

**A Message for the Grace Lutheran Family:**  
30 December 2020



**Happy New Year to Everyone in the Grace Family!**

**Join us for Grace's first 2021 worship service, a drive-up worship service, with communion, on Sunday, 3 January, at 10:00 AM.**

(Details on page 2)

**Special Requests This Week: Prayer Concerns** (page 3); **Deacons are needed for worship set-up** (page 3); **2021 Prayer Partners sign-up** (pages 4 & 6); **check out the new Grace website** (see pages 4 & 5).

*The Grace Family had a wonderful, memorable Christmas Eve service and now is looking forward to a New Year when we hope to emerge from the covid emergency and return to worship and church activities that we knew before covid.*

The current series of **Weekly Message** meditations features Martin Luther's inimitable insights on the Bible's Christmas stories. The series includes the Annunciation (last week), the Song of Mary (this week), the Birth of Jesus (7 Jan), the Shepherds (14 Jan), the Visit of the Magi (21 Jan), the Flight to Egypt (28 Jan), the Slaughter of the Innocents (4 Feb) and the Presentation in the Temple (11 Feb).

## **A MEDITATION ON THE VISITATION AND THE SONG OF MARY**

**Luke 1:46, 47, 49-53** (read vs 39-56)

<sup>46</sup>**And Mary said:**

**"My soul glorifies the Lord**

<sup>47</sup>**and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...**

<sup>49</sup>**for the Mighty One has done great things for me—  
Holy is his name.**

<sup>50</sup>**His mercy extends to those who fear him,  
From generation to generation.**

<sup>51</sup>**He has performed mighty deeds with his arm.  
He has scattered those who are proud in their  
inmost thoughts.**

<sup>52</sup>**He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
but has lifted up the humble.**

<sup>53</sup>**He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty."**

The second event in the cycle of New Testament Christmas stories is the **Visitation**. The **Visitation** is recorded in Luke's Gospel as an event where Mary, who was pregnant with Jesus, went to visit her relative Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John the Baptist. In response to Elizabeth's joy over her visit from the



A 15<sup>th</sup> century depiction of the **Visitation**, Mary's visit to the mother of John the Baptist

Mother to be of God's Son, Mary proclaimed the **Song of Mary**, often called the **Magnificat**. Mary's song rejoices over how God acts through the meek and humble to "**perform mighty deeds**." God works through them to "**scatter the proud**," "**lift up the humble**" and "**send the rich away empty**." Now God will do even more through Mary.

Martin Luther highlighted how God turns weakness into "**mighty deeds**" in a sermon focused on the Song of Mary. Note how Luther ties this theme to Christ's weakness on the cross that turned out to be God's ultimate victory over sin and death.

*God allows the godly to be powerless and oppressed so that everyone thinks they are done for, yet even in that very moment God is most powerfully present, though hidden and concealed. When the power of man fails, the power of God begins, provided faith is present and expectant. When oppression ends, then one sees what strength lies below the weakness. Even so, Christ was powerless on the cross, and yet he was most mighty there and overcame sin, death, world, hell, devil, and all ill.*

Mary had faith that God would use her humble state to create strength. Luther believed that in moments of weakness, "**God is most powerfully present**." We should find new hope by understanding how acting humbly with love, compassion, empathy, kindness and generosity makes us instruments for helping God perform "**mighty deeds**."

## WEEKLY NEWS AND EVENTS AT GRACE

- © **Grace Christmas Eve Service.** Grace's Christmas Eve service was a wonderful event that will long be remembered by all who were there. Indeed, lots of people were there. There were 130 worshippers including several visitors, 55 cars, 2 sheep, a donkey and a small horse. Being able to experience the celebration of Jesus' birth outside, in the cold, with real animals, and with word, music and live figures emerging from the dark to tell the birth story did more to take us back to the cold, dark chaos of a smelly manger in Bethlehem than any Xmas Eve service most of us have ever known. Forgoing the comfort of a sanctuary to be in a setting where the story of the birth of God-with-Us was portrayed in such a memorable way made the whole experience so much more meaningful.

*Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Grace Christmas Eve service: To Pastor Jaci who planned and led the service; to Bobbi Bean, Joan Eckermann and Rachel Beeler who provided special music; to Zane Harder and Mike and Judy Moenter who brought animals; to Living Gospel actors Mike and Mary Schlievert, Matt and Rachel Haar and Christmas Angel Addison Tiell.*

- © **DRIVE-UP WORSHIP ON SUNDAY.** The first regular worship service of 2021, with communion, will take place this coming Sunday, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January. The service will once again take place in the church parking lot, starting at 10:00 AM. Pastor Jaci and Church Musician Bobbie Bean will conduct the service.
- © **WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING ALL MEMBERS OF THE GRACE FAMILY TO THE WORSHIP SERVICE THIS SUNDAY! VISITORS ARE ESPECIALLY WELCOME!**

