastor Smee

Announcements



(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.



Naomi's Friends meet the 2nd & 4th Tuesday of
each month at Ale's Crab House @ 12 pm.



The Care Center is in need of these items:

- Men's and Women's winter clothing
- Canned Chili
- Canned Peaches
- Side items for Holiday Baskets



Church Council meetings are held on the third
Tuesday of each month from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm
in room 8. If a regularly scheduled council
meeting needs to be rescheduled, the will be
notified through the weekly MailChimp mass
emailer as well as the bulletin.



Do you have a heart to help those who are grieving?
Are you or someone you know grieving and could
use support traversing your grief journey?
Grief Share is Coming Soon. Talk with Pastor Kris.

Christmas Service Times

Dec 24th 4:30 & 7 pm

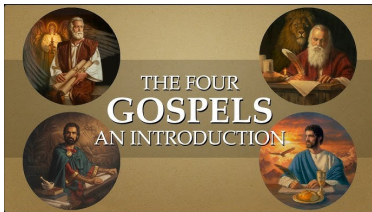
Dec 25th 9am

Dec 29th 9 am



Ladies of Grace Christmas Breakfast.
When: Friday, December 20, 2024 from
10 -12. Give yourself a break with
girlfriends of Grace.
Enjoy community and connectedness with
ladies of Grace.
Come bless and be blessed!
Where: Grace Fellowship Hall
You are invited to bring items for Care
Center:
Can Openers
Coffee
Cranberry Sauce
Canned Sweet Potatoes
Anything used for holiday meals
Items Care Center listed in the bulletin

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



Peace Bible Study meets the third Wednesday of the month at 9 am in the CR. The study is called *Introduction to the Four Gospels*. All are welcome.



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

Team 784
**Intro to the Bible &
The Bible's Big Story
with Pastor Carleton**
Fellowship Hall

Augustana
**The Lutheran Perspective
With Pastor Kris**
Conference Room



Join "A Bible and a Pencil" Bible study via Zoom on Tuesdays at 1:00 pm. The study is on the book of Exodus. Please contact Mark Brynestad via email at marknsue78@gmail.com for further information regarding this class.



An in-depth Bible study of Mark via Zoom on Tuesday nights, 7:00, under the instruction of Mark Brynestad. Please contact Mark Brynestad via email at marknsue78@gmail.com for further information regarding this class.

Scripture Readings for December

Date	Gospel Reading	Additional Readings
Dec 1st	Luke 21:25-36	First Reading Jeremiah 33:14-16 Psalm Reading 25:1-10 Second Reading 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
Dec 8th	Luke 3:1-20	First Reading Malachi 3:1-7b Psalm Reading 66:1-12 Second Reading Philippians 1:2-11
Dec 15th	Luke 7:18-35	First Reading Zephaniah 3:14-20 Psalm Reading 85 Second Reading Philippians 4:4-7
Dec 22nd	Luke 1:39-56	First Reading Micah 5:2-5a Psalm Reading 80:1-7 Second Reading Hebrews 10:5-10
Dec 29th	Luke 2:22-40	First Reading Exodus 13:1-15 Psalm Reading 111 Second Reading Colossians 3:12-17

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. Jesus is here!



2 Corinthians 9:15

December 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Worship 8:00 & 10:30am	2 6:30pm LIMBO	3	4	5 5:10 pm Praise Band	6 12pm Sticht Memorial Service 1 pm Luncheon	7
8 Worship 8:00 & 10:30am 6pm Youth Group	9 6:30pm LIMBO	10 12pm Naomi's Friends @ Ale's Crab House 1:30pm OWLS	11	12 2:30pm Parkinson's Support Group 5:10 pm Praise Band	13	14
15 Worship 8:00 & 10:30am 6pm Youth Group	16 6:30pm LIMBO	17 6:30pm Council Meeting	18 9 am Peace Bible Study	19 5:10 pm Praise Band	20	21
22 Worship 8:00 & 10:30am	23	24 Christmas Eve Services 4:30 & 7pm	25 Worship 9am Office Closed	26 5:10 pm Praise Band	27	28
29 Worship 9am	30	31				
						



502 N. Norma
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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)



www.gracelutheran.org
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*



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Worship Services Sundays at 8 & 10:30 am
Christian Education Hour Sundays 9:15 am

