

# December 2021 Grace Notes



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*Candlelight Christmas Eve service at Grace Church, December 24, 2018. Photo by Don Heimburger.*

## A future remembered

by Pastor Dave Lyle

Christmas, perhaps more than any other time of year, is about remembering. For many of us, idyllic memories of gathering, bleary-eyed, around the tree on Christmas morning and later sitting down to tables heavy-laden for the feast come to mind. At Grace, our memories turn to a darkened sanctuary whose silence is pierced by a single voice, calling us back to David's royal city. In many ways, our memories are the source of joy (even if that means forgetting

the not-so-great moments along the way). In other ways, our memories are melancholic. After all, our memories are populated with loved ones who have departed this life or who have become estranged from us.

Our memories of Christmas are, by definition, about the past; about what we have done and where we have been. Christmas itself, however, is a celebration of God's remembrance of

**The God who makes  
promises is not the God  
who forgets them.**

*Continued on page 2*

# God's memory of the future ...

*Continued from page 1*

what God has promised to do. On Christmas, we celebrate God's memory of the future.

Zechariah, silenced for a time for failing to believe the angel's words, suddenly breaks forth in song when his son, John the Baptist, was born:

Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,  
And has remembered his holy covenant (Luke 1:72).

These words are part of the song we call the Benedictus, sung regularly during Morning Prayer. Zechariah, caught up in the joyful surprise of God's unfolding salvation, announces that God has remembered and kept the promises of old.

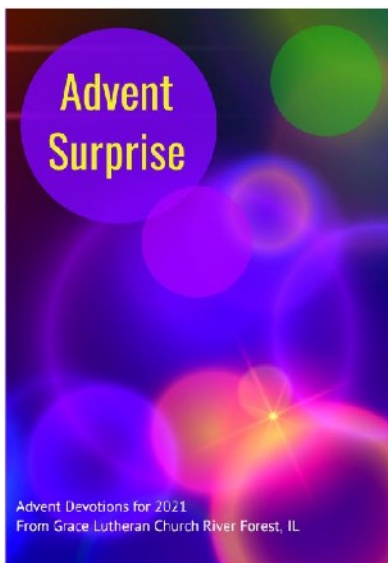
This Advent, as we make our way toward the joy of Christmas, we take time to think about just how surprising it is that God has shown such grace and mercy to us. Surprising, yes, but wholly in keeping with God's holy nature. The God who makes promises is not the God who forgets them.

For us, these promises are bound up not in our memories of Christmases past but in the person of the God wrapped up in our humanity, Jesus Christ. His coming is breathtaking, as angels and shepherds will remind us. Christ comes to bring peace on

earth. No regime or power shall long withstand his reign. Christ comes to bring goodwill among all people. No separation or estrangement shall last forever. Christ comes to bring healing. No illness, even if it lasts until the end of life, will last forever. Christ comes to raise the dead. The Kingdom of life, in which nothing shall be wrong and all manner of things shall be well, will thrive forever around the throne of Bethlehem's child.

I hope you'll join us throughout Advent, reading the "Advent Surprise" devotions prepared by members of the Grace community and joining us for worship and fellowship on Wednesdays. I know you rejoice with me as we anticipate gathering together again on Christmas Eve. And I pray that God may catch you off guard throughout this season with an abundance of grace and mercy, joy and peace. Even when our memories falter, God's does not. The Lord has remembered you. The Lord remembers the covenant. Christ has been born for you; Christ will come again. In Christ, we have been remembered, joined again to God.

**May God catch you off guard  
throughout this season with an  
abundance of grace and mercy,  
joy and peace.**



## **"Advent Surprise" devotions, written by members of Grace**

Members of Grace Church have written devotions for this Advent season with the theme of "Advent Surprise!" The daily devotions explore the surprising blessings of God's grace and mercy shown to us in the birth of Jesus.

Devotions are posted daily at [www.habitsofgrace.blog](http://www.habitsofgrace.blog). Scroll to the bottom of the blog page and enter your email address if you would like to receive a daily email with a link to the day's devotion. (If you subscribed to Grace Church's Lent 2021 devotions, you're already set up to receive the Advent devotions.)

Printed copies of the devotion booklet are available in the atrium at Grace.

