



Address Service Requested

**Christmas at Grace 'Tis the Season Once Again!**

The Advent/Christmas season is a bustling, exciting time at any church, and Grace is certainly no exception. In fact, with the inauguration of our new Grace Concert Series, there are more opportunities to celebrate the glory of Christmas than ever before! Cut out this page and post it where you can see it often—you don't want to miss all that's happening at our church home this month! *Note: as always, we apologize if you receive this newsletter after any of the following events have occurred:*

**Saturday, Dec. 6, 7:30pm**  
**"A Baroque Christmas"**

Don't miss this second opportunity to experience the Advent Chamber



**Sunday, Dec. 7, 8:15/9:30/11am**  
**"One of Us"**

Did you ever wonder why Jesus came to earth to live as one of us? It's truly a mystery—and a miracle! Join us for this Music in Worship presentation of "One of Us," a contemporary Advent musical featuring the Grace Praise Team and special guest trumpeter Chris O'Hara, a founder and former member of the Synergy Brass Ensemble. Directed by Kris Visser and choreographed by Rev. Adrienne Ann Ilseman, "One of Us" also features liturgical dance and dramatic tableaux.



**Sunday, Dec. 21, 9:30 & 11am\***  
**"Christmas with Grace"**



Orchestra, in residence at Grace this debut concert season and one of the Midwest's finest young ensembles. At this concert, the ACO will be joined by the Young Naperville Singers and the Grace Chamber Singers. They will perform Charpentier's "Christmas Eve Mass" and beloved works by Bach and Handel. For advance price tickets (adults \$20; seniors 65+ \$16; students \$10), visit [www.peopleofgrace.org/concerts](http://www.peopleofgrace.org/concerts) or pick up a Grace Concert Series brochure in the church office. You may also purchase tickets at the door (\$22/\$18/\$10).

Glorious Christmas music for choir and orchestra, featuring the Grace Chancel Choir and full orchestra and special guests the Naperville Central High School Steel Pan Ensemble. Music includes Randol Alan Bass' "Christmas Flourish" and Glenn McClure's setting of "Veni Emmanuel," with Caribbean percussion, beloved carols and more!

**\*Dec. 21 8:15am worship features music from the New Life Singers**

**Sunday, Dec. 21, 7:30pm**  
**"Longest Night" Service**

Join us in quiet remembrance of loved ones we've lost and preparation for the coming of Christ; led by Pastor Bob Atkins.

**Christmas Eve, Dec. 24**

**12:00 Noon** Holy Communion service with Pastor Don Niswonger and music from the Grace Bell Ensemble

**3:00pm** Service for children and families with Pastor Bob Atkins and music from the Angelus and Cherub children's choirs

**4:30pm** Service for children and families with Pastor Bob Atkins and music from the Junior Singers and Children's Bell Ensemble

**7:00pm** Youth-led service with Pastor Lisa Telomen and Rev. Howie Snyder and music from His Grace, Grace Youth Chorale and the Youth Bell Ensemble

**9:00pm** Holy Communion service with Pastor Bob Atkins and music from the New Life Singers

**11:00pm** Candlelight "Lessons and Carols," featuring the Grace Chancel Choir and Naperville Brass Ensemble. Led by Pastor Bob Atkins

**Christmas Day, Dec. 25, 10am**  
 Family-friendly worship in Fellowship Hall with Christmas carols and stories 'round the tree! Kids, come in your Pj's!



*Prepare Ye the Way for the Lord!*



*These beautiful photos were taken by Dick Trondsen on November 30th in worship and later in the day at the Advent wreath making celebration and the Children's Choir Ministry's musical "Light of the World"*



## Pastor's Journal

### In Times of Less Plenty, Let Us Give the Gift of Love

Christmas comes but once a year, every year in December. Why are we never ready for it? Every year most of us are unprepared, making last minute decisions, and our forced choices produce less than we would hope.

