

grace notes

December 2022

Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year!

Today (November 27th) kicked off the Season of Advent. It also is the anniversary of my Ordination. I have been in ministry 18 years, which is amazing and also hard to believe. The weather has also been in the mid-40s or 50s all weekend. It just doesn't seem like the Holiday season is really upon us. I confess when we lit the Advent Wreath this morning, and we sang Advent and Christmas Songs, it all took me by surprise. "Already? It's too warm! How can it be Advent?" And yet, here we are.

Often, we skip immediately to the Christmas story in Luke when we think of Advent. We remember how the angel came to Mary and promised her the Holy Spirit and shook Joseph's world. But Advent texts don't get to Jesus that quickly. They usually linger in anticipation, reminding us of the signs and seasons of our world, inviting us to contemplation and preparation. Pastor Maria preached this first Sunday in Advent on Habakkuk (one of the lesser-known prophets) about signposts and hopefulness. Next week, we will hear from the book of Esther about how we have been called to speak into moments of trial for the most vulnerable, and eventually we will get to the Christmas story, where we will be reminded of the chaos of how it all started. How Mary and Joseph's relationship was in question, how God comes in dreams and amid all the mess, God continues to proclaim the promise over and over again. I am with you!



As we conclude 2022, I relate to this Season of Advent. This past year has been one of waiting, anticipation, and preparation. Some of the waiting has been so hard, like waiting for Pastor Maria to return to work after her stroke. "How long, O Lord! Indeed!" Or waiting at the airport as I traveled to see my mom in her sickness. Or on a more hopeful note, waiting for our building project to get started, especially since some of the bills are already coming in. "How long till the sound is fixed?" "How long until our bathrooms are accessible?" "How long, O Lord! Indeed!" I have discovered that as much as waiting can be hard, it is made a lot easier when I don't come in with all sorts of preconceived notions about how it should

go. If I prepare myself to wait, then I can just go with the flow (as a planner this is easier said than done.).

We have recently hired Donlar Construction to be our Construction Manager at Risk. I am excited about this partnership. They are going to help us manage and stay within our budget and be helping us as we move along and eventually break ground. According to all the timelines I have seen, we should be concluding our project by December 2023, just one year from now. It doesn't seem possible. How can all of this happen when nothing has yet started?

But it is time. Time to start. Time to move forward. Time to break ground. Time to enter the chaos. This will probably actually start to happen in the spring, but I can feel it ramping up. I know that nothing can really prepare me for what's ahead, but that I need to follow the example of Habakkuk, Esther, Mary and Joseph and trust God. Trust that God will be with us in the chaos. Trust in the vision that God has given us to break down barriers and open up our building and allow grace to flow beyond these walls and to those who have not yet heard the good news of God's love, acceptance and forgiveness. As we are reminded in this Season of Anticipation, God is indeed with us in it all (please remind me about this in June, when I don't have an office) guiding and leading the way forward in faith and hope. So come, let us live in hope and trust together.