Advent begins on Sunday, November 28. The devotions continue through Christmas Day on December 25.

**Grace Notes** is published monthly by Grace Lutheran Church and School, 7300 Division St., River Forest, Ill. It is mailed to Grace members, parents of students at Grace School, and friends of the congregation. This issue was mailed via U.S. Postal Service Bulk Mail on Wednesday, November 24, with the hope that it will arrive in your mailbox no later than December 3. Copies are also available at Grace.

**Deadlines and submissions.** The January-February issue of Grace Notes will be mailed on January 14. The deadline for copy is Wednesday, January 5; the issue covers events through early March. Send news to [ggotsch@graceriverforest.org](mailto:ggotsch@graceriverforest.org). Please limit submissions to news relating to Grace Lutheran Church and School, its mission, ministries, and the benevolences the congregation supports. Articles should be no longer than 500 words. Submissions may be edited for length, clarity, and relevance.

# Sharing your faith is for everyone

*It takes practice to talk about where and how God is showing up in your life*

by Julie Hinz, Evangelism Committee

*Then Jesus went about among the villages teaching. He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. (Mark 6:6b-7)*

You probably know the names of those initial “twelve,” but what about today’s disciples? Oh, yeah...that’s us. We are those who continue to be sent out “two by two” into the world to speak the words of the Gospel, to teach the world through our choices, our actions, our attitudes, and our words that Jesus is Lord and that God’s salvation is for everyone.

In most cases our choices, actions, and attitudes are second nature. Acts of kindness, serving others, being loving people — those things are part of our everyday ingrained behaviors. But what about our words? Are we, here at Grace, able and as excited to speak our faith as readily and beautifully as we sing it?

Many of us do not have experience talking about our faith. It is not second nature, but it can be. The only way to get good at something is to practice it. That’s what Grace’s Faith Sharing Groups are all about, and we on the Evangelism Committee would love to have you join one.

Our Faith Sharing Groups are small groups of 6 to 9 folks who meet for one hour a month to simply talk about faith, God, how God works in our lives, why we believe, etc. We began with one group of 11 people. Today we have five groups with 37 people. One group has been meeting for over a year now, and we rejoice in new friendships and closer connections, knowing we can speak openly about ourselves, our faith, and our lives. This is how speaking our faith works — once we start, the Spirit does the rest and gathers the faithful together to do more.

I, for one, would not trade that hour a month for anything. It is truly a time out of time when I can gather with friends to share our lives, consider where God is showing up in our everyday lives, discuss scripture and how it applies to us, share stories of

our own faith development, and learn from others to see new things in the Bible that I had not noticed before. It is a chance to put my faith into my own words and get used to hearing those words come out of my mouth. Not only have I become much more comfortable speaking about my faith, I know I am not alone in my discipleship.

The Evangelism Committee is in the process of forming more groups and inviting the entire Grace community to join our Faith Sharing work. We would love to build a community of faith-sharers, people who not only do good works and sing the Gospel, but who also speak God into the world. Someone spoke to each of us about Jesus. It’s now our turn to do the same for the hurting world in which we live.



## Important details about Faith Sharing Groups

**Faith-Sharing groups meet using whatever format works best for the group.** Participants are asked to discern what will work best for their particular group of people. Currently groups are meeting primarily online to accommodate COVID restrictions and comfort levels, work schedules, etc. During the summer months some groups met in person outdoors at members’ homes. Meeting at church is also possible. This flexibility allows people with a variety of needs and schedules to work this hour into their lives.

**Joining a group is not a long-term commitment.** Join for a few months and if it is not for you, we will rejoice that you spent some time with us. If you find joy in these gatherings, you are free to stay with your group or even lead a group for as long as you wish.

**Interested?** Watch for a [sign-up link](#) in your email from Grace, or sign up at the front desk!

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## Treasured traditions return to Christmas worship in 2021

*Children's Christmas Eve service at Grace Church, December 24, 2019. Photo by Don Heimburger.*

Remember last Christmas? Live-streamed services from an empty sanctuary, maybe with a small choir? Bare-bones mid-week Advent worship, again on livestream? Without the Advent suppers and Cornerstone lunches that bring people together for conversation and fellowship as well as food?

