



As I write this newsletter article, my email and my calendar (that I'm trying to recreate) have been screaming for my attention. There are Conferences at the schools for the kids, trying to coordinate Thanksgiving and Christmas gatherings with my family, the variety of special services and programs here in Advent at church, etc. I find myself making longer and longer To-Do lists. It is not hard to get a little anxious over all that I feel I need to be doing or giving my attention to right now. I was going through some old papers of mine and found "The Christmas Pledge." It helped me reorient my thoughts and decisions. I thought I would share it with you:

## THE CHRISTMAS PLEDGE:



- Believing in the true spirit of Christmas, I commit myself to:**
- Remember those people who truly need my gifts**
- Express my love in more direct ways than gifts**
- Examine my holiday activities in the light of my deepest values**
- Be a peacemaker within my circle of family and friends**
- Rededicate myself to spiritual growth**

May this be the guidepost for all of our decisions and lists of things to do this Advent and Christmas season. I pray you can fully experience Christ being born anew again in you this Christmas.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Laura



## FMSC-Feed My Starving Children

On November 2, 2024 - 26 children, youth and adults from GUMCE went to the Aurora facility to pack meals. There were other groups there as well. At the end of our time slot, we packed 161 boxes that contained 34,776 meals for children around the world. These meals would feed 95 kids for one year!! FMSC's mission is to feed God's starving children hungry in body and spirit! FMSC work with food distribution partners that stay with communities for the long haul, empowering them to move from relief to development.

FMSC has at 98.7 % success rate of reaching the children in need.

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## Blue Christmas

It has begun...actually it began before Halloween was ever over: the Christmas EVERYTHING! The commercials, the music, the decorations in the store. We are told, it's the happiest season of all. However, for some of us, we are not feeling the "merry" of Merry Christmas. It may be something going on in your life right now: a recent death of a loved one, a divorce, an estrangement from a child, a lost job; maybe it is current health struggle or perhaps something from years past that is resurfacing in a different way this year. If that describes you or someone you know, I wanted to let you know that here at Grace UMC we are going to be offering a "Blue Christmas Service" on Friday December 12<sup>th</sup> at 4pm in the sanctuary. It is intended to be a safe place to just be authentic in whatever you are feeling.

If this isn't your circumstance this holiday season, I pray that you will be aware of those around you that may be struggling. You can be a light to someone walking through a dark time by simply being present, hearing how they are feeling while not trying to talk them out of it or offer quick fixes on how to feel better. You could invite them to the Blue Christmas Service and even offer to go with them. Every Christmas, we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child. We

acknowledge the ways in which Christ has been born again in our lives, how we experience Emmanuel: God WITH us. May you feel the light of Jesus this Christmas season and may you carry that light to others who feel they are surrounded in darkness.



Grace and Peace,

Pastor Laura

## *Hanging of the Greens*

**December 1<sup>st</sup>** is the **Hanging of the Greens** during our 10:30 am worship service. Please join us as we decorate the church to celebrate the beginning of Advent Season. **HOPE**

## *WWF Christmas Program*

You are invited on **December 7<sup>th</sup>** from 10:00-10:50 am in Grace Place for a "Baby Shower for Jesus" and light brunch. From 11:00-Noon in the Sanctuary enjoy a word and song program, "A Celebration of Mary and Her Story." Bring unwrapped gifts for Groundwork charity: diaper wipes, rattles, Destin/Aquaphor, bottles, Onesies 12 months and under, infant clothing 12 months and under, infant bath towel and wash cloths, Walmart gift card. [No diapers needed.] RSVP to Maida McCormack .

## *Worship Service*

Sunday, **December 8th** at 10:30 am join us for the 2nd Sunday in Advent. Worship and communion.  
**PEACE**

## *Blue Christmas Service*

Thursday, **December 12th** at 4:00 pm join us as we remember and celebrate those who have gone before us.

## *Christmas Cantata*

As we enter the season of Advent, leading up to our celebration of the birth of our Savior, the choir, bells, organist, pianist, soloist, and our charming children, are preparing a Christmas Cantata for the third Sunday in Advent. It also includes a few Christmas Hymns that you know and love, so you can sing right along with us.

Join us at the 10:30 service on **December 15th** for "This is Christmas". **JOY**

## *Worship Service*

Sunday, **December 22nd** at 10:30 am join us for the 3rd Sunday in Advent worship. **LOVE**

## *Christmas Eve Worship*


Tuesday, **December 24th** at 7:00pm join us as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. A beautiful worship service with Communion served and the Silent Night Candle Lit closing.