Pastor Joanna Mitchell

Associate Pastor's Message



Reconnecting

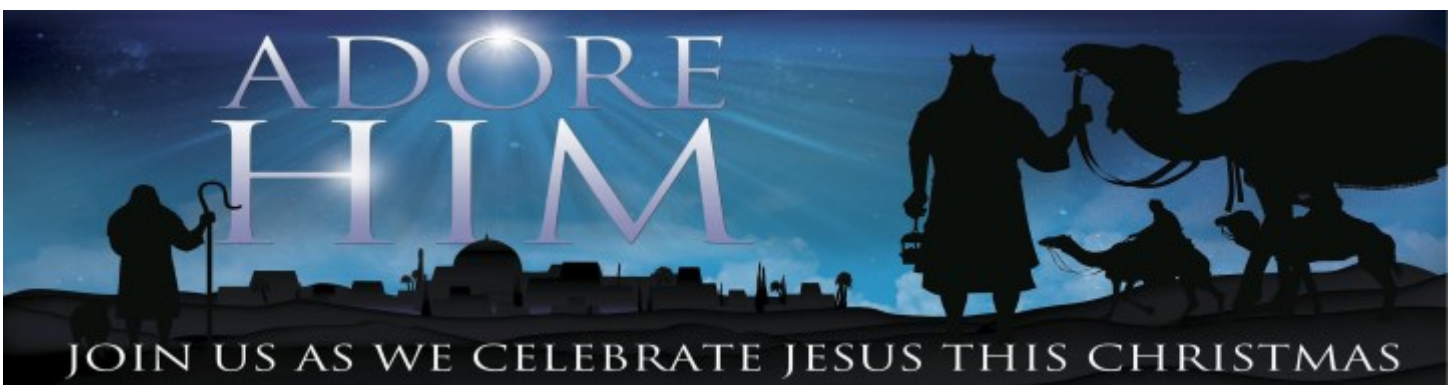
Oh what fun! Advent is the season of waiting leading up to Christmas. This is often the most busy time of the year! We busily go about our days preparing for and attending holiday parties. Seeing friends old and new! Reconnecting with family, some of us it has been a few years since everyone has all been together! This is true of our Church family too! The way in which the Covid-19 pandemic shifted the ways in which we show up for each other and the way it affected when we gather, how we gather, if we will gather at all. In many ways we are reconnecting with each other and revisioning just what ministry looks like together.

Reconnecting has been a theme in some of the Faith Formation leadership groups here at Grace. In what ways are we being called to reconnect with each other, our faith, our church, our community, our preschool? This list is both long and detailed. What exactly does reconnection look like? Are there friends you used to see at Grace you haven't seen in a while? When you find yourself missing them, might you give them a call or send them a note? Are there different generations of folks who you feel disconnected with, how might you be invitational to them or how can you be a guest in their space?

I think about all we have been through in the past year and I give thanks for this community! And I think about this coming year and all that is in store for us at Grace. All the ministry! A building project breaking ground! Mission trips! Children's programs! Fellowship! Bible Study! Might we build and re-build? connect and reconnect?

And might we start now, in December. December 11th at both services, our music ministry will be blessing us with their Advent Cantata "A Weary World Rejoices,". Invite your friends and family to this wonderful worship-ful event! And the following week December 18th, our children (pictured above) will be presenting "Shepherds, Sheep, and a Savior." This is a Christmas story re-telling you will not want to miss! There are others in our community who should be invited! Or join us on Wednesday nights throughout Advent as we sing Holden Evening Prayer and wait in hope together as we await God, born in the flesh, God incarnate, God with us, Jesus Christ, Emmanuel!

Merry Christmas,
Pastor Maria Markman



Vision Board

Waiting

Well it's that time of year again. Even though the stores might have you believe that the Christmas season starts as early as October, Advent this year started on November 27th.

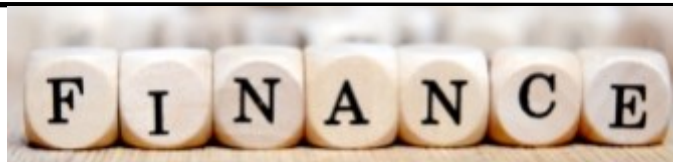
Christmas season is a busy time between all the holiday parties, gift shopping, baking and cooking special treats to share, and preparing our homes both inside and out for our family and friends to enjoy. It's no wonder that many of us can be filled with a growing anxiety as the season approaches.

One of my favorite Advent activities has always been the creation of the Advent Wreath at Grace. My family loves the traditional Lutheran pot luck and fellowship along with singing some of our favorite Christmas carols. My family always makes two wreaths. One for us to enjoy, and another as a gift for one of our neighbors.

But historically, Advent is a time of inward preparation in anticipation of the birth of Jesus. I like to stop and reflect during the Advent season. How have I acted? How can I do better? Who should I pray for? Who have I been a blessing to? These are questions we wrestle with as imperfect human beings. But that's precisely the point. Jesus died for our sins and God accepts us for who we are. John 1:4 says: *"The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen the glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."* The truth is we are all a blessing to others, sometimes in ways we will never know. We can only try to do better every day.

