

Grace Notes

Gather to Christ • Grow as Disciples • Go to Serve

A Communications Ministry of Grace United Methodist Church, Naperville

December 2020

Christmas at Grace ... New Possibilities

By Rev. Cindy Marino

We all know the difficulties we've experienced over the past several months. The question we have tried to ask ourselves at Grace, as we have shifted almost everything we do to a new way of doing it, is, "What are the possibilities?" We have stuck with that question, not because we are optimistic or confident – or desperate – but because we are created in the image of God who never gives up. Our God is a creating God who continues throughout the history of humanity to find new ways to communicate God's love to us.

We will celebrate God's creative gift to us in just a few weeks at Christmas. Even if we are required to stay home for everyone's safety, God still comes to us, moves right in with us, suffers alongside us, guides and girds us for this life we live even during a pandemic.

So, what can we do to celebrate that incredible gift?

Our tradition of passing the light of candles is certainly something I will miss. Like you, I'm sure, I cherish being in the warmth of the company of others, surrounded by the gradually growing light as we share it flame by flame, enveloped in the music that tells the story and opens our hearts to the transcendence of God. It's an experience that allows us to feel both the mystery and the unfailing love that is God.

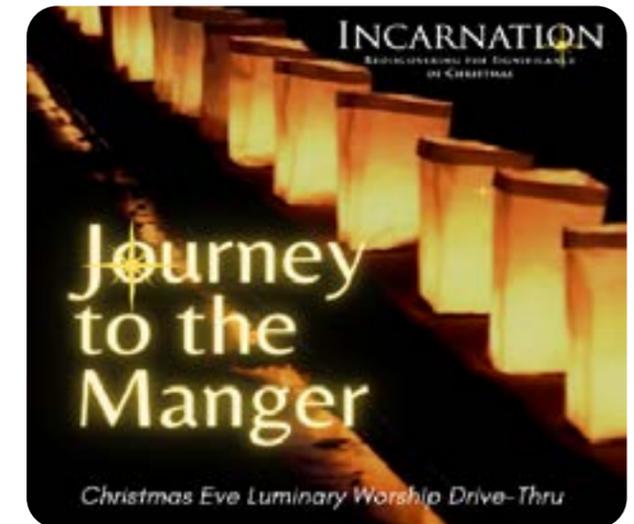
We hope to bring that moment of transcendence to life for our community in a new way this year! Grace will host a luminary drive on our beautiful Grace UMC property on Christmas Eve! Our prayer is that this Drive-thru Luminary will become a gift from Grace Church to our community to bring the light of Christ into the world.

Grace can offer nearly half a mile of luminaria with stations along the way to tell the Christmas story. From the safety and warmth of cars, participants can leave the darkness of the world behind as they turn into the church and follow the luminaries to the manger. Please see the Christmas at Grace insert for more information.

This gift from Grace to our community can only become a reality with your help. If you would like to contribute to the cost of this gift, please [click here to give](#) and choose the drop-down for the Journey to the Manger. We can also use loans of solar lighting or battery Christmas lights, station decoration teams, and dream teams to help plan the displays.

We pray this luminary drive becomes an extension of our Christmas Eve worship opportunities which we will also provide for your at-home celebrations. Please see the Christmas at Grace insert for more information.

For a list and description of stations available, contact Chamus (education@peopleofgrace.org) or Pastor Daniel (associatepastor@peopleofgrace.org). If you have other ideas or contributions, email me (seniorpastor@peopleofgrace.org). I look forward to working with all of the people of Grace to celebrate the light of Christ in our midst!



Thanksgiving With Grace

Hosted and curated by Dan Wagner, this audio and video program will be designed as an offering of gratitude and hope in God's faithfulness.

In this special service, you'll hear a compilation of inspiring Thanksgiving readings and historic Thanksgiving Proclamations, hymns, praise songs and anthems. You will hear Grace Musicians, along with hymns led by musicians from here and abroad.

Listen during those traditional hours in the kitchen (for some of us, our favorite place!), or in a quiet evening moment when all the work is done, or as a group time of devotion with the loved ones in your home, or as a background to dinner. Stop and start as you wish. [Click here to watch on Thanksgiving Day!](#)

Be reminded of the warm memories, beloved traditions, and what God says to us in Jeremiah 29:11, *"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."*



Advent Book Study

Starting the week of Sunday, November 29, the pastors and staff invite you to join us in reading Adam Hamilton's new book Incarnation: Rediscovering the Significance of Christmas.

