



GRACE NOTES

Volume 8 Issue 12

December 2020

December Grace Church Family:

In Psalm 98, three words formed the theme of God's promises: *Sing, Shout and Praise*. "Sing to the Lord a new song because he has done wonderful things." "Shout triumphantly to the Lord, all the earth! Be happy! Rejoice out Loud! "Sing your praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of music."

We find ourselves in a unique situation because of this Pandemic. Last year the beloved carol "Joy to the World" was the song sung all over the world especially because it was the 300th year anniversary of this hymn. It is a powerful reminder that all of creation is being renewed and freed.

We cannot sing or shout in our churches but we can praise God in new ways. I just finished recording confirmation families for our online worship services. I am so happy to be connected in this way. December is a busy time for all of us. We anticipate "Joy" as we receive family and friends in a different way. By now, the prevalence of "Zoom" is our way to connect. But don't forget about phone calls or cards to convey our blessings especially those who feel isolated.

I came across an interesting word this week: "Covidtide". It is defined as a deeply lonely time when gatherings are restricted and human touch deprived. The Good News reminds us that Jesus was born to a people walking in darkness and He gives light. We will continue to offer Christ; God waits to meet us.

We begin our Advent Season, November 29th, and then celebrate "Love Feast" on December 6th. You will receive instruction via

email about this simple thanksgiving of God's provision in our lives. I will also be providing a weekly Advent devotion and music which will be posted via the church's Facebook and YouTube channel. Our online worship services will continue and we will celebrate the coming of the Messiah.



"Joy to the World the Lord is come; let earth receive her King! Let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing."

Sincerely,

Pastor Romir R. Esguerra

Redistricting Announcement

A year ago at the special session of the annual conference, the dean of the Cabinet, Rev. Darneather Murph-Heath, announced that the Cabinet would be submitting legislation in June 2020 to reduce the number of districts from six to five.

There have been many changes in population, demographics, church membership and the number of churches in the NIC. For instance, we've gone from 426 churches 30 years ago (when we last redistricted) to 350 in 2020.

We also believe that reducing the number of districts helps position us for an uncertain future. We don't

know how COVID-19 will continue to affect us as a conference with the potential for fewer churches. We know that there is a potential loss of churches due to the separation of the UMC that could result in fewer churches in a short period of time.

The redistricting plan provides for about 71 churches per district. The conferences are divided into north and south rather than east and west. All the districts will be "new" and the new districts will have new names! The names of the districts are Lake: North, Lake: South, Prairie: Central, Prairie: North and Prairie: South.

Here are the Prairie Central District churches:

Addison: Good Samaritan	Elmhurst: Christ	Naperville: Wheatland Salem
Algonquin: Christ	Elmhurst: Faith Evangelical	Oswego: Good Shepherd
Antioch	Elmhurst: First	Oswego: New NFC
Aurora: Bethany of Fox Valley	Fox River Grove: Community	Plainfield: First
Aurora: First Nueva Vida	Geneva	Plainfield: Sharon
Aurora: Flowing Forth	Glen Ellyn: First	Ringwood
Aurora: Wesley	Hebron	Roselle
Barrington	Ingleside: Joyful Spirit	Schaumburg: Our Redeemer's
Barrington: Salem	Itasca: The Center	Schaumburg: Our Savior's
Bartlett: Good Shepherd	Joliet: Cristo Es El Camino NFC	Schaumburg: Salem Korean
Batavia	Joliet: Grace	South Elgin: Community
Bensenville: First	Joliet: Hope	St. Charles: Baker Memorial
Bolingbrook: Crossroads of Faith	Joliet: Ingalls Park	Villa Park: Calvary
Bolingbrook: Friendship	Joliet: Trinity	Wauconda: Federated Church
Carol Stream: St. Andrew	Lake Villa	West Chicago: First
Cary	Lombard: Faith	West Dundee: First
Crystal Lake: First	Lombard: First	Wheaton: Aldersgate
Elgin: Cornerstone	McHenry: First	Wheaton: Gary
Elgin: First	McHenry: Mount Hope	Winfield: Community
Elgin: Journey of Hope	Naperville: Community	Winfield: South Asian
Elgin: La Luz de Cristo	Naperville: Grace	Wood Dale: Community
Elk Grove Village: Prince of Peace	Naperville: Hope Indian NFC	Woodridge
	Naperville: Naperville Korean	Woodstock: First
	Naperville: Wesley	

