

THE GRACE VINE

GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

"I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit" John 15:5

DECEMBER 2020

Rev. Timothy Spence, Pastor
Home Telephone: 304-905-6188 - gracelutheranwheeling@comcast.net

Called by God's grace, we commit to a life of worship, discipleship, and service in the name of Jesus Christ

The start of Advent begins another "Church Year". Our calendar differs from everybody else. Maybe that's a sign of our being a "peculiar people" as Paul says.

Even so, everybody else is celebrating. I think the prize for "Earliest Christmas Decorations in a Store" goes to Lowe's, which had some of their stuff up the week after Labor Day this year. Please! The gas grills were still on closeout in front of the store and the log splitters and snowblowers were still being unpacked from the shipping crates!

Some folks rebel against the "Happy Holidays" greeting and argue that we need to get back to saying "Merry Christmas". But when the holiday season starts in September and includes Hallowe'en, Thanksgiving, an increasing secular version of Advent (you can buy an Advent calendar for your dog this year!), Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Christmas, and New Year's, it seems about right to just say "Happy Holidays" and get it over with. Some folks are even talking about "the holiday season" including Groundhog Day and extending to Valentine's Day! So from the week after Labor Day until February 14 we are allegedly in "holiday" mode.

The latest in the strangely worded culture wars about the holidays is a commercial for an Ion-Plus movie in which the lead character says, "Christmas is a lifestyle choice!" Watch the Hallmark movies. Sappy and saccharin as they are with warm feelings and happy endings, does anybody ever go to church in these movies? There is usually some Christmas Eve climax with a reunion and a Christmas Ball or a town Christmas celebration. At midnight everybody gathers around to light the town Christmas tree – without a manger in sight.

The weeks before Christmas call us to a flurry of baking and decorating and buying and wrapping and getting ready for everything - so much so that we are often exhausted by the time Christmas actually comes. I think one of the reasons that people are so quick to put away the decorations on December 26 is that they have become worn out with the hustle and bustle of getting ready and besides now we have to get ready for New Year's and Valentines Day and the rest of the "holidays". We just want to get it over with and get on to the next thing.

Meanwhile, we haven't taken the time to slow our pace and listen to the promise of hope in the weeks before Christmas so that we can genuinely appreciate the event when it finally happens!

16 Ridgecrest Road
Wheeling, WV 26003
Church Telephone: (304) 242-5830
Sunday Morning Worship - 10:00 AM

One of the most brutal treatments of the Christmas season in recent years was an episode of “Mom”, a TV series about a group of recovering female alcoholics, including a mother and daughter, Bonnie and Christy. In the episode, one of the women convinces the others to go Christmas caroling. Bonnie thinks this will be a good idea to help her new sponsee take her mind off the fact that her drinking has resulted in her not being able to see her daughter. Celebrating her first sober Christmas, this newest member of the group is heartbroken about the loss of her family.

In an unexpected turn of events, Bonnie disappears from the group. After some searching, Christy finally finds her mother sitting outside a church in a life-sized creche curled up in Mary’s lap. Bonnie is crying for the many years she had missed with her daughter, family, and friends, and all the broken relationships caused by her drinking. The required happy ending occurs when the newly sober sponsee calls her mother and thanks her for taking good care of her daughter while she tries to begin her new life as a sober person. She is allowed to talk to her daughter and wish her Merry Christmas.

As Christians, ours is a strange life. Instead of a new year beginning on January 1, our calendar starts four Sundays before Christmas on November 29. Instead of celebrating with our Christmas trees up the day after Hallowe’en, we watch and wait for four weeks, lighting candles and counting down, and the tree comes in late. And instead of the decorations coming down the day after Christmas, we celebrate the good news for twelve days and leave everything up until sometime in January.

“Mom” and crying in Mary’s lap in the manger is a far piece from dancing with the prince at the Christmas Ball or getting engaged in the Hallmark channel movies. But it is perhaps more honest. I doubt that many of us will find ourself dancing with the prince at a Christmas ball, but lots of folks can relate to crying over broken relationships during the holidays.