This year, with economic uncertainty and a holiday season marked by fewer and lesser purchases, Christmas will still come. But the holiday spirit that used to drive year-end parties and December shopping sprees may be in short supply.

There is an old story by O. Henry called the "Gift of the Magi." With a typical short story twist, it tells of the true meaning of the Christmas spirit when there is not plenty, but only love. If you do not know it, or only dimly remember it, you can find it online in the public domain or in our Naperville library. Maybe there will be time in this year of less "plenty" to read this story to your children, explaining watch fobs and hair combs to a digital generation and, in the process, exploring the love which is at the center of Christmas.

O. Henry concluded (after laying out his story of a poor young wife who sells her long hair to pay for the gift of a watch fob chain for her husband who has, in turn, sold his watch to pay for a set of combs for his wife): "The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days, let it be said that of all who give gifts, these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi."

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Bob's "Journals" also appear in Positively Naperville

## CHURCH COUNCIL UPDATE

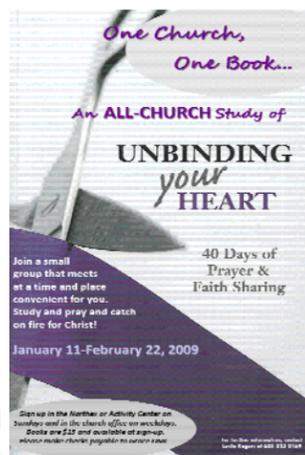


By John Bodine,  
Church Council Chair

Our Grace membership has responded extremely well to our plans for bolstering Children's and Family Ministries in 2009, with current expected gifts for 2009 totaling \$1,596,600. This effectively matches our 2008 budget, but still falls short of our plans for expanding Children's and Family Ministries in 2009. We need an additional \$130,000 to complete the budget plan for 2009. A team of Grace leaders has reviewed current returns from our Stewardship Campaign and has forwarded to all members a note asking if they would consider an adjustment upward of their Estimate of Giving to help make up the difference. These are difficult and challenging times with respect to our economy, but it is exactly the time when Grace and other community institutions are called upon to support their members and the community at large around them.

Please consider what you can do to help us achieve our goals for 2009. In these holiday times, sometimes tense and stressful, remember that it is not the gifts we buy or the parties we throw or attend that are valued in the long run. It is the relationships with family and friends, the lives that we touch, the expressions of love, the gratitude and prayers we extend to one another when in need that bind us together and create the comforting and accepting community we must be. Take time to reflect on your blessings. Enjoy the moments and memories, and be generous with your hugs and smiles. They will brighten the world around you.

Remember also to get engaged in what's happening at Grace. There are exciting changes afoot, and we need your skills and talents. Make a special point of greeting someone you don't know and perhaps find yourself the welcoming Grace ambassador for a potential new member!



### All-Church Study!

Join us on a spiritual journey that will change the way you look at your faith forever! Beginning **January 11 through February 22, 2009**

Grace is embarking upon an all-church weekly small group study of Martha Grace Reese's *Unbinding Your Heart: 40 Days of Prayer and Faith Sharing*. During the 2008 Lenten season, some of our leaders and members studied this book and were so moved by its liberating, unguarded approach to prayer and faith sharing, they have offered to lead others in small group study of this ground-breaking book in the new year. Sign up in the Activity Center on Sundays or in the church office on weekdays for a study time and location convenient for you. The book is \$15, available at sign-up (please make checks payable to Grace United Methodist Church). Contact Leslie Rogers at 630-325-0169 for more information.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bulk mail is unpredictable! Please accept our apologies if you receive this newsletter after any of the below events have occurred.

### Christmas Music/Worship (see page 1) Advent Candle Lighters Still Needed!

Please contact Tom Blair at 630-548-3074 if you can help light Advent candles at worship services on either Dec. 7, 14 or 21.

