

DECEMBER, 2017 • VOLUME 16, NO. 12

Adventby Pastor Ken Gibson

The word advent is defined by Webster a couple of different ways. The first is advent with a small “a”; as the following; (ad-vent n.) the coming or arrival of something awaited or momentous. Then there is Advent with a capital “A” as follows: (Ad-vent n.) The birth of Christ. I think that both definitions are actually needed to capture the wonder and gift that advent truly is, both as advent and Advent.



For me, the advent with a lowercase “a” represents the joy and excitement we have in waiting for the birth of Jesus. The Advent with uppercase “A” is the event itself, an event so important that all of time since is noted from this birth.

And for me, this year advent with a small “a” is truly a time of waiting for a special birth, especially since I wait with anticipation for the birth of a second grandson, as daughter Lauren is due to deliver early in this new advent season. Now the whole world, I am sure, will not hence forth mark time at the birth of our newest grandchild, yet it is significant to me and my family. I will rejoice at the gift of this child, and in the same way we rejoice again that the whole world experienced the first Advent, capital “A”. Our family has always included the wonder of the Advent season and the joy of remembering Christ’s birth and the gift of Christ’s coming means for us and for the world. Lauren, especially, always loved the waiting as much as the actual joy of Christmas. Where Joy, on the other hand, truly relished in the joy that comes with Christmas Day! Both are good and both are important.

Yet I must share that time changes things, and I am reminded that for some the “joy” that should be felt at this time of waiting can be troublesome and maybe even painful. I will not try and make it all sound and seem easy and in some way suggest that such should not be the case. I have over these past 25 years of ministry and 58 years of life come to realize that people are where they are and sometimes the best we can do is try to just be with them in that space. To sit and wait with them as it were. To share in the moments of hurt and to care enough to maybe just, be still enough to hear them as they breathe.

So what I am asking us all to consider is, as we “do” advent this season, if we might all take some time to be still enough, if not to hear and feel someone else breathe, then to make time to do such for ourselves. Our mid-week Advent service with Holden Evening Prayer is one place that we can do such together as a community of faith, and as persons in need of some stillness in our own lives. In so doing then, might we come to the place where the Advent, uppercase “A” is the fulfilling gift of life and light so intended. Advent waiting is for a purpose and may we find Joy in both the wait and the birth.

Happy Advent to all and to all a Christmas full of The Gift!

CHRISTMAS EVE YOUTH RECITAL RETURNS—You can sign up musically talented children to present a short (1 - 3 minute) sacred Christmas piece before the 4:30 pm service. Participation in the recital will be set up on a first come basis. We **MUST** have all of the following information: Person playing or singing; which instrument or voice, Title, composer, timed length of piece; phone contact. Sign up in the Activities Binder. Please have info in the binder by **December 11**.

SENIOR LUNCHEON – December 19 Come celebrate with us! It's time for our annual Christmas party. Our holiday dinner features: broccoli ham roll-ups, brussel sprouts with sour cream sauce, cranberry fruit relish, rolls & butter, preacher cake, coffee & tea. For fun, we will be having a "recycled gift exchange". Please bring a new item you have received and never used, wrap it up real pretty! Sign up in the Activity Binder by **December 17**. Questions, call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063

BULLETIN & PRESENCE LIGHT SPONSORS- 2018 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.

FOOD PANTRY HELP– We are in need of a Grace Food Pantry representative. Dick Boehmke is retiring after many years of faithful service. For more information or to volunteer for this much needed ministry, please contact the office.

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, Chaplain Major Darrell Kyle deployed with the U.S. Air Force.

