



**December
2020**

GRACE MESSENGER

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Please call to make sure someone is in the office.



Advent Message

From the Pastor



GOD IS WITH US!

"O come; O come Emmanuel" is the first line of a popular Advent carol that I especially enjoy. Although the context is relevant to Israel's captivity in ancient times, the message of hope and promise is relevant for all times. Especially these times fraught with uncertainty and apprehension.

As many of you know, "Emmanuel" is Hebrew for "God is with us." When we sing or say, "O come Emmanuel," it seems that we are saying, "Come be with us, God who is with us." Sounds a bit redundant; if God is already with us, why would we need to ask God to come to us? I'm glad you asked!

"Asking" is an important element of our bilateral relationship with God. God has invited us into the Divine presence not in the context of subjects or inferior beings, but as beloved children. The "God who is with us" wants to have a familial relationship with us which includes dialogue. God wants to hear from us. In other words, we are invited to pray. To have conversation. *To be with the God who is with us.* To ask for God's mercy and help in times of trouble, just as a son or daughter would seek aid and comfort from a loving parent.

Jesus, our "Emmanuel," came to earth in the form of human flesh to be with us in the most relevant way of all. He came to love us, heal us, forgive us, and save us. And He continues to do all those things, all day and every day. But the season of Advent awakens us anew to the reality of Christ's coming and the hope and joy we share in anticipation of His arrival.

This year it seems we might need a little more Advent Spirit. The dark shadows of the Coronavirus, the heated and sometimes hateful political rhetoric, and the effects of an economic downturn have combined to become a "perfect storm" that threatens to steal our joy. 2020 has not been our favorite year! At least not mine!

But wait! All is not lost! Not even close to being lost! We have not been forgotten or abandoned! All we need do to see that God is with us now is to look around us. We see God's love reflected in the face of the ER nurse or the oncologist, the nurses' aide or the housekeeper; we see Jesus shining through the curtains of that ICU or in the back of the ambulance. We find God's presence through the service of teachers, first responders, retail clerks, truck drivers, power line and telephone workers, and yes, the people cleaning up the debris from Hurricane Zeta. God is with us in the lives and actions of God's people. Even in the most mundane and ordinary things, God is present in a most extraordinary way!

Therefore, my friends, do not let the Coronavirus or the struggling economy or any of the many other cares of this life steal our joy! Let the Spirit turn our gloomy apprehension into hopeful anticipation! **EMMANUEL IS COMING!**

Doris and I wish for all of you a very blessed Christmas, and for hope, peace, and joy to fill your hearts and lives.

In Christ,
Pastor Dave





OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Christians welcoming and serving

The marks of discipleship are to:

- *Pray daily *Worship weekly *Serve your church & community
- *Relate to others in a small group
- *Read the Bible *Give a tithe and beyond

Birthdays in December

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Doris Weaver | 15 Karen Samuelson |
| 2 Justin Prendergast | 21 Paul Hierstein |
| 5 Russell Saglibene | 23 Pat Holliday |
| 9 John Thompson | 27 Joshua Conley |
| 12 Carrie Carrubba | 30 Mary West |
| Kevin Schultz | Pastor Dave |
| Keith Voigts | Don Radley |
| 13 Larry Torguson | |
| Tabitha Hill | |



Anniversaries in December

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 4 Roy/Lucy Puckett | 16 Pastor Dave & Doris |
| 7 Bud/Karen Samuelson | 28 Tony/Chris Caston |
| 8 Henry/Wanda Branstetter | Larry/Gayla Torguson |
| 11 Pete/Candis Raif | 30 Paul/Judy Hierstein |



READERS

- 6 Barb Gaines
- 13 Candis Raif
- 20
- 24
- 27

ASSISTING MINISTER

- 6 Mary West
- 13 Ron Schmidting
- 20 Judy Hierstein
- 24 Kevin Schultz
- 27 Keith Voigts

TELLERS

- 6
- 13
- 20
- 24
- 27



Outreach currently has nothing going on in the community. However, my challenge to church members is to read the book of Luke before Christmas Day! Luke has 24 chapters and there are 24 days in Dec. before Christmas Day. One chapter read individually or as a family each day will take you through the life of our Savior.

