

DECEMBER, 2015 • VOLUME 14, NO. 13

LIGHT EM UP!by Pastor Ken Gibson

As I sat down to type this month's GFT article a member called and wondered if I wanted to put lights again around the front entry. My immediate answer was in fact; "LIGHT EM UP!" I love the lights during the season when we all begin to string lights and brighten up our potentially darker days.



This year I suggest that perhaps we even put up more lights? "Why?" you might ask. Well in the midst of all that is going on in our world, let us make the lights of the season this year glow even brighter. If I were Tim "The Toolman" Taylor, I would figure out some way to use the "Binford Super Power Booster 5,000" ARRGH ARRGH ARRGH ARRGH! For you see, I want the world to know that the darkness cannot overcome the light! The Darkness of senseless killing of persons. The Darkness of fear of innocent persons seeking only to find a place away from bombs and bloodshed. The Darkness of families whose loved ones find them-selves in harms way day in and day out.

Yes, there seems to be a lot of darkness these days but as Advent is now upon us we realize we wait again for the birth event that allowed for all darkness to be trampled underfoot. We realize that in Jesus birth the Light has come into the world and the darkness cannot overcome it. No matter how some try to darken that message, it simply cannot be done. Light will win the day; it always has and it always will.

So, as you hang your lights this year or as you gaze upon them, (you may have them up already), let the reflecting brightness remind us of loves pure light that has come and that is the reason for all the lights we see. As we sing in verse four of Hark, The Herald Angels Sing; "Light and life to ALL he brings, Ris'n healing in his wings!" So yes, LIGHT EM UP! SING EM UP! And "Fear not, for see I am bringing good news of great joy for ALL the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the LORD! (Luke 2:10b-11)

LIGHTING OF THE SQUARE COOKIE DISTRIBUTION—Join us at 6:30pm on Friday, **November 27** to distribute the cookies at the Lighting Of The Square. Please bring a basket or bag to hold the cookies.

ADVENT SPIRITUALITY: PRAYER & COLORING—This Advent, you are invited to meet in the parlor, near the warmth of the fireplace, on Wednesdays from 6-7 p.m. for a time of prayer and a quiet space for coloring as we reflect on scripture and prayer themes surrounding hope, courage, joy, and love. Pastor Amanda will lead the opening time of prayer and reflection before a time to color an Advent prayer page. Please join us at 6 p.m. for prayer and coloring before Holden Evening Prayer at 7 p.m., Wednesdays in Advent (December 2, 9, 16, 23).

GRACE SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS TREE—Once again our Grace Sunday School Students have been hard at work making ornaments to decorate a tree for the opera house "Tree Walk". Stop by and visit our tree anytime the opera house is open starting Friday Nov. 27th at 7:00 p.m.

BLOOD DRIVE—Celebrate the holidays by giving back. We are holding our last blood drive of 2015 on Wednesday **Dec 2**. Lets make it the biggest one yet. Come help save up to three lives by donating blood at Grace. Appointments available from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Look for Gretchen Hutchens in the narthex between services to sign up or give her a call at 815-341-7544.

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT FORUM—All are welcome to join us downstairs in Luther Hall Sunday morning 9:45-10:30 for our current series of REALIZING THE SOCIAL TRUTHS IN OUR COMMUNITY— Grace is inviting human service organizations to tell their story. Find out who is in need and discover steps you can take to "Share God's Grace". Invite others to come with you. **November 29:** no class, **December 6:** PIONEER CENTER empowering individuals to achieve their full potential where they live, learn, work and play, **December 13:** ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS OF MCHENRY COUNTY is dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the environment, **December 20:** CHOITZ FAM ZAMBIA, Missionaries with International Teams, and one of our Endowment Recipients, **December 27** - no class

FESTIVAL CHOIR OPPORTUNITIES—Rehearsals have begun on Wednesdays for the season of Advent. If you let us know the services you can sing we can give you the exact rehearsal schedule. Christmas Eve 11 pm rehearsals will begin in early Dec. We will again include the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's "Messiah" .

MITTEN TREES—Once again, Grace is collecting NEW mittens, hats, gloves, scarves, socks, and underwear for local families in need this winter. Please bring items to church by Dec. 20 and hang them on the mitten trees in the narthex and lower level. Thank you for your donations! Questions, please contact Ellie Thurow.

