



# GRACEGRAM

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH



OUR  
MISSION

Saved by Grace.  
Called to Worship.  
Sent to Serve.

## January 2016

HOLY COMMUNION OFFERED EVERY SUNDAY

INSIDE THIS EDITION

## From the Pastor's Desk

### Time for a New Beginning

by Pastor Paul E. Kuhlman

We have all made any number of New Year's resolutions that we have failed to complete, and some we wish we had never made. Yet, every year, as the lighted ball falls in New York, we are quick to make promises that will only end in the great heap of promises not kept.

Maybe one way to be realistic as a believer in Jesus is to first recognize that his words and promises are true. Remember that promise Jesus made at your baptism, "And lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age?" Maybe, just maybe, if we begin there, with the promises Jesus made, and ground our own promises in those made by Jesus; well, then maybe our own promises will not end up broken.

The New Year IS a time for new beginnings. Maybe the new beginning for the members of Grace would be to pledge ourselves to seek the promises of God through Jesus, and to set our minds and hearts to discern what those promises mean to us and Grace Lutheran in 2016. One promise from Jesus is that we will be surprised. I can't wait for the surprise!

- Living Liturgy
- Handbells
- Adult Forum
- Six-Month Building Changes
- New Member Class

A Look @ Next Month—February, 2016

*Theme: Shades of Purple*

- Living Liturgy—Purple: Royalty in Suffering
- Ash Wednesday—Lent begins

*Deadline for inclusion in the February Gracegram is **January 17, 2016***

*Send your articles to Victoria Alt at:*  
[parishadmin@grace-hastings.org](mailto:parishadmin@grace-hastings.org)

# Living Liturgy — Green in the middle of winter – all about new beginnings

by Pastor Paul

I have some not-so-fond memories of winter in Michigan. Having served a congregation in northern Michigan, I can remember one winter when we had the most snow in the state (over 230 inches) and one that stretched into April, when we received 15 inches of the wettest snow I had ever seen so late in the winter, shutting the area down for days. Then of course, there was the Christmas of two years ago, when we were all without electricity for nearly a week, and the sound of breaking limbs could be heard for days.

Generally speaking, though this year might be an exception, the winters in Michigan include cold days, penetrating winds, daily snowfall, dark and cloudy days, and long nights. In the midst of the colors of gray, white and darkness, the church displays the color “green,” the color of life.

For several weeks after Christmas, during all of January and parts of February, the church is in the midst of the season of Epiphany, or what they call in the Roman Catholic church, “Ordinary Sundays.” When we experience in nature the hibernation of plants and animals, when trees are bare and flowers are covered in a blanket of icy snow, the church proclaims life and new beginnings.

Epiphany is the season of new beginnings; the “green” season. Though the first day and Sunday of the season are still clothed in the color white, the season itself is green, and begins with the celebration of the coming of the Magi, the beginning of the reign of the new born king. The first Sunday of Epiphany is the baptism of Jesus, the public beginning of his call by God. In the Gospel of the following Sunday, Jesus performs his first miracle at Cana, the first of many throughout his ministry. On the third Sunday of Epiphany, Jesus visits the Samaritan woman at the well and she becomes the first “non-disciple” to bear witness to the Messiahship of Jesus. The story of the Samaritan woman continues into the fourth Sunday of Epiphany as the witness of the woman leads to the first invitation to Jesus to stay and continue preaching the truth of his message. The crowds would begin to grow from this time onward. John’s gospel fills the church with hope.

Considering the texts and messages of the Sundays of Epiphany, green is an appropriate color, not only for the season, but also for the church’s ministry and mission. In the Gospel readings we experience new beginnings and the growth of Jesus’ mission and message. As a church, we are called to that same “new beginning”—to faith in Christ and the task of bearing witness in our community. In the midst of a world that surrounds us in darkness, death, and gray, we are led to growth, green, and decisions about Jesus.

I am reminded of the lyrics of an old winter song, “Oh, the weather outside is frightful,...” however in the church, we are filled with promise, hope, and the color of life; new beginnings. Green, in the middle of winter! What a blessed reminder!

## November Council Meeting

### Summary

by Kate Watson

The Council reviewed the draft Constitution and tentatively set dates to present the draft Constitution to the congregation via special meetings. The dates and times for the special meetings are yet to be determined.

The financial study team has met and begun its work. They hope to have a treasurer or financial secretary in place by January. The December meeting will take place as a dinner where council members and spouses will gather at the County Seat for brief business and then fellowship.

Elsie Merrow was received into membership. Inactive members were removed from the membership list. Before we remove anyone attempts had been made to contact and then two letters were mailed requesting they contact the office if they wished to stay on the membership list.