Christmas is about the Christ coming into a world of broken promises and broken relationships, of tears shed for what could have been and for our part in it. Christmas is about repairing the brokenness of our human condition as the Son of God casts off the trappings of divinity to lie frail and vulnerable, crying in his mother’s lap for the now-broken relationship with humanity that might have been. Christmas is about the hope of what can be, as the possibility of our broken relationship with God being repaired becomes as real as a child crying in his mother’s lap.

Christmas is not about getting engaged to the prince. It’s not about the ball or the town party. It’s not a “lifestyle choice”. It’s about the Great God Almighty – the Prince of Peace - coming to dwell among us for healing and hope and reconciliation.

So we’ll start late. We will listen to the promises of the prophets. We will watch and hope and slow our pace. We will wait to begin our celebration until we are finally ready to say, “Joy to the world, the Lord is come!” And we will be the peculiar people with the odd calendar who celebrate the possibilities for new life and reconciliation that come with a new year that begins on November 29.

Happy New Year, and Blessed Advent.

HOW COVID -19 SPREADS

A teacher recently used this analogy to show how the Covid-19 virus spreads even when we can’t see it and think we’ve got it managed and corralled.

Ten children are working around one table on an arts and crafts project. One of the children is using glitter. Nine children are not using glitter. How many children have glitter on their clothes?

That’s like Covid.

UPDATE

As I write this, the number of Covid-19 cases in Ohio County has topped 1,000, and we now know that at least seven members of the Grace congregation have been diagnosed with Covid-19 and that many members of our extended families have been exposed and some are ill.

This virus is insidious and sneaky, and a lack of caution will make things worse.

Fortunately, our members have taken it seriously and have maintained precautions, and so far our worship life has not become a “super spreader” event like it has in more than a dozen other congregations in our state.

With the news of not one but two promising vaccines, we hope that things will be different in 2021. Meanwhile, we ask you to be patient while the vaccine undergoes final approval. After approval, it will still take several months to get enough of the vaccine produced and distributed to everyone. Plans are that those most at risk – medical personal, first responders, front line workers, and residents of high-density populations like nursing homes and prisons will get the vaccine first, then the rest of us. It may be as late as June until enough people have been vaccinated so that we can begin to return to former patterns. The hope is to return to the next normal.

We are grateful for your patience and faithfulness as we continue to watch and wait, and look forward to the time when we can return to the nave and sing together the song of the church, “This is the feast of victory for our God! Alleluia!”

CHRISTMAS EVE

Grace will have a Christmas Eve service this year. We will gather at 7:00 PM on Christmas Eve.

We don't know exactly what that will look like or how it will work, but it will happen. It will not be a communion service, but we are working on some creative ways to use lighting.

We are experimenting with new technologies and will soon be able to describe how the service will work. Watch the bulletin, the weekly devotions, the web page, and other forms of communication for details.

MUSIC

While the voice of the church has been muffled due to restrictions on singing because of the problem with voices projecting more droplets into the air, the music of the church has not been silenced.

We are grateful to our music staff and to members of our bell choir, who have volunteered to social distance and stay apart while playing as duets or quartets. We continue to use the piano as a musical offering as well.

We are fortunate to have creative and talented people working to enhance our worship life under trying conditions.



THANKSGIVING

Although this is the December issue of the Vine, it will be reaching most of you just before Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving will admittedly be different this year. In our own family, medical conditions, the possibility of virus transmission from classroom teachers, a nephew with a severely broken leg, and a mother with Covid in a retirement home will mean that we will all be apart for Thanksgiving. Instead of about 16 of us around the table we will each be in our own homes.

But that does not mean we will not be thankful. We will each put together a small dinner (fewer 20-pound turkeys; more turkey parts) and we will call each other to say hello and wish each other well. We will be thankful for great-nephews who are growing like weeds and exploring the wonder and mystery of the world as only preschoolers can do. We will give thanks for healing begun with the hope that nephew John will be walking by January and back at work by April.

We will bow our heads in thanks that we still have work for our hands and the means to put food on our tables and that we have a roof over our heads and warm clothes and safe places for family to be. We will give thanks for those who are caring for our mother in these difficult times and trust God for her care.

