

grace notes

The January Newsletter of Grace Lutheran Church

Grace Begins the New Year Living In the Light of the New Born Christ

Here we are the beginning of January and the New Year. All the Christmas decorations have been taken down, packed up, and stored away for another year. All the preparations we made for Christmas bore fruit with a wonderful celebration of the birth of Jesus. We had great times with family and friends. But now, Christmas is over and we're hopeful that its light will shine into the new year.

This seems so appropriate because January is the traditional church season of Epiphany which centers upon the familiar story of the Magi following the light of

the Star to Bethlehem and the newborn King. The emphasis of the season is the Light of God's love in Jesus, shining for all nations.



But does that mean for us personally to live in the Light of Christ? At Grace we will begin to answer this question with a worship series in January called Living In Epiphany, as we explore what it means to live in His Light. When you come to worship you will hear a lot about 'living,' truly living, as journeying people in the way God wants for us. Each week there will be

a different aspect to living in the Light as we live 'In', 'With', 'By' and 'For' in his love.

WORSHIP SERIES CALENDAR

Jan 10/11	Living IN Freedom - Baptism Renewal Matthew 3:1-17 - The Baptism of Jesus
Jan 17/18	Living WITH Temptation Matthew 4:1-17 - The Temptation of Jesus
Jan 24/25	Living IN Righteousness Matthew 5:1-20 - The Beatitudes
Jan 31/Feb 1	Living BY Practice Matthew 6:7-21 - Jesus' teaching about spiritual practices
Feb 7/8	Living IN the Now Matthew 14:13-33 - Jesus feeds the multitudes
Feb 14/15	Living IN Denial Matthew 16:24-17:8 - The Transfiguration

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Come and join us as we LIVE in the Epiphany light of God's grace.

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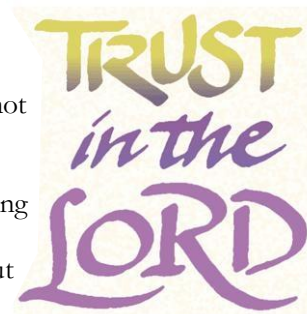
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Will God Provide All That We Need?

Pastor Mark's Remarks

It never fails in January, as we begin to gear up for the second half of the ministry year, to wonder whether or not God is going to provide all the financial and people resources to accomplish what we hope to do. Maybe it's because we're closing the 2014 financial books, conducting the audit, and putting the final touches to the Annual Report and the Proposed 2015 Budget, that doubts about this new year bubble to the surface.



It isn't that I don't trust God to provide. I certainly believe St. Paul's confession: *"And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work."* (II Cor. 9:8) I know God has provided for my family many times in the past, and I know he will in the future.

But I find it easy to fall into scarcity mode and wonder whether we'll have enough. Frankly, we have some ambitious plans for this next year. We want to help Pastor Steve as he completes his PhD and begins to focus more on adult spiritual formation. To accomplish this, we need to hire a full-time Director of Youth to take over leadership of our growing youth ministry. In addition, we plan to hire a part-time Business Manager to take on some of the added responsibilities Jonathan Orwig and I have been carrying since our former Church Administrator, Ralph Holbrook left last April. Like I said, we have some ambitious plans. The question is whether or not we'll be able to financially support all of them?

When these doubts persist, I begin to reflect upon the wonderful generous ways of this church. As I write these words a week before Christmas, I am in the process of contacting people in our community nominated to receive monetary gifts of Grace. It is so gratifying to hear the surprise, shock, and gratitude from them as I tell them we're giving them gifts of money. In addition, I see the large piles of gifts in the Fellowship Hall given for hurting families at Sand Creek Elementary School. The huge pile of toys, clothes, games, and gift are visible signs of our growing generosity. In addition, I am thankful for the generous support of your financial gifts and offerings which have helped us end our year with all the bills paid and a little left over for the new year.

All these reflections help balance the doubts when they come. I sense this is all a part of the journey of faith, and trust that leads me to fully believe that God will provide. As I begin this New Year and think of all the possibilities, I am going to remember to give thanks for the constant generosity of the people of Grace. You give me hope to trust that God will truly provide all we need!

Trusting in His Gifts!

Pastor Mark

A New Year Challenge: Get into Scripture!