Locks on the Parish Admin. office will be re-keyed. The Congregation Council will begin reviewing one church policy per month starting in January.

Full GCC meeting minutes are available at [www.grace-hastings.org](http://www.grace-hastings.org) as well as in the church office.

# President's Perspective

by Doug Neeb

On the way into work one morning I was listening to sports talk radio, as I often do. The discussion was about today's athletes and how they feel entitled. How the athletes don't seem to "buy" into the team concepts that were so often taught when I was growing up. The belief, that the team as a whole is important than each single athlete's goals. The faith that the coach had a broader vision of what needed to happen and that was what everyone needed to "buy" into to be successful. That effort, persistence, and passion will always triumph over skill and ability. The consensus was that today's athletes are self-centered, can only see what makes them feel good or look good and they have lost sight of the goals of the team or the vision of the coach. They want to be in control of everything and not be lead or guided. I started to remember some of the conversations I had with members of Grace and I started to wonder, if we might be suffering from some of the same issues. I ran across this devotional from Charles R. Swindoll that I would like to share about control.

## Galatians 3

*It's easy to get confused these days. "Out of control" isn't what we want to be. People who drink too much are said to be "out of control." Those who worry too much become emotionally "out of control." The same goes for those who go too far with anything: prescription drugs, food, fitness, sex, work—you name it.*

*But wait. Does this mean we're supposed to be "in control"? Is that our goal? I know a boss (in fact I know several) who is definitely "in control." Folks who work for him either grin and bear it or jump ship as soon as another job surfaces. Some fathers are, without question, "in control." They intimidate, dominate, moderate, and manipulate.*

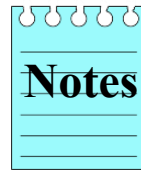
*But being "in control" doesn't necessarily mean "controlling." A healthy, happy life requires being in control of ourselves. To be punctual, we must control the use of our time. To be prepared and ready, we must be in control of our schedule. To be a good listener, our minds and tongue must be controlled. To get a project completed, our tendency to procrastinate must be under the firm control of our determination.*

*This means, then, that we need to be in firm control of ourselves . . . but not controlling of others. Our example? Christ, of course. He got the job done. Without wasted effort, personal panic, or extreme demands, He accomplished the objective. Right on schedule, He went to*

*that cross. When He sighed, "It is finished," it was. Absolutely and completely.*

*Did most believe? Are you kidding? The vast majority back then, as now, didn't give Him the time of day. Could He have grabbed the controls and forced them to sit up and take notice? I hope to shout! Remember what He said? "Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53). I'd call 72,000 angels being in charge, wouldn't you? It was His own control that restrained Him from controlling others.*

*The Christian life boils down to a battle of the wills: Christ's vs. our own. Every day we live we must answer, "Who's in charge here?"*



## Notes from the Veep

by Chris Bush

Have you had a chance to get your after-worship snack and drink in the Narthex? What a busy place! We'll be continuing hospitality at this venue through February. It's an energizing experience and rather exciting! Some lessons learned so far: we noticed the paper cups don't insulate the coffee as well as the foam cups (working on that) and, for some, the noise of God's people can be a little overwhelming (Pastor's office and the conference room can provide an escape). Thank you again for giving this a try and providing feedback!

The Grace constitution is READY (drum roll, please) to be reviewed by the congregation. We will be delivering a copy to your mailbox soon and planning several opportunities for discussing it and getting comments. This has been a long, educational process, but also very rewarding to work with several people on the document: Jan Weller, Mark Bishop, Pastor Amy, Pastor Paul, Doug Neeb, Eileen Oehler, and Margaret Wood. Diverse perspectives allowed for deep conversations and thoughtful writing.

Lastly, it's just over two years away but the time is NOW to start planning on Grace's youth attending the ELCA National Gathering in Houston in 2018. Detroit was amazing this past summer, when Kim, Hope, Emmalee, and I represented Grace at our congregation's first venture to the National Gathering. This is such awesome faith-building work, not just for the teens but the adults who accompany them on this journey. I'll be touching base with families whose youth will be entering at that time, are involved, or just finishing high school for the 2018 school year (or please seek me out) and getting a meeting on February's calendar.

## Education News

by Lorraine Freedlund

The “Colors of Christmas” program took place on Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup>. There were 23 children and 3 adults who took part in the Bethlehem scene during the presentation. It was so touching to see the reenactment of the birth of Jesus. All of the children and adults were very excited to be in the Christmas program. After the program, delicious cupcakes were decorated by every child to enjoy. Then, they each made an ornament for their Christmas tree.

The congregation joined in fellowship for a potluck and Jesus' Birthday party after the service in the fellowship hall. Great food and fellowship made for a wonderful Advent/Christmas celebration.

