

*“Abiding in Christ through grace, we are gathered to grow and sent to serve.”*

# Notes of Grace

Grace Lutheran Church (ELCA), Brownton, Minnesota

December 2017

## December Servants

### Acolyte

- 3 Aaron Ward
- 10 Hunter Gens
- 17 Ross Jerabek
- 24 8:45am Brent Lipke  
5pm Aaron Ward  
& Ross Jerabek
- 31 To Be Determined

### Communion

Joyce Peterson

### Altar Guild

Vonnie Schuett & Theresa Eitel

### Ushers

- 3 Michelle Barley
- 10 Lowell & Sherry Rickheim,  
Rich & Kerry Ward
- 17 Klark & Paula Katzenmeyer
- 24 8:45am Brad & Karla Trettin  
5pm Larry & Jeanette Tongen
- 31 Vicki Herrmann,  
Ben & Gloria Schuft

### Readers

- 3 Keith Tongen
- 10 Joyce Peterson
- 17 Roxanne Wendlandt
- 24 8:45am Kerry Ward  
5pm Paula Katzenmeyer
- 31 Vicki Herrman

### Greeters

- 3 Joyce Peterson & Grandkids
- 10 Jim & Shirley Lindeman
- 17 Keith & Jane Tongen
- 24 8:45am Norm & Cheryl Schwarze  
5pm Oarther Martin Jr
- 31 Ben & Gloria Schuft

## “From Heaven Above”

Pastor Martin Luther wrote the hymn “From Heaven Above”. It is not as well-known as other Christmas carols, but when we sing it, we tell the Christmas story with praise. In one verse we sing, “I too must join the angel-throng to sing with joy his cradle-song.” And that’s what we will do on Christmas Eve at 5pm – gather to join the angel throng and sing together as a congregation. Come and join us.

Before all that happens, we all will have different opportunities to prepare for the celebration of Christmas. Worship in Advent and let your preparation include giving to the poor, the forgotten, the homeless, or others who appear to us as the face of the Jesus, born into poverty.

## Sunday School Christmas Program

Our Sunday School will join in the Christmas story with their program on Sunday, Dec. 17, at the 8:45am worship service. Following the program, a light breakfast will be served. Since a Thrivent Action Team will help provide the funds for the meal, the free will offering will all go to help others. We hope we can enjoy time as families and as a congregation together in worship and together in meal. There will be no Sunday school hour that day.

## Servant Lists for 2018

This is the time of the year we make our servant lists for 2018. If you would like to be included as a Scripture reader during worship, as an Altar Guild member (help set up for Holy Communion), or a greeter at the front doors on Sunday, please call the church office early in December so we can include you.

\*Please let us know also, if you would like to be removed from these lists as well.

Schedules will be available end of December and/or included in the January Newsletter.

**Grace Members:** Please **do not** store our extra fellowship room chairs in the garage. There have been many chairs destroyed by mice.

Thank You!  
Joyce Peterson, Council President

## End of Year Gifts Sought for our Ministry

As we come to the end of our fiscal year, we will count on everyone to help us pay down the \$5,000 borrowed from our Line of Credit. We have had a good year of ministry and we are grateful for all the gifts, large and small, which enable us to be a community of faith that is “Abiding in Christ through grace, we are gathered to grow and sent to serve!”

## Open House 90th Birthday Party for Audrey Tongen

The family of Audrey will be hosting an Open House celebrating her 90th Birthday at the church on January 7th from 11am-3pm. Church members are welcome to stay following worship.

## **Grace Lutheran Church Council Meeting Highlights**

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**November 8, 2017**

### **Secretary's Report:**

M.S.C. to approve the minutes of the October 2017 meeting.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

General Fund: October ending balance \$124.00.

Total Income for Oct - \$5,797.93, Total Expenditures for Oct - \$13,704.13.

Line of Credit: \$5,000. M.S.C. to approve the Treasurer's Report

**Correspondence:** Thank you from the Gideon's

**Pastor's Report:** [The Pastor is reading about the future of the Church and pondering how we exist as a God's church in today's society. Wondering about how we adapt. More to come.](#)

### **Calendar:**

- Nov 26 Decorate for Advent/Christmas after worship
- Nov 27-29 Pastor out of town – Lilly Conference
- Dec 2 Women's Guest Day 10:30am
- Dec 17 Sunday School Christmas Program/during worship
- Dec 24 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent in the morning & Christmas Eve worship at 5pm
- Dec 25-30 Pastor's vacation
- Jan 7 Fellowship Hall reserved: Keith Tongen contact person
- Jan 28 Annual Meeting

### **Old Business/Updates:**

1. Congregational directory is in for review. A draft will be returned to us to proof. Once we approve, it will move on to be printed.
2. Garbage service – issue with Waste Management contract, having difficulty cancelling the contract. Will probably have to pay a cancellation fee.
3. Discussion on Cemetery funds' investment. Guest Diane Knorr from Thrivent. Discussed options for investing in mutual funds to help make the Cemetery fund a self-sustaining account.

### **New Business:**

1. Discussion on the Gehrke bequest. The council decided where to give the required benevolence amount of \$8,000.
2. Pastor reviewed the Memorial gift policy concerning the need for the council to approve gifts and to think about what gifts would be good for our ministry.