As we enter the last days of the Christmas season. Let's not rush to Christmas Eve, but take some time to celebrate with our family and prepare our hearts for the love that is to come. Enjoy the peace and the magic we can only experience this time of year. Enjoy the waiting. For all too soon it will be over. It will be said on that day *"Lo this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us ; this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation "* Isaiah 25:9

Brook VanderLeest
Vision Board Member



Jan. 1 to Oct. 31, 2022

Current & Capital Offerings \$677,582.84
Other Income \$269,647.77
Expenses \$1,014,397.19
Building Project Offerings \$455,099.99
Dedicated Offerings \$321,494.98
Dedicated Funds in Balance Sheet \$123,201.59

Jan. 1 to Oct. 31, 2021

Current & Capital Offerings \$676,648.22
Other Income \$83,602.30
Expenses \$856,139.29
Building Project Offerings \$0.00
Dedicated Offerings \$64,884.57
Dedicated Funds in Balance Sheet \$86,779.11

Ministries

Spring Forest Qigong Practice Group

Spring Forest Qigong practice group led by Randy Sparer meets at Grace the 1st & 3rd Mondays of each month at 2:30pm. Through gentle, yet powerful healing movements and meditations, you will learn how to heal yourself. Questions, contact Randy Sparer 612-812-2392.



Graceful Seniors: December 13th 8:30-10am

Graceful Seniors is a group of mostly retired folks who meet the second Tuesday of each month. Our next gathering will be December 13th in the Fellowship Hall for breakfast and a Bible study (8:30-10:00am). Bring your Bibles! We are studying Revelation. If you would like to read ahead we are focusing this session on Chapters 2-4. We also will sing some Christmas Carols! If you are a senior and interested in joining us on the second Tuesday of the month, please call the church office so we can make sure we have coffee and a donut for you! We would love to have you join!

Ruth Circle: December 5th 12:30-2:00pm



A group of mostly retired women who meet the first Monday of each month following quilters (12-12:30 lunch 12:30-2:00 study) This month we will be having our annual Advent Luncheon. Please contact the church office or Low Jackson to participate.



For the past four years, Family Promise in Anoka County has been working toward creating a permanent site for our organization, staff, and families to create a more stable environment for the children in our shelter program, and improve the guest experience and outcomes for all our programs. While we have had some possibilities along the way, for various reasons none have worked out. Now, however, there are two incentives for believing change will be coming very soon!

First, due to a pending property sale at Lord of Life Church we know we will someday, in the near future, need to leave the space we have been renting for nearly 10 years. Lord of Life has been a fantastic partner for us and continues to advocate for us, but they have been offered a great opportunity for their own sustainability, which means at some point soon the property where the Day Center sits will be redeveloped. While we can stay until that time comes, it makes the most sense for us to create a plan to move soon so we don't cause problems for our program, or Lord of Life with a hurried transition.

Secondly, we have an accepted offer to purchase two properties which would allow us to move our offices and day center to one property and ultimately build shelter and housing on the other neighboring property. We are now waiting for a funding decision on grant money to help us purchase the properties; thoughts, prayers, and good vibes that everything is approved would be greatly appreciated!

We hope to be able to share additional details about this exciting opportunity very soon!



Ministries



The Women's Retreat Ministry team wants you to **plan ahead to "Be Uplifted"** for an Amazing, Fun-Filled Event that is happening in February 2023. This event is our over-night weekend **Winter Women's Retreat at Luther Point Bible Camp on Friday February 24 thru Sunday February 26, 2023.** We invite **ALL Grace women** and their friends to come. At this fun event, you will meet and get to know more women at our church, laugh a lot, and **RELAX.** We have everything planned and provided for you except your overnight bag – The team will provide all your meals, daily devotion sessions, carpooling, lots of free time, a field trip to a creamery, outdoor hiking (if you so choose), snacks and wonderful women fellowship that you can only get at a Women's Retreat. Our goal for this retreat is to grow in relationship with one another and God; provide tangible spiritual take-aways to apply to your daily life and have **LOTS OF FUN AND LAUGHTER.** This Women's Retreat is also a safe and encouraging environment where **EVERYONE** is invited to come. **Space is limited so registration will be required for this event-Go to Realm NOW to register.** The Early Bird cost thru Dec 31st is only \$120 which include 3 meals, 2 overnight lodging and carpooling cost. Packing list and additional details will be sent to you once you register!. Can't wait to see all you Fabulous Women at this Wonderful Event in February 2023. Reach out to Stacy Surratt for any questions – stacysurratt@yahoo.com



