



GRACE
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Grace for Today

JANUARY, 2017 • VOLUME 16, NO. 1

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!.....by Pastor Ken

OK, I know some of you are thinking: where have you been PK? Christmas was last month. Well, true enough, the actual Christmas Eve and Christmas Day celebrations were last month, but Christmas lasts until January 6th. So I feel OK with wishing you all a Merry Christmas and all the best for the New Year too!

Let me also add my sincerest thanks to all of you that sent me a card, good wishes, and gifts over the Christmas Holiday season and for the true gift that all of you are to me every day of the year. I am so pleased with the life together that we share in the name of the One whose birth we are celebrating again. May you all know that not only during this season, but throughout all the seasons of the church year, I thank God for the ministry we share in Jesus' name.

Some of us have been taking a reflective walk through Advent, and now Christmas, with Martin Luther. For me at least, it was a very good thing to do, as it got me back to journaling again. I have been thinking reflectively upon many things. Taking time to be reflective is always a good thing, especially as we think about all that God might be calling us to do as a church. Our church, which bears the name of the great reformer, is in the 500 Anniversary of the reformation.

I do hope to keep a focus on Martin Luther and all that he meant as a servant of the Gospel in advancing Christ for the entire world. Luther would not want us to lift him up, but rather to turn toward Christ. This is what the focus will be, using some of what Luther taught, to advance the gospel always. Allow us to keep the good Dr. Luther and his words in our minds as the year goes forward. For example, here is an excerpt from a Sermon Luther gave at Christmas in 1522. The text verse Luther used is Luke 1:52: He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.

"How could God have revealed his loving kindness more divinely than by sinking himself deeply into our flesh and blood, by not despising human modesty, and by honoring nature most where Adam and Eve had most disgraced it?"

All evil lust and all evil thoughts fall away, however strong they are, if we but turn our eyes to that nativity, seeing how the most high Majesty is creatively at work in the flesh and blood of such a lowly Virgin. As deeply as she is despised on earth, so highly, yes- a thousand times higher she is glorified in heaven.

Behold how very greatly God glorifies those who are despised by the world, and who rejoice therein. Open your eyes and see what the Lord sees! Only downward does he gaze into the deepest lowliness. As it is written: 'he is enthroned above the cherubim and gazes into the deepest depth, even into the abyss.'

Neither did the angels find princes or the mighty, but only untaught and lowly folk. Might they not have brought their message to the high priest, the scholars at Jerusalem who have so much to tell about God and the angels? No, not they, but the poor shepherds were found worthy of such great grace and honor from heaven, they, who on earth have no honor. Yes. Truly, God casts out all that is lofty."

So then, as we head into the New Year, let us be reminded that we are to be disciples of the One who came to serve all and who first came to the lowly. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year in Jesus name, Amen



**Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year!**

LUTHERLAND TOUR BEING OFFERED DURING NEXT ADVENT SEASON OR 2017!

Do you know that 2017 marks the 500th anniversary year of the start of the Reformation? Have you ever thought of traveling to the places that Luther lived and studied? Well then, make plans now to be a part of a spiritual journey through Luther Land all the while also visiting some of Germany's most wonderful Christkindlmarkts/ Christmas Markets.

A tour is being planned for us at Grace. I/Pastor Ken, will host with the assistance of Witte Spiritual Tours, a company recommended by the ELCA. Here is your chance to see the places that Luther lived and changed the world through his passion for the Gospel. A few brief brochures along with a preliminary sign-up sheet is in a binder on the welcome desk. Please take a look and if interested please sign up and I will be in touch. The cost is estimated at \$3,200-\$3,400 and includes airfare, land transportation, hotel, breakfast daily, 6 dinners, tour manager, and admission fees. The dates are **November 27-December 7, 2017.**



BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKS- Nancy Kreznor will be hosting our next blood pressure check on January 22 between the 8:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. services. This is a free wellness service Nancy provides to our congregation.

PAINTING DAY- Through our capital campaign we have been able to make improvements to our facility and grounds. Our next project involves sweat equity and we need help from the congregation. We are painting Grace Center and the hallways in the lower level on **January 21**. We will be starting work at 8:00 a.m. All volunteers are encouraged to sign up on the sheet located on the activities bulletin board. We can't make this happen without you, please mark your calendar.