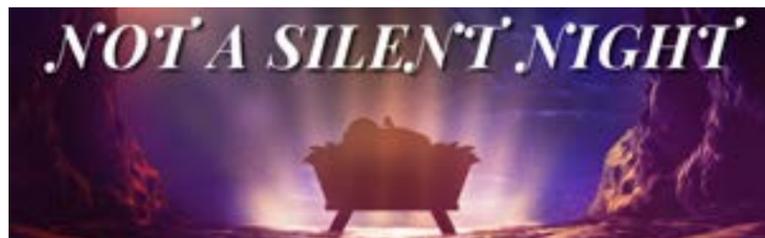
Hamilton explores the various names of Jesus (Lord, King, Savior, Emmanuel, Light, etc.) and helps us appreciate their historical and personal importance.

Click here for a list of small groups participating in this study or contact Pastor Daniel (daniel.cochran@peopleofgrace.org) for more information.



United Methodist Women Gathering

Come with us as we journey with Mary and experience the birth of Jesus on Tuesday, December 1, at 9 a.m. on Zoom. With readings and musical videos, we will see Mary's perspective on Jesus' birth as presented by Adam Hamilton's book Not A Silent Night.



We will also have our Remembrance Service and Installation of Officers for 2021. Join us for this special day of celebration.

[Click here for Zoom link.](#) Contact Phyllis Pepiot (ppepiot@gmail.com) for more information.

Children's Advent & Christmas Message

By: Chamus Burnside-Savazzini, Director of Children's Faith Formation

What a very different year it has been for us all! Our life looks a little different for so many reasons, but God is always with us. It is already the Advent Season and Christmas is around the corner! Do you know that the Advent Season teaches us to be patient and celebrate "waiting?" Is it hard for you to wait? Waiting teaches us to be patient, like many of us have to do when we stay at home to keep each other safe. Sometimes it's easy to feel sad when things are not the same, but we can always see God's goodness through tough times.

Can you think of 5 GOOD things that have happened while you have been waiting this year? Write them down as a family. Now, think about the GREAT thing that we celebrate at the end of Advent Season, the birth of Jesus Christ! That is worth waiting for! A humble child, laying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes and filled with heavenly potential! As I write this message, I think of the children of Grace, and I know that God has so many plans for each and every one of them. My prayer is that Grace UMC continues to be a nurturing, caring place where every child knows that they are filled with heavenly potential! Just like the innkeeper who offered his stable, we have no clue who we are raising, so I pray that we get it right! Many of you have already picked up Advent Wreath materials, and each child should have received their Advent and Christmas kit.

If not, please email me (chamus@peopleofgrace.org) and I will get the kit to you. I pray that these resources along with Zoom Sunday School hour at 9 a.m., the Children's Time recorded messages and the Grace worship experiences, support strengthening a relationship with God! Have a blessed Advent and Christmas, and I look forward to all that God has planned in the New Year! Merry Christmas!

Luminaries for Christmas Eve: "In Honor, Memory or Celebration" of Loved Ones

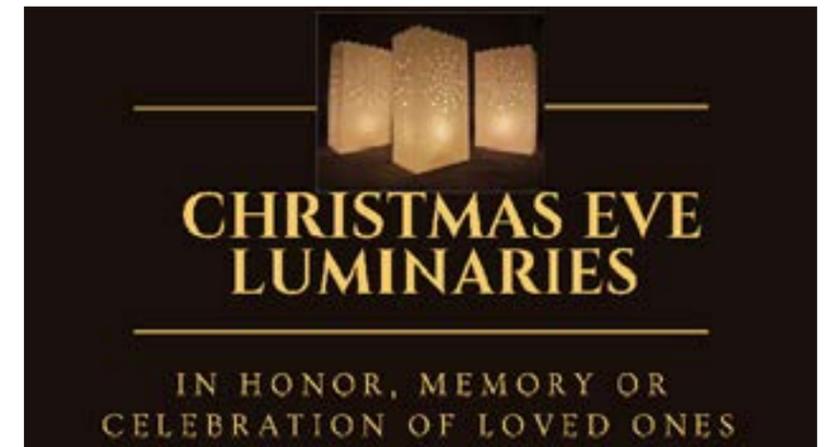
Buying poinsettias in honor, memory or celebration of loved ones is one of the many beautiful traditions at Grace that had to be re-imagined in 2020.

So, re-imagine we did! This year, instead of the beauty of the poinsettia tree in the Sanctuary for Christmas Eve, we are going to be sharing the Light of Christ by creating a luminary path through our parking lot for our "Journey to the Manger" Christmas Eve Drive-thru Worship Experience.

