

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gathering in grace, Growing in faith, Serving in love

December, 2020

Pastor's Ponderings

Even if you're signed up to receive our newsletters by e-mail, you're receiving this through the mail because there's SO MUCH that we want you to know this month, and we wanted you to be able to have a copy in your home to read and reread to your heart's content.

Dear Friends.

After 9 months of COVID-19 disrupting our plans and keeping us away from in-person worship in our Sanctuary, we're in a time when it's so hard to be apart. It's so easy to dwell on the traditions we can't do this year, which includes worshiping together. The idea of a Christmas Eve when we can't gather, worship, and sing in our Sanctuary is so heartbreaking. But rather than wallowing in what we CAN'T do, our Advent/Christmas Planning Team has been focusing on what we CAN do these Advent and Christmas seasons. Our goal is to help provide a meaningful spiritual experience for you amid the challenges of this time. The Holy Spirit has fueled our creativity, and honestly, I'm as excited about the ideas we've come up with as I would be about our usual traditions.

Here's some of what we'll be offering this month:

- Reverse Advent Calendar benefitting the Food Pantry (see directions on p. 2; find insert pull out)
- Directions for Homemade Advent Wreaths (see page 9)
- Advent Devotional Booklet (see page 2)
- Advent Bible Study (see page 2)
- Drive-Thru Communion (see page 2)
- Advent Reflection Times in the Sanctuary (see page 2)
- Christmas tree for you to help decorate (see page 3)
- Christmas tree for your prayer requests (see page 3) *
- Grace Christmas ornaments for you to keep (see page 3) *
- Christmas Bake Sale (see page 3)
- Christmas Eve Parking Lot Service (see page 3)

You can read more details about all these things inside. While Advent and Christmas will look and feel different this year, what won't change is what we're celebrating. God promised to send a Messiah to save his people, and this month we celebrate the coming of that promised Messiah. Jesus was born for you in a strange time and a strange place, not unlike the time we're experiencing right now. We are loved, forgiven, and saved by this Messiah, and no restrictions or limitations can stop us from experiencing the profound joy and gratitude of this eternal gift God gave to us.

In Christ,

+Pastor Jennifer



Reverse Advent Calendar

Remember those chocolate Advent calendars you may have enjoyed in previous years? This year, we're encouraging you to participate in a "Reverse Advent Calendar." Instead of receiving a treat every day of Advent, why not **give** one to those in need? Inside, you'll find a colorful copy of a Reverse Advent Calendar. Each day, the calendar suggests a food or household item for you to donate to help those who don't have enough. Participate for a few days, for a week, or for the whole month. Feel free to substitute items if you can't get what's assigned for that day. Items may be dropped off at Grace on Wednesday evenings or Sunday mornings, at the Food Pantry, or call church staff if you'd like to have someone pick up your items from your house.

Advent Devotions

Once again, Pastor Jennifer and some colleagues have put together an Advent Devotional booklet for you to use this Advent season. Devotions will be posted on Facebook daily, but if you'd like a copy of the devotional booklet, you can pick one up in the Little Library outside the front entrance of Grace.

Advent Bible Study

Advent has begun, so join us for a study on the season of Advent called "The Light Will Shine" held Monday evenings at 7:00 on Zoom. (You can participate over the phone or use internet Zoom link) at 7:00 p.m. the following Mondays:

Nov. 30 – Watchful Expectancy Dec. 14 – The Fulfillment of All Promises **Dec. 7** – John the Baptizer **Dec. 21** – The Dawning of Day

Join Zoom Meeting https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83214318706pwd=UURJd0o4S0RnOTVYWkpEc2NGbE9VUT09 +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago) Meeting ID: 832 1431 8706 Passcode: 154303



Drive Thru COMMUNION

While it's a bit too chilly to have outdoor services, we're going to be offering "Drive-Thru Communion" twice a month through the winter.
Between 10:00-10:30 on those Sundays, simply drive to the back entrance of the church by the Skogen Rd. entrance, and servers will bring you pre-packaged communion in your car. Grapes will be available for kids as well. This month, Drive-Thru Communion will be offered Dec. 6 and 20, as well as Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.
Dec. 20 – 10:00-10:30 a.m. Dec. 25 – 10:45-11:30 a.m.

