

# Grace Notes

December 2022



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH • 7300 W DIVISION • RIVER FOREST IL 60305 • 708-366-6900 • WWW.GRACERIVERFOREST.ORG



## Surprised, saved, and sent

by **Pastor Dave Lyle**

Year after year, the arrival of Advent catches me by surprise. No, I'm not lamenting the ever-earlier playing of Christmas music and hawking of gift ideas, although I wouldn't mind delaying those a bit longer. I simply mean that Advent tends to get here before you know it, as the saying goes. I always know Advent is coming, yet I'm always surprised when it arrives.

**Advent is a time to be reminded that Christ has come, and that Christ will come again.**

It's not only the season that sneaks up on us. God has a way of doing precisely the same thing. We shouldn't be so surprised; neither should God's arrival long ago have caught the people unaware. It's not like the prophets hadn't promised the coming of Messiah. Still, God's birth in Bethlehem went nearly unmarked by most people.

*Continued on page 2*

# Surprised, saved, and sent

*Continued from page 1*

Jesus' entrance into our mortal world was revealed to the lowest, a few shepherds keeping watch over their flocks, and noted by the highest, Herod and his minions who sought to end Jesus' life before it had a chance to really get started. Beyond these few, who even noticed God's arrival?

We, too, are not always adept at noticing God's arrivals in our midst. Even less, perhaps, are we truly on the lookout for Christ's Second Coming, that time when God will put things right and call forth a new Heaven and a new Earth. Advent is a time to be reminded that Christ *has* come, and that Christ *will* come again. Between this "already" and "not yet", Advent is also a time to watch for the myriad ways Christ is present in our lives today.

On Sundays during Advent, our Prayers of the Day remind us of Christ's coming. Each begins by asking God to "stir up." On the first and fourth Sundays of Advent, we ask that the Lord would stir up the power of God. Our Advent hopes begin outside ourselves; our hope rests in the power of God to come and save us. Then, we pray that God would stir up *our* hearts and *our* wills. For while we wait and watch, God has work for us to do. So, we pray, "Stir up your power, and our hearts and wills, and again your power, O Lord, and come."

This theme is picked up in our midweek worship services and our Advent devotions: *Justified and Just: Saved and Sent by the Coming Christ*. We are justified, saved, only by the power and the grace of God. Apart from that grace, we can do nothing. As those who are justified, our hearts and wills are stirred to work for justice in this world. As Christ comes to us, so does Christ send us to others to enact the coming Kingdom in the midst of this world.

Inside these pages, you'll find a multitude of opportunities to worship the coming Christ during the Advent and Christmas seasons. You will also see many opportunities to serve our neighbors in need. As we worship and serve, we practice looking for signs of Christ's coming *and* become signs of Christ's presence for others.

Perhaps like me, you're a little surprised that it's already Advent. May we be mindful that Jesus' appearances are always surprising. On the other hand, there is nothing more dependable than the coming of Christ.

Come, Lord Jesus!

## "Justified and Just" Advent devotions

*How does what God has done for us lead us to live in this world?*

*That question is at the heart of our Advent Devotion series. In Advent, we await the coming of Christmas as we await the return of Christ. In Advent, we hear comforting words of hope and hard words of judgment. In Advent, we see God doing a new thing. This new thing, the coming of Christ, changes everything. In him, we are saved. By him, we are called. Those who have been justified are called to enact justice. These pages are a testament to the many ways that the people of God at Grace Lutheran Church take seriously both the message and the mission.*

*I pray that these devotions will be a blessing in your prayer life this season. Each was composed by a layperson who is part of the Grace community. We often hear from the pastors (especially me!). This season, we lift up the voices of the laity.*

-Rev. Dave Lyle

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. Printed copies of the devotion booklet will also be available at the front desk. Advent begins on Sunday, November 27. The devotions continue through Christmas Day, on December 25.





# Advent and Christmas Season Worship



Sunday, November 27

## **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**TWO SERVICES of Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.**

Isaiah 2:1-5, Psalm 122, Romans 13:11-14, Matthew 24:36-44

Sunday, December 4

## **SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**TWO SERVICES of Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.**

Mal Isaiah 11:1-10, Psalm 72:1-7; 18-19, Romans 15:4-13, Matthew 3:1-12

Sunday, December 11

## **THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**TWO SERVICES of Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.**

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

Sunday, December 18, 8:30 and 11 a.m.