Pastor Steve

I am excited for 2015! It is going to be a great year for Grace as we continue to explore what it means to *be blessed to be a blessing*. One of our goals for this 2014-2015 ministry year has been to work on our Biblical fluency as a congregation. Biblical fluency is more than just knowing the facts about the Bible (although that's a big part of it). It goes beyond Bible knowledge and seeks to see how the God of the Bible is the same God that works in, through, and with us in our everyday lives.

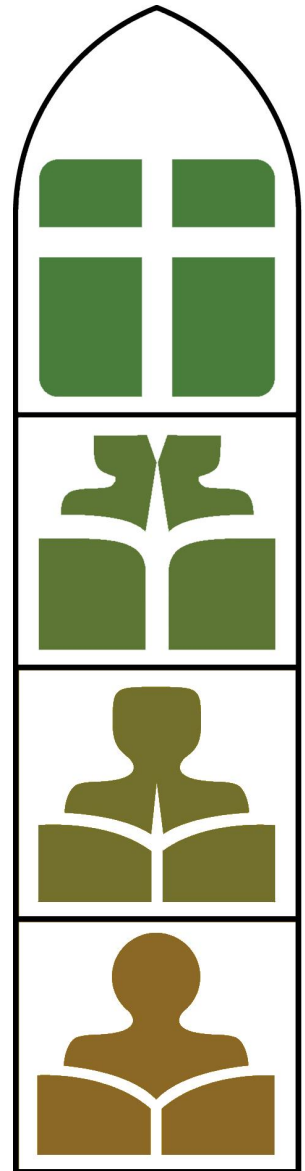
Biblical fluency is important because of one simple truth: *if you don't know the Bible, it is very difficult to grow deeply with God*. The Scripture is that place where the Triune God meets us in a powerful way. The scripture is our source to know the life and teachings of Jesus. Without Jesus, we can't know God the Creator, and without the Holy Spirit, we can't understand the scripture. They all weave together.

Here are three ways that you can get into scripture this year:

- **Bible Mania!** We offered a one-day event last October that told the ONE STORY of the Bible in ONE DAY. We recorded that event and now offer it online in twelve short videos. You can watch them on your own, use them in a small group, and share them with your friends. Watch the videos on our website under Resources>Bible Mania! (<http://www.graceandover.org/resources/bible-mania/>)
- **Follow the Daily Reading Schedule.** Did you know that there is a daily reading schedule that fills in the gaps between the texts on Sundays? Yep. You can find that schedule on the website under Resources>Narrative Lectionary Devotions (<http://www.graceandover.org/resources/devotions/>)
- **Pastor Steve's Blog.** We will be preaching through the Gospel of Matthew this Spring in worship. If you have a desire to know more about this book and enhance your interaction with the lessons, I invite you to join me online. I have spent the past few years blogging about the Bible. Visit my *Matthew* page that offers links to online commentaries, sermons, and illustrations that will give you a deeper understanding of this Gospel. I welcome online discussion. Visit www.stevethomason.net and click "The Gospel of Matthew: Exploring the Kingdom of Heaven" (<http://www.stevethomason.net/studies/the-bible-bookshelf/matthew/>)

I believe that the Word of God in Scripture is powerful. When we read it, the Holy Spirit meets us and teaches us. Then, when we discuss it with each other and try to put God's teachings into action, great things can happen. So, my challenge for 2015 is simply this. Get into the Bible, and see what God does!

Pastor Steve



Learn
— & —
Grow

LOOKING BACK OVER THE LAST YEAR

A Vision Board Word

Alden Riley

The older I get the faster the years fly by. I look back at this past year and do a reality check, did I accomplish everything I had hoped. To my great satisfaction I find that I did achieve many of the goals I had set for myself. However there were a number of goals that I had not even begun.

When I look at these unfinished tasks, I have to ask myself why I didn't place the urgency on these goals to get them done. Certainly I thought they were important at one time. Obviously my priorities changed, my wants and needs were not in sync with the plans God has for me.

These same realities are true for Grace. We can look back at this past year at the tremendous number of

things that have been accomplished. Including much needed maintenance to our facility, our numerous local and global outreach programs, our children's, youth and adult education programs. We were able to accomplish these things because we were in sync with God's plan for Grace.