Advent Reflection Times

We know being in Grace's Sanctuary is meaningful for many of you, so we're offering 3 opportunities for <u>Advent Reflection Times in the Sanctuary</u> this month on Wednesday December 9, 16, and 23 from 3:00-8:00 p.m. If you come, you'll need to wear a mask and stay distant from others there at that time. But we're hopeful that it'll be a meaningful, peaceful time of comfort and hope. When you come into the Sanctuary, you'll find:

Space to sit and pray
 Candles to light
 Recorded music
 Devotion materials
 Trees to decorate
 Ornaments to take home

Grace's 2020 Christmas Trees and Keepsake Ornament

This year, rather than having 1 giant Christmas tree, we'll have 3 smaller trees. Typically, you'd have the opportunity to decorate the tree, and we want to continue that tradition in a different, safer way during COVID.

<u>Family Tree</u> – We are a church family, and we want your family represented on our **Family Tree**. **Bring an ornament from home** or hang a church ornament to represent your own family

<u>Grace Tree</u> – Our Grace Tree will be filled with blue Grace Lutheran Church ornaments. You're invited to **take one of these ornaments home to keep**, to represent your church home in your home.

<u>Prayer Tree</u> – Our little live Christmas tree will hold ornaments of your prayer requests. (See more information below)

Fraser the Prayer Tree

We'd like to introduce you to *Fraser*, the Prayer Tree, or our "COVID tree." Fraser is going to be part of the grove of Christmas trees in our Sanctuary this month. Fraser has a very important job. He will hold prayer ornaments for our congregation during this Advent and Christmas season, and after Christmas season is over, he'll be planted in our church yard to forever remind us of this strange year, & to remind us that life comes out of struggle and death. Want to add prayer ornaments to Fraser? Come hang one during a Wednesday night Advent Reflection Time or contact Virginia or Pastor Jennifer to add an ornament with your prayer request.



Christmas Bake Sale

Grace high school youth will be offering a Christmas Bake Sale outside on Sunday, Dec. 20 during Drive-Thru Communion (from 9:45-10:30 a.m.). Christmas cookies and other goodies will be available for donations in the rear parking lot. Want a plate of goodies delivered to you instead? Contact Pastor Jennifer, and cookies will be delivered to you on Dec. 20. All proceeds will help fund the 2022 Youth Gathering.

Christmas Eve Distanced Worship Options

Since we can't gather safely inside for Christmas this year, we're offering 2 safe Christmas Eve worship options:

At **5:00 p.m.** we'll broadcast a full Christmas Eve worship service live from the Sanctuary with special musicians. Available for live viewing on Channel 987 and on Facebook.

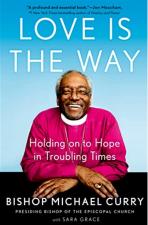
At **7:00 p.m.** we'll hold a brief Christmas Eve service in the Parking Lot at Grace. The service will include the Christmas Gospel, Communion, candle-lighting, and singing Silent Night. You'll be able to listen to the service from the warmth of your car by tuning in on your car radio.

Christmas Day Worship Broadcast

Christmas Day worship will be broadcast live on Channel 987 and on Facebook at 10:00 a.m. Dec. 25. Drive-thru Communion will be offered after the service between 10:45-11:30 a.m.

Worship Broadcasts

All worship services this month will be broadcast on **Charter channel 987** & on **Grace's Facebook page.** Sermons are posted on Grace's YouTube channel after Sunday worship as well.



January Book Discussion "Love Is the Way"

Looking for a new book to read? Are your relatives baffled about what to get you for Christmas? Add the book "Love Is the Way" to your Christmas list. It's a new book by Bishop Michael Curry, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. You may have heard Bishop Curry preach at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle or on his many life-giving TV appearances.

Starting **Monday, Jan. 4**, we'll do a **6-week book discussion** of this book. The subtitle of the book is "Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times" & couldn't be more perfect during this challenging time. "Love Is the Way" is available on Amazon (\$20). Want Grace to order a book for you? Contact Pastor Jennifer.

Grace Gab

Feeling like chatting with Pastor Jennifer and other Grace folks? Join us Tuesday mornings at 10:30 a.m. for Grace Gab on Zoom. There's no agenda, no topic – just a chance to check in and chat with others from Grace. Here's the link:



Grace Staff Availability

With school still being virtual, Pastor Jennifer and Teresa are working from home and helping their kids with online schooling and therefore, have irregular office hours. Virginia is also working from home as she cares for her mother. All are very available over e-mail or phone. And Pastor Jennifer is available for in-person appointments at church. Please feel free to contact any of us.

Pastor Jennifer – 608-295-7120 pastorjenniferglc@gmail.com

Virginia Becker 623-680-3696 gracelutherancambridgewi@gmail.com

Teresa Neuenschwander 608-658-7844 teresa478@hotmail.com

Thank you & Happy Anniversary!

A big thank you to Kathy and Chuck McCarty who celebrate their 50th anniversary this month. They donated the pre-lit largest tree that will be adorned in the Sanctuary this Advent and Christmas.