Win, lose or draw, I plan to start reading Proverbs beginning on January 1st. Proverbs has 31 Chapters, one for each day in January! This is my personal challenge and should be easy to accomplish!

Merry Christmas, Pete Raif



SEMI-ANNUAL
CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING

Mark your calendars....There will be a semi-annual congregational meeting to approve the 2021 budget, on Sunday, December 13th, immediately following the worship service. Please stay connected to the Zoom meeting.

Thank you, The Church Council

Christian Education ~ Lisa Speck

Hope all our Sunday School (SS) families had a great and safe Thanksgiving break. We look forward to learning more about Jesus during this Christmas season. Keep looking for your mailed lessons each week full of stories, activities and crafts to be completed before SS Zoom sessions. Our SS Christmas break will be Sun. December 20th through Sunday January 3rd. We will begin classes on Sun. January 10th through Zoom. We hope all our families enjoy their holiday season, where we can all love, laugh and learn more about Christ, the reason for the season.



Stephen Ministry

We all experience challenges in life. There are times when we could benefit from the support of a caring Christian friend that will keep our visits confidential. Stephen Ministers are ready to provide the emotional and spiritual care one needs when faced with a difficult time. If you, or someone you know in the congregation or community, could benefit from the care of a Stephen Minister, please call or ask the person to call the numbers below. Stephen Ministry is **CONFIDENTIAL**
Contact: Linda Johnson 504-433-4768 or Pastor Dave Parr 423-620-1284.



READINGS FOR DECEMBER

Date	Sundays of Advent	1 st Reading	Psalm	2 nd Reading	Gospel
6	2nd	Isaiah 40:1-11	85:1-2, 8-13	2 Peter 3:8-15a	Mark 1:1-8
13	3rd	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11	126	1 Thess. 5:16-24	John 1:6-8, 19-28
20	4th	2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16	89:1-4, 19-26	Romans 16:25-27	Luke 1:26-38
27	1st Sun of Christmas	Isaiah 61:10-62:3	148	Galatians 4:4-7	Luke 2:22-40



LORD IN YOUR MERCY, HEAR OUR PRAYERS FOR....

Kevin Baker, Rose Bearson, Gracie Blair, Jennifer Bonstaff, Henry Branstetter, Jim Bryant, Charles Busby, Jan Bruner, Charissa, Cynthia Chadwyck, Vivian & Mike Collins, Alice Crandall, Cole Crane, Bill Creasy, Susan Cross, Robert Crowley, Anita Cruz, Richard Cuevas, Alvin Culberson, Gina Dale, Timothy Davis, Toni Davis, Angie Dedrickson, Christie Deshotel, J. L. Dono, Joe Dunnion, Amberly Favre, Azalee Fullmer, Emily Galloway, Madelyn Gordon, Vickey Gordon, John Guthans, Jackie Haygood, Devon/Emily Head, Steve Hiles, Brenda Hiles, Sherry Holbrook, Pat Holliday, Miriam Hurdle, Peggy Jefcoat, Mike Johnson, Carmela Jones, Palmer Jones, Peggy King, Larry Kirtwright, Debra Kotzen, Arleen Kupke, Cheryl Lacey, Breanna Ladner, Patti Lastorka, Sandy Leslie, Patricia Lindsey, Lois Long, Mary Ann Maggard, Betty Marshall, Russell Marshall, Lindsey Mays, Cindy Mitchell, Mike/Kathy Pearson, Ann Peneguy, Patience Poupart, Lucy Puckett, Mary Puckett, Christopher Ryan, Karen Samuelson, Kim Schultz, Kay Shushan, Corky Sidell, Ruth Spera, Larry Strohsack, Rita/Boyd Swenson, Ted, John Thompson, Maggie Tirrell, Gorie Thomas, Jeff Turner, Fred Turrentine, Juanita Vann, Gwenn Voigts, Doris Weaver, Brantley West, Kacey Jade West, Janyce Westerman, Dolly Willams, Larry Wilson

**Deployed & Active Military ~ Victims of Domestic Abuse ~ All who have been furloughed
All Medical Personnel and First Responders**

If you see any names that can come off or any names you would like to add, please let Gloria know so she can update the list.



