

# grace notes



December 2020



## Waiting for God in the flesh!

If there ever has been a year for waiting it is 2020. We have waited for COVID-19 to pass. We have waited for restaurants and stores to open. We have waited to get back to work. We have waited for the seasons to change. We have waited for normal to return and still we wait. In the last few weeks, our family has moved back into isolation. Even though for the most part, we haven't been overly social since March, we were more social this summer than we are now. My kids aren't seeing their friends. We aren't seeing any relatives. For the most part it is just us. I am grateful for my family, and I know that some people are waiting alone, and how hard that must be. I continue to pray for you! In the meantime, we are finding ways to connect with people virtually and allowing the computer to once again be the way we find nourishment and community.

John 1:14 states: The word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood (The Message version). The first chapter is the Christmas story in John. There is no birth story here, but instead a new beginning

for humanity in which the Word (aka God) comes into the world with skin on. Skin that can be touched and caressed. Flesh that can reach out with a hug. Blood that can make you blush and bleed.

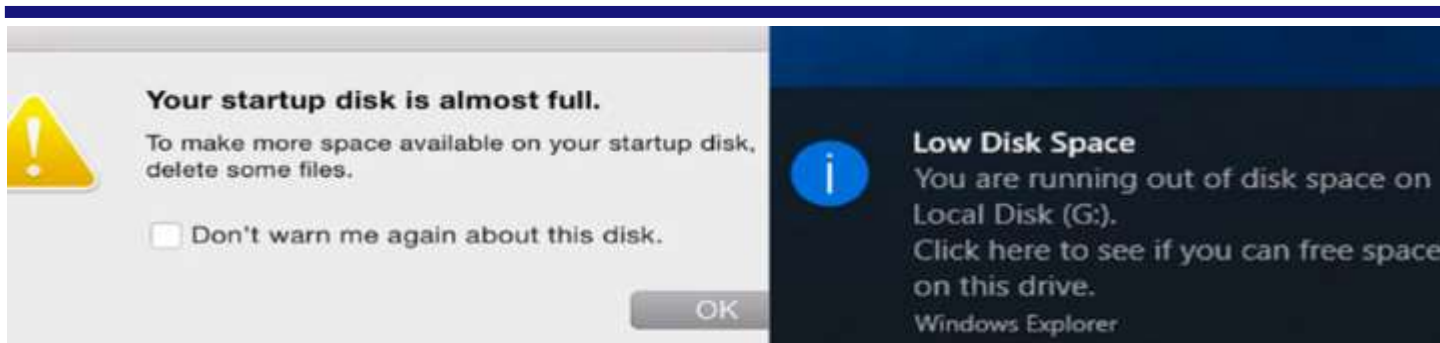
It has been a fleshy year. One in which our physical bodies have mattered deeply. We have recognized the vulnerability of our flesh in the face of a pandemic. We have been asked to pay attention to how close we get to others, to what we touch, and who we even breathe on. While we have focused on the physical body, we have also realized the strain that **not** being in contact with other people can have on our overall health. We know that we and our loved ones need more than phone calls and kind words, but hugs and hands to hold. I long for the day when I can greet someone with a handshake and a smile again, and when I don't have to think twice about hugging my parents or a friend. But for now; we wait. We wait with longing for that day to come again.

Advent comes every year. A time of waiting. A time of anticipation. A time when we know that God is about to do something new. God is going to be born into our world to transform it. God knows our need for flesh and blood connection. God recognized it and God was born as a vulnerable baby, who had to be cuddled close. A baby with a new baby smell who needed to be tended and nurtured. A baby who knew what it was like to be loved and held, and who would one day do the same for other people. To love them and hold them in his own arms.

I grieve for the Christmases of our past, when I took for granted the number of people we could pack into the sanctuary and the variety of activities that stressed us out over the month of December. And yet, I won-

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## Associate Pastor Reflection



People of Grace,

Have you ever received a notification like this: “Your startup disk is almost full. To make more space available on your startup disk, delete some files.” Or “You are running out of disk space... Click here to see if you can free space on this drive.” During seasons of virtual church, I get this notification a lot. All the videos I am making and editing take up so much space on my computer. The great thing about it is that it ensures I clean up and get rid of the things I am no longer using.