PRAYERS-*Please lift up these petitions in your prayers—To become a praying member of the Friends in Prayer, please submit name and e-mail address to dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org.*

World: Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, churchwide staff & their families, Bishop Jeff Clements, synod staff & their families, those serving in military conflicts, Arusha Town Lutheran Parish in Tanzania (our companion parish), Scott Bunch serving in the military, Spc. Michael Picard, Army Reserves, Corps of Engineers, deployed to Kuwait (friend of the Laird family), Colleen Laird (studying 4 months abroad at University College Dublin, Ireland), Lt. Thomas Stock serving in Africa (nephew of Tammy Hansing)

Woodstock: Pastor Ken Gibson & his family; Pastor Amanda Bergstrom & her family; Grace Staff; Grace Council

Health Concerns: Lois Bloese, John Bloese, Dee Bohn, Ken DeVogelaere, Patrice Dunn, Verna Eslick, Steve Figved (friend of Cathy Meyer), Tannie Fiorina (mother of John Fiorina), Cheryl Flemming (mother of Kristy Nellesen), Robert Giron (brother of Patty Kozlow), Tamasa Gutierrez (mother of Patty Kozlow), Maroulla Hahne (friend of Martha & Bill Fleck), Devin Harms (friend of Joe Evanoff), Cindy Hertrampf (sister of Tammy Hansing), Mary Hurst (friend of Deborah Evanoff), John Johnson (brother of Jerry Johnson), Jake Kalisik (grandson of Barbara Murray), the Kamps family, Diane Knowles, Keith Kulpinski (friend of Spanbauers & Thurows), Colleen Kuraszek (friend of Adele Petersen), John Mahoney, Renee Merklin (friend of Rachel Bratanick), Tammy Millman (daughter of Karen Millman), Sue Murphy (friend of Martha & Bill Fleck), Carol O'Brien (sister of Bill Larsen), Gloria Ogle, Arne Olson, Shawn Rank (son of Bert & Carol Rank), Jean Reed (mother of Mary Hoyt), Steve Rick & family (friends of Billie Cornell), Joan Russell (mother of Sheri Conover), Stanley Russell (father of Sheri Conover), Darlene Sarbaugh, Dick Schroeder, Ellen Schulz (daughter-in-law of Diane Schulz), Bill Seger, Eleanor Setser, John Sorensen, Doris Sunday, Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahan), Ellie Mae Thompson (great niece of Gladys & Ken Renner), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Bob Unglaube, Bud Winter, Ruth Zirves

Sorrows: Lyle Bungard, Dee Fritsch, Robert Gruel (brother of Barbara Hathcock)

If you wish to add a prayer request for this newsletter, please call the church office at 815-338-0554. Your prayer concern will run for one week and may be renewed. Submissions to the *Friends in Prayer* e-mail and phone teams may also be submitted by telephone to the church office or by e-mail to Gracewoodstock.org. Due to confidentiality laws, hospitals no longer notify churches or pastors when a member is hospitalized. If you or a member of your family have a medical procedure planned or is admitted to the hospital, please call the church office at 815-338-0554.

SENIOR LUNCHEON – January 24 – Let’s start the New Year out with fun! We have a wonderful Maple Mustard Roast Chicken Dinner planned, starting out with a Cranberry Pineapple Salad, homemade Buttermilk Biscuits and a Wickedly Good Whoopie Pie for dessert. Then you can enjoy playing some games of Bingo, I have some new challenging games planned and some great prizes also. Cost is only \$5.00 for a healthy, home cooked, three course meal - So bring a friend! Please sign up in the Activity Binder by January 22. Questions, call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063

LENTEN SOUP LUNCHES – Calling all you great cooks! Please consider signing up to make a large batch of soup to be served after our Lenten noon services. A sign-up sheet and more information is in the activity binder. Ash Wednesday is March 1, 2017.

FROM THE GRACE KNITTERS- A big THANK YOU to whoever donated the large collection of yarn recently. It was a very generous gift, and we would like to thank you personally. Please email Judy Reilly (jreilly038@gmail.com) or call Judy at 815 353-4638.

