



## From the Pastor,

The key words in December are Love and Hope. The Nebraska Synod December theme is “Cultivating Love through...Hope.”

God so loved the world that God’s son came down to earth to be a human being. This son was born out of God’s love for us so God could die in our place for our sins. But GOD could not die and still exist unless God was Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God loves us so much that God has made Godself made known to us in three different ways.

God so loved the world that God gave us the Son to give us hope that God the creator actually loved and still loves the earthly creation. December 25 is God’s love and hope descending upon God’s creation. The angels celebrate the birth of the Son and Christ because they are aware that this is God’s love in action to bring humans back into a good and better relationship with the creator.

December 25 heavenly joy was introduced into the world. Yet every four years half of the American people lose their hope and joy and half gain hope and joy.

Christmas calls all people to hope and love in Christ. This is the call of God’s people. We must live out this hope, love, and joy in our part of the world. There may not be Peace on Earth as the angel declares to the shepherds Christmas night but there can be this God’s peace where we are located.

God’s peace, love, hope, and joy this Christmas.

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Jim

**On December 1st, the Cook Lion’s Club will be hosting the traditional family fun night and the arrival of Santa at the JCC Middle School building in Cook. This is the annual Cook Area business appreciation event for the community. Plans are to start playing Bingo about 3:00 p.m. and we hope to see Santa arrive around 4:15 p.m. Pizza is planned for 5:00 p.m. and more fun & prizes to follow. Anyone wanting to share the Christmas spirit is welcome!**



## Cultivating Love...

Last month we Cultivated Love through Grace. We practiced giving grace to people through forgiving, loving, doing for them. We also practiced receiving forgiveness, love, and actions given to us by their grace.

This month we Cultivate Love through Hope. This month God gives us hope through Angels announcing peace to us born in Child in a manger. Hope that this birth brings us into a new, different relationship with God, the one God intended to have with us. Hope is given to the lowly, the ignored, the lonely, the poor, the confused. Jesus is our hope when all else fails. Jesus is God's love cultivating hope and trust in our hearts.

## THE Tanzania Scholarship PROJECT

Grace Lutheran again this year is sponsoring—The **Tanzania Scholarship Project**. This project sponsors orphans so they can attend a Christian high school. Primary schools in Tanzania are free but secondary schools have fees. Our scholarship students attend one of eleven Lutheran High Schools in northern Tanzania, East Africa. The scholarship for one year of tuition, boarding, uniforms, and school supplies is \$475. In the past years of this project we have witnessed God working through his people. ***We have made a difference!***

There are many orphans in Tanzania who have no parents due to motor accidents, malaria, or other illness. This is leaving many orphans who go to live with extended families. These families do not have the money to pay the orphan's secondary school fees. Without a scholarship, some of these orphans will have to leave school at a young age and fend for themselves. These students are very thankful for the opportunity that the project provides.

In the past Grace has received donations to sponsor 4 orphans. Your contribution is tax deductible. 100% of your donation goes to your orphan's education! *Donations towards this project should be designated on your offering envelope and then one check will be sent to Sheridan Lutheran in Lincoln. These donations must be in NO LATER than December 29<sup>th</sup>.*

We will receive the name of our orphan, a picture, and a letter from our orphan. Sheridan Lutheran has members who travel to Tanzania and visit the schools. We are encouraged to write letters to the orphan(s) that we are sponsoring. They collect letters from sponsors in January and September and deliver those letters directly to the schools via Sheridan Lutheran missionaries.

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

12/1-Jeramy Bridgmon

12/6-Shayla Thompson

12/9-Kenneth Rosenthal

12/10-Kathy Helgren

12/11-Jody Bruns

12/14-Chris Weber

12/15-James Armknecht

Morgan Smith-O'Connor

Lisa Weber

12/16-Crytal Haake

12-20- Adeline Perkins

12/21-Ashlei McDonald

12/25-Jesus Christ Our  
Lord

12/26- Julie Effken

12/27-Melanie Ristrom

12/30-Shari Siepelmeier

If you would like to bring a **Poinsettia** to share with the church, you can bring them at any time. If the poinsettia is in memory or honor of someone, please add that information to the sheet at the back of the church. Be sure to label your poinsettia with your name for when you come to pick it up.