Dear Grace Family, Friends and Guests,

Below is a letter received on 11/20 from our bishop concerning the reopening of our churches in the near future. While this is NOT what we were hoping or planning for, we do realize that not opening our doors is truly in the best interest of our church at this time. With the positivity COVID testing rate in Will County now over 20% and hospital bed availability very low, we want to do what is best for our congregants. The ReTurn team continues to monitor the data in our area and determine how and when we can return to worship safely. Amidst the stress and uncertainty of life right now, we are grateful for the health of our congregants. We all play a part in slowing transmission and have a responsibility to take proper health and safety precautions. This is more important than ever as we enter into the Christmas season. Renewed effort with taking precautions will ultimately ensure our safe return to worship in person.

Happy Thanksgiving from your ReTurn Team



New Illinois Mitigation Policies

Governor J.B. Pritzker has announced new Tier 3 mitigation guidelines that are to go into effect on Friday, November 20, 2020. The state of Illinois, like most other states, is experiencing an alarming spike in COVID-19 cases. In order to prevent further infection and death, as well as to avoid overwhelming hospitals, we must all do our part.

We must be good neighbors to those in our communities and churches, to be part of the solution to this COVID-19 spike, and to keep ourselves and loved ones safe. Therefore, I would ask that churches not meet for at least the next four weeks. This is also in keeping with the request made by Bishop Frank Beard in the Illinois Great River Conference. What any one of us does affects all of us at this point in the pandemic.

Our churches might be the only ones in our communities who are not having in-person worship but we will then not be super-spreaders of the disease. We are called to do no harm and that means abiding by measures that we know are effective in helping to prevent the spread of infection: wear a mask in public, wash your hands, and practice social distancing. The governor has effectively asked us to stay home!

In terms of other groups in our buildings, I would discourage them although the governor did say that daycare centers were acceptable. Please abide by the guidelines of your specific county. If you are in doubt, please call your county department of public health or visit their website.

I would also ask that everyone refrain from Thanksgiving gatherings beyond people with whom you are already sheltering. As I have heard repeatedly, it's hard to imagine not gathering for Thanksgiving, but we need to in order to be able to gather again in the near future.

Also, I would encourage clergy and churches, if you haven't already, to begin to prepare for online Christmas Eve services since it doesn't look like this is going to subside by then.

I know this is hard but we must all be part of the solution to keep ourselves and each other healthy (and alive). The vaccine seems to be just around the corner and we don't want to let our guard down now.

Be safe! Be a good neighbor! And make a difference!

Sincerely,

Sally Dyck



VIRTUAL ANGEL TREE

Here is the link to GUMC Virtual Angel Tree.
graceumc.theangelgivingtree.org



When you click the link, click "register" and fill out your information. You will have to create a password and then click ok. You will then receive an email to verify your account. Click on the link in the email to confirm your email address. That will take you into the Grace UMC Angel Tree account. You can narrow your search by age, gender or toys. Or just click a tag on the tree.

ANGEL TREE

When you find a tag you like, click "add to wish list". Once you are finished selecting angels from the tree, you can click on "Reserve Angels" below to reserve all of the angels in your wish list. Or you can click on "Select Additional Angels" to add more angels to your wish list. You will receive an email saying "Your Angel Tree Gift Tags". Click the email and print out the tag.

Please return all new gifts unwrapped by November 30, 2020. Attach the Angel Tree tags to each gift, or attach Angel tag to the bag that includes all gifts. Recommended gift amount of 35.00 per angel.