# OUR CHURCH'S FINANCIAL HEALTH

## October

### 2024 Income & Expense Summary

Comparison to expected cash flow for budget approved 12/10/23 and revised 6/25/24

		October		Year to Date	
		Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
INCOME		\$19,708	\$14,391	\$230,334	\$219,649
EXPENSES					
	Apportionment	\$2,137	\$0	\$21,370	\$12,822
	Salaries & Benefits	\$13,588	\$12,554	\$148,636	\$141,148
	Administration	\$1,130	\$911	\$11,292	\$12,110
	Programming	\$792	\$257	\$7,917	\$3,877
	Church Buildings	<u>\$7,890</u>	<u>\$10,037</u>	<u>\$78,900</u>	<u>\$87,823</u>
	<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$25,537</b>	<b>\$23,759</b>	<b>\$268,115</b>	<b>\$257,780</b>
	<b>SURPLUS OR (DEFICIT):</b>	<b>-\$5,829</b>	<b>-\$9,368</b>	<b>-\$37,781</b>	<b>-\$38,131</b>

**NOTES:**

- 1) Income is falling below expectation in recent months -- Now \$10 below plan.
- 2) Current projection is that we will be only about \$5k below plan on spending.
- 3) Savings in personnel and program areas have been offset by higher than expected utility and maintenance costs.
- 4) If apportionments are paid in full, our 2024 deficit could be in the \$30k range.

### Advent Class Offering December

Pastor Laura and Debi Shippey will be offering an Advent Study on Wednesday Evenings December 4, 11 and 18<sup>th</sup> from 6-7 p.m. in the library. We will be having a time to reflect on the previous Sunday's sermon and scripture with our sermon series "O Come Let Us Adore Him." There will be no book for the study. Please sign up in the Narthex on Sunday mornings or call the church office.

## FAITH AND WELLNESS

Our November presentation by Hadi Finerty from the Alzheimer's Association offered us the most up-to-date information on this awful disease. The fact that 46 of us came to hear her speak is indicative of the importance and impact of Alzheimer's Disease. We will follow with great interest the U.S. Pointer Study to learn of continued advances to prevent or slow down this disease. A big THANK YOU to Cathy DuBois for orchestrating this presentation!

### Upcoming Activities:

1. 1st Sunday BP checks. We are in the library the first Sunday of every month for 30 minutes prior to the start of the worship service—come and let us check your blood pressure. Controlling your blood pressure is one of the 10– healthy habits for your brain—we learned this at the Alzheimer's presentation.
2. December 4th at 12 noon, Faith and Wellness Team meeting.
3. Lunch Bunch—17 of us dined at the Dragon Light restaurant on November 19th. For our December outing we are headed to Jameson's on 2755 Black Road, Joliet on the 10th. Please RSVP to Pat Meyers or Barb Fisher
4. December 12th at 4pm Blue Christmas Service. Come join us, bring a friend to a special time of reflection, music and quiet reassurance. In this busy holiday time it is important to acknowledge that for some people the holidays are a time of sadness, loneliness or pain. Come, light a candle of hope.
5. Looking forward to January: a presentation is being organized to help us understand what we need legally and religiously to have our end of the life wishes known and to guide those around us. More details will be in the January Grace Notes.

Debi Shippy

### CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR GRACE CHILDCARE

Since Grace Child Care is one of our outreach ministries of the church, let's help them this Christmas by bringing the following items:

- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| • Paper plates | • Paper napkins |
| • Paper towels | • Clorox wipes  |
| • Baby wipes   | • Kleenexes     |

Please put the donations in the decorated box by the church kitchen.

Thanks so much for your help!



I spy with my little eyes of mine, two of Santa's helpers. Clarise and Linda decorated the Giving Tree.

## ANGEL TREE

- \* Donors are encouraged to select an angel from the tree, purchase a suitable gift(s) and return the un-wrapped gift(s) to the tree with the angel tag attached.
- \* Place the gift in a heavy paper bag and attach the An-gel to the bag. And place under the tree.
- \* Please sign your name on the sheet beside the Angel Tag that you select .
- \* Gift cards may be received in lieu of gifts. Gifts in price should be about \$35 per child.
- \* Higher amounts are up to the discretion of the donor. All items must be new. ☑ Wrapping paper can be included for the parents to wrap the gifts.
- \* All gifts are due back to Grace Church by Sunday, December 15th.