While we were grateful last December to be able to hear the Word preached and sing along with the hymns on YouTube, the restrictions we followed to keep one another safe during the pandemic dampened the joy and sense of belonging we experience when we worship in person, alongside other Christians. This year will look a lot more like the Advent and Christmas traditions we treasure at Grace. Advent suppers are back, and of course, we're singing again in worship service.

Perhaps the most-asked question around Grace lately has been, "Will the Children's Christmas Eve Service be back in person?" Yes, it will, in person at 4:15 and 6 p.m. on December 24. The children will be masked, using the same high-quality masks that the Parish Choir uses each Sunday, and they will follow the social distancing guidelines used in Grace School. The 4:15 service will also be live-streamed.

There are additional Christmas Eve worship services at 8 p.m. and at 10:45 (with music at 10:30). The Lord's Supper is celebrated at both of these services. The late service concludes with congregation members lighting candles and singing "Silent Night." The service of Holy Communion on Christmas morning begins at 10 a.m.

We still need to be careful about protecting ourselves and others from COVID during the winter ahead. While booster shots for adults and vaccinations for young children help to keep everyone safe, all of us have different concerns and different comfort levels with being indoors with many people, even when they're wearing masks. This will understandably affect choices about coming to worship or sharing meals.

Many of Grace's Advent and Christmas services will be live-streamed, making it possible to participate from home or from away-from-home locations. This year, as last year, we remain "Together in Christ," as we celebrate God's presence here on earth in Jesus, the Savior, "wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." We join the angels' song, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"



Johanna Johnson, Grace School's new music teacher, is new to the preparations for the Children's Christmas Eve service. But she's not new to the service itself. Her three children, now in high school, college and graduate school, attended Grace School and sang and rang handbells in the service for many years.

"It's a very impressive service, and I remember loving it. I never imagined that I would be the one directing the choir!"

School choirs started working on the music especially early this year since students did not have the experience of rehearsing the music over and over again in 2020. As in former years, Johanna reports that "Torches" remains the kids' favorite song.

What's new this year? "We're singing mainly things that have been done over the past four or five years—that kids have some memory of singing, or at least hearing." There are pieces for the school handbell choir, and of course, the descants for "O Come All Ye Faithful" and "Silent Night."

Johanna has discovered that many kids don't know these basic Christmas carols. "It's important for them to have that body of knowledge, to know those words and those tunes."

# Advent and Christmas Season Worship

Sunday, November 28, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

## **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Jeremiah 33:14-16, Psalm 25:1-10, I Thessalonians 3:9-13,  
Luke 21:25-36

Sunday, December 5, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

## **SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Malachi 3:1-4, Luke 1:68-79, Philippians 1:3-11, Luke 3:1-6

Sunday, December 12, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

## **THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Zephaniah 3:14-20, Isaiah 12:2-6, Philippians 4:4-7, Luke 3:7-18

Sunday, December 19, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

## **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Micah 5:2-5a, Luke 1:46b-55, Hebrews 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-45

Friday, December 24

## **NATIVITY OF OUR LORD: CHRISTMAS EVE**

**4:15 and 6:00 p.m.**

Lessons and carols led by the children of Grace

**8 p.m.**

Holy Communion

**10:45 p.m. (Music at 10:30)**

Candlelight Holy Communion

Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-20

Saturday, December 25

## **NATIVITY OF OUR LORD: CHRISTMAS DAY**

**10 a.m., Holy Communion**

Isaiah 52:7-10, Psalm 98, Hebrews 1:1-12, John 1:1-14

Sunday, December 26.

## **FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS**

**ONE SERVICE of Holy Communion at 10 a.m**

I Samuel 2:18-20, 26, Psalm 148, Colossians 3:12-17,  
Luke 2:41-52

Friday, December 31, 7 p.m., Holy Communion

## **NEW YEAR'S EVE**

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13, Psalm 8, Revelation 21:1-6a,  
Matthew 25:31-46

Saturday, January 1, 10 a.m., Holy Communion

## **NAME OF JESUS — NEW YEAR'S DAY**

Numbers 6:22-27, Psalm 8, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:15-21

Sunday, January 2

## **EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD**

**ONE SERVICE of Holy Communion at 10 a.m.**

Isaiah 60:1-6, Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12,  
Matthew 2:1-12