## December Anniversary

December 8 -  
Keith & Eunice Weber

### UPDATES

Please be sure to **send in any updates** (new addresses, phone numbers, email address, etc.) **for all family members** on the Church membership list, and for the ELCW Yearbook. **Please** let us know if you or someone you know is not receiving the Tower Echoes and would like to - we would like you to be on the list, either mail or by email.

*Thank you to our members for  
providing food and cash donations  
towards the Thanksgiving Bag  
Project and the food for the  
Osage Food Pantry.*

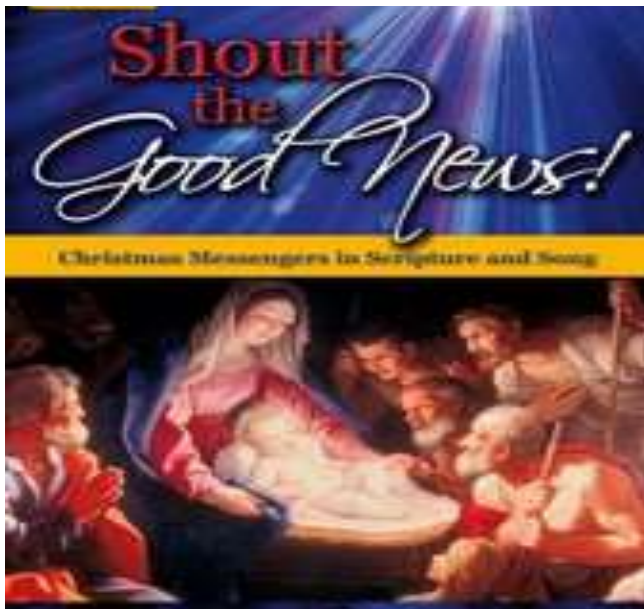


## **Children's Christmas Program**

Christmas Program **Practices** will be held during the Sunday School hour at 9:30 a.m.  
If you know of someone who would like to join us, please let Melissa know at 402-957-7272

**The Children's Christmas Program** will be held on **December 22nd** during the  
**8:30 a.m.** Worship service at Grace Lutheran.

The service will be followed by the **Birthday Party for Jesus.**



The Community Cantata will present  
***"Shout the Good News!"***

on Sunday, December 22nd  
at 7:00 p.m.

Coffee, Snacks & Fellowship  
will follow.

## **Christmas Eve Worship**

The **Christmas Eve Candlelight**

Worship Service at Grace Lutheran with Communion is  
Tuesday **December 24<sup>th</sup>** @ 7:00 p.m.



Offering has been designated to go to Lutheran Family Services



**Church Seasons:** The Time After Pentecost has ended the 2023-2024 Church year. December 1 we began a new church year with the first season being Advent. The color is blue and it is a time to prepare the church and our hearts to celebrate The Nativity of Our Lord. Society just celebrates Christmas from Thanksgiving until Christmas Day. But liturgical churches understand the Christmas Season is December 24/25 through January 5, The Twelve Days of Christmas. We try to hold back all our "Merry Christmas" celebrating until at least Christmas Eve. That being said, the Sunday School Christmas Program and the Christmas Cantata, "Shout the Good News" are December 22nd.

Church Festival Days:    December 20 - Katharina von Borra Luther, renew of the Church, died 1552  
December 24 - Christmas Eve  
December 25 - Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day  
December 26 - St. Stephens, Deacon & Martyr  
December 27 - St. John, Apostle & Evangelist  
December 28 - The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

U.S Holidays -    December 21 - Winter Begins  
December 24 - Christmas Eve  
December 25 - Santa Arrives  
December 31 - New Year's Eve

Jewish Holiday -    December 25 - Hannukah begins at sunset

Please contact Rich or Joyce Roesener (financial Secretaries) if you need a RECEIPT FOR Offerings GIVEN to Grace Lutheran for 2024

Addison has a new baby brother – *Raymond Francis Dietz.*

Congratulations to Kate & Russ Dietz. He was born on his grandpa Dean's birthday – November 6<sup>th</sup>.