LIGHT A CANDLE THIS ADVENT—Help make our Advent celebration special. We need 15 families (one is also a family unit) to light the candles on our Advent Wreath for all weekend Advent services starting **Nov. 29** and for Christmas Eve. Sign up in the Activities Binder at the Information Center. There is no speaking involved. The candle lighting takes place in the early part of the service.

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 Eaton, Bishop Wollersheim; those serving in military conflicts, Arusha Town Lutheran Parish in Tanzania (our companion parish), Scott Bunch serving in the military, Tyler Stiemke serving in the military

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

Health Concerns: Bob Clemons (friend of Cathy Meyer), Janet Cook (sister of Karen Millman), Rita Cosgrove (sister of Diana King), Cary Crisp (friend of Lynn Nattress), Jim Davis, Nancy Davis, Ken DeVogelaere, Marge Dierksen, Clark Drennen (cousin of Bill Fleck), Betty Dusthimer (sister of Diane Thurow), Sophie Frazier (great grand niece of Ila Randolph), Maroulla Hahne (friend of Bill & Martha Fleck), Donnie Hertrampf (brother-in-law of Tammy Hansing), Patrice Hoover, Erika Hoppe (mother of Monica Hoefling), Mary Hurst (friend of Deborah Evanoff), Christina Jaggi (friend of Adele Petersen), Fila Johnson (sister-in-law to Roberta Herzog), John Johnson (brother of Jerry Johnson), Vincent Lopez (father of Tom Lopez), Wilma Malinasky (mother of Janice Laird), Gail Mueller, Jack Myers (friend of Betty & Dick Boehmke), Jesse Myjak, Don Nusbaum, Carol O'Brien (sister of Bill Larsen), Gloria Ogle, Alice Pate, Ferd Raffel, Shawn Rank (son of Bert & Carol Rank), Joan Russell (mother of Sheri Conover), Stanley Russell (father of Sheri Conover), Dick Schroeder, Ellen Schulz (daughter-in-law of Diane Schulz), Eleanor Setser, John Sorensen, Suzanne Stumpff, Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahan), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Lauryn Trede (granddaughter of Pat Cervantes), Bob Unglaube, Dorothe VonBergen, Faith Watkins, Karen Wells, Lois Wiecek, Jeannie Wilcox, Janet Worley, Robert Worley (cousins of Diane Baker-Lockwood), Ruth Zirves

Sorrows: Vernon Thomas Kopsell, John McMahan (father of Melissa McMahan), Terry Haak (father of Coleen Kunzie), Bill Stecker (brother of Carol Raffel), James Wille, Frances Waghorn-Homeier, Charlotte Simmons (grandmother of Rob Ribbe), Larry Bohn

Joys: Baptism of Chase Ryker Westbrook, son of Cortney & Chad Westbrook

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.

LOVE . . . by Pastor Amanda Bergstrom



Love. . . Love wins. Love casts out fear. Love speaks to weary hearts. Love entered this world as that tiny little baby, away in a manger for there was no room for his parents in the inn. Love died on a cross and rose to new life. God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ.

It has been a long year, a long year of shocking local and global events. It has been a long year of losses, and fear, of persisting racism, of stirring xenophobia, of terrorist attacks, of mass shootings, of inexplicable violence and hatred.

Yet, even as these events and realities weigh so heavily on our hearts, and somehow hardens our hearts as if to shut out any remembrance of feeling, there is still love. There is the love of God that gathers us up, the broken people and pieces of this world, to be held in a tender embrace. There is our own love for others that causes our hearts to ache and grieve for someone else’s suffering and pain. There is the love of that tiny baby, which compels us forward through this last month of the calendar year. There is a communal love to be silent for a night as we watch the light of flickering candles and know that love does indeed win, cast out fear, speak to our weary hearts, and God somehow loves us just as we are.

I pray that this enduring love of God may guide us this December. May God’s love be at the core of our gift-giving frenzies. May the love of Christ remind us that Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus needed to flee for their lives. May the loving Spirit stir up in our hearts the compassion of the Good Samaritan, one who tended to an unknown traveler in need of assistance. May the love of God guide us to know that death and terror and fear do not stand in the face of the love that says, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”

Even as the longest night of the year nears, the sun still comes with the morning; and even as the end of this long year nears, there is still love. Thanks be to God for love, and blessings on this year and on your Christmas celebrations.