DO NOT BRING YOUR GIFT TO THE CHURCH

You can have items shipped directly to: The Salvation Army 300 3rd Ave Joliet, IL. 60433. Or, use the Walmart Drop off locations available: Shorewood, Plainfield, Lockport, New Lenox and Sam's Club/ Joliet.

SWEATSHIRTS FOR THE HOMELESS

Our annual Holiday Sweatshirt Donation drive has had to be cancelled for this year due to Covid. The virus has made it difficult and impractical in many ways on those donating and the recipients. The man in charge thanks us for wanting to help the homeless but suggested that Grace takes this year off. Thanks to our faithful congregation for always being ready to help those that are in need!

Cathy Kazak



CANDY DONATIONS NEEDED

During the upcoming weeks our Confirmation class will be collecting candy donations to make holiday gifts for senior citizens and shut-ins being served by the Meals on Wheels program. Due in part to Covid-19 more people are in need of assistance this year than ever before (865 are currently receiving meals through the program). These gifts from us with their meals are a real treat for them and a simple way for us to show that Grace UMC cares.

About 300 pounds of individually wrapped regular and sugar-free candies are needed for this project. Your left-over Halloween candy is an ideal donation. Monetary donations are most welcome, too (please make checks out to Jim Morrow). Let us buy for you!

Candy donations can be dropped off outside the main church entrance in our collection tub; monetary donations can be mailed to the church or left in the mailbox. For more information, contact Jim Morrow at 815-482-2550. Thank you in advance for your help.



December

BIRTHDAYS

- 12/1—Brandon Bogucki, Travis Bogucki,
- 12/3—Brianna Anderson
- 12/4—Debra Black, Quinn Kolodziej
- 12/9—Patti Bailey, Jay Wait
- 12/11—Frieda Gray, Juda Gray
- 12/12—Alice Jackson, Linda Jursinic
- 12/13—Kathryn Ray
- 12/14—Peg Tucker
- 12/15—Joan Krosnicki, Daniel Potter, Caryn Young
- 12/16—Zachary Harrison
- 12/17—Elijah Gray
- 12/20—Destiny Hicks
- 12/21—Gene Lockhart
- 12/23—Reyna Guzman
- 12/24—Jay Caswell
- 12/26—Russ Ghilain
- 12/27—Benjamin Meister
- 12/28—Jacob Linko
- 12/31—Stephanie Butler, Jean Navin



We are so grateful for Grace Child Care Center that serves the little ones in our community.



- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Lyndle & Linda Burton | December 3, 1977 |
| Jeffrey & Michelle Ray | December 17, 1994 |
| Jerry & Sandy Brazeal | December 19, 1992 |
| Gail & Lee Shaw | December 23, 1961 |
| Henry & Clarice Boswell | December 31, 1957 |

Thank you Joe and Maida McCormack for helping me decorate the sanctuary for Christmas.

From: Barb Fisher



UMW IN MISSION

Instead of our Purse ministry this year, we sent a check to Groundwork at Guardian Angel Community Services and they expressed their appreciation with a nice thank you note. We will continue to support them in the coming year anyway we can, as it goes directly to women and children.



AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to support Grace United Methodist Church every time you shop, at no cost to you. AmazonSmile is available at smile.amazon.com on your web browser and can be activated in the Amazon Shopping app for iOS and Android phones. When you shop AmazonSmile, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added benefit that AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to Grace UMC.

Greetings from BSA Scouts Troop 15,

We want to say THANK YOU to everyone at Grace for their amazing support of our Scouting for Food Food Drive. We collected over 400lbs. of food for Ridgewood Food Pantry.

The Scouts are also excited to share they were able to go camping for the first time this year. The boys planned and executed, following all of the Grace UMC and Rainbow Council Covid Guidelines and Precautions, The First (and hopefully only) Socially Distanced Campout, held on October 25th. Both Scouts and Leaders were thrilled to get one campout in before additional mitigations were put into place.