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

Health Concerns: Richard Anderson (Uncle of Beth Miller & Carole Gerloff), Lori Armstrong Reeter (friend of Karl & Denise Klabunde), Marge Birk, Lois Bloese, John Bloese, Ray Bock (husband of Sharon Bock), Mary Sue Boerner (friend of Paul Lockwood & Diane Baker-Lockwood), Sheila Boggess (friend of Kathy Stone), Frank Bunch, Dale Carlson, Allison Clark (niece of Martha & Bill Fleck), Jasper Clark (grandson of Joe Evanoff), Nancy Davis, Patrice Dunn, Verna Eslick, Russ Freeman, Robert Giron (brother of Patty Kozlow), Becca Guenther (niece of Gretchen & Claude Hutchens), Tamasa Gutierrez (mother of Patty Kozlow), Wallace Halvorson (father of Shelley Tucker), Jerry Johnson, the Kamps family, Diana King, Nancy Knieja (friend of Martha Fleck), Diane Knowles, Keith Kulpinski (friend of Spanbauers & Thurows), Ken Lindenmier (brother-in-law of Diane Baker-Lockwood), John Mahoney, Renee Merklin (friend of Rachel Bratanick), Tammy Millman (daughter of Karen Millman), Kem Moran (friend of Barb Aavang), Carl Neubaum (son of Donna Neubaum), Carol O'Brien (sister of Bill Larsen), Gloria Ogle, John Oliver (friend of Ron & Mary Koehn), Sue Olsen, Arne Olson, Vicki Pilgard, Carol Raffel, Carol Rank, Shawn Rank (son of Bert & Carol Rank), Johnny Rankin (friend of Joe Evanoff), Sheila Readel, Rene Rebman (uncle of Ron & Mary Koehn), Jean Reed (mother of Mary Hoyt), Dora Reyes, Joan Russell (mother of Sheri Conover), Stanley Russell (father of Sheri Conover), Colton Sciluffo (infant son of a friend of Joy Oberman), Dick Schroeder, Ellen Schulz (daughter-in-law of Diane Schulz), Bill Seger, Eleanor Setser, John Sorensen, Keith Steinwehe, Elsie Stoddard, Ginny Stroh (mother of Fay Wilson), 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), Bev Visconti, Jim & Patti Waters (parents of Chris Ethridge), Kaitlyn Wietermann, Bud Winter, Ruth Zirves

Sorrows: Carmen Goodmon (mother of Jennifer Robbins), Bert Rank, Philip May

Joys: Baptism of Brynleigh Ann Benda (daughter of Brandon & Kristina Benda)

If you wish to add a prayer request for the 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.

All is Calm. All is Bright.....by Pastor Amanda



All is calm, all is bright . . . except when it's not all calm and bright. Things, life, the world, everything is not usually all calm and bright, but in the stillness and quiet, in the scripture and songs of tradition and resistance, and even in tentative greetings of hope and joy- the calming peace of Christ and bright light of the world somehow breaks through all the unsettled chaos and the dim dreariness- and for a moment all might be calm and bright.

I love and long for moments that give us a glimpse of the promise of the Christ child. In this season of Advent, waiting and preparing for Christmas, I often find fleeting calm and brightness in the reflected light of fresh snowflakes, the calm of a warm place to rest after being out in the cold, the decorative lights that adorn trees or buildings, and in the candles we will light in worship.

During weekend worship services, we'll pause for the lighting of the Advent wreath, one candle to visually mark each of the four weeks of the season.

During Wednesday evening Holden Evening Prayer, we'll process with a large candle and we will sing these declarations of faith: "Jesus Christ, you are the light of the world; the light no darkness can overcome;" and "Great and mighty are you, O Holy One, strong is your justice strong your love."

And during Christmas Eve worship services, we'll sing of that silent holy night, where all is calm and bright, as we light candles and hold the light of Christ in our hands. And in that song and action we boldly declare that even when all is not calm or bright in our lives or the world, there is a holy wonder in the birth of Christ, and that wondrous night of his birth still makes a difference in ushering in God's peace today.

May this season bring moments of calm and brightness, of peace and joy, of quiet reflection, and of joyful sounds of silence and praise; may this Advent and Christmastime reorient our lives to the promise of Jesus' birth.