- **Worship Bulletin and Hymns.** Worship bulletins and hymns are sent by email before each service. Printed copies are available before each service.
  - **Communion Instructions for January 3<sup>rd</sup>.** Worshippers will have communion elements with them in their vehicles during the service. You may either bring your own bread and wine or pre-packaged communion sets will be available before the service. The communion liturgy is included in the worship service. Worshippers will remain in their vehicles. When Pastor says, “***The body of Christ, given for you,***” take your consecrated bread. When Pastor says, “***The blood of Christ shed for you,***” take your consecrated wine.
  - **Attendance Last Sunday.** 67 persons attended worship last Sunday.
  - **Offerings.** An offering drop-off is available at the entrance to the parking lot, or you can give your offering to the Deacon before the service or you can mail offerings **to the Church or Financial Secretary Deb Boos.** Pending the final week’s offering count, total offerings for 2020 were just \$1,736 short of fulfilling the 2020 offering budget of \$150,000. That is a significant accomplishment considering this was the year of covid. Thank you to all who faithfully provided regular offerings during 2020.
- © **PRAYER CONCERNS.** Please keep the following persons in your prayers: The Family of Vicki Sievert, The Family of Jackie Schneider Cannon, The Family of Jerry Giesler, Josh Hunker, Jeff and Laryn Wheeler, Ken & Kirsten Georgi and family, Bob and Marge Griffin, Peggy Michel Noftz, Stephen Andrew, Shirley Buhrow, Sandy Duty, Bertha Marquardt, Jeanne Haar, Jim Flick, Vera Hille, Dean Crandall, Corrie Albright, Dr. Fred Bean, Kelly Troyer, Arnold and Donna Foss, Mitzi Paule, Nadine Crisologos, Joan Dietrich, Sandy Cutchall, Cheryl Hoot, Dick and Ruth Hammel, Reed Oestreich, Heather DeWitz, Grace members who reside in nursing homes and members of the Grace family and their colleagues who serve in the Armed Forces. If anyone knows of someone to add to the prayer list, please inform Pastor Jaci or a Council Member.
- © **Thank You Messages.** During the covid emergency when Grace has continued to conduct parking lot worship, several visitors have attended worship at Grace. Two recent thank you notes describe their experiences:
- *Thanks for being our home church during this pandemic. We have found the services enlightening and your members friendly. Merry Christmas!*
  - *Excellent sermon tonight..loved it..and thank you and everyone else involved with making this happen..left me with a wonderful feeling cause I couldn’t imagine not going to church on Christmas Eve! Thanks again...God Bless and Merry Christmas!*
- © **Mask Wearing at Grace.** When the covid-emergency began we requested that everyone who is in the Church when other people are present to wear a mask. When we began drive-up worship, we also requested that anyone who got out of their vehicles for any reason to wear a mask. We are very grateful for how well members of the Grace Family have cooperated with this requirement and we ask everyone who attends worship or is in the Church to continue wearing masks. We want to keep all members of our family safe.

- © **Deacon Service Request.** The Board of Worship is looking for Deacons who are willing to assist with the set-up and take-down for Drive Up Worship. A training session will be held in early 2021 and a rotation schedule will be set-up similar to what was done for Sunday worship prior to the covid pandemic. If you are willing to serve as a Deacon and have not already responded to a recent email request from Rachel Beeler, Board of Worship Chairman (sent to previous Deacons on 9 December), please recheck your messages and send an email to the Board Chair Rachel Beeler ([rastewart@amplex.net](mailto:rastewart@amplex.net)) to let her know that you are willing to serve. Previous service is not necessary; training will be provided.

- © **AOB Class Ronald McDonald House Support Project.** The AOB (Affirmation of Baptism or Confirmation) Class at Grace may be small—it consists of one student, Brady Buhrow, and one instructor, Jayne Klett—but it has demonstrated how God can use the small and humble to “**perform mighty deeds.**” This year as a Christmas benevolence project the class solicited stuffed animal toys and plush pillows to give to the Ronald McDonald House for inclusion in their Family Welcome Bags. This project succeeded in providing 37 stuffed animals, 19 plush pillows and a \$120 cash donation that were taken to the RMH just before Christmas.



- © **Prayer Partners 2021.** If you would like to be/have a prayer partner for 2021, please fill out the prayer partner information form (clip and use the form printed on the last page of this message or request one from a Deacon on Sunday) and place it in the offering can in the church parking lot. Or you can call the Congregational Life Chair, Mary Schlievert, at 419-350-1134, or email at [jamasami@me.com](mailto:jamasami@me.com). Prayer partners will be drawn for you due to COVID 19. Please turn in your info forms by January 25, 2021 (Annual Meeting day). You will be notified of your prayer partner in early February.
- © **COUNCIL REPORT.** The most recent Council meeting was held on Monday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of December. Actions taken during that meeting were reported in the 17 December **Weekly Message** (you can now download a copy from the new Grace website). The next Council meeting will be on Thursday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of January.
- © **Board of Property Meeting.** The property board will meet for its monthly meeting at the church, in the fellowship hall, on January 7th at 5:30 PM.
- © **New Grace Website – [www.graceelconline.org](http://www.graceelconline.org).** The new Grace website is updated and functioning according to its design. Anyone who opens the website will find the latest information on the **Home Page** with the “Latest News” at Grace,