Thank you to Kristi Winick for playing selected Christmas songs during the “Colors of Christmas” program. Thank you to Anne Johnson for singing “Mary's Song” during the program. Thank you to Mary Kuhlman, Carla Neil, Cindy Olson, and Kristi Winick for singing “Away in a Manger” in different languages to conclude the program. Thank you to Mary Richards, Kim Markwart, and Kate Watson for your helping hands in getting the children ready for the program. Also thank you, Kate, for reading the “Colors of Christmas” book during the program. A special thank you to our youth who read the scripture readings during the program: Grayson Patton, Gavin Patton, Sean Benedict and Molly Patton. What a fantastic performance at Grace! A big thank you to Kim Domke for helping me organize, plan and present the “Colors of Christmas” program. Thank you for sharing your gifts so readily. Finally, the Grace Bell choir played wonderfully before and during the program. Such dedicated children and adults who play for our enjoyment and to praise the Trinity on high. Keep ringing those bells.....

Intergenerational faith building get-togethers have taken place in September and November of 2015. The Sunday fellowships began with a breakfast and then an intergenerational activity. Several Grace members will be contacted to lead the January intergenerational breakfast and activity. Everyone is welcomed to join in this fellowship time at 9:30 am on January 31<sup>st</sup>.



## Evangelism News

by Bill Freedlund



The Evangelism Committee met on December the 7th.

We discussed the excellent turn-out for the **Holly Trolley** again this year. New ideas for next year include more lighting, especially by the Grace Lutheran Church banner for the delivery of cocoa and cookies to people who do not want to leave the line. We will continue with this outreach for next year. ***Thank you to all who helped with the Holly Trolley 2015 outreach!!***

***Many thanks for all donations of money, turkeys and other food items for the Community Christmas baskets and for help in packing and distribution!*** Gifts for children were included in the baskets. Thanks to the youth group we placed a nativity scene in each basket.

We discussed what the Evangelism Committee description should be and this will be included in the revised constitution. After discussion we agreed on an updated description. We also moved to change our name from Evangelism to Outreach Committee.

The new **Grace Participation Cards** will be able to provide information about visitors so further contact can be made. We agreed that visitors should receive a letter from Grace as soon as possible. Our plan is that this letter will be written by the Pastor for initial contact. Further visits will initiate a phone call from a Committee member. This process does require that we have an accurate address and phone number and this is where the Participation Card is so helpful with visitors. We want to encourage all members of Grace to help welcome our visitors and invite them to enjoy coffee hour after worship, as well as return for another visit.

There were 3 **Christmas Eve Invite Cards** placed in each mailbox for our members to hand out. Please think of neighbors or friends that you can share the Christmas season with and pass the invite along to them.”

We concluded with discussion of other avenues of outreach and will continue to do this on a monthly basis with other possibilities of including the presence of Grace in community activities.



## Handbells by Kim Domke

Clapper Kids- had a wonderful outing in December. They were invited to ring at the Kindship Care Holiday Banquet held at the Hastings Community Enrichment Center. The students performed 30 minutes of entertaining ensemble pieces with sing- along Christmas Carols. We were treated to a wonderful dinner afterwards. Thank you to Nancy Frost for setting this up.

Anyone interested in ringing in the bell choir is invited to a Hand Bell Workshop on Saturday, January 16, 2016 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM.

This workshop will work on musical skills, hand bell & chime techniques. We will preview new music and begin to practice our new winter and spring music. Following practice we will eat a fabulous lunch and enjoy fellowship with each other. All these things help us to work together to play beautiful music for the Lord.

- ♪ This is also a good time to invite a friend who may be new to bell ringing or wants to give it a try. 4<sup>th</sup> grade and older please.
- ♪ Let me know ASAP if you would like to ring bells in this next semester.
- ♪ Brand new ringers will need a free private lesson prior to the Saturday Workshop. Just give Kim Domke a call at 269-908-0024.

Regular rehearsals will begin on January 21<sup>st</sup> at 3:45 for students & 5:45 for adults.

Help is needed from the Grace family... Our student bell choir has grown very large; God has filled all the ringing spaces. However, I need some help as ringers arrive and to be on hand during rehearsals also while young ringers are being picked up. Please talk to me if you can help be the Face of Grace on Thursdays from 3:15 to 5:00. This is not a musical position, but supervision and possibly some clerical help. Thanks for prayerfully considering this



## Grace's High School Youth

by Chris Bush

Chris Bush will be setting up a meeting early in the New Year to discuss Grace's trip to the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston. Youth who will be starting high school in September 2018 through those who just completed high school that year can be part of the group that goes to this awesome event. Get a hold of Chris NOW to express your interest!