**Brunch in Fellowship Hall following the service**

Sunday, January 9, 10 a.m., 8:30 and 11 a.m

## **BAPTISM OF OUR LORD**

Isaiah 43:1-7, Psalm 29, Acts 8:14-17, Luke 3:15-17, 21-22



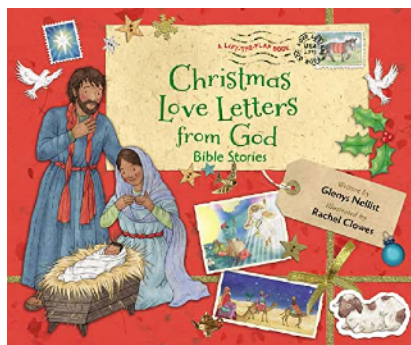
# Children's Christmas Books in the church library

As this busy season takes its hectic toll, how about a snuggle on the couch with your littles and a special storybook? And what better place to find a holiday story that shares the true reason we celebrate Christmas than the Grace Church Library. Check out the atrium cabinet for some recommendations, or stop in at the church library and check out other books on the shelves.

Here are some favorites:

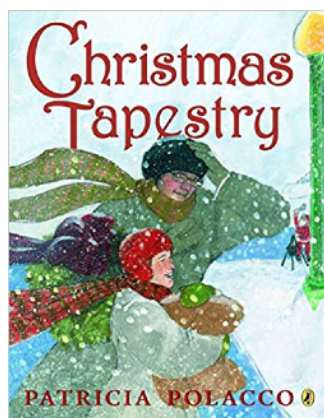
## **"Christmas Love Letters from God"** by Glenys Nellist

This biblical re-telling of the Christmas story from Old Testament prophecy to the visit of the wise men has a clever interactive twist. At the end of each piece of the story there is a flip-up envelope with a personal letter from God to the reader. Lovely illustrations by Rachel Clowes complete the adventure.



## **"Christmas Tapestry" by Patricia Polacco**

A Baptist minister and his family move from Memphis to a struggling congregation in Detroit. The change is a struggle for the two children in the story as Christmas approaches and they miss their old house and friends. Unexpected water damage ruins the altar wall in the church. The pastor and his



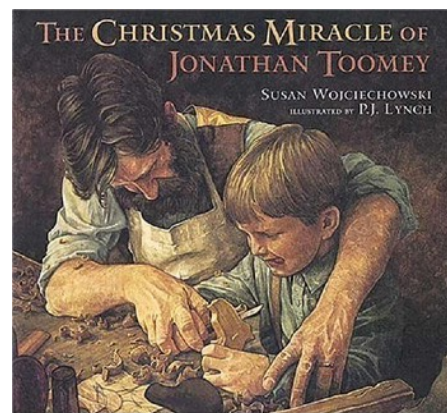
son come across an old tapestry in a shop in town which they hang in the church to cover the damage before Christmas morning. But this is only a side plot as the history of the tapestry connects to an old Jewish woman they meet at a bus stop and to a surprise and very tender ending. It is Christmas after all.

## **"If You're Missing Baby Jesus" by Jean Gietzen**

You can be the first to check out this book! It's a classic tale about a family who discovers Christmas joy in an unexpected friendship.

## **"The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey" by Susan Wojciechowski**

This lovely story follows a grumpy woodcarver, Jonathan Toomey, who has lost everything dear to him. He meets seven-year-old Thomas and his mother, who together bring joy slowly back into his life.



*Grace Church's library, on the first floor, just inside the Division Street door, is open for self-service on Sundays and during the week when the building is open. There are books for adults and children, fiction and non-fiction, including lots of resources for celebrating Advent and Christmas.*

## **Book talk in Adult Ed Sunday, December 5, 9:45 a.m.**

### **Seminar Room and on Zoom**

### **"Best Books of the Year" with Elizabeth Palmer**

Elizabeth Palmer, Books Editor at The Christian Century, returns to Grace's Adult Ed programming on Sunday, December 5, with a new edition of "Best Books of the Year." The class meets at 9:45 a.m. in the

Seminar Room. It will also be available on Zoom. Look for a link in your email, or visit the Adult Ed page at [GraceRiverForest.org](http://GraceRiverForest.org). The Adult Education Committee is working on programs for 2022. If you have suggestions, please contact Ted Anton ([tanton@depaul.edu](mailto:tanton@depaul.edu)).