We would like to offer you the opportunity to sponsor the luminaries on this path "In Honor, Memory or Celebration" of a loved one by making a donation toward the cost of these bags.

If you would like to sponsor one or more of the luminaries, please [click here to fill out the form](#) or contact the Church Office (630-355-1748) by Monday, December 14.

Dedications will be posted on our website along with the Christmas Eve Worship Services.



Wayside Cross Blue Box

By: Cheryl Ameiss

Have you noticed this blue box in our parking lot? It is a little hard to find. It is in the lower parking lot across from the playground. See if you can find it.

I wanted to pass along information from a special article in the Naperville Sun from October 28. Many of the places that collect clothing or other items for resale to support their ministries or organizations discovered this October they were very short on warm clothing.

Now let's think about this. In March/April when you usually are putting away those heavy coats and sweaters, you usually lay out ones you don't want anymore and give them away. Did you do it? No one was collecting those things because of the shutdown.

Well, when Wayside Cross went into their storage areas this Fall, they discovered they were just about depleted of all warm-weather clothing. Winter is coming. There are more people without or losing their jobs. Can you help them out by putting your clothing in bags and dropping them in the blue box? I understand they make pick-ups every week. The boxes are built to be secure so things cannot be stolen, and they keep things safe and dry.

Please help by cleaning out your closets and give to those that don't have anything. Let's fill that box to capacity every week.



Next! All-Church Adult Faith Formation: Spiritual and Gospel Music



Friends and family of Grace are invited to our next all-church faith formation on Sunday, January 3, at 9:15 a.m. Dan Wagner, Director of Music, will provide a digital journey through the history, development, and impact of Spiritual and Gospel Music. His presentation, Lament to Jubilation: A Journey of Hope, will include musical samples from the earliest recordings of spirituals to contemporary Gospel Music.

Contact Pastor Daniel (daniel.cochran@peopleofgrace.org) or your small-group leader for the Zoom information.

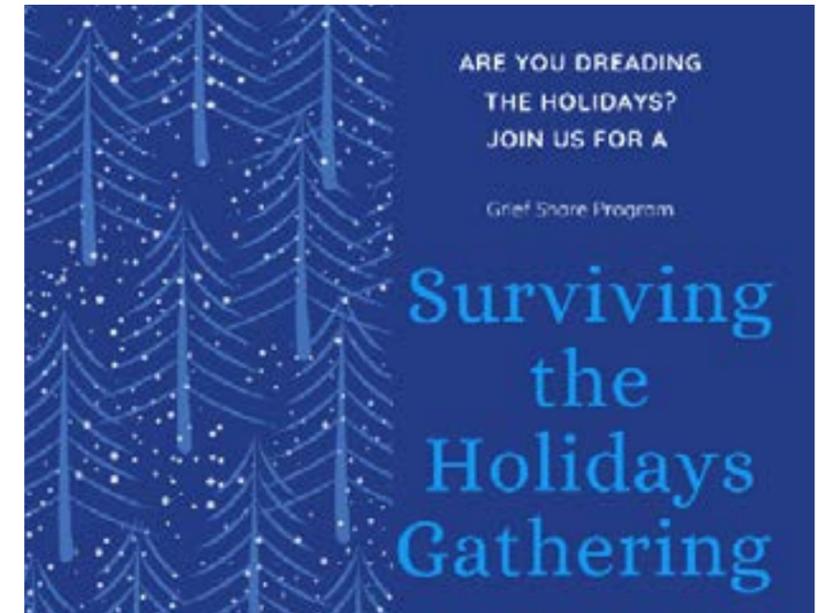
Surviving the Holidays Zoom Gathering!

Surviving the Holidays Zoom Gathering!
Are you dreading the holidays, knowing everything has changed after losing a loved one?

Join us for our Surviving the Holidays, a Grief Share Workshop, on Sunday, December 13, from 1 p.m. on Zoom led by Pastor Cindy and Judy Cornett.

This workshop will provide ways to cope and a time to be in community with others who are finding this to be a difficult time of year. There is hope!

Contact Judy Cornett (shottsja@gmail.com) for more information.



Harvest Home Offering

Thank you for your generosity!

Our Harvest Home offering so far has raised \$5,360, to be split between UMCOR, dealing with recent disasters, and toward new audio and visual systems installed in our Sanctuary for live-streaming worship services. We have already benefitted from the systems, keeping us connected through worship but safe from COVID-19.