**They ask that you do not use gift bags. Gift bags break easily when transporting.**

## CANDY DONATIONS NEEDED FOR MEALS ON WHEELS

During the coming 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. More people are in need of assistance this year than ever before. These gifts with their meals are a real treat for them and a simple way for us to show them 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; let us buy for you!

Candy donations can be dropped off outside the church office in our decorative collection box; monetary donations can be mailed to the church or left in the mailbox. For more information contact Jim Morrow at . Thank you in advance for your help.

## HANGING OF THE GREENS

**Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup>**

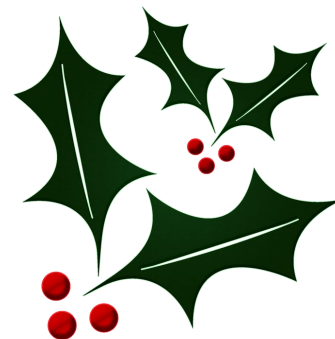
As we all prepare our homes for the upcoming Advent and Christmas season, we will decorate our church home on Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup> with the Hanging of the Greens. The service will be a little different this year compared to previous years and may have a few surprises. We will also have cookies and punch in the Narthex following the service, because who doesn't eat Christmas cookies while decorating their home for Christmas?! Please mark your calendars for Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup> so that you don't miss this special service at your church home.



## GRATITUDE CORNER

Thanks to those who have pledged financial support for Grace for 2025.

Thanks also to those who share gifts on a regular basis but choose to not pledge.



## It Was a Happy Thanksgiving!

I'd like to thank all of those who have supported our Daybreak Mission through food donations, or monetary donations. Also a big thank you to the Rojas/Guzman family and Don Lutz for volunteering to prepare and serve the monthly dinner meal. Thanks to Steve and Linda Meister, who handle the early morning breakfast every month.

The third Monday of October had 93 people staying at Daybreak. We served over 50 meals, as some clients are working at the time dinner is served. It costs approximately \$300 to cover the monthly dinner. Breakfast expenses are usually \$180. We are so grateful for the congregation's continued support of this important mission.

Diane Lutz

## FREE! Bolingbrook High School Holiday Concert

If you are interested in some outstanding music to get into the Christmas spirit, come on over to the Daytime performance of the Bolingbrook High School Holiday Concert on Tuesday, December 10<sup>th</sup>. This performance is actually their final dress rehearsal, but don't let that fool you! Every year the final dress rehearsal is just as good as the 'real' performance on Thursday night (12/12). For their final dress rehearsals they invite some middle school and elementary school students for their audience, and I've been able to get seniors to also attend. You need to be at BHS by 9:15am; the concert begins at 9:45am and is all done by 11am. (We want to arrive before the busses bringing the students, so we will get inside and seated prior to them arriving!) I need to know who is going so that they can reserve parking spots and seats for us that morning. Carpooling is strongly suggested. You must **RSVP by TEXT** to Diane Parro before December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

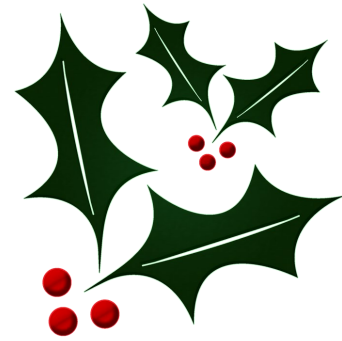
Handicap seating will be available.

## December Community Office Hours

Noon-1:00 p.m. Thursdays at **Urban Kitchen**

2424 Plainfield Rd. Suite 100Crest Hill, IL  
60403

(\*Note Pastor Laura will NOT be holding  
Community Office Hours on December 26<sup>th</sup>)



## LUNCH BUNCH

Come join the fun on December 10th at 12:30  
pm at Jameson's Pub at 2755 Black Road, Joliet.

Please RSVP to Barb Fisher or Pat Meyers (by  
December 8th.

## DAYBREAK SHELTER

Dinner will be served Monday, December 16th  
and Breakfast Tuesday, December 17th.

Sign up sheets for food donations are on the  
bulletin board in the narthex.

Thank you in advance.