Stewardship



Unmasking God's Gifts

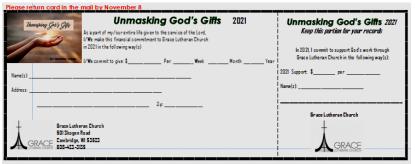
The Stewardship Committee would like to thank those members that volunteered to



share their stories during our fall Stewardship Drive with the theme of Unmasking God's Gifts. These stories of blessings were a welcome change to all the negative news that is heard in our daily lives these days.

We would also like to thank everyone for their donations to Grace Lutheran Church in 2020 and for those who returned their pledge cards for 2021. (We are still accepting pledge cards if you would like to turn one in.) Even with all of the uncertainty in the world around us, our members have stepped up and allowed Grace's ministry to continue touching lives. The Sunday services, Bible studies, Sunday School, and donations to the ELCA have continued. It is a great reminder that a church is not just a building. It is the people that are being good stewards of the gifts God has given them to spread the love and Good News of Jesus.

May God continue to bless each and every one of you during this season of Jesus' birth.



If you have lost your pledge card, please e-mail the office and we can send you another.

Feel free to drop your 2021 pledge card in the mail, if you haven't already.

Or, bring it to an upcoming Drive-thru Communion to drop in the bucket.

Endowment Committee Seeking Input

The **Endowment Committee** would like suggestions of charitable organizations (non-profits) to donate some of this year's investment proceeds Please email Todd Tatlock

at <u>ptatlock8728@frontier.com</u> or call at 608-764-8728 with your recommendations by December 11th. Our bylaws allow us to allocate funds to Community Outreach, Missions and/or church capital improvements and/or debt reduction.

Confirmation Corner

Mentor night this month is Dec. 2 at 6:30 p.m. Confirmation students will finish study of the 10 Commandments this month. As soon as students finish their first packet of 6 sermon notes at home, they can return them to Pastor Jennifer for the second packet.

Outreach and Social Justice

At this time of the year, we would generally have a small Christmas tree on a table in Fellowship Hall with Good Gifts ornaments on it. Since that will not be happening, we encourage anyone who is looking for a special gift "that can't be wrapped" to check out either of the following websites; goodgifts.elca.org or giftsoflove.org.

The second website is for Lutheran World Relief, which has a different variety of gifts. In either case, you will be giving Christmas gifts that make a difference to people around the world. Thank you, and have a Blessed Christmas season

Examples of Good Gifts cards, including a card sent to you or an e-card!



Examples of gifts at Lutheran World Relief's Gifts of Love



Need Assessment Opportunity for Age 55+

All residents of the Cambridge School District who are 55 or older are invited to take a survey to determine the needs of older residents in our area. The survey will be available December 1st online at the following WEB sites: Cambridge Community Library, Village of Cambridge, and the Cambridge News. Paper copies will be available at your church, village and town clerk's offices, the Cambridge Community Library, the CART office, both local banks, and by calling (608) 423-3511 or e-mailing director@cambridgeareaems.com. Each person 55 or older in a household is encouraged to complete the survey by December 21st, 2020. They can be dropped off where you picked them up or at any of the above locations. Also they will be picked up by calling 423-3511 mailing to director@cambridgeareaems.com.

Sunday School 2020/2021

Teresa Neuenschwander, Christian Education Coordinator <u>teresa478@hotmail.com</u> 608-658-7844





Grace Lutheran Christmas Program 2020

Program will be shared during service on Sunday, December 20th. Thank you, parents and students, for all your hard work this!



Check out our Facebook group called Grace Lutheran Sunday School

This group was created to inform you about Sunday School Happenings! Please feel free to post pictures or videos from lessons that you do, ask questions or even to just say Hi! I love hearing from you, and it will be a great way for all of us to stay connected! An email will also be sent with all of the same information.

All lessons and activities will be sent by email or can be found on the Grace Lutheran Sunday School Facebook group.