He will be baptized on December 15th here at Grace Lutheran.

## Grace Lutheran Church Annual Congregational Meeting

### Sunday, January 19th, 2025



Grace Lutheran Church will hold its Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 19, 2025 following worship services. Worship time will be changed to 10:00 a.m. for Joint Worship with Hope Lutheran.

Annual Meeting Reports should be turned in by the 28th of December 2024.



# December 2024



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>3</b> 8:30 am Worship w/ Communion 9:30 am Sunday School Program Practice 3:00 pm Cook Community Christmas @ JCC MS Cook, Santa @ 4:15 pm, Pizza @ 5:00 pm	2	3	4 Confirmation 6:00 p.m.	5	6	7
<b>8</b> 8:30 am Worship 9:30 am Sunday School Program Practice	9 Bible Study 2:00 p.m.	10	11 Kids for Christ 4:00 p.m. Confirmation 6:00 p.m.	12	13	14
<b>15</b> 8:30 am Worship w/ Communion 9:30 am Sunday School Program Practice	16	17	18 Confirmation 6:00 p.m. Church Council 7:15 p.m.	19	20	21 Tower Echoes Deadline
<b>22</b> 8:30 am Worship & Sunday School Christmas Program Birthday Party for Jesus to follow 7:00 pm Community Cantata Presentation Fellowship to follow in the basement	23	24 <b>CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE 5:00 pm @HOPE 7:00 pm @ GRACE</b>	25 	26	27	28 Annual Report Articles Deadline
<b>29</b> 8:30 am Worship	30	31				

## **Old Songs and New Songs**

The Lutheran magazine, *Gather*, had a timely article in its September/October edition, especially since we have been evaluating standing and sitting during worship and we are introducing the new Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) hymnal in December. The article “Holy Experiments” explains the Greek word “*adiaphora*” which means things of lesser importance and its usage in planning and conducting worship.

The article states, “In Christian teaching, *adiaphora* refers to things neither commanded nor forbidden by scripture; things which may hold value, but are not, finally, of ultimate importance: not to our salvation in Christ, nor to love of neighbor, nor to scriptural guidance to seek God’s glory above any other.”<sup>1</sup> *Adiaphora* is important for us to consider when it comes to matters of tradition, taste, and preference.

The author, Christa Von Zychlin, concludes by “giving thanks to God for all the church folk, throughout the years, who are willing to sing old *and* new songs, who lovingly try to separate *adiaphora* from essentials, who conduct holy experiments, who are unafraid to throw out what is no longer fresh, and who help us all embrace new seasons of life with the One whose ‘...*mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning*’.”<sup>2</sup>

We’ve evaluated standing and sitting throughout the service, another *adiaphora* situation. Hopefully, the changes made are ones that fit your needs. Please remember, you can always “stand” in spirit if that fits your needs.

Let’s have fun and patience with the new hymnal! We used the green hymnal for 46 years, so there will be “holy experiments” as we begin our adventures in the ELW (Cranberry) hymnal.

1. Von Zychlin, C. “Holy Experiments.” *Gather Magazine*. 2024. p. 6-9.
2. Lamentations 3:22-23.

Worship, Evangelism, and Fellowship Committee  
Sarah Purcell



## **Grace Lutheran Church Council**

### **November 20, 2024**

The regular meeting of the Grace Lutheran Church Council was called to order by President Bret Wellensiek at 7:15 pm. Pastor Helgren led with an opening prayer. Members present were Cheryl Grundman, Sarah Purcell, Jody Wellensiek, Robin Eggleston, Bret Wellensiek, Pastor Jim Helgren and Diane Wilken, church treasurer.

Minutes of the October meeting were reviewed. Correction made to indicate that “Pastor and the Organists” together ordered new hymnals. Robin Eggleston motioned to accept the minutes with the correction noted, Sarah Purcell second. Minutes approved.

