

+ GRACENOTES +

January 2021



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK *A New Year—New Opportunities*



Each day of this New Year 2021 brings promise of a new start. For many, the start of a new week is the time to begin that diet, get serious about exercising, forego TV viewing/binging, and start reading that book we've always wanted to read but never got around to it. For a vast majority, however, there's something especially motivating and invigorating about seeing the month of JANUARY on the calendar. This is the year that we'll accomplish great things!

God doesn't necessarily call us to do great things, however. He asks that we be trustworthy in small things (Luke 16:10-11). To that end He gives us gifts to use to build up the Body of Christ and to reach out to the lost.

Some of us have many gifts. People like Michelangelo—painter, sculptor, and poet—and Thomas Jefferson—architect, statesman, and scientific farmer—come to mind. God, the Giver of gifts, knows that the number of gifts each of us have varies. Our Lord told the Parable of the Talents pointing out as well as teaching us that success lies in using what we've been given, not having the greatest amount.

Our gifts also differ in their degree. There are many sculptors but few, if any, compared to Michelangelo. Yet their art can bring satisfaction and inspiration to others. You may not be able to sing opera, but you can sing God's praises. You may not be a great speaker, but you can witness to the love of God in Christ to others through words and deeds. You may not be a mechanic, but you can provide transportation for someone needing to get to an appointment or to church.

That's why God gives us gifts and abilities—that we may be equipped to serve others. The start of a new year offers us an opportune time to assess those gifts and see how we can use them for God's glory and the good of His people. The motivation to do so comes from the same One who gave us those gifts! Just as He was motivated by love for us to give us, not just our gifts, but the greatest gift of all, His Son, so we are motivated by love for Him to serve those He calls to serve. We are after all blessed to be a blessing!

Jan and I wish each of you a joyous and blessed New Year of days filled with living and serving in His love!

+ *Pastor Jim*

Parish News

What's Happening at Grace

Grace Lutheran Ministry

Financial Status

January – November 2020

Grace Lutheran Church Financial Plan Status – November 2020

	November	YTD Thru Nov	% of Plan	2020 Financial Plan Total	Month 11
General Fund Financial Plan vs Contributions					
General Fund Contributions	\$9,535	\$147,743	91.80%		
Plan Offering Goal	\$13,412	\$147,530	91.67%	\$160,942	
Over (-under) Plan Goal	-\$3,877	\$213			
Contributions vs Expenditures					
General Fund Contributions	\$9,535	\$147,743	91.80%	\$160,942	
General Fund Expenditures	\$10,954	\$119,922	74.51%		
Net	-\$1,419	\$27,821			

From Opinion: writes Esau McCaulley of Wheaton College.

Religious services aren't the same over Zoom. "We stay because attendance is not about what the church gives us; it is our way of offering something to God".



CONGREGATIONAL UPDATE

As many of you know, a Voters Meeting was held via Zoom on Sunday afternoon, Dec. 13. The main item of business was the approval of the 2021 Financial Plan, AKA the 'COVID Budget'. There were 30 persons in attendance on Zoom and it was interesting for me to 'host' a group of that size for this type of meeting. All in all, I think it went very well. The Plan of \$161,000+ was passed unanimously. This will be the budget that Council will work with until such time that Church activities return to a more normal level and/or a new pastor is installed at Grace.

The Call Committee will reconvene after the New Year to begin making plans for contacting the two pastoral candidates who indicated they are willing to be interviewed. Of the five names we were given by the NW District office, three were contacted and two indicated a willingness for further discussion. Please keep this process in your prayers. While the Call Committee has set some parameters for what it thinks will be a good 'fit' for Grace, we also need to put our total trust in God, that He knows what is best and good for our congregation here in Ashland.

Grace's positive Financial situation at the end of 2020 is such that the Council voted unanimously to 'gift' three local charitable organizations \$5,000 each from the current surplus of funds in our General Fund checking account. This surplus is largely the result of reduced expenditures in our 2020 budget due to COVID-19 and the resulting cutback in activities at Grace. Even after these gifts, adequate funds remain in the Grace account to cover unusual or unforeseen expenses that may come up during the coming year.