“Upcoming Events,” “Grace Benevolences” and “This Week’s Worship Service,” with the lectionary scriptures for the next Sunday. Members of the Grace Family are encouraged to bookmark this new website and use it regularly, so they know what is taking place at the Church. In addition, the fourth website page, **Grace Communications**, now has recent copies of these **Weekly Messages**, monthly **Parish Reporters**, Council meeting minutes and **Grace Annual Reports** posted on this page where you may download them to read or print.

One word of caution about the new website address: Do not use the old Grace website address that ends with .com. Be sure to use the new address with .org, [www.graceelconline.org](http://www.graceelconline.org). Anyone with comments or questions about the website please contact Gary Anderson or Church Secretary Joyce Bruntz.

- © **OPERATION OREO.** Please keep all of the military in your prayers, but especially: SGT Stephen Simkus, Cadet Julian Sanchez and Garrett Mapes. Anyone wishing to make a donation to Operation Oreo to help offset the cost of shipping and also the contents of the Goody boxes – Just mark “Op Oreo” on the memo line of your check.

If you have a name to add to our list or if you have any questions about Operation Oreo, please contact Jennifer Marquardt.

- © **Invitation to Read the New Testament in 2021.** Bishop Beaudoin and the Northwest Ohio Synod are inviting Lutherans in Northwest Ohio to join in reading the entire New Testament in 2021. The reading list is arranged in the order the New Testament books were composed, not in the order they are listed in the New Testament. The reading list starts with James and concludes with Revelation (*You may be surprised to learn that many New Testament letters were composed before the Gospels were written.*). You can download the “**2021 Daily Bible Reading Guide**” at <https://files.constantcontact.com/8f1c062f001/00c3b4ce-9a87-42a3-8bbf-52b4da8cdadf.pdf>.

- © **ELMORE FOOD PANTRY.** The Grace food item for January is 7.25 oz. boxes of macaroni and cheese. The Elmore Food Pantry, which is hosted by Grace, is now open on the third Friday and Saturday of each month from 9:00 AM until noon. Anyone who wishes to drop off food items at the church should bring them to the church (leave them inside the north door) during the following hours when the church office door is open:

- **Monday and Wednesday: 4:30 to 5:30 PM**
- **Tuesday and Thursday: 6:30 to 7:30 PM**
- **Saturday: 9:00 to 10:00 AM**
- **Sunday: 9:30 to 10:00 AM**

- © **Amazon Smile Fundraiser.** Your Amazon purchases can earn cash contributions for Grace Lutheran Church if you enroll in the Amazon Smile program and name Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Elmore OH, as your designated charity. Log in with this address: [smile.amazon.com/ch/34-1219970](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/34-1219970). If you use the Amazon Smile program, 0.5% of your eligible purchases will be donated to Grace if you designate Grace as your charity. Donations received by Grace through this program will be divided evenly between Operation Oreo and the Piecemakers.

- © **Stamps for a German Orphanage.** Do you still have your Christmas cards in their envelopes? If you do, remember our ELCA is still collecting stamps that a German orphanage repurposes for sale to stamp collectors. Put them in an envelope and get them to Nancy Pries.
- © **Thank Offering Boxes.** The Thank Offering Boxes are empty and need to be put back in your cupboard to collect coins at times in your days when you are thankful for something in your life. Ask Deb Boos for a box as she passes through the parking lot on Sunday mornings. Check the **2020 Annual Report** when it comes out in a couple weeks for last year's collection data. Ruth Haar (WELCA Treasurer) was pleased with the final amount.
- © **Millers Receipts.** Members of the Grace Family who shop at Miller New Market Grocery in Genoa should continue to keep their receipts and give them to Marilyn Crandall who will redeem them for Grace (*or send them to 9591 W Moonlight Bay Lane, Oak Harbor OH 43449*).

***Our prayer: God of Grace, help us to act humbly with love, kindness and generosity so that we may help you perform mighty deeds in this world.***

Pastor Jaci Tiell  
[pastorjacitiell@aol.com](mailto:pastorjacitiell@aol.com)  
 419-215-8370

Gary Anderson,  
[dcmgaryanderson@gmail.com](mailto:dcmgaryanderson@gmail.com)  
 419-607-3036

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***Be a Prayer Partner is 2021***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday: \_\_\_\_\_

Anniversary: \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer partners pray in secret for each other daily and at special times throughout the year. Prayer Partners are revealed each year at Christmas time.

*"Beloved, pray for us."*  
 1 Thessalonians 5:25