# Grace's Annual Advent / Christmas Concert Holy Light

Sunday, December 12, 4 p.m.

Carols for Advent and Christmas  
in settings by Robert A. Hobby and others  
with readings by Susan Palo Chervien

Choirs of Grace Church and School  
with organ and orchestra



## Chicago Choral Artists present J. S. Bach's Christmas Oratorio

Michael D. Costello, director

In Grace's sanctuary

Friday, December 17, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 19, 7:30 p.m.

Tickets available at [ChicagoChoralArtists.org](http://ChicagoChoralArtists.org) or at the door  
\$45/adults, \$40/seniors, \$25/students

## More music for celebrating Christmas

### Chicago Children's Choir Songs of the Season

December 18, 5:30 p.m.

Epiphany Center for the Arts  
201 South Ashland Avenue, Chicago

Grace Church's special benevolence giving this fall included a gift to the Chicago Children's Choir. You can support the choir, learn more about their mission and enjoy holiday music at a special concert celebrating the many ways people around the world commemorate the holidays. Go to [www.ccchoir.org](http://www.ccchoir.org) to purchase tickets.

### St. Olaf Christmas Festival Watch Party at Grace

Join alumni and friends of St. Olaf College at a watch party for the 2021 Christmas Festival Concert, "Love Divine," live-streamed here at Grace in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, December 5, 2:30–5 p.m. All are welcome. Greeters will check proof of vaccination and ID at the door. Masks are required.

[Register here.](#)





Do you love to sing? Do you love to sing Christmas carols? The Evangelism Committee is inviting Grace Church members and friends to go Christmas caroling in downtown Oak Park on Saturday, December 18, 1–2 p.m.

No fancy singing experience needed — just a love for singing Christmas songs with other people. Come and join the fun. Song sheets will be provided and there will be cookies and cocoa back at Grace following the caroling.

All are welcome. [Sign up online](#) or at the front desk so that we can get in touch with you about where we'll meet in downtown Oak Park. (You're welcome to just show up, too, even if you don't sign up ahead of time.)

If you'd like to donate cookies or make cocoa, please contact Linda Street ([kentuckystreets53@gmail.com](mailto:kentuckystreets53@gmail.com)).

*Save the date!*

## Slovak Dinner

Friday, January 21

6 p.m.

Fellowship Hall

*Friends from the CCE with  
Julie Modrich, January 2019*



After a year dominated by COVID-related matters, Grace looks forward to once again hosting a Slovak dinner on Friday, January 21, benefiting its regular benevolence partner, the Center for Christian Education (CCE) in Martin, Slovakia. Hosted in Fellowship Hall and beginning at 6 p.m., the event will include an authentic Slovak dinner, a cash bar, entertainment, and silent auction of exciting items.

CCE leaders will present an update of their ministry. Learn more about the Center for Christian Education at [www.cce.sk](http://www.cce.sk).

The cost is \$50 per person, with proceeds to benefit CCE's Lutheran High School. To reserve your space, go online to [GraceRiverForest.org](http://GraceRiverForest.org) and complete the reply form, paying online.

### Building hours

**Monday through Friday**, 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Open weekday evenings and Saturday mornings for scheduled activities.

**Sundays**, 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and for scheduled activities in the afternoon and evening. Please wear a mask when you come to Grace on Sundays and during the week.

### Pastors' emergency phone

Call 708-689-3032 for emergency pastoral care on weekends, or when the Grace building is closed.