Sunday, December 6th An Angel Appears to Mary God uses ordinary people to be part of extraordinary things. God has special plans for each of us. Main Bible Verse "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call Him Jesus". Luke 1:30-31

Sunday, December 13th No Room in the Inn Even though Jesus was born to be our King and Savior, He was born in a stable. Main Bible Verse "Mary gave birth to her first born, a son. She wrapped Him in clothes and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:7

Sunday, December 20th The Bethlehem Shepherds Jesus was born for all people, and we all need to spread the good news about Jesus. Main Bible Verse Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord." Luke 2:11

Monday, December 21st • Special ZOOM Call • 6:00pm

We will learn about the Wiseman, play a fun game and do a science experiment! The Wisemen Bring Gifts to Jesus Through the visit of the wisemen, Jesus is revealed as King for all people. Main Bible Verse "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:2



https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84922468833?pwd=MHU0Q3BYTXhFajlnVWZoZXhNUGxOdz09

No Sunday School December 27th & January 3rd. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

December Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat.
		1 10:30 a.m. Grace Gab	2 6:30 p.m. Confirmation- MENTOR night	3	4	5
6 New Member Sunday 9 a.m. Worship Broadcast Cable Channel 987 & Face- book Live (posted later in the day on YouTube)	7 7 p.m. Zoom Bible Study	8 10:30 a.m. Grace Gab 7:30 p.m. Grace Council	9 3:00-8:00 p.m. Advent Reflection Time in Sanctuary 6:30 p.m. Confirmation	10	11	12
10 a.m. Drive-Thru Communion		on Zoom				
13 9 a.m. Worship Broadcast Cable Channel 987 & Face- book Live (posted later in the day on YouTube)	14 7 p.m. Zoom Bible Study	15 10:30 a.m. Grace Gab	16 3:00-8:00 p.m. Advent Reflection Time in Sanctuary 6:30 p.m. Confirmation	17	18	19
20 9 a.m. Worship Broadcast Cable Channel 987 & Face- book Live (posted later in the day on youtube) Sunday School Christmas video shown during worship 10 a.m. Drive-Thru Communion	21 6 p.m. Sunday School activity Zoom 7 p.m. Zoom Bible Study	22 10:30 a.m. Grace Gab	23 No Confirmation 3:00-8:00 p.m. Advent Reflection Time in Sanctuary	 24 5 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship Broad- cast on Cable 987 & on Face- book; 7 p.m. Christmas Eve Parking Lot Service & Drive- Thru Communion 	25 10:00 a.m. Christmas Day Worship Broadcast & Drive-Thru Communion	26
27 9 a.m. Worship Broadcast Cable Channel 987 & Face- book Live (posted later in the day on youtube)	28	29	30 No Confirmation	31		



Showing Thanks! The 6th Grade Pre-Confirmation class put together goodie bags for essential workers. They put over 50 bags together! Scarlett Jelinek, Sammy Grender, Miranda Borchardt

Advent wreath and craft ideas

It's Advent!

We invite you to celebrate the season of Advent by creating your own Advent wreath or Advent display to use at home. All that's required is 4 candles—one for each week of Advent. You can add a 5th for Christmas if you want. Decorate it however you like. Check out these ideas:

Instead of a "wreath", you can use floral foam on a tray or plate and stick in branches of different greens, berries, blossoms, dried flowers, bows etc. Votives work well.









Using Holly instead of pine or fir, wet floral foam can be placed in a deep dish, with dried blossoms and berries added.

Collect acorns, pine cones, rocks and moss from the forest, and made a wreath out of willow branches to contain a kind of "collage." Add nuts of different kinds, and votives.



It's easy to use a deep dish, like a pie dish or a bowl, and using wet floral foam, make a collage of decorative items and greens. Add your faux poinsettia for the pop of color. It doesn't have to be symmetrical or even round!

We'd LOVE to see pictures of the Advent wreath you create at home! Send us pictures or post to Facebook to share.

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

November 10,, 2020 Via Zoom from Home during Pandemic

(Minutes below are not approved until next month's Council meeting)

Meeting called to order by President Steve Geis at 7:32 p.m.

Attendees. Steve Geis, Tim Neuenschwander, Amy Simdon, Tom Kosanda, Amanda Kosanda, Mary Behling, Jean Scott, Kris Tobias, Ann Engelstad, Lori Jensen, and Pastor Jennifer. Erik Olson was excused.

Devotions. Pastor Jennifer offered a prayer to begin the meeting.

Approval of September Minutes.

Amy Simdon moved to approve the October Minutes. Jean Scott seconded, and they were unanimously approved.

Consent Agenda.

Ann Engelstad noted that the Worship Committee met with the Advent/Christmas planning committee last Sunday. Jean Scott noted that the Outreach Committee is continuing to work on quilts. Amy Simdon noted on behalf of the Stewardship Committee that pledge cards are coming in.

Property Report.