If you still wish to contribute, you can do so by sending a check to the Church, made out to Grace United Methodist Church and marked "Harvest Home" on the memo line, or [click here to give](#) and use the drop-down for "Harvest Home."

Again, thank you.



Treadle Sewing Machines Wanted

Did your mother or grandmother use a foot-powered sewing machine? Is it still sitting somewhere unused?



Midwest Mission Distribution Center near Springfield, IL, can get treadle machines to a foreign country where they will be cherished and used. It will first be reconditioned and assured to sew well and then sent to a person in a country like Ethiopia, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, or the Philippines where electricity is not available or dependable. They may use it for their home use or possibly to make a living.

Contact Lauri Tredinnick (lauritred@gmail.com) for more information on how to donate.

College Care Packages

Do you remember the excitement of being in college? The first trip across campus? That first roommate? The first time you did your own laundry? Think of all we learned while we are college students--some of those things have absolutely nothing to do with academics.

Two to three times a year, a group of Moms comes together and packs college care packages for our Grace college students. Those packages are filled with donated items (oatmeal packets, granola bars, candy, gum, mints, Kleenex packets, lip balm--you get the idea), a devotional, a trinket or fast food coupon, and lots of love. The packages are prayed over before they are mailed, and approximately 70 students across the country (Colorado, Oklahoma, Illinois, Kentucky, Minnesota, Indiana, Iowa, Florida, Texas, and Wisconsin) receive a fun bit of "snail mail" in their mailbox. Additionally, a few bags are provided to North Central College campus ministry (for their discretionary disbursement) for students who might just need a "pick-me-up" on a challenging day.

Colleges and universities have had to adapt to our current circumstances causing the experience to feel and look a bit differently for everyone. Sharing with these students the message that Grace Church remains a constant in their lives and Jesus' love is always present feels more important than ever.

Being a college student teaches us many things. What we hope our Grace college students learn, more than anything from receiving a care package, is that their church family loves them, misses them, and is always ready to welcome them home.

Thank you to all who help make this care package ministry possible! How fortunate we are to be able to expand our walls across the country, sharing the love of Christ, one campus at a time.

If you have a college-aged student and would like him/her to receive a care package, or you would like to participate in this ministry, please contact Gaye Lynn Loufek (gayelynn.loufek@peopleofgrace.org).

Thank you's from a couple of Our College Kids!

*"Thank you for the fall themed care package.
So sweet of you!" ~Ali P.*

*"My care package arrived today.
The devotion was exactly what I needed
to hear today. I loved the extra touch
of the "sticker," and all of you!" ~ Eric M.*

Drive-Thru Communion

All are invited to come participate in Drive-Thru Communion with the Grace UMC Pastoral Team following worship on Sunday, December 6, Noon - 1 p.m. at the Worship Center Entrance under the Portico.

Communion will be provided in safe, pre-sealed packages and given to you in your car by one of our masked clergy following its blessing in worship.



Blake Roegner Eagle Scout Project

Congratulations and Thank You to Blake Roegner for including Grace Youth ministry in his Eagle Scout project!

Blake, a member of our Confirmation Class 2017, is working to complete his Eagle Scout rank and approached Grace about creating something for our youth program. His idea and hard work have paid off!

Thanks to Blake and his team, Grace Youth ministry is the gracious recipient of a GaGa Pit!

We can't wait to play this fast-paced, full-of-fun game! Great job, Blake!



*Blake Roegner, Confirmation Class of 2017
and GaGa Pit*

Christmas at Grace

Christmas Eve Worship*

We know you will be blessed as you set aside time for worship this Christmas Eve and/or Christmas Day. To help make that possible, we present two online worship opportunities, each informed first and foremost by our Savior taking on flesh through His coming to earth. With the beautiful Grace Sanctuary in the background, you'll find the familiar and the new to inspire your faith.

One small blessing in offering Christmas Eve worship online is that we may all find the time that works for us as we all celebrate in different times and rhythms. Whether it's a morning devotional or in the reverence of the midnight hour, we can all worship "together." You can also "share" these services with family and friends near and far. We pray you will be blessed and feel connected through these very special offerings:

Christmas Eve Service

A heart-warming worship offering with many of the familiar faces and traditions of Christmas Eve at Grace - organ-led carols, scripture-story re-told by children, music from the worship team and handbells, Christmas sermon, and a candle-lit Silent Night.

Lessons and Carols Service

The ancient re-telling of the Redemption Story through readings with carols music by members of the Chancel Choir, bells and instrumentalists, filled with the awe and joy of the age-old traditional unfolding of the story.