CHRISTMAS FAMILY SHARING—Christmas is coming! That means the Christmas Family Sharing (CFS) ministry will be coming even sooner. We will again partner with Bethel New Life and the Family Health Partnership Clinic (FHPC). For CFS we will have two Christmas trees set up in the narthex with ornaments for you to choose – one tree for each organization. Each ornament will have an item which you can purchase to help that organization. For FHPC, these are items that they distribute regularly such as small bottles of OTC medicines and food items for their food pantry. Bethel is no longer offering the Christmas Store as it had become too time intensive for their staff, however, they will still be offering items for participants to purchase at greatly reduced prices just in a different format. Items on the Bethel tree will be for their Christmas Child Program – baby and toddler toys, clothes, and other items and their Christmas Elder Program – household items, gloves, hats, and coats. A new program is their Adopt a Grandchild Christmas Stocking Program in which you can donate a fully stuffed Christmas stocking for a child aged 3-12. See the table in the narthex for more information on the Stocking program or with any other questions. The ornaments and stockings are available now. Final gift collection will be on Sunday, **December 6**. Thank you so much for your ongoing support of this ministry!



CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS —Help provide decorations for our sanctuary this Christmas. Give a gift in “honor of someone” or in memory of a loved one” or “to the glory of God.” Forms are available in this week’s bulletin or at the Welcome Center in the Narthex. All forms and donations of \$12.00 are due by **December 14**. Following our 10:00 a.m. service on December 25 poinsettias may be taken home or to our shut-ins.

ADULT COACH BUS TRIP REMINDER – Thursday, **December 17, 2015** The Coach USA Bus will be in the lower left lot for loading at 9:45am, please be punctual. Questions: call Shirley Busse @ 815-338-9063

CHURCH CLOSINGS AND EVENT CANCELLATIONS - When severe weather arrives, Grace Lutheran Church will follow D200 closing and cancellations. All weekday activities, including preschool, will be cancelled if D200 has cancelled classes. Please check the [Emergency Closing Center website](#) or any of the radio stations listed on the [D200 website](#) for any severe weather cancellations.



SENIOR LUNCHEON – December 15 – “Have a Very Merry Christmas Party” Our special Christmas menu starts out with Sliced Peaches over Cottage Cheese, followed by Chicken Divan, Wild Rice and French Bread with a Candy Cane Dessert you’re sure to love. After dinner we will have a “recycled gift exchange”: remember that scarf or tie you got last year and didn’t like . . . here’s the chance to get rid of it! Wrap it up real pretty and exchange it for something better. All gifts must be in “like new” condition and come from your home – no going out shopping. Cost is only \$5.00, so bring a friend. Please sign up in the Activity Binder by December 13. Questions, call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063

HELP US GROW! - Every year our preschool is very grateful for the donations we receive from our parents and Grace Church families. This year we are kicking off a Helping Hands: Help Us Grow campaign. Helping Hands will be posted around church that list items we are in need of. Some examples might include; batteries, mailing labels, copy paper, Walgreens gift cards for photo printing or laminating sheets. If you are able to donate an item, please take that hand with you and return your item to the office. Include your name with your donation, we want to be able to give you a big 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.

LIFE LINE SCREENING—Protect your health by finding out your risk of having a stroke by participating in the Life Line Screening that will be at Grace Lutheran Church on Friday, January 15, 2016. Register today for the Stroke, Vascular & Heart Rhythm package, which includes four screenings: carotid artery, abdominal aortic aneurysm, peripheral arterial disease and atrial fibrillation. In order to register for this event and to receive a \$10 discount off any package priced above \$129, please call 1-888-653-6441 or visit www.lifelinescreening.com/community-partners.

2016 BULLETIN & PRESENCE LIGHT SPONSOR DATES AVAILABLE— This is a great way to honor/memorialize a loved one or special occasion while helping to defray the cost of these items. Sponsor sheets are available at the Information 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.

THE SUNDAY BOOK CLUB—The Sunday Book Club has just completed a three year book series "Sunday by Sunday" by Cristy Fossum. We will begin on January 10 with a new selection "90 minutes in Heaven" by Don Piper. This is a true story of life and death written by an ordained minister, this life changing story may just change your daily life. Plan on joining us January 10 in room 102 at the Education time between services. This book is available in our church library, so check it out. We hope to see you then!

CHRISTMAS BREAD BAKING—Join us to make bread for our Christmas Service visitors. We will start at 9:00 am on Saturday, **December 19**. All are welcome. Stay as long as you are able. All hands are welcome!