## Words from Bishop Satterlee – Controversial Crèches

by The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop

Our family crèche sits on the (electric) fireplace in my basement office. We have more than one baby Jesus; each Advent, Chelsey helps me identify the one that's not fancy. St. Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first nativity scene in 1223 at Greccio, Italy, in an attempt to place the emphasis of Christmas upon the worship of Christ rather than upon secular materialism and gift giving. It was a controversial display.

This year, I have noticed images of controversial crèches online. One depicts Mary as a homeless woman at a bus stop, baby in tow. Another portrays the magi as offering alcohol and what appear to be stolen electronics. I would tell you about the holy family depicted as a gay couple pushing a stroller, but I'm afraid of the mail I'd receive. Then there's the Eastern Orthodox icon in my office at work—the holy family fleeing to Egypt—a gift from former students who served in Cairo. Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus are, as Matthew tells it, refugees. I guess it was a good thing for them that Donald Trump wasn't pharaoh.

When Professor Wally Taylor of Trinity Seminary was with us in October, he noted that the original manger—a stone feeding trough—resembled a coffin and swaddling clothes the bands used to wrap the dead. “And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in burial cloth, and laid him in a coffin, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

It strikes me that, as much as we may want to glamorize, sanitize, and sentimentalize Christmas, Matthew, Luke and Jesus do not. The good news of this holy night is that Christ is born, lives, and brings forgiveness, love and life in controversial places—to shepherds out in their fields, tables of outcasts and sinners, those deemed beyond God's reach because of their health, nationality, religion or occupation, and the murderous humanity that nailed him to a cross. In our day, Jesus is born in controversial crèches—Paris, Colorado Springs, San Bernardino—where we need Jesus most. If we want to encounter the newborn Christ, controversial places are where we will find him. So, the angel's words to the shepherds truly are good news for us. “Do not be afraid!”

Blessed Advent and Joyous Christmas!

# Words from the Wise - Autopsy of a Deceased Church, by Thom S. Rainer

by Pastor Paul

*For the last several months I have been reading a small book I found some years ago. Every opportunity I have to read a short chapter, I am filled with fear, trembling, and hope. This book would make a great study book for those interested in a “living” church.*

*I was so moved by one of the chapters, I decided to reprint it for you to give you a feel of the book as well as the themes that have been running through my head the last seven months I have been at Grace, and the last 10-15 years of my ministry. Thom Rainer wrote his book after looking at the causes or reasons for the death of 14 churches. The churches were of different sizes and locations, but they have a common theme that they all had to close at the “end” of their life. The author tries to identify the things that effected their demise, in order to warn the rest of us and avoid a similar fate. I present to you chapter 6:*

## **The Great Commission Becomes the Great Omission**

When the past is hero, as we noted in chapter 3, certain symptoms develop. These symptoms can become sicknesses themselves, sicknesses that lead to death. Some churches begin with a great heart and a great effort toward the Great Commission.

But the methods used become the focus rather than the Great Commission itself. As a consequence, the Great Commission becomes the Great Omission...

One of my favorite country singers is Alan Jackson. He has countless hits, but one of my favorites is “Remember When.” The song is written from the perspective of an older man to his wife as he recounts all the times they have experienced together, both good and bad. It is a sweet song that ends with these lyrics: “Remember when we said when we turned gray, when the children grow up and move away. We won’t be sad, we’ll be glad for all the life we’ve had. And we’ll remember when.”

Nostalgia can be good. It can be fun and healthy. We certainly need to “remember when.” But, as I noted earlier, we can’t live in the past, and we can’t re-create the past. We do “remember when,” but we move on.

Our autopsy revealed a lot of nostalgia about the growth of the church. There was a lot of “remember when” about particular years growing numbers and high attendance days. However, members of dead and dying churches often over-look the reason behind those years of

growth and expansion. Thriving churches have the Great Commission as the centerpiece of their vision, while dying churches have forgotten the clear command of Christ.

## **Great Commission Amnesia**

There are a number of New Testament passages where Jesus sends out His followers. The text that is used the most often to refer to the Great Commission is Matthew 28:19-20: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The imperative in those verses is “go.” But as we go, there are several sub-commands. We are to make disciples. We are to baptize. We are to teach.

But the deceased church, somewhere in its history, forgot to act upon the Great Commission. So they stopped going. And making disciples. And baptizing. And teaching them.

Perhaps I’m being gentle to say the deceased church “forgot” to act upon the Great Commission. Perhaps it is more accurate to say the church “decided” not to act upon Christ’s command.

You see, the Great Commission requires at least two points of obedience from church members. They are to go, and they are to depend totally upon the power of Christ. That’s why Jesus reminded them: “I am with you always.” Christ was ready and willing to work through them. Indeed Jesus commanded it.