Advent & Christmas Worship Services

In December, we gather in worship to wait, watch, keep awake, and prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth during the season of Advent. (On Saturday, December 23 we will gather for our 5 P.M. worship service. On Sunday, December 24 we will not have morning services before the three Christmas Eve evening services.) We look forward to seeing you in worship!

December 16 & 17 Advent Lessons & Carols, "The Great O Antiphons"

During all three weekend worship services we will share in a service of Advent lessons and carols, hearing God's word, singing Advent hymns, and sharing Holy Communion.

Wednesday Evenings: December 6, 13, 20; 7 P.M. Holden Evening Prayer

In the midst of the winter we gather for a quiet prayer service where we sing of Jesus Christ, the light of the world; our prayers rise up like incense before God, and our souls proclaim God's greatness.

Christmas Eve, December 24; 4:30, 7:30, 11:00 P.M.

Holy Communion and candle lighting at all worship services

4:30 P.M.– We share in a joyous Christmas worship service led by our children's choirs. A children's music recital begins at 4 P.M.

7:30 P.M.– We share in a contemporary Christmas worship service led by Youthful Spirit, Laudate & friends, our middle school and high school choirs & alumni.

At **11:00 P.M.**– We gather for a traditional festival Christmas worship service led by Chancel Choir, including a sing-along of "Hallelujah" from Handel's "Messiah."

Christmas Day, December 25; 10:00 A.M.

Holy Communion and Christmas hymn sing

We gather on Christmas morning to hear the good news of Jesus' birth, share Holy Communion, and sing favorite Christmas hymns.

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE–The deadline for the January newsletter is December 15. Send articles to Tammy Baier at tbaiert@gracewoodstock.org, or the church office. Questions: Call the office at 815-338-0554.
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CHRISTMAS FAMILY SHARING- Tis the Season! Our Christmas Family Sharing ministry will be starting soon. This year, though, it will look just a bit different. After partnering with Bethel New Life in Chicago for more than 20 years, Bethel has decided not to offer this program. After conversations with Pr. Amanda and Pr. Ken, Grace will continue to support the Family Health Partnership Clinic (FHPC) and will also support Turning Point and ELCA Good Gifts helping to meet needs in our local community as well as our global community. Stop by to visit the Giving Tree in the narthex starting November 25 and continuing until final gift collection on December 17. This year we are offering several different ways to help support our ministry partners:

Family Health Partnership Clinic: The Giving Tree will again have ornaments with items that FHPC can use in their clinic and food pantry. In addition, we can help supply their Mobile Clinic which supports a number of individuals in Woodstock. For those of you who are online shoppers, FHPC has created an Amazon Wish List. You can order items off the list and have them shipped directly to the Clinic. Go to Amazon.com and look for Family Health Partnership Clinic under Wish Lists. <https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/?ie=UTF8&cid=A372QR19KD28I2>

Turning Point: Ornaments on the Giving Tree for Turning Point will help supply the ongoing needs of their shelter. There will be ornaments for specific items. There will also be ornaments with envelopes attached. Donations collected in these envelopes will be given to Turning Point to help them buy Gravity Blankets. These blankets are therapeutic for individuals who have experienced trauma and ongoing anxiety. Each blanket costs approximately \$100.

ELCA Good Gifts: Ornaments on the Giving Tree for ELCA Good Gifts will also have envelopes attached. You can choose from a wide variety of items – from chicks, to goats, to school uniforms – to help support people in need around the world. You can indicate on the envelope what item you would like to sponsor, and after we have collected all the envelopes, we will place an order with ELCA Good Gifts. You can also order online at ELCA.org/goodgifts.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the Christmas Family Sharing program – no matter what it looks like! If you have any questions, stop by the table, or feel free to contact Mary Beth Martin-Bellavia (815-338-5194 or mbmartinbellavia@gmail.com).