To find all of these worship services, simply refer to www.peopleofgrace.org or to our Facebook page, Grace United Methodist Church of Naperville.

NEW! Journey to the Manger Luminary Drive-Thru on Christmas Eve

Come enjoy a sense of holiness, peace, and hope that wraps us in love during the lighting of candles in a new way at the "Journey to the Manger" Luminary Drive-thru on Christmas Eve from 4 p.m. - 8 p.m. at Grace! The Grace property will be transformed into a pilgrimage of light that takes us on the journey of Mary and Joseph, through the darkness of night and into the light of God's greatest gift. You will be able to participate from your car as you enter the lower parking lot, with guided music and messages, and make your way to the manger. From there you can take the light of Christ with you to share with the world.

** at the time of this printing, restrictions are evolving which may affect the level of participation of specific musicians. We plan to engage everyone possible and are determined above all to offer inspiring worship broadcasts. The "who" and "how" could evolve over the coming days, but we will be there for you to guide in worship using all the resources available to us.*

Giving is at the Heart of Christmas

In the Season of Advent, we invite you to consider participating in one of the many ways listed below that give to those in need in our community and around the world. Giving is at the heart of Christmas and who we are as a community at Grace!

Reverse Advent Calendar

This year, consider a different type of Advent calendar! Instead of chocolates, how about making someone's day brighter and easier by participating in our Reverse Advent Calendar?"

Continued on back of page

“What is a Reverse Advent Calendar?”

Our Reverse Advent Calendar gives you a list of suggested items to put in a box each day to benefit the clients of the Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry. The Food Pantry offers a wide variety of foods for their clients but the specific items in this calendar are always in high demand. If these items are not available for you to share, please feel free to substitute items you and your family choose as alternatives. So, simply grab a box or bag, [click here to download the calendar](#) and begin filling it. Have fun giving back to others this season and maybe creating a new tradition!

Completed boxes can be brought back to the Church any time the week of December 27-December 30, or simply drop them off at the Candlelight Luminary Drive-Thru on Christmas Eve. Contact Lara Stanton (lstanton56@gmail.com) for more information.

December Food Pantry

During Advent Season, Grace is supporting the Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry on Jericho Road. They provide families with a prepackaged box of food that will sustain them for a week. They have seen an increase of 34% in family requests since COVID-19 reached IL and struggle to keep food on their shelves.

We invite you to participate in our Reverse Advent Calendar or visit Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry at their website at www.aurorafoodpantry.org to donate cash. You will find “Grace UMC Church Advent Food and Fund Drive” listed under the Donation Category starting November 29!

Support Heifer International

Our Grace community has been supporting the Heifer International Project for decades, and last year we donated \$5,000 worth of animals and training to help lift low-income, rural communities out of hunger and poverty. As we all are, Heifer International is settling into a new normal with their partnerships, both in the US and in 21 countries around the world. Heifer-supported cooperatives of farmers are finding ways to maintain their farms, businesses, families, and communities affected by the COVID-19 restrictions and weather disasters. The challenges are great, but we can make a difference!

In lieu of visiting the Welcome Center during the Advent season, we invite you to visit the Heifer International website at www.heifer.org and click on their Gift Catalog to see the possible Animal, Caring for the Earth or Women's Empowerment gifts from which you can choose. They even provide cards that you or they can send to your gift recipients!

Indian Prairie District 204 Holiday Giving Program

Grace invites all who are able to join us in supporting the Indian Prairie School District 204 online “Holiday Giving” program, which helps families in the district that face hardship and homelessness.

[Click here to purchase selected gift cards or donate money](#) that will be used to serve the greatest needs for District 204 families, who are in need.

We are very thankful for your generosity as we join together to bring some encouraging support to families in need in the school district this year. Contact Chamus Burnside-Savazzini (chamus@peopleofgrace.org) for more information. Thank you in advance!

Holiday Gift Drive: Kids Above All (formerly, ChildServ)

Grace invites you to join in supporting Kids Above All's Holiday Gift Drive to help their children have a special and fun Christmas. At this time, they are in need of NEW stuffed animals (small/medium) for kids ages 0-14 and/or NEW books for kids ages 11-14 (middle school). These additional items encourage love and literacy. Donate one or more! We will gladly receive Amazon deliveries directly at Grace at: “Grace UMC c/o Chamus” 300 E. Gartner Rd., Naperville, IL 60540. Contact Chamus Burnside-Savazzini (chamus@peopleofgrace.org) for more information. All items are needed by Friday, Dec. 10.