

grace notes

The December Newsletter of Grace Lutheran Church

Christmas at Grace

A Time to Watch



Advent... it's all about waiting as we count down the days before Christmas. In the midst of all the hectic preparations, we wait like expectant parents for the birth of a child. It's a hard wait! It's a challenging wait! It is a good wait!

There is so much to do, isn't there! We want to avoid the Advent waiting when we're so busy with holiday preparations! There are cards to be addressed and mailed. Our homes wait to be decorated, both inside and out. Packages and gifts have to be bought and wrapped, while we also try to bake cookies and prepare Christmas treats. Then there's the trees to be bought and decorated! Family gatherings have to be planned. Whew! Who has time to wait with all that has to be done!

In all this busyness we invite you to take time to come to church each week and pause for just an hour or two to worship and prepare for Jesus' birth. As we focus upon the importance of time, and the challenge of waiting, we will be ready to watch God's Promise of Salvation be born in the manger in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve.

For those who are new to Grace, we celebrate Christmas in a "big way." We have five different worship services on Christmas Eve to give everyone an opportunity to include worship amidst all the family activities. The first two are early Family Services (2:00 & 4:00 pm) which offer an extended children's sermon and a special gift for children. The next service (7 pm) has a more "contemporary" feel to it, as well as candlelight singing. The last two services (9 & 11:00 pm) will be joyous traditional candlelight services with lots of special choral music. And after the "big" celebrations of Christmas Eve, we gather in the quiet of Christmas morning to share the story of the Shepherds, and gather around the Lord's Table for a reflective "Quiet Communion" service (10:00 am).

Please note the following Worship Opportunities:

Christmas Worship Schedule

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Wednesday | December 24 | 2:00 & 4 pm | Family Christmas Service |
| | | 7 pm | Contemporary Candlelight |
| | | 9 & 11:00 pm | Traditional Candlelight |

Christmas Day Worship

| | | | |
|----------|-------------|-------|-------------------------|
| Thursday | December 25 | 10 am | Quiet Communion Service |
|----------|-------------|-------|-------------------------|

What's Inside

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Pastor Mark's Remarks | Pg. 2 |
| Vision Board | Pg. 4/5 |
| Children's Ministry | Pg. 6/7 |

Staff Contacts

Phone - (763) 421-6520

Senior Pastor

Mark Hellmann..... Ext. 110
markh@graceandover.org

Director of Outreach & Women's Ministries

Jeannie Hellmann Ext. 122
jeannieh@graceandover.org

Visitation Pastor
Gene Heglund

Pastor of Spiritual Formation
Steve Thomason, Ext. 105
stevet@graceandover.org

Coordinator of Youth Ministries
Tom Baker..... Ext. 123
tomb@graceandover.org

Co-Director of Children's Ministries

Monica Allen..... Ext. 116,
monicaa@graceandover.org

Co-Director of Children's Ministries

Kim DeVries..... Ext. 112,
kimd@graceandover.org

Director of Worship & Music
Jonathan Orwig..... Ext. 113
jonathano@graceandover.org

Worship Coordinator & Organist
Carroll Potter Ext. 109
carrollp@graceandover.org

Connection & Volunteer Coordinator
Kate Mophew Ext. 120
katem@graceandover.org

Director of Praise Team
Jenn Hubal Ext. 114
jennh@graceandover.org

Director of Grace Choir
Doreen Hutchings
doreenh@graceandover.org

Secretary
Kris Miller Ext. 101
krism@graceandover.org

Bookkeeper
Bonnie Trembath Ext. 111
bonniet@graceandover.org

Parish Nurses
Lily Tunby & Lori Ackerson
..... Ext. 100

Generosity Can Be Contagious!

Pastor Mark's Remarks

I was overwhelmed when I heard the news from our visitors from R.O.D.I (Rakai Orphan Development Initiative). Grace Lutheran had adopted 25 orphans! Johnson Lwondo, Richard Mutaawe and Ann Hill were ecstatic! When they came to speak at our worship services during our Marathon Month of Loving Generously, they never expected such an outpouring of generosity and love. At first I was surprised too. Sponsoring 25 orphans represented a large financial commitment, and so much love. However, as I reflected more upon our growing generosity to love everyone whom God brings to our doors, I was both excited and thankful! God's Spirit is indeed teaching us about what it means to love generously.

But the adoption of the orphans isn't the only sign of our growing generosity. I am thankful for the continued support of our FMSC Marathon Serving Event and the 400 plus people who showed up to pack meals for hungry children. I celebrate the nearly 400 boxes filled with Christmas gifts for children around the world, the shelves full of "heat-and-eat" food for Hope 4 Youth, and the Thanksgiving food given to families at Sand Creek Elementary School. It was a great month of loving generously!