“For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, Plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11

The Church is a living breathing entity, as such, our goals and

priorities change. So even though we don't accomplish everything we set off to do, maybe it is God's way of adjusting our course and setting us back on the path he has chosen for us. *“For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, Plans to give you hope and a future.”* Jeremiah 29:11

The Vision Board works diligently to discern Gods plans for Grace. So that through Gods grace we will become a spiritually mature and welcoming Church, that glorifies his holy name. As I near the end of my term on the Vision Board I feel honored, blessed and humbled to have been a part of this process.

Thank you for your trust!

Alden

Vision Board Notes

The Grace Lutheran Church Vision Board met at the home of Dennis Grabowski on Tuesday, December 9th, 2014. Members present were Dennis Grabowski, Tari Yates (for the first portion of the meeting), Jessie Crooks, Greg Ackerson and Alden Riley along with Pastor Mark. Good conversation and a yummy dinner were enjoyed by all.

After dinner, the board discussed a study, “No Charter for Comfort” and discussed the difference between “believe, behave, belong” and “belong, behave, believe.”

The board discussed many items including, sending delegates to the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly in May, new carpet installed in the nursery and remaining hallway, the positive impact of the new 9:00 choir director Doreen Hutchings, and the different improvements, big and small, that still need to be made in the building to improve the overall look and feel of the church.

The board also shared the results of the Senior Pastor Yearly Evaluation with Pastor Mark.

The meeting ended in a time of prayer.

SPECIAL STARS OF EPIPHANY

e·piph·a·ny

- sudden realization: a sudden intuitive leap of understanding, especially through an ordinary but striking occurrence
 - "It came to him in an epiphany what his life's work was to be."
- appearance of god: the supposed manifestation of a divine being

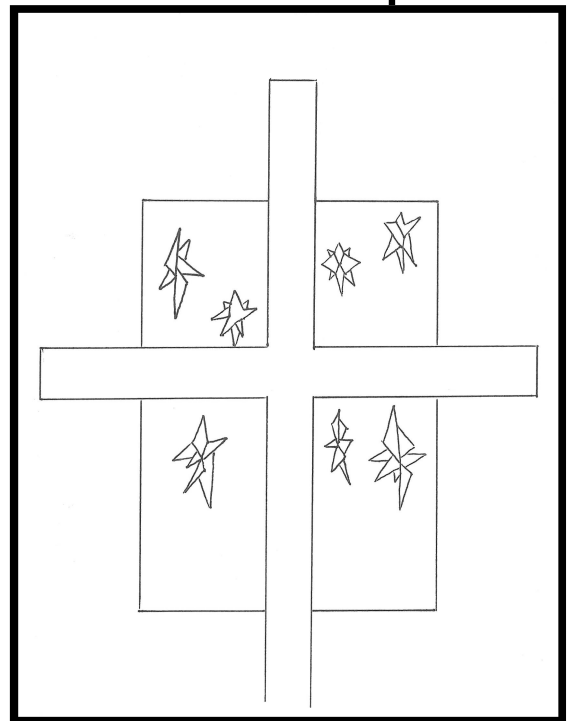
Epiphany? What is Epiphany? It is season that follows the 12 Days of Christmas and begins the long journey of uncovering the meaning and importance of Jesus...the unexpected gift of forgiveness and redemption for the whole world. Epiphany starts on January 6th by recalling a moment early in Jesus' life... the Star of Bethlehem that draws the Magi from afar to the baby Jesus. Proclaimed in the heavens to the whole world, the shining star announces that the new born King is for everyone. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, light indeed shines in the land of darkness for the Savior has come to redeem all of creation.

Once again we will experience Epiphany in an incredible way as we welcome back the beautiful stained glass stars hanging in front window of the Worship Center. These stars designed and created by Paula from Down Home Stained Glass of Anoka as a special memorial celebrating the life of Tim Melody. For those who knew Tim who lost his battle with cancer four years ago, the stars reflect a lifelong fascination with rocketry, space, and science. In Tim's memory and those loved ones we all miss, the gift of stars recalls an old Eskimo proverb:

"Perhaps they are not stars, but rather openings in heaven where the love of our lost ones pours through and shines down upon us to let us know they are happy."

Perhaps as we worship during Epiphany, the beautiful stars will be a comfort and a joy for those who have experienced loss.