### "Stories for the Journey" CDs

There are extra CDs of Grace members' testimonies, shared in worship in August, outside the sanctuary. Help yourself—share them with a friend!

### W.O.W. December Fellowship

Widows or Widowers will gather Sunday, **December 7**, at 10:30 a.m. in the Fireside Room for fellowship, lunch and a shared program on Christmas cards. Please bring a \$10 donation for Naperville Ecumenical Adult Day Care Center. All widows and widowers are invited. If you are not on our calling list, contact Winnie Graver at 630-769-6089 for a reservation.

### Over 50 Fellowship Shares the Spirit

Come enjoy a delicious Christmas luncheon and Christmas music program from Dan Wagner on Thursday, **December 11**, 12:00 p.m., in Fellowship Hall. Reserve in advance in the church office (630-355-1748) by Dec. 9; cost is \$5 at the door.

### Jolly Old St. Nicholas!

Families with children aged kindergarten through fifth grade, come hear the story of St. Nicholas and make a gingerbread house on Sunday, **December 14**, at 10:45 in the Activity Center. Please bring mittens, scarves or hats to decorate our Mitten Tree. We will take them to children who need them to keep warm this winter. Sign up in the Activity Center on December 7 or in the church office. Contact Margaret Harrison at 630-355-1748, ext. 241, with any questions.

### December Women's Circles

**Martha-Esther** invites all women to attend their Christmas Brunch on Tuesday, **Dec. 16**, 9:15 a.m., in the Fireside Room. Nothing to bake or bring, and loving child care is provided (reserve child care with Leslie Stapleton at 630-961-9304). Now is the time to check out this fun, friendly group of women! **Sarah Circle** will meet on Tuesday, **Dec. 16**, 9:15 a.m., in the home of Jean Ownby (note change of venue!). Our program features Val Dudley, who will present "Hand Chimes/Christmas Carols." We'll have our annual cookie exchange as well as our Christmas Cookie Cook Books for

sale...**Mary Circle** will meet Tuesday, **Dec. 16**, 9:30 a.m. (note time!), in the home of Elaine Pauls for our annual Christmas luncheon. Please bring a favorite Christmas item for "Holiday Show and Tell" (a card, ornament, book, etc.), and remember your items for Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry...**Priscilla Circle** will meet Tuesday, **Dec. 16**, 6:30 p.m., in the home of Ruth Wills for a potluck dinner and program presented by Ruth. Please bring a dish to pass...**Ruth Circle** will meet Wednesday, **Dec. 17**, 9:15 a.m., in the home of Char Schwabero. Our program is "Skipping Christmas," by Winnie Graver; please bring a gift for Family Shelter. **2008 Contributions Due Dec. 31** All monetary contributions to Grace must be turned in by Dec. 31, 2008, or mailed in an envelope postmarked by Dec. 31, 2008. Monies that do not conform to these guidelines cannot be attributed to the year 2008.

### New Member Class/Luncheon Jan. 11

Would you like to join the membership of Grace in 2009? Our next new member class and luncheon will meet Sunday, **January 11**, 10:50 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Participants will join Grace at the service of their choice the following Sunday, January 18. Please contact Rev. Carol Madalin at 630-355-1748, ext. 246, if you would like to join our next new member class.

### All-Church "Unbinding" Begins

**January 11** (see page 2)

### Lenten Booklet Contributions

Devotions, poems, art, etc. for our 2009 Lenten booklets are due Monday, **January 12**. Our Lenten Task Force needs adequate time to produce these annual booklets so that they can be in your mailboxes by Ash Wednesday (February 25 this year). Please contact Merrill Litchfield at 630-355-5239 for further information.

### Advent Chamber Orchestra in First Concert of the New Year

In its third concert of the inaugural season of the Grace Concert Series, the Advent Chamber Orchestra will perform "La Visionaire" on Saturday, **January 17**, 7:30 p.m. See [www.peopleofgrace.org/concerts](http://www.peopleofgrace.org/concerts) for ticket information, or pick up a concert series brochure in the church office.