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 \$14.00 are due by **December 17, 2017**. Following our 10:00 a.m. service on December 25 poinsettias may be taken home or to our shut-ins.



PEOPLE IN NEED FORUM- Anyone who is interested in helping those in need is encouraged to attend this forum. Topics will include: homelessness, senior population, veterans, budgeting, financial resources, and more. The event is Saturday, **January 27, 2018**, 8:00a.m.– 12:30p.m. Luecht Conference Center McHenry County College. Register today at www.mchenry.edu/peopleinneed. For more information contact: Bev Thomas at bthomas@mchenry.edu

2018 ELCA Youth Gathering. Grace Lutheran Church has a strong tradition and commitment to supporting the high school youth group’s trip to the triennial ELCA Youth Gathering, and we are looking forward to next summer’s ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston. The theme of the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering is “This Changes Everything.” Please keep these Grace high school students in your prayers as we prepare for this incredible time of faith formation, fellowship, and service: Jack Duenas, Luke Duenas, Aidan Filetti, Evan Fiorina, Olivia Mellinger, Jackson Parrish, Phillip Paulson, Hannah Paulson, Maddie Rank, Taylor Spanbauer, Ellie Thurow, and Jason Thurow. In September, Grace’ youth group sent cards of support to congregations in Houston affected by Hurricane Harvey, so we invite you to join us in praying for continued recovery efforts. Thank you for your prayers and support for Houston, for the Gathering, and for Grace’s Youth Group! “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8 *This Changes Everything*.

WELCOME CENTER HOST- A Welcome Center Host is needed for the second Sunday of each month before and after the 10:45a.m. service. This is an important way we reach out to visitors and members alike. Please contact Janette Hess at rdbj210@gmail.com if you are interested or would like more information.

PREPARE THE WAY; CARRYING OUR FAITH INTO THE FUTURE UPDATE.....by Bill Nattress

We are nearing completion of the Capital Campaign that started in January of 2015. In that time, we have completed many significant projects around the Church property; replacement of the parking lots along with new lighting, new flooring and ceiling tiles within the Narthex and in Grace center, new choir robes, bathroom renovations, just to name a few. You may recall that the projects were prioritized into three groups, we have completed all of the group A projects and are on target to complete all of the group B's as well. The committee is looking at the group C projects to complete the campaign.

As of this moment we have \$497,556 committed against the goal of \$780,430 of which about \$509,524 has been received. This also represents approximately \$50,952 that has been set aside for the tithe to be given to the Synod at the completion of the campaign. Some gifts to the campaign will be completed at the end of this year while a few will continue into the spring.

A celebration event is being planned for April 22nd of next year as a thank you for all that participated in donations of time, talent, and funds as well as making the formal presentation of the tithe to the Synod. Mark your calendars now for this wonderful event!

There is still time to make a donation to the campaign. Just let the Church office know. By answering the call to help we will continue to carry forward this gift of faith and Sharing God's Grace! Thanks Be To God!

PRIMETIME MEAL TEAMS- There are several dates that are still vacant for meal teams for PrimeTime. Please consider helping this ministry. It is very helpful to busy families involved in choir, bells, confirmation, and school events to have a meal ready to enjoy by their families. The following are dates that are still available: 1/10, 1/31, 2/14, 2/28, 4/4, 4/25, 5/2. Just taking one date would be a huge help. Contact Melissa McMahon for more information or meal team ideas, mmcmahon@gracewoodstock.org.

MISTLETOE MAGIC UPDATE- The committee has been meeting and planning throughout the year. There are incredibly exciting changes taking place. The committee has met with the pastors and in an effort to ensure success they opted not to have the shop for 2017. They will be launching under a new name and a brand new online platform for 2018!

What will this look like?