But for all of us, the stars which will adorn the cross in the front of church will provide the truth of Epiphany. Like the Magi of old, they will guide us in the journey throughout the season revealing the truth of Jesus in the "beginning" stories of his life...Jesus is God's Son born into our world to save us all!





January's News

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.



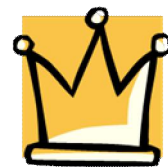
Family Worship Weekends - January 4

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.



It's a King Thing

Our new SONday School Theme 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

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

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.

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.”



“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

January YOUTH NEWS

Middle School Ultimate Lock-in January 23-24:

Our annual night out with 600 other middle school youth at the Maple Grove Community Center is scheduled for Friday night, January 23. Stay up all night with us for swimming, inflatable games, ice skating, dancing, dodgeball, pizza, and much more stuff. Invite your friends too! The cost is \$30 which includes bus transportation both ways.

Schedule

Fri.	Jan 23	9:15 pm	Leave Grace parking lot
Sat.	Jan 24	6:30 am	Return to Grace

Registration forms will be distributed at Catechism on January 7th. The registration deadline is Wednesday, Jan. 21st.

All details and registration form are also available from our youth website: graceandoveryouth.com

Fun Future Events and Awesome Activities

A Message From A Member of the Stewardship Team

Hi People of Grace,

The Stewardship Team is very excited to announce **Fun Future Events and Awesome Activities** coming up in 2015! Now this may sound like an oxymoron linking Stewardship with fun. But it's true and the Stewardship Team is going to host some fun events to prove it!! Let me explain...

Our Team has met over the past couple of months and worked hard to reimagine and redefine the word stewardship. The first thing we've discovered is this: Stewardship is NOT about money! Yep, you heard it right. And you will be surprised to hear that we will not use the word "money" this year as it pertains to stewardship. In fact, we have a Mason jar set in the middle of our table at our team meetings, and if one of us uses the "M" word (money) they have to put 25 cents into the jar. We're saving it all to be gifted for a mission project!

So what "fun" have we planned for next year? The first event will be a Celebration of the **STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S GOOD EARTH FAIR** during Earth Day Week (late April). At the fair we will present ways to recycle, compost, use energy-saving light bulbs, and other easy steps of environmental stewardship. In addition, we will send teams out into the community to clean up trash along roads, plant trees and spruce up nearby parks. There will be food, fun, and a wonderful feeling that comes from caring for God's wonderful creation.

RE

IMAGINE

The second event will be the **GOOD GIFTS OCTOBERFEST** to conclude a month-long celebration of the God-given gifts, talents, passions and skills in our family of Grace. Each weekend in October we will highlight some of our gifts and talents God has given us. Right now we plan to ask people to share their gifts of music and dance in worship. In addition we will host an Art Show for the many artists in our church and teach a class on Spiritual Gifts. Finally we will host **OCTOBERFEST 2015** on October 25 to celebrate God's gifts of our rich heritage and his mission for us today. We are planning lots of fun! There will be brats and beer (root beer, that is!), dancing, music groups and lots of games for kids. All of these events will remind us of the reason for God's giving us our gifts of talents and skills...they help us do his mission in the world!

Throughout the year you'll hear more from us. We will write encouraging stewardship messages in the Grace Notes. We will urge you to steward mission at Grace and participate in a 5k run for Haiti in May. Finally, we will pray that many will begin to embrace a whole life-stewardship of "living our lives centered on Jesus, as evidenced in our relationships with God, self, and others". And It's Going To Be Fun Too!

More to come in February.
 Submitted by Ruth DeLine
 (The most fun team at Grace)

A Word of Thanks from the Church Office

As we end 2014 and begin 2015, I want to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU! God continues to bless us at Grace. I am especially thankful for the many, many people of Grace who give of their time to help us whenever and wherever we are in need. You are truly examples of *Loving Generously*. Every day, God brings people into our lives to help carry the load. From the fabulous ladies who come into the office every week to help with bulletins, mailings and data entry, the funeral teams who jump into action whenever someone experiences a death in their family, the weekly

worship servants, the guys who work tirelessly to maintain our building, the Liturgical Arts Team who beautify our Worship Center, mentors, teachers, musicians, and Grace Notes helpers, just to name a few. So, on behalf of the Grace Staff, I say Thank You for all you do. We couldn't be this Ministry of Grace in the Heart of Andover without your gifts of help, love and support!