### Fellowship of Christian Men 2009

Men, mark your calendars now for the following FCM quarterly meetings for the year 2009: Winter Forum-Friday, **January**

**23**; Spring Forum-Friday, **April 3**-Summer Forum-Saturday, **July 25** (Kane County Cougars game-families welcome!); and Fall Forum/Men's Event-Friday, **October 23**. **Happy 16th Anniversary!**

The Grace congregation is invited to share in a very special anniversary event celebrating 16 years of the Grace Church Foundation. Set for Friday, **January 30**, catered dinner will begin at 6:00 p.m. (please reserve with Scott Oats at 630-355-4716 or [soats@sbcglobal.net](mailto:soats@sbcglobal.net)). Following dinner will be a special Grace Concert Series presentation featuring "Nancy Staton and Friends." For concert and ticket information, visit [www.peopleofgrace.org/concerts](http://www.peopleofgrace.org/concerts), or pick up a Grace Concert Series brochure in the church office.

### Youth Events in the New Year:

**January 16-18** Senior High Retreat  
**January 31-February 1** College Retreat  
**March 20-21** 30-Hour Famine  
**April 24-26** Junior High "Believe"  
**June 6-14** Side-by-Side Summer Mission

### New Year's Resolution: Serve Grace!

There are so many ministries at Grace in need of your service. In particular, Education, Family and Children, Coffee Fellowship, Missions, Religion and Race, Church and Society, Evangelism and Grace Guides need you! Contact Bob Plummer at 630-961-3228 if you can offer your help.

## Don't Flake Out!

The holidays are crazy, but you don't have to be! Join our soul-centering circle of worship every Saturday evening, 5:30 p.m., in the Activity Center. Informal, intimate worship style, weekly communion, family time, and original music from singer/songwriter Vickie Wagner.

The deadline for January Grace Notes is: **Monday, December 29**  
Grace Notes is published for the members and friends of Grace United Methodist Church. Submit news to Barb Ceruti via e-mail at [gumcnotes@peopleofgrace.org](mailto:gumcnotes@peopleofgrace.org); phone at 630-355-1748, ext. 240; or drop off news in the church office, ATTN: Barb  
**Grace United Methodist Church**  
300 E. Gartner Rd.  
Naperville, IL 60540  
630-355-1748 [www.peopleofgrace.org](http://www.peopleofgrace.org)

## Southern Gospel and A Cappella Artists Bring Harmony, Energy to Grace

The month of November was book-ended by two energetic concerts in the Grace Concert Series, each featuring accomplished vocalists with pitch-perfect harmonies and effervescent style. The first, on November 7, featured Southern Gospel artists The Crist Family, wowing their audience with their beautifully blended sound and Christian witness through music. "The Crist Family's a cappella harmonies were just wonderful," said Phyllis Pepiot. Winners of door prize CDs from the Crist Family were Gene Skooglund and Margaret Schmitt.

On November 23, more wonderful a cappella sound filled our sanctuary, when the Chicago area a cappella octet "An Octave Above" sang their diverse blend of a cappella jazz, pop, 80's, "oldies" classics, and an entire second half devoted to Christmas music, uniquely arranged and sung by



A cappella artists "An Octave Above" perform at Grace on Sunday, November 23.

the four women and four men of "An Octave Above." Both concerts attracted enthusiastic crowds, sealing a solid start to the inaugural season of the Grace Concert Series.