October Financial Report - Duane Wilson

Finances for Grace improved slightly in October. There were no unusual budget expenditures in October. To meet the 2020 budget, our income needed each month is \$16,610. This does include the PPP loan receipt. Contributions YTD are \$6,395 above required budget.

Restricted fund account activities were fairly active in October. Grace Food Pantry received \$358 in donations with expenses of \$304. Good Samaritan expended \$1,688 to assist members and others in need with \$177 in donations. The Building Fund expended \$4,280 for air conditioner repairs that were previously covered by a generous donation. We took in \$1,275 for hurricane donations and had dispersed \$3,150 by the end of the month. These Restricted funds will continue to be used to help members and others in the community in need.

The October Financial Summary is posted in the hallway if you'd like to review the finances in more detail. We should all be thankful for our financial stability, challenge ourselves to turn the decline in Finances around, and continue to pray for the council and financial health of our church so that we can continue to support our church mission and outreach. Please remember to support our church financially during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Worship Committee - Candis Raif

After receiving up-dated guidelines from the Southeastern Synod suggesting that churches hold off on plans to return to in-house worship, and due to the increase of Covid-19 cases in our area, our Return to Worship Team has decided to postpone our return until the tentative date of January 3, 2021. Obviously, we will be re-evaluating our situation as we progress toward the January date.

Thank you to all who have volunteered to sing, read, and serve as assisting ministers! Also, many thanks to the volunteers who deliver the children's sermon!

We will continue to have in person communion on Sunday mornings from 11:30 to 12:15 and Wednesdays from noon to 12:30. We follow social distancing guidelines. The brief communion service lasts about 5 to 6 minutes.

We still need readers for each service. You do not have to be at the church to read. This can be done from home via Zoom. You will receive a copy of the bulletin and readings. If you can participate as a reader, please let Carrie Carrubba know. For Assisting Ministers, we will use the AM schedule as it stands. If for some reason you are not able to serve, please find a substitute and advise Gloria of the change.

Thank you for continuing to participate via Zoom!



December / Liturgy Schedule

December 6, 2020 ~ Second Sunday of Advent (Blue)

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8 ... John (the Baptist) crying in the wilderness to "prepare the way", and calling for us to repent and reorder of our lives so nothing gets in the way of the Lord's coming.

December 13, 2020 ~ Third Sunday of Advent (Blue)

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28 ... a passage that describes Jesus as "the light of the world", and presents John the Baptist as a witness to Jesus, and one who directs attention away from himself and focuses it on Christ, the true light.

December 20, 2020 ~ Fourth Sunday of Advent (Blue)

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38 ... the beautiful and familiar *Annunciation* ... the news the angel brings to Mary that God is keeping the promise made to David, and that David's throne will be given to the holy child she will bear -- the Savior! Let us respond "count on me" as eagerly and humbly as Mary, "Let it be with me according to your word."

Psalm Substitute for the day: Luke 1:46b-55 ... *The Magnificat*

Thursday, December 24, 2020 ~ Christmas Eve (White)

Gospel: Luke 2:1-14 [15-20] ... The Nativity of Our Lord, with angelic proclamations of good news and great joy.

December 27, 2020 ~ First Sunday of Christmas (White)

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40 ... Jesus' family devoutly observe the law, and in the presentation, Anna and Simeon recognize Jesus as the one who will bring glory to Israel.

Mid-week Worship Schedule

Midweek Worship ... on Zoom at 7 pm—Dec. 9,16