Tom Kosanda stated that Virginia Becker sent out an email stating that all 3 boilers have issues, some more serious than others. Accordingly, Tommy has requested a quote from Bill Richter for replacing them, but does not yet have a response. In the meantime, the maintenance contract is up for renewal at the price of \$465/year. Amanda Kosanda moved to renew the maintenance contract. Tim Neuenschwander seconded the motion and it was approved. Lawn mowing has been completed for the year and some leaf clean-up work is being done. He noted that the garage may be underinsured based on current replacement costs. Tim Neuenschwander will follow-up with the insurance company. He also noted that when he got to church recently, the front door was locked but the left door could be pulled open. Pastor Jennifer noted that it has to be separately latched and may have been left unlatched following a recent funeral. She will check on it.

Treasurer's Report.

Tim Neuenschwander reported that there was not much change from September to October. General giving was up slightly, special giving was down slightly, and expenses were up slightly. There was an overall net loss of just over \$500, but there is still net income for the year. He and Diane Russo are working on the 2021 budget and are planning as if 2021 will be a more normal year. He has received budget requests from Tommy, Virginia, and Teresa, and encouraged all Committees to get their requests in as soon as possible. An initial review and discussion was held and final information will be reviewed in December. The ELCA has recommended Tithe.ly for online giving. However, it appears that Vanco is less expensive and is working well for us, so no change was suggested. Amy Simdon stated that Hometown Bank is indicating you can send in an email saying you are ready to request forgiveness of the PPP loan and they will send out an email with instructions. Tim will follow up on that. Jean Scott moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Ann Engelstad seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Continued on next page ------

Pastor's Report.

Pastor Jennifer reported that three young people were confirmed on October 25 – Eli Key, Julia Schneider, and Carter Stenjem. She met with some families who would like to join Grace and is setting up a "joining service" for December 6, 2020, with some people coming in person. Drive-through communion was held for the first time last Sunday and seemed to go well with about 50 people taking part. It will probably take place in the back parking lot next time. We all agree to try doing it 2 times/ month, but reduce the time frame to 10-10:30 since there won't be an outdoor service going on at the same time. She received an email yesterday from the Cambridge Deerfield Players group. They are doing some cleaning and have a drum set that belongs to Grace. We agreed we don't really need or want that back and should offer it to the CD Players. The pastor and others are starting to go through musical things at church as well, following Judy Brandt's death. She has been working with other clergy in the community to put together a joint Thanksgiving service to be shown Thanksgiving Eve. Pastor Jennifer will then be gone a few days, but will pre-record the service for the following Sunday.

New Business:

Worship

- Thanksgiving/Advent/Christmas planning: As mentioned above, the Worship Committee met with a special committee to work on these matters. Many good ideas are being discussed. Planning is ongoing and another joint committee meeting will be held shortly.
- Music Director: So far, there are 3 volunteers willing to cover the remainder of November and probably December. Judy basically fulfilled three roles- organist, choir director, and Director of Music. We agree that the most important need right now is to search for an organist, if possible, and to hope for one that might also direct the choir. The Personnel Committee will be meeting this month and Pastor will share budget information with us when she has that.
- Budget: Discussion was already held as noted in the Treasurer's Report, above. No further information presented here.
- Virtual Congregational Meeting Resolution: It appears that we need to pass a Resolution in order to allow us to hold the congregational meeting virtually, if necessary. We need to ensure participation abilities and must still follow the usual rules regarding quorum, voting, etc. Steve Geis provided a Resolution template he had obtained. Mary Behling moved to approve the passage of such Resolution, Lori Jensen seconded the motion, and it was approved. Mary will complete the template and sign it. The date for the Annual Meeting was set for January 24th, 2021. Committee Reports are due by December 1, 2020.
- **Old Business:** Discussion was held regarding return to in-person worship. Steve Geis presented information from the Department of Human Services regarding the current positivity rates in Wisconsin. The calculation that they use should be at 5% or below before they would recommend re-gathering and we agree that is a good standard for us to use as well. That rate is currently at 18%.

Adjournment: Next meeting will be December 8, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. by Zoom.

There being no further business, Jean Scott moved to adjourn. Tim Neuenschwander seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously, followed by the Lord's Prayer.

Report submitted by Mary Behling, Council Secretary



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Place address sticker here;

Gathering in grace, Growing in faith, Serving in love.

www.gracelutherancambridge.org

"Like Us" on Facebook: Grace Lutheran Church-ELCA Cambridge, WI

Please note:

We broadcast on Channel 987

Staff & Council Contacts

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Vice President	Kris Tobias				
Secretary:	Mary Behling				
Treasurer:	Tim Neuenschwander				
Outreach:	Jean Scott				
Education:	Amanda Kosanda				
Stewardship	Amy Simdon				
<u>Hospitality</u> :	Lori Jensen				
Evangelism:	Erik Olsen				
<u>Worship</u> :	Ann Engelstad				
<u>Property:</u>	Tom Kosanda		12		