At the first thanksgiving, only half of those who set sail from England were present. More than half of the colony had died over that first hard winter. They had very little food until the harvest came in and had resorted to taking old, stashed corn crops from the decimated villages of Native Americans who had died from a Smallpox epidemic two years before.

It is said that an old custom still followed by many of those who are descended from those first pilgrim families is that, on the table next to each plate at the Thanksgiving dinner are five hard grains of corn. By the spring of 1621, this is what each person was allowed to eat for each meal. The five grains of corn set at each place are a reminder of how bad things were for their ancestors and how much we have been blessed at this Thanksgiving. They are a reminder that, no matter how bad things seem, we have much for which to be thankful.

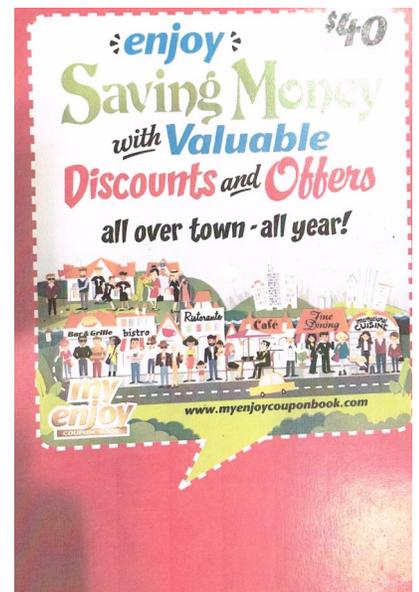
As you sit at your place this Thanksgiving, try to focus on what remains, and not what has been lost. Be thankful for the people you can talk to by phone or internet. Give thanks for work and shelter and food and warm clothes and good government and good neighbors and all the other things that Martin Luther reminds us are included in our "daily bread".

Remember that, like those first pilgrims, things will not always be the way they are now, and that you have been blessed. Give thanks for what is and for the promise of what will be in the new year, and do not spend too much time lamenting what is temporarily different. For God is still God, and God's presence continues to be with us even in the face of adversity. Better times are coming, but meanwhile we still have much for which we can be thankful.

Happy Thanksgiving.

ENJOY!

Thrivent is again selling Enjoy books for 2021 as a fundraiser. The books include discount coupons for various restaurants, including some that deliver, as well as coupons for other entertainment venues. Funds raised will go to various projects around the church. Books are \$40 and may be ordered from Kim and Joe Kochy. Call them at 304-277-1174 to reserve your copy. If you cannot get out to pick up your copy Joe will deliver upon request.



OFFERING ENVELOPES

We want to say a HUGE THANK YOU to all those who have been able to keep up with their giving to help keep staff working and the bills paid. In particular we are grateful to those few people who stepped up and extra gifts that allowed us to purchase supplies that we wouldn't have even thought about a year ago like extra gloves, masks, a sanitizing sprayer, signs reminding people to wear masks and maintain social distance and wash their hands, and other cleaning supplies, as well as providing for the extra costs of postage, video equipment, and other materials to help continue to keep in touch with our members and friends while we have been forced to be apart.

On Sunday, November 15, those members who were able to be present adopted a 2021 operating budget of \$207,659. This represents an overall decrease of about 6% from the 2020 budget. The budget adopted also included a special gift to the Tri-Synod Archives Endowment and the provision for a new electronic sign along Ridgecrest Road. These two projects are "extra-budgetary" and will be paid for with funds received from a bequest from Marjorie Wolf. Instructions for the use of the bequest were that it be used for "benevolent and capital projects."

We know that Marjorie served on the Archives Board for many years and was Secretary of the Board when the Endowment was established, and that she also was eager to tell others what Grace was doing. We believe Marjorie would be pleased with these two projects. Plans for the remainder of the funds are to add them in the account for the picnic pavilion.

As for the general budget, Grace has been able to "hold its own" this year, even as some congregations have seen decreases in income of nearly 90%. We are thankful for those who have continued to send offerings and who have used the Myeoffering feature on our web site to keep up with offerings.