PRESCHOOL FUNDRAISERS- The preschool will be having two fundraisers in January:

Panera Bread—On **January 12** Panera Bread will give the preschool 20% of qualifying sales all day. Just present the flyer that is on the welcome desk, or show the digital flyer that will be on Facebook and other social media.

Kingston Lanes- Join us for some bowling family fun and help the preschool at the same time. On **January 21** from 1:00 p.m.- 4:00p.m. Kingston Lanes is donating all game proceeds and 10% of food and drink sales. Please RSVP through the flyer at the welcome desk, or email Chris at clearman@gracewoodstock.org. RSVP’s are due by **Wednesday, January 18th**. Please let us know how many people are coming and the shoe sizes needed.

SUNDAY BOOK CLUB - January 8th in room 102 between services. This would be a great time for newcomers to join us! We are reading Flight to Heaven by Dale Black. If you enjoy lively, faith-filled discussions and some sweet treats, this group is for you. Questions, call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063

BLOOD DRIVE– There are many ways Grace Lutheran Church services and helps the community. Our Blood Drives are one of them. On **January 15th** Grace is holding our first blood drive of the year. Please come donate and start the new year out by helping to save a life. Make an appointment at heartlandbc.org or contact Gretchen @ 815-341-7544.

PRESCHOOL OPEN HOUSE– Preschool will hold its annual winter open house on January 28, 2017 from 10-noon. This is the kick off to our fall 2017 registration. Please come visit our fabulous preschool and help spread the word that registration will start then.

BULLETIN & PRESENCE LIGHT SPONSORS—2017 Bulletin & Presence Light sponsor sheets are available in the green binder at the Welcome Center. A month prior to your sponsoring, a form will be sent to you requesting information and a donation of \$20 for the Bulletins & \$10 for the Presence Light. Thank you for helping us fund the weekly bulletins and presence lights.



BREAD FOR THE DAY 2017—Bread for the day is a daily-use devotional resource filled with rich treasures; such as a brief scripture reading, a prayer and hymn for each day and more. The devotions begin January 1, 2017. If you are interested in having a copy of the devotional book they available for purchase in the office for \$8.00.

SAVE THE DATE: Blood Pressure Checks **JAN 22**...Grace Preschool Open House, **JAN 28**... Blood Pressure Checks **FEB 12**...McHenry County PADS **FEB 18**...

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: **MONTHLY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**—The deadline for the February newsletter is January 15. Send articles to : Tammy Baier at tbaier@gracewoodstock.org, or the church office. Questions: Office at 815-338-0554.
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Here is your link to the Weekend Worship Participants:

Schedule:<http://www.gracewoodstock.org/WeeklyNews/Monthly%20Worship%20Participants.pdf>

PREPARE THE WAY

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Committed— \$497,556.06
Received— \$437,401.24
Goal— \$780,430.00



Stephen Ministers

Share the warmth of God's love with those who need it most: the lonely, the depressed, the grieving. Is God calling you to reach out to those who are hurting?

Consider serving as a Stephen Minister. For more information, please contact Katy Sheridan or Pastor Ken

WACM COOKBOOKS

Would make a great Christmas Gift! They are available for sale at the Information Center. They are \$14.95 each and all proceeds go to support Woodstock Area Community Ministries.

UPDATED PHONE NUMBERS AND ADDRESSES

Please contact the church office if your contact information has changed, or you no longer have/use a landline phone. Thank you!

SUNDAY MORNING SWEET TREATS

Sundays are available immediately! Info/sign-up on the Activity Board. To volunteer for coffee set-up contact the office.

CHURCH CLOSINGS AND EVENT

CANCELLATIONS - When severe weather arrives, Grace Lutheran Church will follow D200 closing and cancellations. Please check the Emergency Closing Center website or any of the radio stations listed on the D200 website for any severe weather cancellations.

GRACE STAFF & COUNCIL

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Office Hours: 8:30 am–3:30 pm, M–Th
8:30 am–12:00 pm, F

Visit the Grace website for the most up-to-date information for all that is happening at Grace!

