

The Grace Lutheran Family Weekly Message
7 January 2021



Please join us for worship at Grace this Sunday, 10 January, at 10:00 AM. (Worship will be in the Grace parking lot; details on page 2)

Important Announcements This Week: Prayer Concerns (see page 3); **2021 Offering Designation Notice** (see page 3); **2021 Prayer Partners sign-up** (pages 4 & 6); **Property Board meets today** (see page 4).

Grace's **Weekly Messages** are distributed by email and regular mail to all members of the Grace Family to keep them informed about worship services, church activities and benevolence projects.

The current series of **Weekly Message** meditations combines excerpts from the Bible's Christmas stories with Martin Luther's inimitable insights on those stories. This series includes the Annunciation (23 Dec), Song of Mary (last week), Birth of Jesus (this week), the Shepherds (14 Jan), Visit of the Magi (21 Jan), Flight to Egypt (28 Jan), Slaughter of the Innocents (4 Feb) and Presentation in the Temple (11 Feb).

A MEDITATION ON THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Luke 2:4-7 (Read also Luke 2:1-7 and Matthew 1:18-25)

⁴So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Matthew and Luke both report the strange circumstances of how Joseph and Mary were pledged to be married, only to find that she was pregnant, and how it took the intervention of a messenger from God to convince Joseph to go ahead with their becoming parents to Jesus. Luke's version of the story adds Joseph and Mary's arduous trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for Caesar Augustus' census at a time when Mary was in the last stages of her pregnancy



Botticelli's Nativity shows the mean conditions of Jesus' birth in a stable.

and how the birth took place there, in a stable. Martin Luther was struck by how God had chosen this couple of such lowly means to be parents to his Son, but Luther's greater wonder was that this Son of God came as a real baby who did all the things real human babies do. Here is a quote from a Luther sermon:

There in a stable, without man or maid, lay the Creator of all the world. And there was the maid of fifteen years bringing forth her firstborn without water, fire, light, or pan, a sight for tears! What Mary and Joseph did next, nobody knows. Scholars say they adored. They must have marveled that this Child was the Son of God. He was also a real human being. Those who say that Mary was not a real mother lose all joy. He was a true baby with flesh, blood, hands, and legs. He slept, cried, and did everything else that a baby does, only without sin.

We should marvel, with Luther, that God choose to come in weakness as a “**real human baby**.” But Luther, and we, have to be even more deeply moved by this birth in our times because we know how the story ended. Luther said it well: “**Here is the Child in whom is salvation**.” Yes, the Son of God came as a real human baby who was to become “**salvation**” for Luther, for us and for the world. Thanks be to God!

WEEKLY NEWS AND EVENTS AT GRACE

- © **DRIVE-UP WORSHIP ON SUNDAY.** Worship this coming Sunday, the 10th of January, celebrates the baptism of our Lord. The service will 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. If you know of someone who is not receiving these emails, tell them to log on to the Grace website at www.graceelconline.org and “**Subscribe for Updates**.”
 - **Attendance Last Sunday.** 60 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**. Thank you to all who faithfully give regular offerings to support Grace's ministry and benevolence programs.
 - **Epiphany.** Yesterday, the 6th of January, was Epiphany, but how many of us know what Epiphany means? Epiphany commemorates the Visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus. Epiphany is the Christian feast day that celebrates the revelation that God became incarnate, that is, God became fully human as the baby Jesus. The Sundays between now and Ash Wednesday are designated as “*Sundays after Epiphany*.”

- © **PRAYER CONCERNS.** Please keep the following persons in your prayers: Pastor Holli Burkhardt and Family (her father died from covid), Laura Short, Gayle and Sandy Duty, Shirley Buhrow, Josh Hunker, Jeff and Laryn Wheeler, Bob and Marge Griffin, Peggy Michel Noftz, Stephen Andrew, 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.
- © **CONGREGATIONAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT.** The first of two annual congregational meetings in 2021 will be held on Sunday, 24 January. The purpose of the meeting is to present the **2020 Annual Report**. The meeting will be held in the parking lot immediately after the worship service.
- © **Annual Report Preparation.** Two Annual Reports with statistical data about worship and financial matters are completed at the end of each year. The ELCA requires the submission of an “**Annual Congregational Report**.” The Grace **Constitution** requires the Council to prepare an **Annual Report** that is to be presented to a congregational meeting on 24 January. To give you a preview of what will be in those reports, here are some statistics from the past year.