For next year, offering envelopes are available now, a full month ahead of when we usually distribute them. If you are able to arrange to pick yours up at church either during the week or on Sunday morning, that will be helpful. However, any that are not picked up by December 28 will be mailed.

POINSETTIAS

Because the Christmas Eve service will not be held in the church this year, we will not be offering poinsettias for sale.

However, those wishing to honor or remember someone are welcome to make a \$5.00 donation to have name included in the bulletin. The donations will be sent to Wheeling Soup Kitchen to help those who are unemployed or underemployed in this holiday season.

To make the donation and have the listing made, please use the order form below. **Please use one order blank for each donation, extra forms available in office and on Sunday mornings. Please print.**

ORDER BLANK FOR CHRISTMAS DONATION 2020

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

Name of Donor _____

POWER *of* **PRAYER**

PRAYER LIST

Ryan Deegan
Henri Fontaine
George Myers
Stephanie Moore-Vetanze
Andrew Lemasters
Barbara Knollinger
Jodi Ennis (Hunt)
Dona'e Albert
Nick Riggle
Jim Gallaher & Family
Carrie Sacco
Bob McDonald
Art Henry
Sean Datson
Sean Dutton
Linda Dunnell

Hines Rotriga
Amelia DaGrava
Thelma Moore
Addison Lucas
Bill Scholley
Keith McMannis
Susan Falbo
Carolyn Polverini
Nettie McClure
Richard Chrisfield
Kristin McGavitt
Sister Mary
Jerry Findel
Elaine Anderson
Coy Davenport

Betty Swartz
David Ausdenmoore
"Elizabeth"
Cindy Roshak
Linda Porter
Doris Schafer
Dorothy Miller
Zane Neuhardt
Peggy Frazier
Willow Hollingsworth
Minnie Taylor
Shari Sedilko
Karen Walker
Brian Lester
Becky Frazier

ON MILITARY DUTY

Brian Coughlan

Casey Young

Parker Euri

HOMEBOUND

Dorothy Cox
Good Shepherd Nursing Home
Room 214
159 Edginton Lane
Wheeling, WV. 26003

Becky Frazier
55801 Conno-Mara Dr
Bellaire, OH 43906
Wheeling, WV 26003

Bertha & Robert Loth
c/o Grace Lutheran Church
16 Ridgecrest Road
Wheeling, WV. 26003

Debbie Hawkins
Peterson Rehabilitation Hospital
20 Homestead Ave.
Wheeling, WV 26003

Don Taylor
Peterson Rehabilitation Hospital
20 Homestead Avenue
Wheeling, WV 26003

Chris Roshak
River Park Hospital
1230 6th Avenue
Huntington, WV. 25701

Eileen Hempelmann
207 Boggs Hill Road
Wheeling, WV 26003

Howard & Betty Shackelford
333 Dement Road
Triadelphia, WV 26059

Jim Gallaher
40 Suncrest Avenue
Wheeling, WV 26003

Kitty Hagedorn
18 Willow Avenue
Wheeling, WV 26003



GRACE COUNCIL 2020

Vicki Pennybacker *December 1*
Diane Coughlan *December 1*
William Strauch *December 4*
Michael Wallace *December 7*
Robert McClure *December 9*
Chap Holbert *December 16*
Kathy Nelson *December 17*
Kim Kochy *December 18*
Bonnie Treiber *December 18*
Cameron Wiley *December 19*
Betty Shackelford *December 21*
Harry Kettler Jr. *December 23*
Chad Grimes *December 24*
Christian Bell-Osinkosky *December 25*
Bradley Weeks *December 25*
Joe Kochy *December 28*

Nancy Weeks
Lutz Albrecht
Pat Franklin
Linda Dunnell
Tami Tysk
Diane "Dee" Coughlan
Brian Crawford
Dennis Niess



Mike & Lynn Maquire *December 2*
Edward & Adriana Wolf *December 4*
III
Gregory & Deborah Sqroi *December 18*
Howard & Betty *December 25*
Shackelford
Andrew & Kathy Nelson *December 27*
Ronald & Marcella *December 29*
Woloshan