OK@Play Event:

An Evening of Christmas Carols

Fri, Dec 16th @ 8:00-10:00PM
Heart of the City Music Factory,
2665 4th Ave, Anoka, MN

Join us for an evening of singing traditional Christmas carols, led by Dan & Sandy Adler and a group of local singers. This is a participative night, so feel free to sing along! Advanced tickets are \$15. Tickets at the door are \$20. Additionally, a free-will offering will also be received to help support the ongoing ministry of Heart of the City Ministries. Seating is general admission and doors open at 7:30 PM. Concessions will be available for sale during the concert. The Music Factory is located on the 2nd floor of the WWI era Old Milk Factory on the Rum River in Anoka. *It is not a wheelchair accessible building, and there are some stairs to climb.*

Advanced tickets \$15. Door tickets \$20. Contact Vickie Meade at 763-712-0496 or vmeade714@gmail.com with any questions. Register and pay on Realm.

Save the Date:

January 29th is
 our Congregational
 Meeting.



It will occur at 9:45am between our two Sunday worship services. We will be voting on the proposed 2023 Budget.

Ministries

Wish List for the Holidays at Stepping Stone



Stepping Stone Emergency Housing in Anoka is also under construction! Because of this re-model effort, their traditional Santa Shoppe will not happen quite the same this year. **What we need is your help with is filling the 66 bags with gift cards and a few special items.** Pick and choose from the list as you wish. Bring your items back to Grace and put them in the **tote labeled for "Stepping Stone Homeless Holiday Gifts"** by the weekend of **December 11th**. These are the specific items that have been requested.

(NEW AND UNWRAPPED PLEASE)

- **\$25 gift cards to Walmart or Target (plastic, not electronic)**

The following personal feminine/manly items (\$10 or less per item):

- Jewelry/watch
- Wallet/purse
- Manicure set
- Nice facial moisturizer/lotion/foot crème
- Lip balm/Chapstick
- **Donate at SteppingStoneEH.org and indicate "Holiday Gifts" and then Stepping Stone will use your donation to purchase items for the residents.**

Thank you for your loving and generous gifts to those in need within our community! If you have any questions, please contact Ann Lange at 763-438-5623.



New Member Class

New Member Class

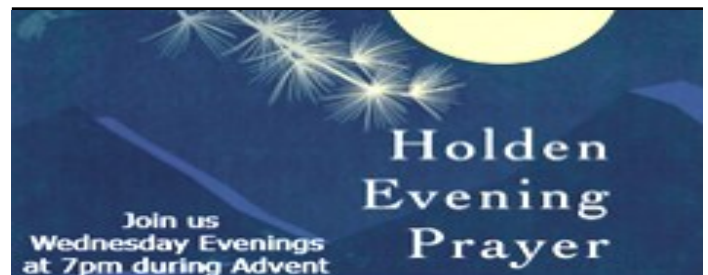
January 22nd- New Member Class at 11:45am following our 10:30am worship. Sign up on Realm.



Family Table

Family Table is an outreach program sponsored by several churches in the area including Grace. On the 3rd Sunday of each month, we are privileged to prepare

a variety of meals for our guests. Many of our guests have been affected by the rising costs in food and gas and truly appreciate the meals we provide. Others are looking for opportunities to share a meal and conversation with friends. Recently, we have opened up the fellowship room for indoor dining, and slowly folks are taking advantage of the opportunity. That also gives us a chance to visit with our guests and get to know them. If you are looking for a fun way to volunteer, please check out the Sign Up Genius link. The calendar is posted thru July 2023, so you can do some planning. Come help us help others! Whether you are able to volunteer on site or contribute cash or food, we need you! You are such an important part of our outreach programs! If you have any questions, you can contact Lynda Wilde at lrwilde@comcast.net or call/text 612.418.6444.