The organizations chosen were: Habitat for Humanity, Ashland Emergency Food Bank, and OHRA (Options for Helping Residents of Ashland). These organizations deal primarily with the valley's homeless and unhoused population, a demographic badly in need of continued support.

The Christmas Eve service had the largest attendance (59--Zoom and in-house combined) of any of our worship services since we began Zoom worship back in March, 2020. One of the nice things about Zoom is that people from other geographic locations are able to join us for worship. For example, members of one of our families who live in far-away Minneapolis and Fargo, ND, were in attendance for the Christmas Eve service. Consider forwarding the weekly Zoom notifications to YOUR family and friends, too! Share the Gospel with those you love!

Please keep all members of Grace Lutheran in your prayers, especially those who might be struggling or hurting in some way.

"I have strength for anything through Him who gives me power." Philippians 4:13

Bob Janssen,
Council Pres.



Call Committee Update- January 2021

Interviews will be conducted with the two pastors (Pastor Eric Robinson and Pastor Samuel Grayl) that agreed to talk with us during January. I thought it would be of interest to summarize the types of questions we will be asking each candidate.

The Call Committee has developed a list of fourteen questions. The questions address areas such as style of ministry, preferred worship formats, women's roles in the church and views on communion practices, campus ministry at SOU, strategies to attract new members to our congregation and how a pastor integrates visitors/prospective new members into congregational life.

Since we are an inclusive and collaborative parish, we also address that in the interview. We also ask how he would expect the congregation to support the work of the pastor in a shared ministry with the people of Grace; and how he deals with differences of opinion and potential conflicts among members of the congregation.

We ask each candidate which areas of their current ministry are most difficult and which areas are least difficult. Also, we ask which area of ministry the pastor would like to spend the majority of his time.

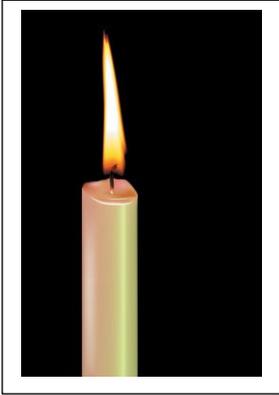
Since the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted our parish and the church at large in dramatic ways, we thought it appropriate to ask pastoral candidates how they have dealt with the pandemic as it impacts parish and pastoral ministry and how it has impacted their personal life.

We will also ask each candidate to address two or three things about themselves and their pastoral style that we did not address in our questions. Finally, we solicit any questions that they might have for us.

After completion of the interviews, the Call Committee will decide if the candidates are a good fit for Grace Ashland. Of course, the pandemic will impact the timing of any possible meetings with members of the congregation. In the meantime, we will make available any additional information requested by candidates so that they can better assess if Grace Ashland is a good fit for them and their families.

Mike Bahr- For the Call Committee

The Coming of the Light



A
pure
and
golden
light it
seems that
spread across
the pew reflects
its radiance from the
mellow old carved oak
and hanging greens upon
the faces, hands of those,
who sing so sweetly,
Silent Night. Look deep
into this gentle fire
and then go forth to bear
it far and tender to
wherever infants cold
and frightened tremble
in the dark with
no bright star
no kings
to
greet.



All in the Same Boat

The portion of the church building where the congregation sits is called the *nave* or *boat*. It reflects the understanding that the church is the ark of salvation, offering life in Jesus Christ to all who receive it. Often in stained-glass windows one can find a picture of a boat, sometimes a cross as the mast to symbolize The Church. As you sit in worship on Sunday look around you. We're all in the same boat.



Winter Shelter News

“Monday Food Delivery”

Helga helps serve soup, chili, scalloped potatoes and lentils



Cathy McKiblin and Nan use Cathy's car for hot dishes. Nan carried grilled cheese sandwiches, bananas and cookies or snacks. Usually, we have bottled water.