## NEW BOOK IN LIBRARY

The Finger of God by Jesse L. Jackson Jr. - This is  
a powerful and insightful book that Jesse has  
painstakingly researched on what he feels has the  
intent of the Founding Fathers on the  
Constitution. Part I has 13 chapters and is very  
deep. Part II & III are biographical on Jesse Jack-  
son in which he takes full responsibility of his  
mistake when he was sent to prison while he was  
an Illinois Congressman.



# December Birthdays and Anniversaries

John Kabelis	December 01
Brianna Anderson	December 03
Debra Black	December 04
Quinn Kolodziej	December 04
Maria Pons	December 08
Patti Bailey	December 09
Jay Wait	December 09
Frieda Gray	December 10
Juda Gray	December 10
Gena Rhodes	December 10
Emmett Barkley	December 12
Alice Jackson	December 12
Linda Jursinic	December 12
Kathryn Ray	December 13
Peg Tucker	December 14
Joan Krosnicki	December 15
Daniel Potter	December 15
Caryn Young	December 15
Elijah Gray	December 17
Gene Lockhart	December 21
Matthew Renzi	December 22
Reyna Guzman	December 23
Jay Caswell	December 24
Russ Ghilain	December 26
Ben Meister	December 27
Jacob Linko	December 28
Mia Bowen	December 30
Stephanie Butler	December 31
Jean Navin	December 31
Mia Bowen	December 30
Stephanie Butler	December 31
Jean Navin	December 31

Jeffrey & Michelle Ray	December 17
Henry & Clarise Boswell	December 31

We celebrate the birth of Maria and Chuck Pons granddaughter **Evelynn Elizabeth** born November 20th, 2024.

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Our condolences to the Trimmer family on the passing of **Dorothy Trimmer**. Dorothy passed on October 20, 2024.

Our condolences to Peggy Tucker and family, **Ron** passed away on October 27, 2024.



## MISSION OF THE MONTH

**December – Global (pg. 16) Solar Oven partners UMC (#418812)**

The solar oven training and distribution program works in the Dominican Republic.

### Holiday Envelopes 2024 (Thanksgiving & Christmas)

will go 75% to general budget with the remainder to two local ministries. The funds received by Mis-

NOV ATTEN	WORSHIP 8:30AM 10:30AM	CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL	ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL
Nov 3	82	26	16
Nov 10	84	29	19
Nov 17	94	29	18
Nov24	63	31	19

# DECEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1 <b>HOPE</b> 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 9am Christian Ed 10am <u>Blood Pressure</u> screening 10:30 Worship <b>Hanging of the Greens</b></p>	2	3	<p>4 12pm Faith &amp; Wellness mtg. 6pm Advent Study 6:15 Bells 7:30 Choir</p>	<p>5 6pm DayCare Christmas program</p>	6	<p>7 <b>10am UWF Christmas program</b></p>
<p>8 <b>PEACE</b> 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 9am Christian Ed 10:30 Worship with <u>Communion</u></p>	<p>9 6:30 pm SPRC</p>	<p>10 12:30pm Lunch Bunch Jameson's on Black Road 6:30p Finance via ZOOM</p>	<p>11 6pm Advent Study 6:15 Bells 7:30 Choir</p>	<p>12 7:00 am Men's Breakfast  4pm Blue Christmas Service</p>	13	14
<p>15 <b>JOY</b> 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 9am Christian Ed 10:30 Worship/ <b>Cantata</b></p>	<p>16 5pm Daybreak </p>	<p>17 7am Daybreak Breakfast  6:30p DayCare Zoom 6:30pm Trustees</p>	<p>18 6pm Advent Study  6:15 Bells 7:30 Choir</p>	<p>19 7:00 am Men's Breakfast  6:30pm Church Council</p>	20	21
<p>22 <b>LOVE</b> 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 9am Christian Ed 10:30 Worship</p>	23	<p>24 7:00pm <b>Christmas Eve</b> worship service</p>	<p>25 <b>CHRISTMAS</b> </p>	<p>26 7:00 am Men's Breakfast</p>	27	28
<p>29 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 9am Christian Ed 10:30 Worship</p>	30	<p>31 </p>	<h1>#2025</h1>			

Grace United Methodist Church  
1718 Avalon Avenue  
Joliet, Illinois 60435-5799



**December 24th**  
**7:00 pm**  
**Join us for our**  
**Christmas Eve**  
**Worship Service**