But I celebrate more as I see our church continue to extend a generous welcome to all God brings inside our doors. I know it isn't always easy. Like many of the neighbors in the Loving Generously video series who became uncomfortable with Frank and Cassie Donovan's generous welcome to the people of the soup kitchen, it's sometimes challenging to welcome AND love everyone. But when we do, God can do marvelous things in us, as well as in others...like 25 sponsorships for orphans!

I find myself wondering how the Christmas story might have been different if the inn keeper hadn't welcomed Joseph and Mary to his stable when his inn was full. Would the events of Jesus' miraculous birth be different if they couldn't find a place for the birth? What about the generosity of Joseph? How would Christmas be different if he hadn't welcomed Jesus into his family as his own? Would we tell of the welcome of the shepherds in the stable if they had been less generous and stayed in the fields with their flocks? Would the joy be as great if the angels hadn't welcomed Jesus with their heavenly choir? Yes, the story of Christmas would be different if a generous welcome had not been given by so many to the new born king!

As we wait for the coming of Jesus once again at Christmas, I pray we will see once again how generous our God really is! For at the heart of Christmas is "the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes, he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." May we find this Christmas a moment for us to continue our growth of loving generously!

Hoping this Christmas is a true celebration of God's wonderful generosity!

Pastor Mark

Want to Deepen Your Christmas Celebration?

Love to Sing Christmas Carols?

Ever think about joining a choir for a short period of time?

If your answer to one of the above questions is “YES!” we invite you to join us during Advent and Christmas as we prepare meaningful music to celebrate Jesus’ birth. One of the best parts of Christmas is the beautiful and rich heritage of music that moves our hearts and helps us experience the wonderful story of Bethlehem. We invite anyone who has a few extra hours, a love of singing, and a desire to tell the Christmas story in song, to join us.

This year, we’re offering two special ways in which you can share in our Advent and Christmas music ministry.

Advent Choral Celebration at all Sunday Services – Dec. 20 & 21.

All the music ensembles at Grace join together in an Advent & Christmas Musical Celebration. Rehearsals will be held on Saturday mornings Dec. 13 & 20 from 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. All the groups will be singing a beautiful new musical by Joel Raney entitled *The Promise of Light*, as well as other Christmas favorites.

Christmas Eve Song Prelude and Service – Dec. 24 at 11:00 p.m.

On Christmas Eve we will gather for a sacred hour of singing beloved Christmas Carols in candle light, share in Holy Communion and prayer, and celebrate the birth of Jesus. The Adult Choir will present some beautiful music that will move your heart. Rehearsals will take place on Wednesday evenings from 7:00-8:30 pm and Saturday mornings, Dec. 13 & 20 from 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Please join us for this special musical opportunity. (for additional information, please email Jonathan Orwig at jonathano@graceandover.org) You will truly make a difference in our Advent and Christmas celebrations!

Baptismal Renewal Comes to Grace!

At Grace, we talk about walking wet in our baptisms. One of the year’s most meaningful worship moments is our Baptismal Renewal Service in early January. Baptismal Renewal is at the heart of who and what we are at Grace.



Many thanks to Harold Zupon who has recently brought a new kind of Baptismal Renewal by renewing our Baptismal Font! Yes, after many years of use, the font was beginning to show its age. Thanks to Harold's gift, it is now absolutely stunning and makes a wonderful impact to our worship space.

What did he do? He refinished the top by removing the warped Formica top and putting tile on the top and sides. If you notice, it is the same tile used on the Chancel platform. In addition, he had a new bowl designed made by one of the potters at the Renaissance Festival in Shakopee. He also installed wheels on it so it can be more easily moved.

The results? It is gorgeous and will truly make a difference at Grace. Once again God has blessed us with a generous gift of talent and skills. Thank you, Harold!!

THANKS for LOVING GENEROUSLY

Our LOVING GENEROUSLY theme was highlighted in November during the sermon series, weekly Bible studies, Sunday evenings@grace and many other conversations. It's been an amazing journey... and it's inspiring to hear the stories of how God is stretching our hearts and challenging our minds to love more generously - in our neighborhoods, at

school, in the work place, even within our families.

