

**The Grace Lutheran Weekly Message**  
21 January 2021



**Please join us for worship, at Grace  
this Sunday, 24 January, at 10:00 AM.**

(Worship will be in the Grace parking lot; details on page 2)

**Plan to attend the Congregational Meeting and  
presentation of the 2020 Annual Report after worship on  
Sunday.** (Meeting will be in the Grace parking lot after worship; details on page 3)

**Important Announcements This Week: Prayer Concerns** (see page 4);  
**Last week for 2021 Prayer Partner sign-up** (pages 4 & 6); **2021 Lenten  
Special Offering Announcement** (see page 4); **Member Benevolence  
Survey** (see pages 4 & 7)

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 regarding those stories. This series includes the Annunciation (23 Dec), Song of Mary (30 Dec), Birth of Jesus (7 Jan), the Shepherds (last week), Visit of the Magi (this week), Flight to Egypt (28 Jan), Slaughter of the Innocents (4 Feb) and Presentation in the Temple (11 Feb).

## **A MEDITATION ON THE MAGI AND RETURNING BY ANOTHER ROUTE**

**Matthew 2:7-12** (NIV, read vs. 1-12)

***<sup>7</sup>Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."***

***<sup>9</sup>After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup>On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.***

In Luke's Gospel, those who paid homage to the baby Jesus were lowly shepherds. In Matthew's Gospel, the baby had more prestigious visitors, "**Magi from the east.**" These "Wise Men" may have been astrologers; they were not kings but almost certainly were men of power and means. They had seen a star that told them a new "**king of the Jews**" had been born. On their way to pay their respects to the new king, they stopped in Jerusalem to get better directions from King Herod. What followed was a morality play in power politics where a corrupt ruler tried to use the Magi as pawns in his quest to stay in power. He tried to lure them into his plot with a lie, "*help me find the new king so I too may go and worship him.*"

Martin Luther was astutely aware of the political implications of Herod's response to the Magi's inquiry about a new king. Luther speculated about King Herod's obvious intention to keep himself in power regardless of what he had to do retain that office:

*Why did Herod summon the Wise Men secretly—was not all the land under his control? Because he knew well that the Jews hated him, and had the interview been public, they might have sought to induce the Wise Men to mislead him and let the new king slip through his fingers. He inquired as to the exact appearance of the star because he had already made up his mind to slaughter the innocents. He thought to himself: "If a new king is born, the Jews will be glad. They will hide him until he is grown up, then they will bring him to light and kill me. Therefore, I must get ahead of them and inquire warily. If he is hidden, I will catch him anyway by killing all of the children at the same time." To carry out this crafty decision he represented himself to the Magi as very humble and reverent and desirous of worshipping him.*

The part of this story that is replayed over and over is the Magi's presentation of gifts. The more important part of the story may be how the Magi did the right thing and refused to seek favors from Herod by betraying the baby's location. When they "**returned by another route,**" the Magi acted to protect a weak and vulnerable baby and his family from the lies and cruel designs of a powerful autocrat. Even today, our Lutheran Church follows this example of protecting the weak and vulnerable by fostering advocacy programs for the hungry, migrants, refugee sanctuaries and racial justice. Could God also be using the Magi's decision to reject Herod's entreaties and "**return by another route**" to encourage us to follow new routes in 2021 where we work to eliminate hunger, reject white nationalism, protect refugees and promote economic and racial justice for the weak and vulnerable?



This **Shrine of the Three Kings** at the Cologne Cathedral, Germany, is said by tradition to hold the bones of the three wise men.

## WEEKLY NEWS AND EVENTS AT GRACE

- © **DRIVE-UP WORSHIP ON SUNDAY.** Worship, this coming Sunday, the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, will 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. If you know of someone who is not receiving these emails, tell them to log in to the Grace website at [www.graceelonline.org](http://www.graceelonline.org) and “**Subscribe for Updates.**”
  - **Attendance and Offerings Last Sunday.** 64 persons attended worship last Sunday. Last Sunday’s offering was \$2,569. So far after three Sundays in 2021, Grace is averaging about \$500 less per week that its offering budget target of \$2,885 per week.
  - **Offerings.** An offering drop-off is available at the entrance to the parking lot, 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.
- © **CONGREGATIONAL MEETING.** All confirmed members are invited to participate in the congregational meeting that will be held after worship on Sunday, 24 January. The meeting will take place in the Grace parking lot; participants will remain in their cars. The purpose of the meeting is to present the **2020 Grace Annual Report.** Copies of the report were distributed last Sunday and will be available again on Sunday if you did not obtain a copy before. You can also download a copy of the report from the Grace website ([www.graceelonline.org](http://www.graceelonline.org)). Open the “*Grace Communications*” page and click on “*Download 2020 Report*” (at the bottom of the page).
- Highlights in The **2020 Grace Annual Report** describe how during a long year of covid restrictions, Grace began conducting its worship in its parking lot and actually saw a small attendance increase over the previous year; how Grace’s offering contributions exceeded budget expectations and how a robust benevolence program disbursed more than \$21,000 in grants while distributing an impressive list of in-kind gifts that went to both Lutheran World Relief and local charities.
  - If you have questions you would like to ask about anything in the report send them via email to Gary Anderson ([dcmgaryanderson@gmail.com](mailto:dcmgaryanderson@gmail.com)) and the questions will be answered during the meeting.
- © **PRAYER CONCERNS.** Please keep the following persons in your prayers: Dean and Kristie Ackerman, Bob and Marge Griffin, Jeanne Haar, Jim Flick, Laura Short, Gayle and Sandy Duty, Shirley Buhrow, Josh Hunker, Jeff and Laryn Wheeler, Peggy Michel Noftz, Stephen Andrew, Bertha Marquardt, 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.