But the deceased church, in its past, stopped going. And it stopped depending on Christ.

Why?

“Going” in Christ’s power requires effort. Certainly the results are dependent upon Him, but obedience is work. And obedience in His power means that we are praying to Jesus so we can reach others. That requires an “other” focus. That requires us to look beyond ourselves. That requires us to get uncomfortable. That requires us to go.

As I looked at the deaths of fourteen churches, I saw a common pattern. Obedience to the Great Commission faded; it usually faded gradually. It’s not like one day the church was sending out dozens of members in the community and it suddenly stopped. Instead the decline in the outward focus was gradual, almost imperceptibly gradual.

It was like the slow erosion described in chapter 2. The efforts at obedience to the Great Commission faded gradually, so that no one noticed. Or if someone did notice, he or she was largely ignored. The more vocal members

usually left the church. The comfortable members remained behind for the deathwatch.

So perhaps “Great Commission amnesia” is really too kind. Perhaps that description implies that the members were not at fault, that they no longer had the ability to recall or know what they were supposed to do.

Perhaps it would be more truthful to say these dying churches had “Great Commission disobedience.” They chose not to remember what to do. They chose their own comfort over reaching others with the gospel

That is why the autopsy concluded that the Great Commission became the great omission.

### **The Convenient Omission of the Action Words.**

Related to the great omission is the nature of conversations among church members of dying churches. These members, as we have noted earlier, often fixate on the good old days. And those days in their memories include some spectacular results:

- A high attendance day that often marked the peak of the church
- Dozens of new members every year.
- Vibrant ministries in the community.
- Recognition of their growth by the denomination or some similar body.

As the members of the dying church recalled those days, often decades earlier, they longed for similar results today. They often wondered why they could not replicate those good old days. And it was not unusual for them to blame others for their plight.

You see, these members had a convenient omission in their recollections. They wanted the same results as yesteryear, but they weren’t willing to expend the efforts. Remember the action words from Matthew 28? Go, make disciples, baptize, and teach.

Members of the dying church weren’t willing to go into the community to reach and minister to people. They weren’t willing to invite their unchurched friends and relatives. They weren’t willing to expend the funds necessary for a vibrant outreach.

They just wanted it to happen. Without prayer. Without sacrifice. Without hard work.

But here’s the bigger issue. Even if the church began to grow on its own, the members of the dying church would only accept the growth if the new members were like them and if the church would continue to “do church” the way they wanted it.

That reality, when it is all said and done, is likely at the heart of the issue. Members of the dying churches really

didn’t want growth unless that growth met their preferences and allowed them to remain comfortable...

*Thom S. Rainer, Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive. (B&H Publishing Group: Nashville, TN, 2014), pg.39-45.*

## **Participation Cards - How are we doing?**

by Pastor Paul



After a full month of using the Participation Cards, I would count this effort a huge success! Remember the purpose of these cards are two-fold: to help us gather much-needed information for our visitors and prospective members, secondly, to help us discover those members who may be absent so that our Shepherds can respond to any needs they might have. The cards also offer an easy way to update any personal information (email addresses and phone numbers) and to allow us to add names to the Sunday Prayer list.

Keeping in mind these goals, the cards have helped the office immensely. We are now able to send Welcome Letters to our first-time visitors. We can now plan a New Member Class for those who are wishing to join, and we now have the information we need to invite prospective members to participate.

I have to say, this was a big step for Grace, and puts us on the “cutting edge” of congregations trying to become welcoming congregations. The cards are only tools, however, and the task of welcoming and serving is still a task and hard work for all members. We can encourage our visitors and newcomers to fill out a card by filling out the cards ourselves every Sunday. Let’s lead by example!

**Such a small thing to do for such a big return!**

## **Sunday Morning Adult Forum – A Look at Samuel 1 & 2**

by Pastor Paul

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers; no wait, it’s Numbers, then Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1st and 2nd Samuel. That means, the books of Samuel are in the first part of the Old Testament. I can still remember the order of those first books from my days in Confirmation class. If I learned anything from those “painful” days of memorization and Saturday morning pastoral lectures, I remember the order of Old Testament books.





I only mention this to you because the Sunday Morning Adult Forum class has decided to begin a study of the books of Samuel, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel. In the Lutheran Study Bible published by Augsburg-Fortress, the introduction to 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel says:

*“The books of 1 and 2 Samuel tell of a time of great change in Israel’s history. Israel had been a loose confederation of twelve tribes based in rural hill country. The book of Judges describes this well. In 1 Samuel we see a shift beginning. The people of Israel demand a king, and the monarchy is born. Israel rallies around their king, begins to defeat their enemies, and takes their cities. They are on their way to becoming a more unified state and greater political power.” (pg. 449)*

So what does such changes mean for the spiritual character of the people of Israel? Who are the main characters in these two books, and how do they demonstrate their faith (or lack thereof) in God? Who is this Samuel, for whom the book is named, and why is he important? We are introduced to a prophet in 1 Samuel, and a strong king is introduced to us; who are they?