- *Our online platform will open prior to the November shop and you will be able to Pre-Order your items.
- *We are still reaching out to congregation and community members for donations of items to be sold through the shop. See below regarding our questionnaire.
- *We are still holding a shop at Grace in November. Pre-Sale items will be available for pick-up during shop hours.
- *We will be looking for volunteers to help us pack and distribute Pre-Sale orders and volunteer in the shop the day of the event.
- *We will be adding a Kids Shop where our youth will have an opportunity to shop with a helper for gifts for their loved ones.

A huge thank you to those that have donated items and supplies. We have been creating and collecting wonderful items that will be sold in our new shop. We are passionate about continuing the program with your help! Please fill out our questionnaire at the information desk in the narthex to submit your contact information so we can build a contact list for the ministry as well as gain your feedback regarding donations, workshops and God given talents you may be interested in volunteering.

We are very excited and feel extremely blessed to have this opportunity to serve. We are looking forward to a great start in 2018!

Patty Kozlow, Alyssa Crown, Melissa Manke & Lynda Rohe

MITTEN TREE- Winter is approaching and it's time to collect NEW mittens, hats, gloves, scarves, socks, and underwear for children and adults in need. Please bring these items to church between **November 25 and December 17** and hang them on the mitten trees in the narthex and lower level. Your gifts will be much appreciated by families in our community! If you have any questions, please contact Ellie Thurow at ekthurow@comcast.net.



PREPARE THE WAY

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Committed— \$497,579.06
Received— \$509,864.95
Goal— \$780,430.00

SAVE THE DATE:

Committee Meeting Night- DEC 5
Advent Midweek Service- DEC 6
DAP- DEC 7
Blood Pressure Checks- DEC 10
Advent Midweek Service- DEC 13
Fair Trade Coffee- DEC 16/17
Xmas Fam Share Items Due- DEC 17
Senior Luncheon- DEC 19
Advent Midweek Service- DEC 20
Xmas Eve- 4:30, 7:30, 11:00-
DEC 24
Xmas Day, 10 AM- DEC 25
Committee Night- JAN 2
DAP- JAN 4
DAP- JAN 18
Council- JAN 18
Blood Pressure Checks- JAN 21

TREE WALK-

Once again Grace Lutheran Sunday School students have made ornaments that adorn one of the beautiful trees at the Woodstock Opera House. The Christmas Tree Walk runs through the end of December and is open to the public whenever the Opera house is open. Please take a few minutes to stop in and enjoy the little bit of joy our students have shared this Christmas season, call 815-338-5300 to check the hours of operation.

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

gracewoodstock.org

GRACE STAFF & COUNCIL

Senior Pastor/Rev. Kenneth D. Gibson
kgibson@gracewoodstock.org
Office Phone: 815-338-0554
Home Phone: 815-527-7215

Associate Pastor

Director of Senior High Ministries

Rev. Amanda Bergstrom
Cell Phone: 630-664-9016

abergstrom@gracewoodstock.org

Director of Communications

Tammy Baier - tbaier@gracewoodstock.org

Director of Music Ministries

Ron Fredriksen

rfredriksen@gracewoodstock.org

Parish Musicians

Terry Aavang, Jan Burns, Dale Carlson,
Tammy Baier, Carrie Filetti

Director of Preschool Ministry

Chris Learman

clearman@gracewoodstock.org

Preschool Staff

Tammy Baier, Cayla Learman, Melissa
McMahon, Nancy Mojica, Cheryl Molve

Director of Educational Ministries

Melissa McMahon

mmcmahon@gracewoodstock.org

Office Assistant/Bookkeeper

Katy Sheridan

Director of Senior Ministries

Shirley Busse

Secretary-Denise Klabunde

dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org

Building Supervisor/Ken Zank

Custodians/Chris & Kim Ethridge

Officers & Council

Andy Bellavia, Cathy Buhrow, Mike Freeman,
Lisa Banker-Gerloff, Ken Hansing, Gayle Hoch,
Mike Liedtke, Sue Olsen, Adele Petersen,
Rob Ribbe, Hannah Wilson
council@gracewoodstock.org

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