We all are approaching the holiday season a little differently because of the pandemic. Going virtual means approaching ministry and life differently. My proverbial “startup disk” is almost full. And as I have reached out to different families, individuals, teachers, medical professionals, retired and homebound folks, I am hearing that you too are experiencing a “running out of space” notification. Enter the church’s built-in clean up software: the Season of Advent. A season of waiting. Something our culture is not too good at. We are driven by phrases like, “Get going,” “do something,” “you can make a difference,” or my personal favorite from childhood, “boring people are bored.” All these statements emphasize if we aren’t doing anything we aren’t contributing; we aren’t growing. But really, we aren’t tired of waiting. We are tired of wishing. And maybe afraid what we are wishing for won’t happen. We are afraid to face ourselves; we are afraid of others, and afraid of the future. We are wishing for that promotion or new job; we are wishing for an end to COVID-19; we are wishing for the church, school, restaurant, and work doors to open. So how do we wait? How do we clean up space on our hard drives?

Our Advent stories are full of people whose startup disks are full. Elizabeth lives her whole life barren. Her life would not have been easy. The whispers behind her back about why she was barren. I am sure she had wished her whole life for a child. And it is in her story that we are told about her husband Zechariah, who because he doesn’t believe, loses his ability to speak. What a way to force you to be present in the waiting? In a way, through this act, God is saying: “Zechariah, I really want you to pay attention to every moment, because I promise I am doing something. It may seem impossible, but trust me.”

In the same way, an unwed, pregnant teenager, Mary’s startup disk is running out of space as she waits for a promised, impossible, unexpected hope. It isn’t until an angel appears to her fiancé, that he believes her. And she must flee her home to live with her aunt, probably because of the cruelty of those who do not understand and do not want to believe the impossible, and unexpected IS happening! We know the outcome, but these women didn’t. I imagine their disks were full; they were worried and afraid. I imagine they didn’t know just what they were waiting for or how exactly it would happen. And yet Mary says, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” People who are waiting, know something IS happening, they trust God, and they want to be present for it. I invite you into this Advent practice: something IS happening, trust God and be present. We might not know the outcome or how exactly we are going to get there, and it won’t be pain free, but it wasn’t for Elizabeth, Zechariah, or Mary either. And yet they trusted, they knew something was happening and they wanted to experience it. And in staying present, they helped usher in the Savior of the World. Might we do the same this year?

Advent and Christmas Blessings,  
Pastor Maria

## Pastor's Message

### Continued from Page 1

der if there is something magical that can happen in the waiting. If just like an expectant mother, we might find joy in what is growing inside of us as we wait. If we perhaps can have heightened awareness to our senses: the smells, sounds and sights of the season. Birthing something requires pain. It requires us being willing to be uncomfortable at times, to share space and to give up some of ourselves. I had terrible pregnancies. I was so sick the entire time, but looking back on the birth of my children, I know that on the day they were born, something in me was born too. I became a mother. I had grown and changed in their births. In Christ's birth we are invited to grow too, to be transformed by God who is living and breathing and surrounding us with God's love. The process will be uncomfortable at times. You might long for the waiting to be over, but in the end something new will be born in you. I pray that as you wait this Advent, that you do so marveling in this amazing promise of God in the flesh, and that you open yourself up to what God is birthing in you today.



Pastor Joanna Mitchell



## DECEMBER NOISY OFFERINGS

By Debbie Jorgens

This month's Noisy Offerings will be directed to people in our own community who are experiencing financial hardship this holiday season. For the first half of December, offerings will be used to help those within the Grace community. Although we may not be able

to help everyone, we strive to help those in need that we are made aware of by our Grace members. Offerings received the second half of December will be directed to HOPE 4 Youth – a nonprofit in Anoka whose mission is to provide pathways to end youth homelessness. Thank you for giving generously!

## Administration



### A Special Thank You

A special thank you to Pastor Hahn, and members of Grace Lutheran for their prayers and cards of sympathy at passing of my sister, Ione, and get well cards following my recent surgery. Your words of support and comfort are truly appreciated during these times of great loss and need for healing.

I wish a special Thanksgiving and Christmas to all.  
Shirley Christenson



### Calling all Holiday Bakers!

By Maria M. & Kristi L.