 - **Worship in 2020.** Grace conducted 11 regular Sunday worship services in the sanctuary before the covid emergency forced the suspension of regular church activities. That was followed by nine on-line services. 32 parking lot services began on the 24th of May and continued through the balance of the year. Average Sunday worship attendance in 2020 was 64. That actually was a small increase over 2019 attendance.
 - **Offerings at Grace in 2020.** Grace’s 2020 budget projected an offering total for the year of \$150,000. Now that the last week’s offerings have been deposited in the bank, we can report that in spite of covid, actual offerings for the year totaled \$151,991. Grace exceeded its 2020 offering budget by \$1,891.
 - **Finances at Grace in 2020.** We will also be able to report that for the second consecutive year, total income exceeded total expenses and that all benevolence commitments were fully funded. More details will be available next week.
- © **Offering Designations.** Grace Benevolence policy allocates 10 percent of all regular offerings to benevolences. 21% of your Benevolence offerings are distributed to the Lutheran World Hunger Appeal. 26% of your Benevolence offerings are distributed to First Fruits Christian charities selected by Grace’s Board of Witness and Mission. The balances of your Benevolence offerings are distributed according to your Benevolence Determination to either the Northwest Ohio Synod and ELCA Mission Giving or to charities selected by Grace’s Board of Witness and Mission. Members can choose to have their offerings distributed in one of two ways:

 - **Traditional Benevolences.** These benevolences support First Fruits benevolences, Lutheran World Hunger Appeal and Northwest Ohio Synod and ELCA Mission Giving.

- **Directed Benevolences.** These benevolences support First Fruits benevolences, Lutheran World Hunger appeal and other charities selected by Grace's Board of Witness and Mission, with no support going to the Synod and ELCA.
- **Your Benevolence Determination.** Any contributor who wishes to change their benevolence determination from Directed to Traditional or from Traditional to Directed may do so at the beginning of each year. They should notify Financial Secretary Deb Boos (BoosJ621@aol.com) of their desire to change.
- ◎ **Deacon Training.** A training session to orient deacons on the set up and take down for parking lot worship services will take place after worship on the 31st of January. Members who have informed Board of Worship Chair Rachel Beeler of their willingness to perform Deacon duties for Drive-Up Worship should plan to attend this training session. The Church Secretary will set up a rotation schedule for Deacon assignments to follow that date. If other Grace members are interested in serving as Deacons, they should contact Rachel Beeler and plan to attend the training session on 31 January.
- ◎ **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. Please turn in your info forms by January 24, 2021 (Annual Meeting day). Prayer partners will be drawn for you due to COVID 19. You will be notified of your prayer partner in early February.
- ◎ **COUNCIL REPORT.** The most recent Council meeting was held on Monday, the 14th 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 14th of January.
- ◎ **BOARD OF PROPERTY MEETING.** The property board will meet for its monthly meeting at the church, in the fellowship hall, this afternoon, January 7th, at 5:30 PM.
- ◎ **NEW GRACE WEBSITE – www.graceelconline.org.** If you have not yet opened the new Grace website, you are encouraged to check it out. The website is designed to provide members and inquirers with a continually updated source of information about what is taking place in worship, church activities and benevolence programs at Grace. 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 four 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. 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*).
- © **Prayer Shawls and Pocket Quilts.** If anyone would like a prayer shawl or pocket quilts to give to someone, contact **Nancy Pries (npries@yahoo.com, 862-3300 or 707-9799)**.

© **Printer Cartridges.** If you throw your used printer cartridges away, the Church can use them and exchange them for office supplies for the Church. Place them in a plastic bag and give them to Nancy Pries.

Our prayer: Creator God, give us a renewed sense of awe and expectation as we celebrate your becoming fully human as the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah.

Pastor Jaci Tiell
pastorjacitiell@aol.com
419-215-8370

Gary Anderson,
dcmgaryanderson@gmail.com
419-607-3036

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