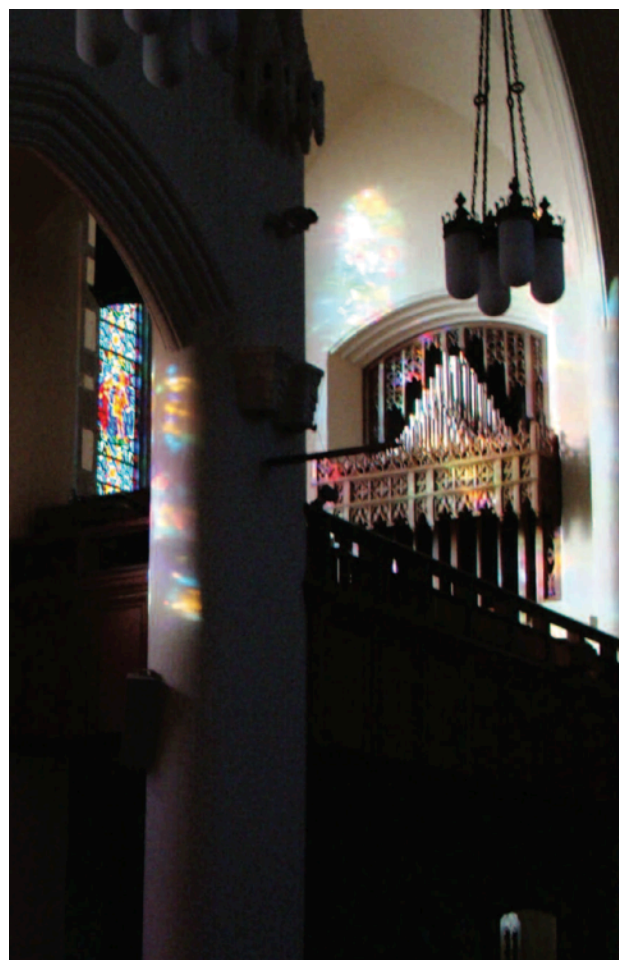
# Advent Thankoffering

During Advent the Stewardship Committee invites Grace members to make a special end-of-the-calendar-year gift to support the ministry of Grace Church. We pray that your Advent Thankoffering is a joyful, generous response to God's surprising blessings of grace and mercy during this past year and during this Advent season.

You'll receive a letter from the Stewardship Committee with a special envelope for your Thankoffering. Or write Advent Thankoffering on the memo line of your check. Whether you place an additional gift in the offering plate, make an online gift, or make an end-of-the-tax-year gift of assets or other funds, you will be helping Grace Church continue to meet its financial obligations and carry out our mission to share the Advent surprise — the good news of Jesus' birth to a world in need.

The Stewardship Committee

*If you'd like to know more about the giving of assets or funds from an IRA distribution, please contact Jim McClanahan, Director of Administration and Finance (708-366-6900, ext. 202; [jmccclanahan@graceriverforest.org](mailto:jmccclanahan@graceriverforest.org)). Or look for "Win-Win Giving" information at [GraceRiverForest.org](http://GraceRiverForest.org) under Stewardship.*



## Social Ministry

**Stockings for The Night Ministry.** The Social Ministry Committee is again filling stockings with necessities for clients of The Night Ministry. They're asking congregation members to "adopt a stocking" with a donation of \$20 and committee members will do the shopping. More information in the atrium.

**The Giving Tree.** The Giving Tree in the Grace atrium during November holds tags with wish-list items for clients of local social service agencies. Take a tag from the tree, purchase the gift, and return it to Grace by December 5.

**Mitten tree.** After December 5 the Social Ministry Committee's Christmas tree in the atrium turns into a "mitten tree," welcoming donations of warm hats, gloves, mittens and scarves to share with neighbors in need.

### FINANCIAL UPDATE

Grace Lutheran Church General Fund

#### Church budgeted contributions

July 1, 2021 – November 22, 2021 \$ 792,000  
(21 Sundays, \$37,700 per week)

#### Church actual contributions

July 1, 2021 – November 22, 2021 \$ 541,000  
(Last year at this time: \$586,000)

Church giving is \$251,000 (32%) below budget and \$45,000 (8%) behind last year. The General Fund deficit on November 22 was \$211,000 (\$171,000 last year through November 30). The deficit does not include the November 30 payroll and month-end expenses.