Holden Evening Prayer

During the Advent season, we will be using the Holden Evening Prayer for our Wednesday evening worship services. Come and worship with us and share this beautiful service as we once again wait in hope for the birth of Jesus.

We know this is a congregational favorite normally used during Lent. We are currently looking at other options for our Lenten Wednesday services, so come and enjoy this beautiful setting of the Evening Prayer during Advent! Wednesdays at 7:00pm.

Ministries



Thank You!

Love of Grace Bazaar Team would like to express our sincere thanks to all the donors for the food (hamburger, soup, pies, buns, condi-

ments, beverages, paper/plastic supplies), for all the very hard working volunteers (with set up and take down especially, vendor assistance, kitchen help, greeters, cashiers), and for all the crafts, bake sale items, jams, lefse, etc. in the Emporium Room with Low Jackson's leadership. It takes a village to make this bazaar a success and you all pulled through to accomplish this. We have not had the bazaar the past two years due to COVID, and we were able to go above and beyond in our proceeds from 2018 and 2019! Most all the proceeds will be going outside our church to selected outreach ministries and within to our Grace youth for scholarships for mission trips and summer camps. God has blessed us abundantly and we are so very grateful to each and every one of you that helped!

I would also like to especially thank the Bazaar Team of Kathy Dahlgren, Lynda Wilde, David Kolar, Renee Miller, Tracie Russell, Jamie Zupon, Karen Fisher, and Joel Anderson for their dedication the past 6 months for their help in planning and leadership that you provided so well.

Thank you!

Ann Lange and The Love of Grace Bazaar Team



Thank You!

Members of Grace,

On behalf of the Grace4Rakai Ministry Team, let me extend you a big THANK YOU for the celebration we had this past week, lifting up the many ACT Ministries Grace supports over in Rakai, Uganda! We are thankful for the support we received through donations toward the Science Lab at the new ACT High School, product sales for the Hope Again Women, and we also sponsored a few new children. For me personally, it was also a great opportunity to meet with so many of our dedicated sponsors at Grace who love and generously support their children over in Rakai. We are all truly making a profound difference in the lives of children at the ACT schools, and in the community at large in Rakai!

Blessings,

Scott Christensen/Grace4Rakai Ministry Team

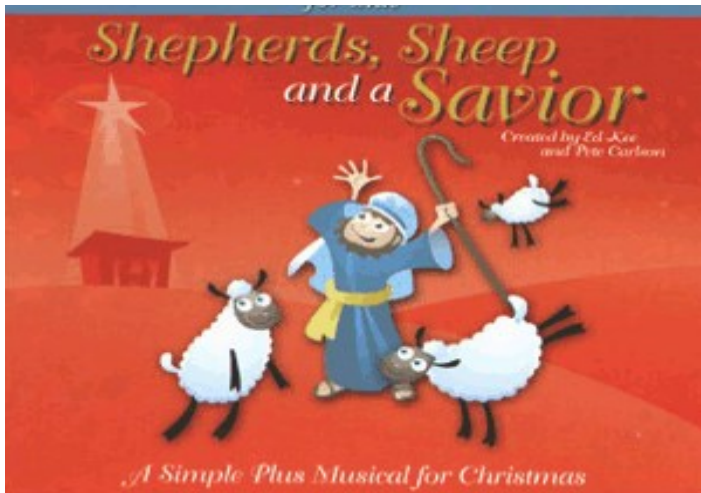


Advent Worship Services

Dec. 4th 8:45 & 10:30am-Second Sunday of Advent
Dec. 7th 7pm-Holden Evening Prayer
Dec. 11th 8:45 & 10:30am-Advent Cantata
Dec. 14th 7pm-Holden Evening Prayer
Dec. 18th 8:45 & 10:30am-Children's Christmas Program
Dec. 21st 7pm-Holden Evening Prayer

Luke 1:14 - You will have joy and gladness,
and many will rejoice at his birth,

Children's & Youth Ministries



Children's Ministry Christmas Program

Shepherds, Sheep, And A Savior

December 18th
in both Worship

Come, see and hear the good news of Christmas as told by the children of Grace December 18th in worship. Often overlooked, this time the shepherds are the first to hear the good news?