Our amazing Grace family put love and generosity into action in many different ways during November. We first thank God for His generous love that inspires us to share with others. And then we want to thank you - our Grace family - for sharing God's love in these generous ways during November:

- THANKS for welcoming families who are experiencing homelessness to stay at our church, through Family Promise ministry. Over 75 volunteers helped by cooking meals, sleeping overnight for security, driving the van, donating food, and dining with our guests.
- THANKS for sponsoring 25 students through African Children Today in Rakai, Uganda. Through your generosity, 25 orphaned children will be able to attend school, receive medical help, and have hope for their future! And thanks for warmly welcoming Richard & Johnson from Uganda, when they spoke at church on Nov. 15/16.
- THANKS for donating financial resources that provided 11 Thanksgiving baskets (feasts) for families at Sand Creek School through our Faith & Community Partnership.
- THANKS to over 400 volunteers who packed meals at Feed My Starving Children on Nov. 21 & 22... may God bring this food to the children who need it most!
- THANKS to countless volunteers who donated 'heat & eat' food items for Hope 4 Youth in Anoka... wasn't it great to see the Welcome Center look like an overflowing grocery store?
- THANKS to everyone who returned an Operation Christmas Child shoe box filled with gifts for children around the world... yes, your love stretches around the world!
- THANKS to the faithful ministry teams that continue to provide delicious meals and warm hospitality each and every month through the ministries of Family Table Meal and Our Savior's Shelter.

We praise our gracious God for all that He has allowed us to accomplish in November, but we don't sit back and rest now. No, we continue on this journey of LOVING GENEROUSLY... asking God to challenge us, to teach us, to

inspire us, to lead us in new ways of LOVING GENEROUSLY each and every day. THANK YOU, Grace Family! THANK YOU, God!

Vision Board Notes

The Grace Vision Board met on Tuesday November 11th, 2014 at the home of Alden Riley. All but Bernard McDowell were present. During a delicious meal we discussed how to promote the Smile.Amazon.com donation program at Grace. Some of the ideas revolved around presenting some Power Point slides during the Opportunities and putting it on the Grace website.

The Vision Board then went on a "Mystery Tour" to Grace Lutheran Church to look at the building with the eyes of a new visitor. Each Vision Board member assumed a certain role: a family with a newborn; a family with teenagers; a retired person, etc. It was interesting to discuss the positive, as well as the negative hospitality aspects of our facilities. We will further discuss what we saw at the next board meeting.

Pastor Mark presented the Proposed 2015 Budget to the Vision Board for discussion. As part of the discussion, he presented the goals and objectives which the leadership and staff have developed in the past four months. The Vision Board approved the Budget with the commitment to closely monitor the finances so we will not over spend. The 2015 Proposed Budget will be presented to the congregation in January 2015 for final approval.



The End is Near! (of 2014 that is)

As we come close to the end of the year, we want to celebrate the generous ways in which the people of Grace give.

How could the many ministries happen without the generosity of people giving their time, skills, energy, and finances? What would our church be without our outreach through Family Table, Till All Are Fed Food Pantry, Family Promise, Our Savior's, Vacation Bible

School, Hope 4 Youth, if not for your support? The mission of Grace would be very different without the outpouring of your generous love. With only four more weeks left until December 31st, how does it look as we end the year? Will our generosity continue to fully fund our ministries? Will we finish the year financially strong or will there be a short-fall impeding the start of the new year? More specifically, will the early start of heavy snowfall affect worship attendance, and increase snow plowing costs to drain our financial resources?

| Actual Offerings to November 16th | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
| Operational | \$620,892.35 | \$566,098.74 | \$625,544.95 | \$613,778.02 | \$577,444.42 | \$591,289.52 |
| Capital | \$92,495.73 | \$76,312.50 | \$88,036.00 | \$84,775.50 | \$75,941.00 | \$71,160.00 |
| Other (Holiday) | \$24,161.80 | \$16,171.87 | \$16,575.24 | \$23,683.84 | \$18,503.12 | \$14,759.29 |
| Free 2B Grace | | | | \$21,000.00 | \$156,838.00 | \$164,268.50 |
| Total: | \$737,549.88 | \$658,583.11 | \$730,156.19 | \$743,237.36 | \$828,726.54 | \$841,477.31 |

Here is a quick financial snapshot at the offerings given up to the middle of November. If you notice, our generosity continues to grow from the previous year.

We are thankful that all of our financial commitment of \$35,000 to the ELCA has been completed, as well the \$3,500 support to Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota. For the rest of the year we will collect our benevolence tithe and ask the congregation how we can distribute it beyond our walls.

As we prepare for a great start to 2015, we would like to ask those who are able, to consider making a year-end financial gift to help us end this year strong. We

believe if we do, we will be able to fill vacant staff positions, relieve the added load our present staff has been carrying, and help Pastor Steve finish his PhD and continue to work at Grace and the church beyond our walls.

You will soon receive a letter (and response card and envelope) to ask you to prayerfully consider a gift. Also, you can give online if you prefer. And, if you have appreciated stock, you can give that as well. Just make sure it is given before December 31.

Thanks again for your generous loving!