FUNERAL PLANNING— Do you have favorite scripture passages and/or hymns? Is there something you hope to have included in your funeral service? We have a simple worksheet where you can note your favorite scripture, hymns, and other details, and we invite everyone to fill one out to share with your family and bring to the church office so we can file it away, and at some point know how to best honor your wishes. Please stop by the church office to pick up a Funeral Planning Worksheet, or you can find a copy on Grace’s website under “Communication & Documents,” and then “Forms and Documents.” Thanks be to God, that even in the face of death, we proclaim the promise of the resurrection.



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE—The deadline for the January newsletter is Dec. 15. Send articles to Lynn Nattress at lnattress@gracewoodstock.org, or the church office. Questions: Office at 815-338-0554.



COMPANION SISTERS & BROTHERS IN INDIA

Dear Rostered Leaders and Faithful Members of our Congregations,

Please find below the email I received from our Companion Synod partner, Bishop Socrates, of the Arcot Lutheran Church, regarding the devastation that happened on the territory of the Arcot Lutheran Church, as the result of a cyclone hitting their homeland on November 9. They ask for our prayers and support. If anyone would like to make a financial contribution in response to the destruction, please forward your check to the Synod office marked "Arcot Lutheran Church Disaster Response" noted in the memo line. We will make sure these donations are sent directly to the Arcot Lutheran Church.

In Christ,
Bishop Gary Wollersheim

Dear and Respected Partners in Christ!

Greetings to you in the precious Name of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As you may aware from the International Weather Forecast the recent Depression centred 450 kms East-South East of Chennai turned into a Cyclonic Storm and crossed the Pondicherry - Cuddalore shore with a rapid speed in Cuddalore district in the early hours of 9th November 2015 leaving many dead and many more homeless with heavy catastrophic effects.

- ◆ *loss of life reaching 40 in Cuddalore area alone.*
- ◆ *loss of livestock crossing 4,000.*
- ◆ *around 30 Pastorates in the Arcot Lutheran Church's operational area including Parangipettai where the ALC-Community College is situated are terribly affected by this cyclonic storm.*

As immediate response we deployed the Danish Mission Hospital, Tirukoilur and the nursing assistant students and staff of the Community College, Parangipettai , to extend medical and health related assistance to the people of the affected villages. The feeding program is likely to be started shortly.

In this critical situation on behalf of the Arcot Lutheran Church we seek your earnest prayers, support and solidarity to enable us to take collective action to help and support the victims of the disaster.

With prayers and kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,
Rt. Rev. Raja Socrates. G
Bishop-President, ALC.*

SIMPLY GIVING—Do you know about Simply Giving? Simply Giving is a confidential, no charge, automatic withdrawal program; and it is one option available for giving tithes and offerings. Simply Giving provides an option to give on a regular basis (weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly). Enrollment forms to sign up are available at the Information Desk, and on Grace's website (under "Communication and Documents," then "Forms & Documents"). As in our giving and our annual estimates of giving, if your situation changes, automatic giving through Simply Giving can be changed by contacting the church office. Automatic gift amounts can be changed, or put on hold with one week's notice. Please feel free to contact the pastors or church office with any questions about Simply Giving.

Here is your link to the Weekend Worship Participants:

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

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION—Grace hosts a New Member Orientation Breakfast on a quarterly basis. We have a light breakfast for those that would like to become members, and those wanting more information on what it means to be a member of the Grace family. Please sign-up in the Activity Binder at the Information Center or call the church for the next New Member Orientation date 815-338-0554.

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

OLSON ELEMENTARY— The school is always looking for items to have on hand in the nurse's office. Lists are at the Information Center.

UPCOMING EDUCATION DATES:
Adult Education—Sundays at 9:45 am
"New" Sunday Book Club—Jan.10
Christmas Tree Walk—Nov. 27th to Jan2nd

BLOOD DRIVE—Our last blood drive of 2015 is on Weds. Dec 2. Appointments available from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Look for Gretchen Hutchens or call 815-341-7544.

2015 & 2016 BULLETIN AND PRESENCE LIGHT SPONSORS NEEDED
Sign-up is available at the Information 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.

**PREPARE THE WAY—
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE**
Committed—\$483,456.06
Received—\$323,283.78

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Beth Miller; Daniel Nattress
council@gracewoodstock.org
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!