Blessings to you this new year!

Kris Miller



Join us for the next . . .

CONNECT CLASS

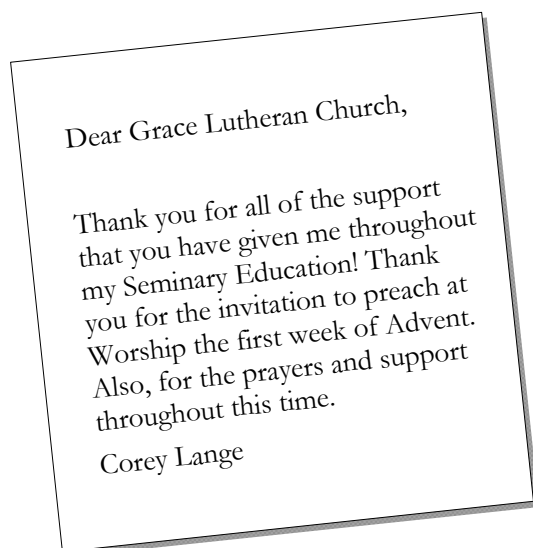
Sunday, Jan. 25

- Would you like to be more ‘connected’ at Grace?
- Would you enjoy making friendship connections as well as learning about the core values and history of Grace Lutheran Church?
- Are you interested in exploring membership at Grace?

Then please join us for the next CONNECT class from 5 – 7:30 pm on Sunday, Jan. 25. We will enjoy dinner in the Fellowship Hall beginning at 5 pm, then get more connected with each other and with the ministries of Grace. And yes, there will be activities for the whole family on this evening.

All are welcome to attend the CONNECT class at Grace Sunday, Jan. 25. Please sign up by calling the church office at 421-6520, or by using the blue opportunity pages during worship.

Thank You!



Family Promise

Building Community, Strengthening Lives

Grace will host Family Promise guests at our church the week of January 25-31

Grace volunteers will provide warm hospitality and safe shelter for families in Anoka County who are experiencing homelessness. Family Promise in Anoka County (FPAC) is a network of 16 congregations who provide temporary housing to families without homes. Guests are housed at each host congregation for one week on a rotating basis, moving to a new location in the network each week until they are able to become self-sufficient once again.

Won't you consider serving with Family Promise?

Here's a list of various volunteer opportunities:

- Prepare an evening meal for 16 people, one evening
- Serve dinner and clean up the kitchen (5 - 7:30 pm one evening)
- Provide overnight security at the church (8:30pm – 7 am one night) You'll get to sleep!
- Be an Evening Host - chat with guests, play games, help with homework, etc. (5 – 9 pm)
- Set up and take down beds
- Donate food supplies for Host Week – i.e. milk, juice, bread, fruit and snacks.
- Drive the van to transport guests (at 6:30 am or at 4:30 pm)

For more information, please contact Jeannie Hellmann, or 763 421-6520, ext. 122



The final 2015 Grace Pictorial Directory is now undergoing editorial changes and updates. The team has been checking addresses and names to make sure our new directory will be as up-to-date as possible.

We're hoping the finalized directory will be here in late February or early March for distribution.

There are still a few pictorial family photos which have not been picked up. Please check the Welcome Center to find yours!

Grace Lutheran Church

13655 Round Lake Blvd NW, Andover, MN 55304

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

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2015 January Annual Meeting Weekend of January 24 & 25

Grace Lutheran Church January Annual meeting is scheduled for January 24/25. The purpose of the congregational meeting is to pass the 2015 Proposed Operational Budget. In order to facilitate this process, we invite you to

- Download or pick up a copy of the January 2015 Annual Report. They will be made available on the weekend of January 17/18 on our website or at the Welcome Desk in the Narthex. Inside this report is a financial review of the past year, as well as the proposed budget approved by the Vision Board in November.
- A more detailed itemized budget will be available in the church office.
- A Budget Review Meeting will be held on Thursday, January 22nd at 6:30 p.m. for those who would like to hear more about the plans and goals contained within the Budget.

The congregation will be asked to vote on the budget at the conclusion of all the worship services on January 24th & 25th.