**Committee and Group Reports:** The nominating committee will need to meet in November.

**Next Meeting:** December 13, 7 pm

## **A Word from the Pastor / “My Work as Lilly Director”**

Let me tell you a recurring story. *A pastor receives his first call to serve a church. Both he and the congregation are excited about the new start. But what the congregation doesn't know is that the pastor is struggling with debt. Four years of college plus four years of seminary created a high amount of debt which now he and his wife will start paying back. The church's salary is at the guidelines of what a first-year pastor is paid; after making his loan payment, there is little to live on meaning they struggle to make ends meet. Each day they bear the anxiety it brings and they are looking at many years of bearing this burden. He begins to feel like a failure and all alone. Where can he turn for help? The debt means he can't provide for his family as he would like. He can't save for an emergency, retirement or his children's college as he was advised to do. The pastor feels ashamed leading the church and asking for support knowing that he can't be as generous as he would like to be. He thought he was called to serve God as a pastor, but now he wonders if he needs to find another profession.*

This story of overwhelming debt is occurring across the Christian church in every denomination. Why is this happening? Does not one have financial management skills any longer? That is not the reason. Rather, the way we finance education has changed over the last 20 years. More and more responsibility is being placed on the student. When I went to seminary, the expense was shared between other entities and resources so that I was able to start my ministry with a reasonable amount of debt. If I went to seminary today, I would be one of those pastors with unmanageable debt. It makes me shutter. Debt is an issue for half of the pastors coming out of seminary today.

This educational debt is making our pastors and their families unhealthy, and it is affecting their ability to lead congregations well. But imagine if the debt load of a pastor could be lightened. It has multiple effects: the pastor's anxiety is lessened, she is more able to be a healthier person and a more effective pastor. For this reason, the Lilly Endowment in Indianapolis launched a multi-year Initiative to see if attention and resources could be brought to ease the financial stress of pastors thereby benefitting the congregations they lead. Our synod has been a recipient of Lilly funds and is participating in this initiative. I was named our synod's Lilly director about a year ago. This is my “other job”. (I am called to serve Grace  $\frac{3}{4}$  time and work as the Lilly director  $\frac{1}{4}$  time.)

One of the major things we are working on is establishing a Ministerial Excellence Fund which helps pastors with their educational debt as well as with other financial issues. If we can help pastors, we believe congregations and our synod will also benefit and our future will be better. We will also be addressing the problem in the educational system by returning to a Lutheran value – that we not only ask that our pastors be well educated, but that we also assist them in receiving that education. Want to be a part of this? We need donations to support the Ministerial Excellence Fund! Go to “Make a Gift” link at [swmnelca.org](http://swmnelca.org) or talk to me.

### **Sunday school & Confirmation**

The Sunday School continues to meet and learn some stories of the Old Testament. On November 19, young people sang during worship and we also featured the bells that some of our young people are learning to play together. The Sunday school went to the Shade Tree to sing that day and a couple days later the following response was received from the Shade Tree:

*Thank you for having the children's choir come to sing for us. We enjoyed it. It was a delight to see all the young people. Thank you!*

During December the Sunday School will be working on their program on December 3 and 10. The program will be at 8:45am on December 17 and there will be no Sunday School that day – but instead a breakfast for everyone. Sunday School will resume on January 7.

The confirmation class is also learning of the stories of the Old Testament. They are learning to recognize the progression of stories on the biblical timeline that is in their study Bible as well as read the Bible maps that correspond with what they are learning.

### **GET AN “A+” IN GIFTING WHEN YOU GIVE THE ONE YOU LOVE YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION.**

Enjoy a Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend with private, one-on one time with your spouse in a comfortable and private environment away from distractions. The next Weekend is Feb 16-18, 2018 at the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel in Brooklyn Center, MN. Apply now at [GodLovesMarriage.org](http://GodLovesMarriage.org), or contact Peter & Phyllis McMahon at [mcmahonp@comcast.net](mailto:mcmahonp@comcast.net) or [763-561-1575](tel:763-561-1575) for more information. Weekends fill fast and pre-registration is required. Dave and Pastor Linda Pedersen from Grace will be one of the presenting couples. Contact them for questions at [320-328-9911](tel:320-328-9911).

### **Amazon Gives**

You may remember an announcement earlier this fall letting you know you could make purchases on Amazon with the website AmazonSmile. Some people did and named Grace as the beneficiary of the charity Amazon gives, so we received our first check from Amazon Smile in November. Thanks!

AmazonSmile operates the same as Amazon, but they give a fraction of a percentage of the purchase to a charity of your choice. Sign in using this web address: [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com). It operates the same as Amazon. You will need to choose which charity that will be assigned to your account.

# December 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> 10:30am WELCA Guest Day
<b>3</b> 8:45am Worship/Communion 10am Sunday School	<b>4</b> 6pm Local Broadcast	<b>5</b> 9am Bible Study	<b>6</b> 4pm Confirmation	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b> 8:45am Worship 10am Sunday School	<b>11</b> 6pm Local Broadcast	<b>12</b> 9am Bible Study	<b>13</b> 4pm Confirmation 6:30pm Choir Practice 7pm Council Meeting	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17 Christmas Program</b> 8:45am Worship 10am Breakfast for All	<b>18</b> 6pm Local Broadcast	<b>19</b> 9am Bible Study	<b>20</b> 7pm Choir Practice	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b> 8:45am Worship/Communion 5pm Christmas Eve Worship	<b>25</b> 6pm Local Broadcast	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b> 8:45am Worship						