## **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**TWO SERVICES of Holy Communion at 8:30 and 11 a.m.**

Mal Isaiah 7:10-16, Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19, Romans 1:1-7, Matthew 1:18-25

Saturday, December 24

## **CHRISTMAS EVE**

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

Two services led by the children of Grace

**8:00 p.m.:** Service with Holy Communion

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

Candlelight Holy Communion

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

Sunday, 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

Saturday, 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

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

## **NAME OF JESUS**

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

Friday, January 6

## **EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD**

**ONE SERVICE of Holy Communion at 7:00 p.m.**

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

Sunday, January 8

## **BAPTISM OF OUR LORD**

**ONE SERVICE of Holy Communion at 10:00 a.m.**

Isaiah 42:1-9, Psalm 29, Acts 10:34-43, Matthew 3:13-17

Epiphany Brunch in Fellowship Hall after service.

**Wednesdays, November 30, December 7 and December 14,** We gather for Advent Morning Prayer at 11:30 a.m., with lunch served on the 30 and 14. We gather for Evening Prayer at 7 p.m., with dinner served at 6 p.m. (All meals will be served in the Fellowship Hall).

# Deep breath

## From the church library

Take a minute.

It seems counterintuitive to suggest one more thing to add to our busy holiday schedules, but a quiet devotion or beautifully illustrated children's book might be just what the "Doctor" ordered.

Grown-ups might reflect on *Preparing for Jesus: Insightful Messages of Faith and Faithfulness* by Walter Wangerin Jr. Brief lessons identifying Jesus as "the hero" in the chronology take the reader from Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany right through Lent and Easter.

*Unto Us Is Born* by Herbert Brokering shares imagined dialog with Mary as she walks through the story of the birth of her son. It is written as a two-part chat between the reader and Mary. This may be great conversation

starters with family if individual members take on the roles and read the parts.

Wondering how the Advent calendar began? *Waiting for Christmas* by Kathleen Long Bostrum shares a tale of the German Advent Calendar tradition. Lovely illustrations share the story of a boy and his parents as they manage the excitement and anticipation we all feel in the Advent season.

Finally, *Great Joy* by Kate Dicamillo tells the story of a young girl who is preparing her lines for the nativity play at her church. All the while she is concerned about a poor man she discovers is sleeping on the street outside her home. This heart-touching book reminds us to pay attention to those in need – keeping our eyes open as we rush about and extend an invitation to join us as we celebrate Jesus.

---

**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 23, 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 13. The deadline for copy is Thursday, January 5. Send news to [bklaus@graceriverforest.org](mailto:bklaus@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.

## Refugee Ministry Rocks!!

On August 26, 2021, Grace stepped into this ministry by welcoming a family of five Rohingya refugees who came to us out of a refugee camp in Malaysia.

On October 25, 2021, Grace partnered with Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church to welcome an Afghan widow and her six children coming via the frantic evacuation of their country.

And today, we are blessed with a third refugee family! This time partnering with Pilgrim Church in Oak Park, our family of six is coming from Congo. They are of Tutsi ethnicity and have been living in a refugee camp in Rwanda. The parents are in their thirties and the children range in age from one to nine. By the time this article is printed, they will be settled into an apartment in the Rogers Park neighborhood. Check out our bulletin board in the Atrium for updates as we get acquainted with this new family.

We thank our partners at Pilgrim, who have furnished the household goods and food for this family. They will be visiting on a regular schedule with our Grace volunteers. Also, thanks to Avery Tan, his family, and the fifth grade class at Grace School for organizing a generous donation campaign to provide school supplies, clothing, and all sorts of other good things for the children in this family. Special thanks to all the faithful donors at Grace who continue to support this meaningful ministry.

If you feel the tug to join in, contact Linda Street at [kentuckystreets53@gmail.com](mailto:kentuckystreets53@gmail.com) and find out how you can help a fourth family!





# Grace Advent/Christmas Concert

**December 11, 2022, 4:00 p.m.**

Choirs and Orchestra of Grace Church and School  
Music by Bach, Hobby, Vaughan Williams, and more

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

Childcare available ■ Free-will offering  
7300 Division Street ■ River Forest, Illinois  
708-366-6900 ■ [www.graceriverforest.org](http://www.graceriverforest.org)

## FINANCIAL UPDATE

Grace Lutheran Church General Fund

### Church budgeted contributions

July 1, 2022 – November 16, 2022 \$ 730,000  
(20 Sundays, \$36,500 per week)

### Church actual contributions

July 1, 2022 – November 16, 2022 \$ 502,000  
(Last year at this time: \$505,000)

Church giving is \$228,000 (31%) below budget, but \$3,000 (0.6%) ahead of last year. The General Fund deficit is \$102,000 (\$288,000 last year through November 30). The deficit includes the November 15 payroll, but not the November Portico benefits bill.