Next up in the concert series is "A Ba-

roque Christmas" on December 6, featuring the Advent Chamber Orchestra (see page one), their second of four concerts at Grace this debut season. Early in the new year, the Advent Chamber Orchestra will return to perform "La Visionaire" on January 17. On January 30, the Grace Church Foundation will celebrate its 16th anniversary with a catered dinner, followed by a concert with "Nancy Staton and Friends." On Valentine's Day February 14, spouses and sweethearts will have the very special opportunity to attend "A Song for Valentine's Day," featuring love songs from Grace artists-in-residence, elegant dessert and (best of all) child care, so that mom and dad can have a romantic Saturday night out! Find out more about all of the fabulous concerts in our series at [www.peopleofgrace.org/concerts](http://www.peopleofgrace.org/concerts), or pick up a Grace Concert Series brochure in the church office.

## Grace Office Staff Welcomes Kathy Sakats



Grace member Kathy Sakats joined the Grace office staff last month as a part-time assistant. Replacing Kathy Voss, who left her job at Grace to pursue full-time work, Kathy Sakats was looking for flexible part-time work and felt that working in the Grace office would fill the bill. Working Monday and Friday mornings doing various office tasks, Kathy says that she enjoys being around all the nice people in the

Grace office and learning new things. (However, says Kathy, she has yet to master all of the various copiers!)

"I've learned that there are many people who work very hard behind the scenes to make the programs, activities and communications of Grace successful," said Kathy, who worked at a florist prior to signing on with Grace and as a computer programmer years ago before she left full-time work to stay home with her three children, Tyler (23), Mark (20) and Hannah (17).

Kathy and her husband, Steve, moved with their family from North Carolina to Naperville 11 years ago. Shortly after, they joined Grace Church, where Kathy has enjoyed preparing dishes for Hesus House, sprucing up the sanctuary, and helping to upkeep the church grounds over the years. In her spare time, she loves to walk, read and work in her yard.

Also recently joining the Grace staff is Joyce Stuart, who is serving as a part-time assistant to Youth Ministries. Welcome, Kathy and Joyce—we're glad you're here!

## Animal Attraction!

Send us your animal photos! Every month, we'll feature a photo of your pet (or a friend's, family member's, etc.) or animal shot taken by you or someone you know (no internet downloads or otherwise "anonymous" animal photos, please). E-mail them to [gumcnotes@peopleofgrace.org](mailto:gumcnotes@peopleofgrace.org) or drop them in the church office, ATTN: Barb, to be scanned (originals will be returned to the owner). Please include your name, the animal's name, and any other information you'd like us to know about the animal or photo.



This is Lumpi, a female long-haired miniature Dachshund. Lumpi is 11 years old and has been a therapy dog at Edward Hospital for the past five years. When Lumpi (which means "Little Rascal" in German) is not bringing great joy to patients at Edward, she enjoys relaxing at home with her owners, Albert and Barbara Hoch, two cats and a canary. She also enjoys wearing the many holiday outfits Barbara dresses her in!



## Adult Christian Education

While Sunday School is most often associated with children, ongoing Christian education is as vital to adults as it is to youngsters, if not more so, given the tendency of adults to assume they "learned it all" as children. Like any dynamic entity, spiritual growth needs constant nurturing. While we may have learned the basic Christian principles as children, we must continue to challenge ourselves as disciples of Christ, ask the tough questions, study the deeper implications of biblical teachings, revisit the "basics" (again and again!), and put into practice the fact that a life of faith re-

quires regular attention through the continuing education and fellowship that adult Christian education affords.

Beginning in January, we are enhancing our adult education program with an all-church, six-week small group study of "Unbinding Your Heart," from January 11-February 22 (see page two for details). As Christians, we are called to share our faith and to pray in earnest, trusting that our prayers matter and that our Christian example can have a far-reaching effect on others. "Unbinding" groups will be predominantly lay-led, in accord with the Methodist emphasis on lay leadership. All are encouraged to sign up for a small group study at a time and place convenient for you.