It's time for a cookie bake off! As you are baking your holiday treats this year, take a photo or two of your accomplishments and register in the first annual Grace Lutheran Holiday Bake Off. No need to bring in the cookies; just photos are needed. Decorated delights, secret family recipes, traditional treats, unique and unusual cookies and more will be excepted! We will have PRIZES for kids and adults, so whether you are a beginning baker or a seasoned pro, YOU are welcome to participate! Registrations are due December 16th. Go to [www.graceandover.org](http://www.graceandover.org) for more information and the entry form. Questions? Contact Pastor Maria Markman at [MariaM@graceandover.org](mailto:MariaM@graceandover.org) or Kristi Larson at [KristiL@graceandover.org](mailto:KristiL@graceandover.org).



### Finances

By Marie Kolar

Thanks be to GOD and to YOU for giving of your financial resources during this continuing adversity. Below is a snapshot of our offerings through Nov. 10, 2020. Expenses are shown through the end of October 2020.

#### Mortgage:

YTD Mortgage Principal paid = \$71,477.27  
Remaining Principal = \$503,951.03

	2020	2019
General Offerings 11/10	\$564,904.58	\$556,041.01
Capital Offerings 11/10	\$88,049.72	\$78,594.50
Jan.-Oct. Expenses	\$65,445.63	\$62,919.60



## Vision Board

### God is Always with Us

By Joel Anderson

We took a road trip on October 2 for eight days. Only eight days. My wife, Becky, and I spent the first three days with our son and his wife and their precious son, Jackson who is 2 years old, and had a great time. We were camping in our



trailer in a beautiful park in Crosslake, MN. Although COVID-19, politics, and racial issues are part of our daily lives, at least for now they were only in the back of our minds. We were enjoying God's beauty of autumn leaves, blue lakes, brilliant skies and chilly temps, and our busy little

grandson. It was a precious weekend. Then on Monday we were off -- on a windy morning towing a 34-foot travel trailer, 300 miles down to Luverne, MN. There we were meeting with two other couples whom I had retired with and chose to have our last camping trip of the year with. God led us in those 6 hours through many small towns and scenic highways at no more than 57 MPH and kept our trailer on the road through the many powerful wind gusts.

We arrived safely at Blue Mounds State Park and we were glad to be able to rest and relax again. There too, we enjoyed God's creations of rolling prairies, babbling brooks, gentle warm breezes, and even a Bison herd. On the short drive to the town of Luverne one day, we noticed a cute little Wayside Chapel just off the highway. It could not have been more than ten-foot square. A day or two later we heard from one of our close friends back home that her mother had unexpectedly passed away. Becky and I looked at each



other and both agreed we needed to visit the chapel. We did that, and upon entering we could feel God's presence. The chapel could seat maybe seven people total and had New Testament Bibles to take or to share. We prayed there for Theresa and her family. It was just the right thing to do. Was it a coincidence or a message from God? I wonder how many prayers have been answered over the years by passing motorists in that tiny little church? God guided us safely over the highways back home to Andover on Friday. We had an enjoyable trip, but on Sunday at our parking lot church service I knew we were really home again, and I thanked Him. It was so great to be with church friends again -- even with masks and social distancing!

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God's Blessings,  
Joel Anderson, Vision Board Member

## Ministries

### OK@Play Zooming through COVID-19

By Ann Lange



We have missed everyone! It's time to get together "safely" through Zoom. We would love to have everyone join us for an online social time on:

**Thursday, Dec. 10th at 6:30-7:30 pm (or longer)**

Don't know how to Zoom? No problem . . . all you need is a computer, or an iPad, or your phone that has a camera and audio on it. You do not need to have the App on your device, all you need to do is click on the Zoom link on Grace's Web Site. If you would like to practice in advance, let Ann Lange know and I will send you a practice link, instructions, and walk you through getting into a Zoom meeting. It truly is very easy!

**For Fun:** Wear something Christmas related (i.e. antlers, hat, sweater, bells, etc.) Surprise us and make us laugh!

**For Activities:** We will do introductions and will have questions to get us sharing what has been going on in your life since COVID-19 shut us down.

**"Shout Out Time"** Do you have any exciting news or announcement to share? Now is the time to share it!

We will talk about other ideas to do on Zoom in the future - Movies, games, ?? Put your thinking Santa hats on! We are thinking of Zooming each month on the Second Thursday of the Month. We will talk about that. If we have enough people participating, we may expand to an afternoon social time and an evening social time on Zoom.