**January 22**

**Ich steh mit einem Fuß im Grabe, BWV 156**

**I am standing with one foot in the grave**

**3:00 p.m.** Cantata Preview Lecture (in-person only)

**Mark Peters**, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights

**3:45 p.m.** Bach Cantata Vespers (in-person and online)

**Kontras Quartet**: Eleanor Bartsch, François Henkins, Ben Weber, and Jean Hatmaker

**Dieterich Buxtehude**: Herzlich lieb hab ich dich, o Herr, BuxWV 41

**David John Hailey**, First Baptist Church, Oak Park, Illinois, homilist

**Nathalie Colas**, soprano


**Thomas Aláan**, countertenor

**Ryan Townsend Strand**, tenor

Douglas Anderson, baritone

Bach Cantata Vespers Chorus and Orchestra  
Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello, conducting

**GRACE LUTHERAN SCHOOL**  
7300 Division Street in River Forest  
708-366-6900



Early Childhood, ages 3 to 5

- Full-day kindergarten
- Half-day and full-day options for ages 3 to 4

Elementary & Junior High, Grades 1 to 8

- Strong academic curriculum
- Individualized attention
- Music, art, and sports teams
- Before and after-school care available

**GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL**

FAITH

❖

ACADEMICS

❖

CHARACTER

**First Look Fridays**  
2nd & 4th  
Fridays of each month.  
Call the office at  
708-366-6901

## Christmas Caroling Opportunities



**On December 3, at 1:30 p.m., we will be caroling in Oak Park during their annual Winterfest, On December 18, after worship, we will carol our way to both The Sheridan and Brookdale, where we will spend some time before caroling back to Grace.**

**Details and sign-up:**

**<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/carolingwithgrace>**

# A word of thanks from Grace School

By Ana Garcia

While we started the year with just under 200 students at Grace, we are excited to announce that the number has increased to 203! We feel honored and blessed that more families have chosen Grace to be their school. All the praise be to God! We have had between two and four families attend each First Look Friday event that we've put on, and most attendees have applied.

Grace's annual open house date is set for January 22. We invite you to attend if you are looking for a school or to recommend to others who are currently searching. Word of mouth has consistently been the biggest driver to our school, and we can't thank you enough for being an advocate for Grace.

Grace School's F.A.N. Club (Family Ambassador Network) had their 2022 kick-off meeting on November 6. Aimée Davis, parent of a seventh grade student, graciously opened her home for the gathering. We welcomed new members and discussed how we can continue to share Grace effectively through our families. We were also proud to share our students' recent MAP test scores. 91% of students in second through eighth grade scored above the national average in reading, and 86% of students in second through eighth grade scored above the national average in Math. What a great testament to our teachers!

Grace continues to have a Yearbook Club this year, and we added two more club opportunities: Art Club with Ms. Natalie Johnson and Newsletter Club with Mrs. Williams and Ms. Garcia. Both clubs have been a hit. The Art Club immediately filled up and had a waiting list. Ms. Johnson is teaching candle making, mosaics, clay/sculpture, paint/printmaking, smile lab, and more!

The Newsletter Club had twelve members at its first meeting. The students came up with interview questions and tested out their interview skills on the Early Childhood staff. They worked diligently on putting together a well-crafted newsletter highlighting what Grace Early Childhood programs have to offer as well as spotlighting P.E. and sports. Their first publication will be printed and distributed to school families on December 15.

Over the last month, we requested and collected quotes from families on why they are thankful for Grace Lutheran School. The responses have been overwhelming. We are proudly showcasing thankful thoughts on our social media platforms, the Grace blog, and even around the building. We invite you to take the time to read through them online, or when you visit the school in person. They are a testament to the great community we have at Grace.



*Photos of the many clubs and activities available at Grace School. November, 2022.*

## Ministry Fair

The Ministry Fair may be over but Ministry goes on. Did you discover your Superpower, your gift or talents that can be used for God's glory? Sometimes are gifts and talents are not obvious but are held in shadow until we step out and try something new and different. Sunday, November 20 was an opportunity to explore our God-given gifts in different ways. Thirty-two different ministry groups and their leaders were present, sharing the many wonderful ways each of us are welcome to use our gifts for God, for Grace, and for the world. Grace thrives by finding ways to help you thrive, be it through

women's ministry groups, direct social service opportunities, or by your sharing your gifts during Sunday worship.