If you would like to know the answers to these questions and a whole lot more, plan to attend the Sunday Adult Forum, every Sunday morning at 9:30 am; 8:45 am on fifth Sundays. The class offers us an opportunity to meet some very important characters of the Old Testament, and to learn how God worked through them all, in spite of their shortcomings. We might learn, at the same time, how God can and does accomplish God’s will through us, the people of Grace. Another “new beginning”!

## Monday Adult Forum – Gospel of John, Might Be for You!

by Pastor Paul

The study of the Gospel of John might be for you! If you like to look at the deeper meaning of God’s word, the study of John might be for you. If you like to take your time to study the word, the study of John might be for you. If you are afraid you do not know enough to be a part of a Bible Study, the study of John might be for you. If you have questions about John, if you have an hour to spare on Monday evening, or if you just like being around other Grace people, then the study of John just might be for you!

Every Monday evening, beginning at 6:00 pm. Most of you can be back in your home by 7:30 pm. Oh yeah, the study of John **IS** for you!!



## Constitution Reform – Congregational forums are coming!

by Pastor Paul



The Congregation Council of Grace has reviewed the updated constitution draft and is getting ready to share this draft with the members of Grace. The last reform of the congregation’s constitution took place back in the early 1990’s, and is long overdue. The ELCA asks that congregations update their constitution after the church-wide assemblies that make changes to the congregational model every two years. This has not been done for a long time.

After the extensive work of a constitutional committee during the late summer into early fall, the draft form was presented to the council in November for their consideration and approval to discuss the draft with the congregation. The constitutional committee will be proposing several dates in the future for discussion of the draft with and among members of Grace.

After the forums, the council plans to present the draft for the “first” approval sometime in late winter or early spring. The second and final approval could probably be completed at Grace’s annual meeting in July, 2016.

## Six-Month Building Changes – Council is drawing up a plan for March

by Pastor Paul



A process for changes in the church building is underway. Grace’s Congregation Council has set January 5th as a Special Congregation Council meeting in preparation for a Six-Month Building Improvement Plan. The council will first meet with the members of the Visioning Team to discover the plans and ideas that came from this important group a few years ago. After some hearty conversation and brainstorming, the council will meet separately to continue the process of setting goals.

Then, during the months of January and February, the Executive Board will draw up a plan of action that will be presented to the Congregation Council at their regular meeting in February for final editing and approval. At the present, the Congregation Council hopes to have the plan ready to begin in March, 2016.

The Congregation Council has the hope of making great strides in changing the appearance of our building without making major structural changes and without a major financial burden. In other words, they are looking



for changes that will improve our appearance and functionality while keeping costs down. Some work has already begun, but the council would like to look at a broader plan that would also allow a broader cross-section of members to volunteer in the projects.

Hopefully you will hear more about this in the February issue of the **GRACEGRAM**.



## New Beginnings – What Has Changed the Last 7 Months?

by Pastor Paul

We have just completed the Advent and Christmas season, but in reality Grace has been going through an Advent experience since the arrival of the Intentional Interim Pastor. Advent is a time to change and make new beginnings. That is exactly what we have been experiencing since the leaving of Pastor Amy. From that time onward, we have been a congregation of change, preparation, and new beginnings. Here is a brief look at our Advent that began some nine months ago:

- ✠ The pastor's office has been decluttered and only the essential kept for reasons of functionality. The whole space has opened up,
- ✠ we redesigned the chancel space to more effectively accommodate the Bell Choir during the liturgical year,
- ✠ some parts of the Sunday worship have appeared and disappeared throughout the year, as the different liturgical seasons permit,
- ✠ the bulletin has changed,
- ✠ a participation card has been added to help with our care of members and visitors,
- ✠ welcome letters are sent to first time visitors,
- ✠ we have become more welcoming to visitors with food allergies by offering gluten-free wafers,
- ✠ four pews were replaced by chairs to better welcome visitors in need of wheelchair access,
- ✠ the books in the conference room were sorted and furniture removed,
- ✠ the constitution is being reformed,
- ✠ the congregation council is in the process of restoring the position of Treasurer,
- ✠ the GraceGram is redesigned and the cover printed in color,
- ✠ we see visitors most every Sunday and many are prospective members,
- ✠ the bishop noticed a real change in the spirit of Grace in his last visit,
- ✠ and so much more.