While Grace Church provides several adult education opportunities, both ongoing Sunday morning and mid-week classes as well as various short-term studies, there is a particular need for richer education opportunities for adults in the middle years. Our renewed emphasis on family ministries includes the whole family, including parents as well as their children. "We want to beef up our adult programming for those over 25 and under 50," said Adult Education Chair Leslie Rogers. "We're aware that there is little to offer this group and that they need something of their own." An enthusiastic advocate of more dynamic adult education programming at Grace, Leslie encourages anyone with an

interest or passion for a particular Christian education experience to approach her with their ideas. "See me; we'll put something together!" urges Leslie. "That's the role I want to play in this ministry."

See *Grace in Mission*, our weekly church announcements, for existing adult education opportunities or contact Rev. Lisa Telomen at 630-355-1748, ext. 226. Contact Leslie Rogers at 630-325-0169 with your adult education ideas or questions and for further information about the "Unbinding Your Heart" study. There will be several small group options for the "Unbinding" study, so don't miss this wonderful opportunity to study, pray and catch on fire for Christ!

## Faith in Chains



When I was in college, I discovered the meaning of a personal relationship with Christ. Through the gentle but steady encouragement of a sorority sister, I learned to think of Christ not only as the son of God, but as a trusted friend. For many college students, however, faith is subject to a phenomenon that College of New Jersey associate professor Tim Clydesdale calls "lockbox theory," whereby college students store their religious beliefs, practices and convictions in a sort of "identity lockbox" as they develop other parts of their identities. These other aspects might include vocational or relational identity, while religious identity (along with political, racial, gender and civic identity) is kept under wraps. Essentially, explains Clydesdale, anything that doesn't allow students easy entry into the American cultural

## College Students Keep Religious Identity Locked Away

By Barb Ceruti

mainstream is stashed away during the college years.

"It's disheartening," said Grace Youth Pastor Howie Snyder. "In college, students want to experience freedom, and they lock away their Christian identity in the process; they compartmentalize." According to Howie, "lockbox theory" helps to explain research that is increasingly finding youth ministry to be less than effective. The shift away from Christian identity and faith-based activities in the college and young adult years suggests that junior and senior high Christian education has not "stuck," or at least may not surface again until students grow up and have children of their own.

To combat the effects of "identity lockbox," stresses Howie, college students must put finding a campus church or faith group high on their list of priorities. "My best advice to students who don't go to a

Christian college is to find a campus ministry early and really commit to it." Further, Howie points to evidence that suggests that a "buffer year," during which high school graduates do service or ministry work before they begin college, helps to quell the lockbox effect. "There are ministry programs designed for this," said Howie, noting that even colleges and universities realize the benefit of a buffer year (though, he admits, the idea may not be very popular among students and their parents).

In last month's *Grace Notes*, Christine Freeman wrote of the college ChristCare ministry she and her husband, Josh, began earlier this year. Still going strong, this group of local-area college students and early 20-somethings meets weekly on Tuesday nights to put Christ first in their lives and nurture the principles and values they acquired prior to entering college.

Said Cory Sackett, a member of the college group, "This college ministry has helped not only my faith, but all of those in the group because it allows us to still be 'crazy' college kids, but when it is time to dive into the Bible passages, it is an awesome experience that has made us all grow closer with each other and closer in Christ."

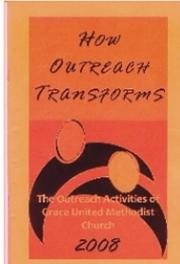
Also new this year, the Grace youth team has planned a college retreat to Shallowbrook Farm in Bradford, IL, on January 31-February 1, 2009 (find registration brochures online at [www.peopleofgrace.org/youth\\_ministries](http://www.peopleofgrace.org/youth_ministries)). Said Grace Assistant Director of Youth Ministries Gaye Lynn Loufek, "Kids need to know there is still a place for them in their church, even after the last day of Senior High Sunday School." Added Howie, "And they should decide now if faith is going to be a part of their lives for the long haul."