### Christmas Caroling

By Jonathon Orwig

**CHRISTMAS CAROLING!**

Join us Sunday, Dec. 20th at 10 am in the church parking lot--we will meet to hand out caroling sheets, then drive (in separate cars!) to carol to some of our members and friends who have not been able to come to worship in person. Contact Jonathan Orwig [jona-thano@graceandover.org](mailto:jona-thano@graceandover.org) if you're coming so we can prepare. If we end up with a really large group, we'll split into two groups.... masks should be worn, and we will spread out widely to sing so we can be safe. This event will depend on current COVID-19 levels for the safety of all.

## Ministries



### The Women's Retreat Team

By Stacy Surratt

The Women's Retreat Team is excited to be hosting **"Social Devotions"** – A monthly virtual Zoom Gathering for ALL Grace Women. Because of COVID-19, there will not be an overnight GLC Women's Retreat this year in February 2021– But the Women's Retreat Team still wanted to connect and encourage every woman at Grace Lutheran Church during these trying times.

So feel free to *Virtually* swing by to get a "Spiritual Nugget" and Socialize with the Women at Grace on a monthly Zoom Call. Each month's call will have a different theme and is meant to uplift and provide a few spiritual truths for you to apply to your daily lives.

Our first **Social Devotion** will be on Sunday evening January 17th, 2021 from 7pm-7:45pm. The Zoom Link will be available for you on the GLC website under Church online – zoom meetings. There is no need to RSVP – just pop on each month and enjoy seeing our Grace Women and hearing how God can impact our lives!

#### Below are the Monthly Themes and Dates:

January 17, 2021 – God Has A Plan  
February 21, 2021- The Power of Love  
March 21, 2021 – Faith and Worry  
April 18, 2021- Sing for Joy  
May 16, 2021 – You are Not Alone

We are looking forward to seeing every GLC woman's beautiful face starting on January 17th at 7pm. Please look for an email and a card in the mail that will remind you of this fun and encouraging event! If you have any questions – contact Stacy Surratt at 317-506-6362 or [stacysurratt@yahoo.com](mailto:stacysurratt@yahoo.com)



### Congregational Reading

By Pastor Maria Markman

Throughout the month of January on Monday evenings we will be discussing the book *Waking Up White: And Finding Myself in the*

*Story of Race* by Debbie Irving. Please begin reading the book now. The book can be purchased on multiple platforms online.

We will have a couple of copies available in the church office for you to borrow as well.



### ***NOW looking for leaders*** **Adult Small Groups will be coming back in February!**

By Pastor Maria Markman

In October and November, groups met over various topics Mental Health and the Church, NonViolent Communication, Worship Music, Young Adult book study, Memoir writing and centering prayer. If you or someone you know would be interested in leading a 6 week small group on a topic of their choice please email or call Pastor Maria [mariam@graceandover.org](mailto:mariam@graceandover.org) For the rest of you, keep your eyes peeled for small group sign ups at the end of January!

## Events



**Grace Lutheran Church Bingo Night**  
**Dec. 10th @ 6:30 PM**  
**Via Zoom**



**Children's Ministry Presents**  
**Christmas Movie Night**  
**Via Zoom**  
**December 17th @ 6:30 PM**  
**Pop some popcorn and wear your jammies!**



***Mark your calendars !***  
**Grace Lutheran Church Chil-**  
**dren's Ministry and**  
**Music Ministry Presents:**

**Do No Be Afraid**

**December 12th and 13th. Posted wher-**  
**ever you watch virtual worship.**

**The story centers around Jesus' birth**  
**stories found in Matthew and in Luke**  
**and is performed by many of all ages!**



**Christmas Around The World**  
**A Virtual Event on Tuesday,**  
**December 8<sup>th</sup> – 7:00 PM**

By Debbie Jorgens

Christmas is a season to celebrate the greatest gift of hope — Jesus. And that is true around the world – from Haiti to Guatemala to the Philippines and Uganda! Enjoy the re-telling of Jesus' birth by guests from all four countries during this virtual event sponsored by Feed My Starving Children. **We will see our partner organization in Rakai, Uganda, and we'll hear our sponsored children sing "Joy to the World!"** Please note that this event is free, but **registration is required**. To register, go to <https://www.fmsc.org/christmas-around-the-world>.