We hope that each of you will take time to think about your own gifts, which are many, and how you might find ways to share them at Grace. If you are still searching for your "spot" or are not sure where you might serve, feel free to reach out to our Discipleship & Fellowship Coordinator, Julie Hinz. [jhinz@graceriverforest.org](mailto:jhinz@graceriverforest.org)

## Cornerstones

Bible study for seniors with treats and fellowship at 9:30 a.m. and Bible study with the pastors at 10 a.m. During Advent, an 11 a.m. worship will follow the meetings. On November 30 and December 14, the group's sessions are followed by lunch in Fellowship Hall.

## Religion in Literature

The group will meet on Zoom on December 16 to discuss "Readings from Martin Luther's Christmas Book". Jill Baumgaertner leads the discussion. Email [jill.baumgaertner@wheaton.edu](mailto:jill.baumgaertner@wheaton.edu) to be added to the group's email list. A copy of the book is available in the church library.

## Theology on Tap

Come for community and monthly conversations about faith and life. Email [tmedlin@graceriverforest.org](mailto:tmedlin@graceriverforest.org) for more information. The November and December sessions are cancelled.

## Moms of Littles

Mothers with children of any and all ages, infants through teens, meet twice a month, once in person and once virtually. If you have a "little" or are expecting one, please join us for community and support. Contact Sabrina Maggio at [sabrina.maggio713@gmail.com](mailto:sabrina.maggio713@gmail.com) to be added to the email list or learn more about the group.

## Dads of Grace

Due to the holidays, the December 26 date is cancelled for this group. Email Pastor Lyle for information about next meetings ([dlyle@graceriverforest.org](mailto:dlyle@graceriverforest.org)).

## PRAYERS

**We celebrate** with our new members, accepted on 11/06

John & Carol Albright

Nick & Casey Blashill

Ryan, Maggie, William & Colin Melville-Gray

Stephanie Hegarty

Scott & Ruth Nelson

Blaine Willhoft

**We celebrate** with Hudson Chumley, son of Miles and Hannah Chumley, and Dylan Drake, daughter of Andrew and Hallie Drake, to be baptized this coming month.

**And also** with Dean Bernard Matuszewski, son of Dan and Izzy Matuszewski, to be baptized on December 4.

**We give thanks** for the birth of Willem Jay Kooi, grandson of Bruce and Barb Van Heukelem.

**We pray** that the Lord consoles the family of Scott Krueger, who passed away on 11/02.

The weekly **Prayer List** can be found in the worship bulletin on Sunday. Contact Esther Armstrong (708-366-6900 ext 207 or [earmstrong@graceriverforest.org](mailto:earmstrong@graceriverforest.org)) to be included on the published prayer list.

## Men of Grace

The Men of Grace group does not meet this November or December. Email Pastor Troy for more information ([tmedlin@graceriverforest.org](mailto:tmedlin@graceriverforest.org)) and to learn about the next meeting.

## Finding Hope

This support group for people with chronic illness meets on the 2nd Friday of the month. The next meeting is on December 9, 10 a.m., at Grace. Chronic illness may include anything that you deal with on a day to day basis whether physical or psychological. The group meets for about an hour to pray together, share a devotion and check in with each other. Meetings may also occasionally involve a guest speaker or an informative video. Contact Judie McDonnell ([judie.mcdonnell@att.net](mailto: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 on the second Tuesday of each month at 10 a.m. in the church library. Meetings are also available on Zoom. Each meeting features a guest speaker. The next meeting is December 13. Contact John Halvorson ([johnhalvorson@yahoo.com](mailto:johnhalvorson@yahoo.com)) for more information.

## Building hours, Winter 2022

Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Thursday, December 21. (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.

## Special holiday hours:

Friday, December 22, closed at noon.

Monday, December 26 AND Monday, January 2, building closed. "Full days" from Monday, December 27, through Friday, January 6 are 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (Open weekday evenings and Saturday mornings for scheduled activities.)

## Pastors' emergency phone

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

## Grace Notes mailing crew invites you to join them for work and fellowship

This newsletter comes to you every month thanks to faithful volunteers who fold, tab, and label it for mailing. Their work makes it possible for the church to distribute a printed newsletter economically and on time.

More hands would make the work go faster. Most months the group meets on a Thursday morning. They'll be at work again on Thursday, January 12, 9:30 a.m. in the church library. If you have questions, contact Marlene Hallman (708-562-5476), or just come!

# Christmas Eve Services led by the children of Grace:

**Two services, at 4:15 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. on December 24.**



7300 Division St.  
River Forest, IL 60305

GRACE  
LUTHERAN  
CHURCH  
& SCHOOL

Non-profit org.  
U. S. Postage  
PAID  
Oak Park, IL  
Permit No 28