The Treasurer’s report was reviewed. Jody motioned to accept the treasurer’s report, Sarah second. Motion carried.

#### **Pastor’s report:**

Attended fall leadership conference 10/22 – 10/23

Sick and shut in visitations reported

Trunk or Treat – 60+ hot dogs served more than last year.

Confirmation report – Kaiden Dorn will be confirmed in February – all requirements complete.

Thanksgiving Eve service is at Hope at 7 pm, Grace will host next year.

Orchard Park worship tomorrow.

Faith forward workshop attended, faith forward coffee break and sharing. 1<sup>st</sup> learning cohort goal for each church 30% of parents.

Invited Hope to start the conversation about their future in January r/t limited funding.

Grace will host Mission Festival in 2025 -will begin planning in new year.

Sunday School Christmas program – December 22<sup>nd</sup> at 8:30 am worship, Cantata on the 22<sup>nd</sup> a 7 pm. Hope SS program on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Baptism scheduled – Raymond Francis Dietz 12/15/24.

10 Thanksgiving Bags completed.

**Correspondence** – Substitute organist recorded music sales

#### **Committee Reports**

**Property** – Fire Extinguishers serviced, Trees parsonage need to be scheduled. Ceiling fans, dehumidifiers scheduled, Exit light working, baby room blinds being replace – chair purchased. Furnace inspection.

**Worship, Evangelism, Music & Fellowship** – 50 hymnals purchased, will start Advent with new books, handout to members on way into church, bulletin template presented, organ tuned tomorrow, will start new liturgy in March.

**Parish Ed & Young People** – Trunk or Treat, SS program practice started, Kids for Christ active.

**Stewardship & Memorial** – People City Mission tour – 12 people attended, lunch together after. Memorial committee guidelines approved with the word “however” deleted from #2. Sarah motioned, Robin 2<sup>nd</sup>. Guidelines to be published in Tower Echoes.

#### **Old Business:**

Worship Duty reviewed – volunteers needed in December, council will cover if needed.



## **New Business:**

Nativity Scene to be installed before Advent begins.

Annual meeting date – 1/19/25

Audit committee for financial records: Jody Bruns and Carl Purcell.

Christmas Eve offering – Jody motioned to send to Lutheran Family Services, Cheryl 2<sup>nd</sup>, motion carried.

Budget numbers workshopped with council members.

Next meeting – Wednesday 12/18/24 at 7:15.

Meeting adjourned with Lord's Prayer. Pastor's evaluation completed following meeting with all council members.

Respectfully submitted:

Jody Wellensiek, secretary

MEMORIAL GUIDELINES: In 2024 a committee was formed to enhance the current memorial guidelines in order to create a more positive approach to memorial giving at Grace Lutheran.

### GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH MEMORIAL FUND GUIDELINES

May the Lord Bless and Keep You!

Memorials are given and welcomed by Grace Lutheran to be used for the mission and ministry of Grace Lutheran.

The memorial committee is the church council.

Giving a gift to the memorial fund can be given at any time. Most times a memorial is given in the memory of a loved one who resides in the company of all Saints who have gone before us.

Grace Lutheran does have guidelines that it follows to help with the decisions to fulfill the mission of Grace Lutheran through the memorial funds.

1. Memorials designated to Grace Lutheran remain at Grace Lutheran and become the property of the church.
2. The family may confer with the church council their thoughts for a particular gift. The church council will make the final decision based on the specific needs of Grace Lutheran.
3. The memorial item (s) use, placement, and if necessary disposal of are at the discretion of the church council .
4. It is the practice of Grace Lutheran not to place names on memorial items.
5. A blessing for the items in memory of our Saints will be recognized at the All Saints Day worship service.



*Joy to the world*



## Grace Lutheran Church

306 N. First St.

P.O. Box 96

Cook, NE 68329



Church Office: 402-864-4201

Pastor Jim Helgren: 402-864-2113

Church Email: [grace68329@gmail.com](mailto:grace68329@gmail.com)