## New Member Class – Becoming One Body: How Worship Shapes Us

by Pastor Paul



Beginning February 7th, for six weeks, Pastor Paul will be leading a New Members Class after the late service. The material used for this class has been written by Pastor Paul and will include leaders/members of the congregation to help introduce worship life and membership at Grace. The class will last for only 60-70 minutes each week and will take place in the sanctuary of the church, beginning at around 12:15 pm.

The New Member Class, ***Becoming One Body***, is open to all people who would like to join Grace Lutheran Church whether through transfer from another Lutheran body, baptism, or affirmation of faith. Any member that would like to refresh their understanding of worship and membership are also encouraged to participate.

“Prospective” members will be sent special invitations, but anyone who is interested in membership can sign up by checking the appropriate box on the Participation Card on Sunday morning during the month of January, or by calling the church office. Though we would like everyone to “pre-register” so that we can have a copy of the handout for all participants, we do welcome “walk-ins”.

You have kids, and are not sure what to do with them while you are attending the class? Well, bring them along. The class is short, and we love children to be a part of everything we do.

## Bishop Satterlee's Visit to Grace – Gifts Left Behind

by Pastor Paul

The members of Grace who attended the second Advent Wednesday Prayer Service were blessed with the visit of Bishop and Mrs. Satterlee. They joined us for dinner, and Bishop Satterlee presented the homily for the evening, focusing on the ELW hymn “People Look East.” He brought greetings from the congregations and clergy of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod, and preached a powerful “episcopal” homily.

Just so you know, Bishop Satterlee also left a gift for Grace, a gift he has left at all the congregations he has visited. You may not know that our bishop was a homiletics/preaching professor at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago before being elected bishop of our synod. During that time he penned two very important

books entitled, **When God Speaks Through You: How Faith Convictions Shape Preaching and Mission** (2008) and **When God Speaks Through Worship: Stories Congregations Live By** (2009). We thank Bishop Satterlee for his generous gift; both his message and his wisdom. These books can be found in our library and may be checked out by our members and friends.

## Website Update – Work Continues for a New Look

by Pastor Paul

On December 13<sup>th</sup> we had a visit from a photographer who took quite a number of photos of our worship space and the people at Grace. He was here to help in the process of developing a new website that will welcome visitors and interested people, and will help us project a positive and bright image to the community.

The work of the photographer is the first step of many, to prepare our new website. Pixelvine Studios of Freeport has been contracted to complete the new design and they are hard at work in the process. Meanwhile, as we wait for the new website, please take a look at the updated Facebook page. You can reach it at the following address, even without a Facebook page yourself:

<https://www.facebook.com/gracelutheranhastings/>



## Thank You

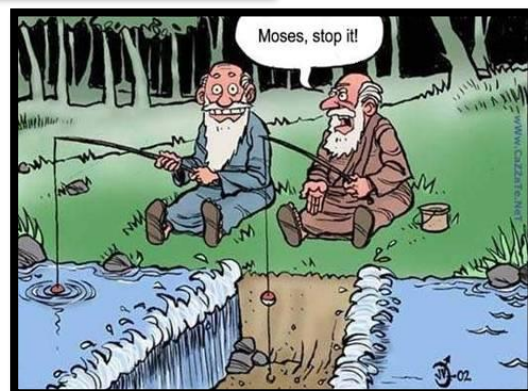
- Everyone helping with the new coffee hour
- Everyone who planned & prepared the Advent midweek dinners
- Children & adults who presented the Colors of Christmas program on 12/13
- Everyone who helped with the successful Holly Trolley event on 12/04
- All our special Sunday morning musicians
- Everyone who contributed to the Christmas baskets & delivered them

If you have a Thank You for members who have helped with a church mission, ministry or event, contact the office before the next Gracegram deadline of January 17<sup>th</sup>.



## What *You Missed* on Facebook

Maybe you already have a large Facebook network, or maybe you think “*I don’t need that newfangled Facebook thing – if I want to know what someone’s up to, I’ll talk to them!*” But Facebook is a powerful tool for reaching our congregation and many of God’s people that we can serve. Did you know - keeping up with GLC’s news this way does not require a Facebook account! Anyone can check out our page at: [www.facebook.com/gracelutheranhastings](https://www.facebook.com/gracelutheranhastings). Scroll down the page and you’ll see listings of upcoming events, photos of recent GLC fellowship events, inspirational articles, maybe even a funny comic or two. Here’s an example of a few things you might have seen on the GLC page this month:



### **January Birthdays**

- 4 Randy Hughes, Diane Alleva-Davis
- 6 Jerry Knickerbocker, Pam Converse
- 7 Jeannette Ulrich
- 11 Alicia Davis, Clyde Watson
- 13 Carl Schoessel, Rod Bowman
- 14 Dollie Larsen, Dean Rounds, Christina Pontius
- 17 Bethany Converse
- 18 Mary Kuhlman
- 20 Rick Duits, Ryann-Lynn Cole
- 21 Joe Bowerman, Michael DeLorenzo
- 22 Steve Kaiser, Logan Clements
- 23 Lacie Hughes
- 25 Allison Neeb
- 30 Jane Power

### **January Anniversaries**

- 5 John & Mary Kleinbrink
- 26 Shirley & John Smith

### **Memoriam**

- 1-1-1992 Florence Speaks
- 1-16-1949 Wayne Beckwith
- 1-4-1988 Don Bowman
- 1-4-1995 Mary Leary
- 1-6-1982 Vern Leary
- 1-6-2008 Donald Haywood
- 1-9-1989 Frederick Send
- 1-10-2015 George Ulrich
- 1-12-1991 Clarence Curtis
- 1-14-1991 Vivian Belcher
- 1-15-2001 Ingartha Swank
- 1-16-1949 Wayne Beckwith
- 1-21-1999 Esther Schlachter
- 1-22-1989 Edward Golnek
- 1-23-2014 Barb Schultz
- 1-23-2014 Clinton Raines
- 1-25-2009 Ken Beckwith
- 1-29-1984 Charlie Wilson
- 1-30-1966 Ralph Ehredt

## **In Our Prayers**

### **Continuing Prayers**

James Chiodine, cancer – brother  
of Lorraine Freedlund

### **Healthy pregnancies**

Jacqueline Endsley  
Sarah Endsley  
Heather Baucom  
Mary Beth DeVinney

### **Military**

Kayla Pohl, *daughter of Rob &  
Lisa Pohl*

Myrina Clements, *daughter of  
Cherie Clements*

Zach Duits, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

Aaron Endsley, Adam Miller,  
Alyssa Mills, Amber Reid,  
Andrew Ferguson, Ashley Gillons,  
Austin Endsley, Ben Curtis, Carl  
Franson, Charles & Tim Krewson,  
Cole Davis, Dylan Kelmer,  
Edward Frost, Greg Scott, Jena  
Harwood, Jon Ingran, Jordan  
Swank, Josh Lewis, Justin Ogden,  
Lena Jordon, Noah Daniels, Phil  
DeVries, Ryan Davis, Spencer  
Reid, Taylor Gould, Tom  
Fenoseff, Zackary Green

**Companion Synods** in Honduras,  
Papua New Guinea, and Latvia

**Nursing home residents** . . . Beth  
Oehler, Dorothy Mayo, Deb  
Wood, Vivian Allerdig

**Shut-ins** . . . Dave Bolton, Ilene  
Hilson, Jamie Coplin, Opal  
Gillons

# Grace Lutheran Church

239 E. North St.  
Hastings, MI 49058

Website: [www.discover-grace.org](http://www.discover-grace.org)

Facebook: Grace Lutheran Church  
- ELCA Hastings, MI

269-945-9414 or 269-945-2645

Fax: 269-945-2698

## Our Staff:

Parish Admin: *Victoria Alt*  
ParishAdmin@grace-hastings.org  
Mon – Thurs 8 AM - 3PM

Custodian: *Nathan Freedlund*  
Minister of Music: *Cindy Olson*  
Choir Accompanists:  
*Marcia Bowman, Chris Bush*  
Bell Choir Leader: *Kim Domke*  
Organist Emeritus: *Donna Buehl*

## Executive Committee:

President: *Doug Neeb*  
Vice President: *Chris Bush*  
Secretary: *Kate Watson*



## WORSHIP SCHEDULE

### Winter

(1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Labor Day - May)  
Sundays @ 8:00 & 10:45 a.m.

### Summer

(June – Labor Day)  
Sundays @ 8:00 & 10:00 a.m.  
Sunday School in recess

### 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays

Sunday @ 10:00am

### Advent and Lent

Wednesdays @ 7:00 p.m.

### Winter

(1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Labor Day – May)  
9:30 AM

### 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays

Sunday @ 8:45 am



## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

## Committee Chairs

Brothers of Grace – *Joe Longcor*  
Congregational Care – *Margaret Wood*  
Faith Building – *Lorraine Freedlund*  
Outreach Committee – *Bill Freedlund*  
Property – *Tom Peck & Phil Poholski*  
Sarah Circle – *Kay Howell*  
Social Activities – *Diane Neeb*  
Stewardship – *Tim Schoessel*  
Youth & Family – *Jana Bishop*  
Worship – *Lorie Gladyness*