## Linking Up to Grace

This is our season of thanksgiving and giving—the last month of 2008, when we can wrap up the year by making a difference in the world, with Christ. In II Corinthians 9: 6-15, we learn that when we give generously to help others in need, we are not only being good for others, but we are also being good for God and for ourselves. Good for ourselves, because we are created by God in His image to be creative and generous and loving and because we experience more of God's love as we care for others and become more the people God designed us to be. Through our generous giving, others benefit by knowing more of God's grace and love and blessing in their lives, and God benefits as He becomes more a part of our lives and relationships. He enjoys

our thanksgiving in the midst of the blessings we share in our relationships with others. In I John 4: 7-12, we learn that God is love, and everyone who loves knows God, and God dwells in them and God's love is perfected in them. So how do we celebrate God's presence among us this thanks and giving season, when Christ becomes one of us? By giving and saying thanks for the opportunity to give and grow in love in our relationships. Give and get to know others—share where it will really make a difference, and bring life and love to another! Bring blessing and honor and love to

someone who has known little of it. And as you give from your heart, with the desire to reach another heart, let God and your neighbor in...connect and create a relationship that is more than a monetary or material exchange. This is what we read of Christ's love and ministry: He not only brought food and healing, but love and honor to those with whom he ministered.



*Want to give more than material gifts this Christmas? Pick up a copy of this book in the church office—it's loaded with opportunities to help others this season! Check it out with the whole family!*

Go with us to Trinity UMC in Joliet to meet the children and families for whom you have bought a Christmas gift. Volunteer at Hesus House (on the second Tuesday evening of each month), or DuPage

PADS at Community UMC on Sunday nights, and share food, socks, gloves and stories with those who live in need. Give to Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry and help re-stock shelves and share stories with those who come for food. Give to Heifer Project, and the livestock will keep on giving to whole communities! Pick up one of those bright orange HOT booklets by the church office, and learn about other projects that give life and love, blessing and hope to people in need this Christmas and all year. Learn how to give not only from your abundance, but also from your heart, with your hands and feet as well!

Blessings to you and yours,

*Rev Lisa E. Selomen*



By Pastor Lisa Telomen

## Making the Holidays Emotionally Manageable

By Rev. Dr. Carol Findon



**W**e have entered a time of the year which can lead to emotional reactions to holiday events and related cultural messages

that promote celebration. At times, these reactions can be characterized by various expressions or symptoms. These may range from mild discouragement, pessimism and listlessness to despondency, persistent unpleasant tension, and melancholic ruminations. Decisions about how to behave seem extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Emotional reactions can lead some people to experience an even more intense reaction—holiday depression. Beginning with Halloween and progressing through Thanksgiving, when tensions build, holiday depression culminates during the Christmas season and seems to wane as we enter the

season of Epiphany.

Perhaps it would be helpful to be mindful of Epiphany, the celebration of the incarnation and baptism of Jesus. Epiphany conveys the manifestation, the revelation of God to the world in Jesus Christ. Christmas did not come into existence until the fourth century, as the church added liturgical observances of the events in the life and ministry of Jesus. Easter, Pentecost and Epiphany constituted the three principal feasts in the early years of the church.

The culture of today has created a heavily secularized celebration of Christmas, ignoring the significance of the incarnation of Jesus. Our emotional reactions can be managed if we focus on the joy and hope of knowing that God is manifested in our lives even today! We can reduce our activities and not accommodate the dictates of the secular culture. Finding time for leisure and centering on the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ will help in cop-

ing with holiday emotional reactions, making them responses that we can manage.

### Laughter Helps Too!

A minister was completing a temperance sermon. With great emphasis he said, "If I had all the beer in the world, I'd take it and pour it in the river." With even greater emphasis he said, "And if I had all the wine in the world, I'd take it and pour it in the river." And then, finally, shaking his fist in the air, he said, "And if I had all the whiskey in the world, I'd take it and pour it in the river." Sermon complete, he sat down. The choir leader stood very cautiously and announced, with a smile, nearly laughing, "For our closing song, let us sing Hymn #365, 'Shall We Gather At the River.'"