2022 Baptismal Reunion

All those who were baptized in 2022 are invited to a Baptismal Reunion on Baptism of our Lord Sunday on January 8th at 12:00pm in the Fellowship Hall. We will share a light lunch, and also do an art project and gift each person with a book of faith.



Appalachian Service Project

It's been a while since Grace Youth have been able to go on a mission trip. We are so excited about this year's High School Summer Trip to the Appalachian Mountains where we will be participating in the Appalachian Service Project (ASP). July 28th-August 6th.

We will travel by van from Andover to an assigned region (we find out in March where we are going) where we will spend a week working on homes and connecting with families who are in need of home maintenance and repair.

When I was a youth, I participated in this project for all three years of my high school career. The families I met and the work we did impacted me profoundly and gave me a great appreciation for all that I have, and a desire to give back. I remember being quite nervous about participating in this project. I didn't know much about construction and was unsteady with a hammer and a nail. And yet, each year I came home having done something I never thought I could do, for example re-roofing a house, restoring a floor, building a deck and more. I know that others in our group felt the same way. Today, I am a proud member of the Women's Build with Habitat for Humanity because I enjoy being able to work with my hands and use some power tools.

We have 15 spots reserved for youth and need 6 adults as volunteers. ASP serves West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. We will be staying at a school or community center. Fundraising and scholarships are available. Cost of the trip is \$650 which includes travel expenses. *As of November 27th there are only 4 spots remaining.*

Sign up today on Realm and talk to Pastor Joanna Mitchell for more information.

Youth Ministries



Green Ribbon Group

Dec. 5th 6:30–8:30 pm

Green Ribbon Group meets the first Monday of the month at 6:30pm. This group is for parents/guardians of children who are growing up with mental health ups and downs, atypical identity, and other hard issues. This group is a confidential, non-judgmental, safe space to talk about struggles others may not understand.



Christikon High School

Backpacking Trip 2023

July 14th-July 22nd in McLeod, MT

A week at Christikon Lutheran Bible Camp in the beautiful Montana mountains for all current 9th - 12th grade students (students must have completed 9th grade by July 2023.)

You spend your first and last nights at the main camp. The rest of the time you are hiking through our mountain wilderness. And you find a special life together: worship and Bible study are woven together with the exhilaration of high country camping. Two trained counselors will lead our group as guides and program leaders. Christikon provides you with backpacks, tents, cooking gear, and food. You supply your own sleeping bag, hiking boots, rain gear, and clothing. Financial assistance is available. We will also be looking for adult volunteers to drive. Register on Realm. Any questions, contact Pastor Maria Markman at mariam@graceandover.org. As of November 27th, there are just 5 spots left.

Christikon Middle School Trip 2023 July 14th-22nd in McLeod, MT



A week at Christikon Lutheran Bible Camp in the beautiful Montana mountains for all current 7th - 8th grade students (Students must have completed 7th or 8th grade by July 2022.) Worship and work in one of the most beautiful places in the country. Excitement and reflection. Trained staff people who care about you. Old and new friends. You will share in program possibilities for both large and small groups. But you also hike into the mountain wilderness surrounding us for one overnight adventure and day hikes. Within the larger community, you'll belong to a "family group" with seven other campers and a counselor, for hiking, service projects, Bible study, and other activities. We will drive to Montana in large 12-15 passenger vans and sleep in a church for one night on the way there, and the way home.

Financial assistance is available. We will also be looking for adult volunteers to drive. Register on Realm. Any questions contact Pastor Maria at mariam@graceandover.org.



Mission Trip

Adult Chaperones

Are you interested in being an adult chaperone for one of our High School Trips?

Please email Pastor Joanna Mitchell at joannam@graceandover.org for Appalachian Service Project and Pastor Maria Markman at mariam@graceandover.org for Christikon Middle School and Christikon High School trips for more information.



Grace Lutheran Church

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www.graceandover.org

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Grace Lutheran Worships

Christmas Eve

2:00pm, 3:30pm,
7:30pm, & 9:30pm

Christmas Day

9:00am