# Healthy Christmas 2021: Stay safe, minimize stress

by Pat Gulik, RN, Parish Nurse

This holiday season looks very different from last year's virtual celebrations. Alleluia! But as we move from Thanksgiving to Christmas in 2021, it's important to remember that things are not entirely back to normal. We still need to take care to protect ourselves and our loved ones as we gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Many of us have already had conversations with family and friends about how to celebrate safely this year. If you're still working on plans, here are some things to consider:

**Is everyone vaccinated?** This is the most important question. Experts agree that groups of fully vaccinated people can gather freely to celebrate. The decision becomes more difficult when you start mixing in partially vaccinated and unvaccinated or vulnerable people. Think about who your guests are or who you will be socializing with. What have their habits been? Have they mostly been at home or have they been working or socializing in crowded spaces? If you have small children who are not vaccinated or vulnerable older relatives, you may want to invite only those adults who are fully vaccinated. You may want to ask people to get a COVID test. A negative rapid antigen test the day before will indicate that the person is likely not infectious. People who are at risk for severe disease may want to pass on large gatherings this year. Offer to set up a Zoom call for those who can't attend.

**Additional suggestions for keeping everyone safe:**

- Keep the group small.
- Improve ventilation by opening some windows.
- Encourage/require mask wearing by those who are unvaccinated.
- Avoid crowded events.
- Everyone should wear masks in indoor public places, whether vaccinated or not.

- Anyone who is sick should stay home.

**What about travel?** Vaccination is required for international travel. To stay safe while traveling domestically the CDC recommends:

- Testing 1-3 days before your trip and 3-5 days after traveling.
- Wearing a mask on public transportation.
- Avoiding crowds.
- Using hand sanitizer.
- Canceling travel if you are exposed to COVID or have symptoms.

**Holiday stress.** Of course, the Christmas season can be stressful even apart from worrying about COVID. As I thought about what to write this year, I looked back on the Parish Nurse article in the December 2019 Grace Notes. Many of the ideas I wrote about then may again be helpful as you anticipate a more "normal" holiday season.

**Take time to reflect and plan.** What does this season mean to you? What is important about it, and who is most important? Make the answers to these questions the intentional focus of your holidays instead of the distractions of stuff, shopping, and meaningless events.

**Try to maintain some balance.**

Remember that spiritual wellness is connected to physical wellness. It's important to do things to maintain our physical health. This includes:

- **Regular exercise** (a great stress reducer). Make time for your regular workout, or simply take a long walk every day.
- **Sleep.** Get at least seven hours of sleep every night.
- **Eat healthy foods most days of the week, and limit alcohol intake.** Don't try to diet during the holidays. Setting a goal of maintaining your present weight is a much more realistic goal. You can indulge now and then for a special event, but try to eat well otherwise. If you do

overindulge, don't give up — just resolve to go back to your plan.

• **Take care of yourself.** Try to do at least one thing to take care of yourself every day. This can be an activity that you love with family or friends, meditation, yoga, a walk, or simply making time to do absolutely nothing.

**Keep a positive attitude.** As much as we may enjoy the company of our loved ones, holiday gatherings can cause anxiety. Family time can bring up some of the worst emotions — perhaps brought on by socializing with toxic relatives, bad memories of past holiday seasons, or things currently going on in your life. Develop a plan to deal with problems that may come up. Practice what you will say to the cousin who always seems to say something that upsets you. Plan ahead of time with a trusted family member what you will do if things become too stressful and you need to leave a gathering. Try to keep your thoughts positive, and be understanding of others. They are probably stressed, too.

**This is the season for giving.** Plan some time to share your blessings with others. There are so many ways to give of your time and treasure. Your generosity will help the recipient and will also help you. Studies have shown that giving is good for our health!

**Give God a gift — from you to God.** Perhaps your gift will be to commit to spending time with God daily. Or maybe there is something that God has asked you to give up. Maybe your gift will be to forgive someone you needed to forgive a long time ago. Whatever it is, make this your most important gift of the season.

**Finally, be grateful.** This is also the season to be thankful. No matter what we are facing, we can all be grateful for the gift of life. Every day we are on this earth is another opportunity to make a difference and to celebrate life.



## FELLOWSHIP

### Grace Notes mailing crew

This newsletter comes to you every month thanks to faithful volunteers who fold, tab, and label it for mailing. More hands make the work go faster. They'll be at work again on Thursday, January 13, 9:30 a.m. in the church library. Contact Marlene Hallman (708-562-5476), or just come!

### GriefShare

A GriefShare group meets at Grace on Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m. in the church library. The current group runs through January 11. GriefShare support groups are open to all. For more information contact Linda Bernard (773-259-4720; lm\_bernard\_@hotmail.com).