*From Judy Cornett*

## Grace's Generosity Reaches Far

Thanks to the generosity of our Grace Church family, our annual **Harvest Home** celebration and **Mistletoe Marketplace** brought in over \$14,000 to help others! Funds raised for Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry at Harvest Home totaled \$6,314, while Mistletoe Marketplace proceeds totaled \$8,067 for the world, national and local missions of United Methodist Women.

Thanks also to **Ruth Wills**, whose teacher connections to Scholastic Books significantly boosted the buying power of Aunt Mary's Story Book Project, allowing United Methodist Women to purchase 100 books (half of which came through Ruth's efforts). Aunt Mary's Story Book Project provides incarcerated parents with a positive way to reach out to their children. Thank you to all who donated books to this worthwhile effort.

Grace donations to **CROP Walk** this year totaled a close second to our previous high of \$6,188, with this year's gifts totaling \$6,157.

Gracious thanks to the (as of press time) approximately 500 Grace family members who have submitted an **Estimate of Giving** for the year 2009.

## Out of the Mouths of Babes...

From Margaret Harrison

During the month of November, children in our 3-year-old through second grade level Sunday School classes learned about different ways to praise God. They learned about praising Him with music, dancing and their voices. The Bible verse for November was "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" (Psalm 150:6)

The second graders wrote this song about praising God:

*Lord, you are great  
Because of your traits.  
God, we praise you  
With all our might.  
We love you  
With all of our hearts.  
We praise you, God!*

They also made a list of their blessings:

Family—sisters, brothers, moms, dads, grandparents, grandchildren, cousins, husband, wife  
Being alive  
Pets  
Games and toys  
Food, shelter, water, clothes  
Friends  
Nature—birds, animals, plants, trees, grass  
Choir  
Jesus



## GRACE PERSONALS

Sympathies to the Friends & Families of...

**Fiore Gentile**, grandfather of Kristen Workman  
**Trent Johnson**, close friend of Larry Decker  
**Helen Mahlin**, aunt of LuRay Workman  
**Kevin and Kelli Shults**, nephew and grandniece of the Schwabero family  
**Bernadine Seger**, sister of Janet Clewett  
**Jean Steunenberg**  
**John Warnes**, uncle of Chris Warnes  
**Bill Winkler**, grandfather of Erin Roller

### Baptisms

**Kyle David**, son of Brian and Kristin Clark, was baptized on November 30

### Celebrations

**Avonna Lee Landwehr and Roger E. Anderson** were married on November 9

From Pastor Bill Bryan: We wish to congratulate Avonna Lee Landwehr on her marriage to Roger E. Anderson of Middleton, Wisconsin. A ceremony and celebration of marriage was held for them on Sunday, November 9, in the Tittle Chapel of First United Methodist Church of Evanston. The couple will make their home in the Evanston area and will attend First United Methodist Church there. We pray God's richest blessings upon them.

### Letters of Thanks

Dear Grace Church Family,

The family of Floyd Miller would like to express our deepest appreciation for the sympathy cards, prayers and support from our church family at Grace. We feel blessed to have you in our lives. Thank you!

—Brenda and Paul Carpenter and Family

Dear Grace Church Family,

For all of those that prayed for me and those that made the beautiful shawl and gave it to me, thank you seems very small. When trying to think of something else, I failed. I'll just say "To Thoughtful All of You—From Thankful Me." I will say Grace Church is truly a family and I'm so proud to be a part of it. May God bless all of us.

In Christian Love,

—Opal Buzan

If you have personal news or a letter you'd like to share with our family of Grace, please contact Barb Ceruti at 630-355-1748, ext. 240, or gumcnotes@peopleofgrace.org. You may also drop off letters or news to the church office, ATTN: Barb.