GRACE'S CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES




No SONday School Weekends
 December 20/21
 December 27/28

SONday
 School Christmas Program
 Sun. Dec. 14 at 2 p.m.

Our Christmas Play this year is The Surprising Christmas Pageant. Our play tells the story of the Birth of Christ told with humor, mystery, and awe!



Dates to remember:
 Rehearsals

- Sat. Dec 6 9-10:15 a.m. This rehearsal is for children with speaking and non-speaking parts only.
- Sat. Dec 13 9-10:15 a.m. This rehearsal is for the entire SONday School Program.
- Sun. Dec 14 2 p.m. (Please have children here by 1:40)

1st and 2nd grade children will be shepherds and angels in the Surprising Christmas Pageant. They only need to attend rehearsal on Dec. 13.

Preschool and Kindergarten children will rehearse during their Large Groups. Information about songs and finger plays came home in November.



Help is needed for serving refreshments following the Christmas Program, creating our sets and props. If you can help, please contact Monica Allen or Kim DeVries.

SONday School Birthday Offering – We Have a Flock!



Our Birthday Offering this year will be going to Heifer International to purchase flocks of chicks. \$20 can buy a flock of chicks which could be 10 to 50 chicks. Our offering total as of November 9th was \$28.17.

At Heifer International, they “believe in equipping our people with the tools, education, and livestock to bring about positive transformation. Together, through every small step forward, we’re transforming the world for the better.”



It's a King Thing

will begin on January 14 as we look at the kings of the Bible. Join us in 2015 for a Royal experience, dust off your crowns and scepters, and get ready for the drama of the Kings and Queens of the Bible.

Rockin' Kids Wednesday Evening Club



December 10 – Christmas Party and last RKBC of 2014 – It's Time to celebrate the Savior's birth as we tell the story, sing carols, and have a party! We will make a Christmas Crafts, snacks, and play a Christmas game. If you would like to help with the party, contact Monica Allen – monicaa@graceandover.org.

January 7 – RKBC winter quarter begins with our last game, Operation!



Children’s Ministry Volunteer Potluck
January 6th 2015 – 6:00-7:30 p.m.

SONday School, Rockin’ Kids Bible Club, and Nursery Volunteers are invited to attend a potluck where we will celebrate the ministry you share with the children of Grace each week. You make them excited to be at church! We want to thank you for helping them experience God’s love and grace with every smile and encouraging word.

What will happen at the Potluck?

We will provide the main dish. You may bring either a salad, bread, or dessert to share.

A humorous and inspiring look at Children’s Ministry to spark our enthusiasm mid-year, SONday School and RKBC will receive their new curriculum packets.

Share and Enjoy Food, fun, faith, and Fellowship!
Please RSVP – kimd@graceandover.org or monicaa@graceandover.org

If you would like to help with this event, we would love it! Please let Kim and Monica know. Kitchen help would be greatly appreciated.

Christmas Nursery

Little ones are welcome to join us in the nursery during the Christmas Services. Our pagers will be available for parents to help make the transition easier.



We will offer nursery on Christmas Eve, December 24, at the 2 pm, 4 pm, and 7 pm Services. We will not have nursery on Christmas Day.

If you would like to serve in the nursery on Christmas Eve, please contact Kim DeVries at kimd@graceandover.org.



“Grace Lutheran Children's Ministry”

“Like” our Facebook page and keep up with everything happening in Children’s Ministry here at Grace

You and families will find:

- Weekly lesson reviews for families
- Newsletters from SONday School
- Updates from Rockin Kids Bible Club

Latest events happening in Children’s Ministry



Family Worship Weekends
December 7 & January 4

Children will begin in Worship Services with their families and then be dismissed to SONday School after the **Children’s Sermon**. This is a special Sunday where kids spend the morning in their classrooms. Kids in Grades 3-5 should bring their Bibles as they will be spend time learning how to use them.

Dinner and a Movie
Friday January 23
6 – 8:30 p.m.



Families, with kids 3 years old-5th grade, are invited for dinner, movie, fellowship and fun! Parents must stay the entire evening. We will begin with a meal served in the Fellowship Hall and then we will head into the Theater (Worship Center) to watch the movie “The Lego Movie”. Please watch the blue opportunity sheets to register your family.

Having great family fellowship opportunities, takes a team of volunteers. Help is needed with table set up, cooking, serving, and cleaning up the theater following the movie. If you can help, please contact Kim DeVries or sign up on the blue sheets.

Grace Lutheran Church

13655 Round Lake Blvd NW, Andover, MN 55304

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

NON PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Anoka, MN 55303

PERMIT No. 118

Address Service Requested



Have you visited the youth website yet? All the up-to-date information is there:

www.graceandoveryouth.com