**"Practicing Self-Care**  
**through the Holidays"**  
**Sun., Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> - 6:30-**  
**8:00 PM via Zoom**

Sponsored by Grace Lutheran's  
 Mental Health Team

The Christmas and New Year's holidays can be stressful under the best of circumstances. But when we consider the particularly challenging environment we find ourselves in this year – specifically, a global pandemic with all its ramifications and the aftermath of a contentious national election – it's safe to say that most of us are experiencing a considerably higher level of stress than usual. And not only stress, but feelings of profound disappointment, loss, grief, and anxiety, as well. This Zoom gathering is intended to acknowledge the complex feelings we are experiencing and to provide strategies and tools for coping with these feelings through the holidays. We hope you'll join us!



## Ways to Give This Holiday Season



### ADOPT A FAMILY FOR CHRISTMAS!

By Ann Lange

**Would you like to share God's grace in a very tangible and REAL way this Christmas?** If so, please consider "adopting" a local family who will be truly blessed by your generosity. Through our Faith & Community Partnership with Sand Creek Elementary School, we will connect families, individuals, or groups from Grace Lutheran with local student families in need.

If you choose to adopt a family, you will receive a list of family members, with genders and ages, but no names. Historically, adopters have shopped for gifts and added gift cards at their discretion. But this year, because of COVID-19, buying and distributing gifts will be risky. **Therefore, we are asking adopters to purchase ONLY gift cards to whatever vendor and in whatever amount the adopter chooses.** If you are interested in adopting a local family this Christmas, please contact Jan Margotto at 763-434-4617.



### CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR STEPPING STONE

By Ann Lange

This year, Grace will once again be providing Christmas gifts to the residents of Stepping Stone Emergency Housing in Anoka. But instead of filling a red TARGET bag with personal care items as we have done in the past, we're asking that you consider donating a Target or Walmart gift card (\$25 value). The gift cards will be inserted into Christmas cards that will be distributed to each of Stepping Stone's 66 residents a few days before Christmas. We'll be collecting the gift cards (or monetary donations for purchasing the cards) **through Friday, December 18th**. Please mail your donation to Grace Lutheran Church (or feel free to drop it off during regular office hours).

Thank you for making Christmas a little brighter for those without a home of their own.



### The Sand Creek Elementary Kiddos Need Your Help!

By Ann Lange



The cold has set in and with COVID-19, many of the children at Sand Creek Elementary are in desperate need of **WARM** winter mittens, gloves, and hats. Let's see how many we can collect! A container will be placed at Grace, outside of the KIDS ENTRY doors, so you don't even have to come into the church to drop off your donation!

Various sizes are needed for boys and girls in grades K-5. If possible, **waterproof mittens and gloves are preferred** so the kids can play in the snow to their hearts' content. And please - NO light-weight mittens/gloves, as they just do not work to keep the kiddos warm and dry. Any questions can be directed to Ann Lange 763-438-5623.

### We're Adopting!

By Alden Riley

Yes, you read that right! We ARE adopting! But not just Judy and me. Our entire congregation is adopting one small family through Family Promise for Christmas! Watch Grace-at-a-Glance for more information, including the specific items on our family's "wish list." Together we can help make Christmas merrier for a family in need.





# Grace Lutheran Church

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*A Ministry of Grace in the heart of Andover and beyond!*

[www.graceandover.org](http://www.graceandover.org)

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## Grace Lutheran's Advent Wednesdays Zoom Worship

**Dec. 2nd @ 1 pm & 7 pm**

**Dec. 9th @ 1 pm & 7 pm**

**Dec. 16th @ 1 pm & 7 pm**

**Dec. 23rd @ 1 pm & 7 pm**

**Please visit Grace Lutheran's  
Web Page for further details.**

## Grace Lutheran's Christmas Eve Parking Lot Worship\*

**3:00 pm - Parking Lot Worship**

**4:00 pm - Parking Lot Worship**

**7:00 pm - Parking Lot Worship**

\*For each Worship service we will be singing Christmas  
carols and hearing the Christmas Story. After Worship  
there will be an opportunity for family blessings.



## Grace Lutheran's Virtual Christmas Day Worship

**10:00 am on Zoom**

**Please visit Grace Lutheran's  
Web Page for further details.**