Two of our Scouts, Josh and Adam, along with Adult Leaders Ben Venegas, Scoutmaster and Eduardo Espinoza, Assistant Scoutmaster, were interviewed by Scott Slocum on WJOL Joliet radio. Following Covid precautions, the radio interview was done remotely, with the 4 participants calling in and being interviewed via telephone. All four did a great job!

We would also like to update everyone on the Four Troop 15 Eagle Projects. Since our last Grace Notes article, we have had two Scouts, Josh & Carter, earn the rank of Eagle. We also have had a third Scout, Breadon, complete his Eagle project. Breadon is now preparing for his Eagle Board of Review, which is the final step in earning the rank of Eagle. Breadon's project was landscaping around the sign at Grace UMC. Our fourth Scout, Adam, will be working on construction plans over

the winter and completing his project in the spring. Congratulations to all ~ We are so proud of your accomplishments, and the additional precautions you had to put into effect to meet these goals.

Troop 15 has exciting news to share. As part of our annual review, we always look for new ideas to implement and new ways to meet the needs of our community. I am happy to announce that one of our new initiatives will be to increase our outreach to Joliet's Hispanic community. We are blessed to have Mr. Eduardo Espinoza, as an Assistant Scoutmaster. Mr. Espinoza has a long

history with Scouting, in Mexico and with our Troop, and is looking forward to assisting with our recruitment efforts. He has already translated our recruitment material into Spanish. In addition we have two other members of our leadership team, Mr. Ben Venegas, Scoutmaster and Mrs. Teresa Piskur, Committee Chair who also speak Spanish. With Mr. Espinoza's guidance, we are excited to see how our program can grow to better meet

the needs of all youth in our community.

Once again, Thank You to Everyone at Grace UMC who make it possible for our Scouts to continue to meet their advancement and personal goals, even in a pandemic. We were so happy to be able to participate in the food drive in person, following the covid precautions. Even though we are back to meeting virtually, we are still going strong thanks to the support of our families and all of you at Grace. Until next time,

Yours In Scouting Troop 15 Scouts and Families



BOY SCOUTS
OF AMERICA®

BOX TOP LABELS

As the company now wants you to scan your Box Top labels, this has become a personal mission instead of a church wide mission. But I had 600 some labels that were collected at church prior to Covid, so they were sent to Cunningham Children's Homes in Urban as always. This is one of the oldest United Methodist Women run missions in Illinois. They can still use the old Box Tops and are buying a second pottery wheel for their ceramic art program with the help of our labels and were most appreciative. Cathy DuBois



October

2020 Income & Expense Summary

Comparison to expected cash flow for budget approved 12/15/19

	October		Year to Date	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
INCOME	\$27,900	\$23,010	\$294,300	\$277,743
EXPENSES				
Apportionment	\$2,707	\$1,794	\$27,068	\$17,940
Pastor Salary & Benefits	\$7,585	\$7,444	\$83,431	\$82,705
Personnel	\$8,148	\$5,892	\$88,942	\$79,568
Administration	\$1,058	\$1,151	\$10,583	\$9,195
Programming	\$1,408	\$461	\$14,083	\$6,247
Church Buildings	<u>\$11,183</u>	<u>\$6,965</u>	<u>\$83,633</u>	<u>\$67,880</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$32,089	\$23,707	\$307,740	\$263,535
SURPLUS OR (DEFICIT):	-\$4,189	-\$697	-\$13,440	\$14,208

NOTES:

- 1) Of the \$16.5k shortage in the income category, only \$8k was due to not receiving pledge income.
- 2) With the shut down, expenses are about \$44k less than expected through October.

OFFERING ENVELOPES FOR 2021

Since our current offering envelopes have no expiration dates on them you can continue to use them in the New Year and beyond until you run out of them (your account # will remain the same). Be sure to contact the church office if additional envelopes are needed.

Thanks for your continued financial support of Grace Church.



Grace United Methodist Church

1718 Avalon Avenue

Joliet, Illinois 60435-5799

The Blessings of Peace
The Beauty of Hope
The Spirit of Love
The Comfort of Faith
May these be your gifts
this Christmas Season.



MERRY CHRISTMAS