### Cornerstones

Bible study for seniors with treats and fellowship at 9:30 a.m. and Bible study with the pastors at 10 a.m. On December 1, 8, and 15 there is Morning Prayer at 11 a.m., with lunch in Fellowship Hall on December 1 and 15.

### Theology on Tap

Come for community and monthly conversations about faith and life. Monthly gatherings will resume on January 27, 2022. Email tmedlin@graceriverforest.org for more information.

### Moms of Littles

Mothers with children of any and all ages, infants through teens, meet twice a month, once in person and once virtually. Please join us for community and support. Contact Ali Carris at beauvais.carris@gmail.com or (312) 720-9473 to be added to the email list or learn more about the group.

### Dads of Grace

Join Pastor Lyle and other dads on Monday, December 27, at 7:30 p.m. for an evening of fellowship. Email Pastor Lyle for the particulars (dlyle@graceriverforest.org).

### Men of Grace

The Men of Grace group meets on the last Saturday, of the month, 9 a.m., at Grace. Meetings resume after the holidays on January 29. Email Pastor Troy for more information (tmedlin@graceriverforest.org).

### Religion in Literature

Religion in Literature will meet Dec. 17 to read aloud portions of a Christmas play based upon Dylan Thomas's "A Child's Christmas in Wales." Copies of the play are available at the reception desk at Grace. If you cannot make it to Grace, please order it from dramaticpublishing.com. Please contact jill.baumgaertner@wheaton.edu for email announcements for this group—and to volunteer to read a part in the play.

### Finding Hope

This support group for people with chronic illness meets on the 2nd Friday of the month. The next meeting is on December 10, 10 a.m., at Grace. Contact Judie McDonnell (judie.mcdonnell@att.net) if you have questions or need to arrange a ride.

### Retired Leaders

This group of retired Christian men and women in former leadership positions in church or community meets December 14 at 10 a.m. in Fellowship Hall and on Zoom for an Advent-Christmas hymn sing led by Pastor Costello.

## PRAYERS

The weekly **Prayer List** can be found in the worship bulletin on Sunday. Contact Esther Armstrong (708-366-6900 ext 207; earmstrong@graceriverforest.org) to be included on the published prayer list. Contact Kathy Lucht (kathy.lucht@gmail.com) or Kathy Garness (KMGfinearts@comcast.net) with confidential prayer chain requests.

**Thank you from the family of Greg Ball:** Many thanks to everyone for their continued prayers for God's will in Greg's life. God has preserved his life and healed his life to full recovery. What a miracle!

**WE PRAY** for those who mourn the recent deaths of Edward Borg and Barbara J. Carlson.

**WE CELEBRATE** with those recently or soon to be baptized:

**October 3** — Christian Dean Lueking-Parker and Benjamin Edward Lueking-Parker, sons of Christopher Lueking and Cameron Parker, grandsons of Dean and Beverly Lueking.

**November 7** — Juniper Eleanor Reddel, daughter of Scott and Abby Reddel, granddaughter of Stan and Paulette Reddel.

**December 12** — Ava Denise Washington, daughter of Michael and Danyale Washington, and Jeremy Cirilo Chilton, son of Zachary Chilton and Mariana Corral.

**ALTAR FLOWERS** Donate flowers to remember a loved one or commemorate a special birthday or anniversary. Use the sign-up sheet at the reception desk in the atrium.

**Thanksgiving Day** — The mums in the chancel on Thanksgiving Day were given in loving memory of Walter, Maxine, Nancy Christopher, Lottie Goraj by Scott Christopher. They were delivered to homebound members after the service.

**November 28** — Bill and Ellen Pullin in celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary.

**December 5** — The Wilkie Family in memory of Luann Wilkie.

# Advent and Christmas at Grace



November 28	First Sunday of Advent
December 1, 8, and 15	Morning Prayer, 11 a.m. Evening Prayer, 7 p.m.
December 12	Advent-Christmas Concert, 4 p.m.
December 18	Christmas caroling Downtown Oak Park 1 p.m.
December 24 and 25	Christmas worship services
December 26	One Sunday worship service 10 a.m.
January 2	Epiphany worship service 10 a.m. followed by brunch

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