DECEMBER 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Strands of Comfort 4:30 pm	2 Handbell Practice 9:30 AM Advent Service 7 PM	3	4	5
6 Worship 10am 2nd Sunday of Advent	7 Dance 5pm	8	9 Handbell Practice 9:30 AM Advent Service 7 PM	10	11	12
13 Worship 10am 3rd Sunday of Advent	14 Dance 5pm	15 Strands of Comfort 4:30 PM	16 Handbell Practice 9:30 AM Advent Service 7 PM	17	18	19
20 Worship 10am 4th Sunday of Advent	21	22	23 Handbell Practice 9:30 AM	24 Christmas Eve Service 7:00 PM	25 Christmas Day Office closed	26
27 Worship 10am 1st Sunday of Christmas	28	29	30	31		

WORSHIP LEADERS DECEMBER 2020-JANUARY 2021

Date	Acolyte	Altar Guild	Bread	Crucifer	Greeters
December 6, 2020		Altar Guild			
December 13, 2020		Altar Guild			
December 20, 2020		Altar Guild			
December 27, 2020		Altar Guild			
January 3, 2021		Marty McNabb			
January 10, 2021		Marty McNabb			
January 17, 2021		Marty McNabb			
January 24, 2021		Marty McNabb			
January 31, 2021		Marty McNabb			
	Welcome Desk	Lector	PA/Sound	Prayer Leader	Ushers
December 6, 2020		Brian Crawford	Volunteer	Pat Franklin	Nancy & Brad Weeks
December 13, 2020		Jeanie Deem	Volunteer	Pastor Spence	Nancy & Brad Weeks
December 20, 2020		Pat Franklin	Volunteer	Nancy Weeks	Nancy & Brad Weeks
December 27, 2020		Kim Kochy	Volunteer	Lutz Albrecht	Nancy & Brad Weeks
January 3, 2021		Elaine Sediilko	Volunteer	Pat Franklin	Buffy & Chris Schenkel
January 10, 2021		Tami Tysk	Volunteer	Pastor Spence	Buffy & Chris Schenkel
January 17, 2021		Nancy Weeks	Volunteer	Nancy Weeks	Buffy & Chris Schenkel
January 24, 2021		Marcie Woloshan	Volunteer	Lutz Albrecht	Buffy & Chris Schenkel
January 31, 2021		Lutz Albrecht	Volunteer	Pat Franklin	Buffy & Chris Schenkel
	Flowers for	Flowers given by	Counters	Assisting Minister	NOTES
December 6, 2020			Dr. Dennis & Donna Niess	Brian Crawford	
December 13, 2020	Honor of (notes)	Kim & Joe Kochy	Dr. Dennis & Donna Niess	Pat Franklin	Harlow & Sullivan Kochy
December 20, 2020	Honor of (notes)	Rose, Carrie & Nancy Weeks	Dr. Dennis & Donna Niess	Shawn Gilmore	Brad's birthday
December 27, 2020	Honor of (notes)	Her Family	Dr. Dennis & Donna Niess	Vickie Gilmore	Jean Hawkin's
January 3, 2021			Steve & Elaine Sediilko	Don McNabb	
January 10, 2021			Steve & Elaine Sediilko	Tami Tysk	
January 17, 2021			Steve & Elaine Sediilko	Nancy Weeks	
January 24, 2021			Steve & Elaine Sediilko	Marcie Woloshan	
January 31, 2021			Steve & Elaine Sediilko	Brian Crawford	

**GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
16 RIDGECREST ROAD
BETHLEHEM
WHEELING WV 26003**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

SAVE THE DATE!

THINGS TO REMEMBER/ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Cans for Watch

Grace members are collecting aluminum cans for WATCH. They will crush, recycle, and use the proceeds for client events. Please bring them at any time, and place them in the large box behind the kitchen door.

Riesbeck Gift Cards

Riesbeck Gift Cards to benefit Thrivent are available from either Judith Myers or Tami Tysk.