- © **FUTURE WORSHIP PLANS.** The Grace Board of Worship and Pastor Jaci have worked out plans for future worship services through Easter Sunday. Be sure to place these dates on your calendars.
  - **Communion in February:** 7, 17 (Ash Wednesday) and 21 February.
  - **Ash Wednesday,** 17 February at 7:00 PM. The service will be a drive-up service with the imposition of ashes (self-imposition) and communion.
  - **Lenten Mid-Week Services,** 24 February, 3 March, 10 March, 17 March and 24 March, at 7:00 PM. There will be a rotation of messages from area Pastors; the liturgy will be “**Perfect Love Casts Out Fear: Evening Prayer for Lent.**”
  - **Palm Sunday,** 28 March. Sunday drive-up worship will include the distribution of palms.
  - **Maundy Thursday,** 1 April at 7:00 PM. Drive-up worship with communion and stripping of the altar.
  - **Good Friday,** 2 April at 7:00 PM. Service of the nails.
  - **Easter Vigil,** 3 April. Easter Vigil will be a virtual service (no drive-up worship). A link will be available to access the virtual Easter Vigil service.
  - **Easter Sunday,** 4 April. Drive-up worship with communion.
- © **Lenten Special Offering Project.** The Board of Witness and Mission has selected the **ELCA Good Gifts Fruit-Tree Farm** as Grace’s special Lenten offering project for 2021. A fruit tree farm can be gifted with a donation of \$150. Based on past Lenten contributions the Board has set a goal of raising \$900 to donate six fruit tree farms. There will not be any traditional soup suppers during Lent this year, but members can still make their Lenten Special Offerings when they attend the Lenten Mid-Week services, or they can donate Lenten Special Offerings along with their regular weekly offerings (*just write “Lenten Offering” on the memo line of the Lenten Offering check*).
- © **Member Benevolence Survey.** The Board of Witness and Mission is seeking your guidance on how Grace benevolence giving should be allocated and disbursed. All members are asked to complete a survey that is printed on the last page of this ***Weekly Message***. The survey asks you to identify up to six benevolence causes that would be most important to you. In addition to the copy that is printed in this ***Message***, copies will also be available on Sunday. We hope you will complete this survey and turn in your completed survey on Sunday.
- © **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 31<sup>st</sup> of January. Members who 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.

- © **Call Committee.** The next Call Committee meeting will be a virtual Zoom meeting this evening, 21 January.
- © **Property Board.** The Board of Property will meet at the church on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February at 5:30 PM.
- © **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 page 6 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). Please turn in your info forms by January 24, 2021 (this coming Sunday). Due to COVID 19, Prayer Partners will be drawn for you. You will be notified of your 2021 Prayer Partner in early February.
- © **COUNCIL MEETINGS.** The most recent, 22<sup>nd</sup> virtual Council meeting was held via Zoom on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January. Agenda and action items included: 1) Prayer Concerns review, 2) approval of the 14Dec20 Council minutes, 3) discussion and approval of the 2020 December and year-to-date financial reports, 4) discussion of Grace's responses to the **ELCA Congregational Report**, 5) upcoming worship plans (*see Future Worship Plans on page 4*), 6) reports from the Property and Witness and Mission Boards, 7) plans for the Congregational Meeting on 24 January and 8) a discussion on whether to conduct a membership review in 2021 (*no decision was made*). The next Council meeting will be on Thursday, 11 February.
- © **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. This

month the Food Pantry will be open on Friday and Saturday of this week, the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.

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**

© **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** for a report on last year's collection data. (*Ruth Haar, WELCA Treasurer, was pleased with the final amount.*)

***Our prayer: Creator God, help us to find the right ways to protect and care for the weak and vulnerable in our community and the world.***

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

Gary Anderson,  
[dcmgaryanderson@gmail.com](mailto:dcmgaryanderson@gmail.com)  
419-607-303

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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

**Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**Benevolence Priorities 2021**

The Board of Witness & Mission would like to gain insight as to the areas of charitable giving that are of importance to Grace members. Please select six (6) of the following areas which are most important to you:

- Affordable housing/community development
- Animal welfare and conservation
- Arts and culture
- Children and family services
- Criminal justice
- Domestic violence
- Education
- Environment
- Gender justice
- Global humanitarian needs
- Healthcare
- Hunger and nutrition
- Migration
- Racial justice
- Shelter and homelessness
- Veterans support
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Considering areas of giving which most interest you, please list any specific charitable causes or organizations which you like to see supported through Grace benevolence offerings (i.e. Alzheimer's Association, Cherry St. Mission, etc.):

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Completed forms should be turned in before worship or after the Congregational Meeting on Sunday, the 24<sup>th</sup> of January.