By Nan Gunderson



**Women of Grace LWML
January 2021**

Advent Donations

Thank you to all who sent in mission donations. Because of your generosity we were able to make eleven donations to local and Portland faith-based charities totaling \$1,400:

Bethesda Communities Portland (home of Karin Curtin)	\$100.00
Dunn House, Medford (Women's Shelter)	\$100.00
Grace Lutheran Benevolent Fund	\$200.00
Hearts with a Mission, Medford (Youth)	\$100.00
Lutheran Latino Ministries, Portland	\$100.00
Maslow Project, Medford (Youth)	\$100.00
Redemption Ridge, Medford (Rescues Young Prostitutes)	\$200.00
Rogue Retreat, Medford (Homeless)	\$100.00
Salvation Army	\$200.00

In addition, we have made a four-year commitment to send a yearly donation of \$100.00 to LLM for Hana Laughon. She is a young Hispanic woman currently in the Deaconess program. Her picture and information can be found on the LWML bulletin board in the hallway.

We also gave gift certificates to two of our college youth who have been attending services at Grace this past Fall.

Our ladies provided and hand delivered live plants (holly or poinsettia) to ten of our senior ladies who have been confined to their homes or senior living accommodations.

**Mites at Work!
OR District LWML**

Carrying Christ into the Heart of the Hispanic Home

LLM (Lutheran Latino Ministries) is a Recognized Service Organization of the LC-MS. Since 2003 **Deaconess Marta Luna** has worked with LLM with her husband until his passing in 2017. She has continued her mission to bring God's love into the lives and hearts of people who do not know Him, and she continues connecting families with the church. Marta works one day a week at Silverton Hospital as a **Chaplin**. In Woodburn, she connects with families through the volunteer organization **Love in the Name of Christ (Love INC)**, and throughout the week she brings the love of Christ to families in homes and hospital rooms, connecting them with the church whenever possible. This grant of **\$6,500.00** will help ensure ample time for Deaconess Marta to discipline families and keep her working at a full-time level by helping provide sustaining support for salary, mileage and communication.

*"For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now I will arise," says the LORD.
"I will set him in the safety for which he yearns." Psalm 13:5 NKJV*



The following Christmas message is from the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty:

A blessed Christmas to all of you “for today (many years ago) in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:11-12). The life, death and resurrection of Jesus came as a blessing to the world even though the world didn’t deserve it and, even worse, was unreceptive to receiving Him as the gift that He was for them (see John 1:10-13).

Increasingly, the world in which we live today seems very unreceptive to that same Gospel, a message that has been such a blessing to the world for more than two millennia. Instead of receiving the Good News of Jesus like Mary and Joseph, the wise men, or the shepherds, the world in which we live is violently suspicious of the message of the Messiah like Herod in Matthew 2. In a speech last month, Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito warned our nation, saying,

In certain quarters, religious liberty has fast become a disfavored right,” Alito said. “For many today, religious liberty is not a cherished freedom. It’s often just an excuse for bigotry and it can’t be tolerated even when there’s no evidence that anybody has been harmed.¹ Later in the speech citing COVID 19 and state overreach, he was even more concerned when he said, The resulting (state) restrictions “blatantly discriminated against houses of worship,” Alito said Thursday, adding that he believed religious liberty is in danger of becoming a “second-class right.”

How did the cherished right of religious liberty and religious assembly become anathema in the culture in which we live? That discussion is for another paper. What remains vital today is first, our awareness of the fact that religious liberty, especially the liberty to believe and teach the whole counsel of God faithfully according to the Bible, that right is under direct assault. Much like Herod’s overt violence against the Christ child that first Christmas (See again Matt. 2:13-18), there are many today who would joyfully welcome the silencing of the Christmas message and the Church that is dedicated to proclaiming that message for all to hear. Like Joseph who gallantly protected Jesus and Mary that first Christmas, we as believers should also put to use our God-given freedoms to fight for our right to be the Church in this culture for the sake of the culture and the mission of the Church. But, even more importantly than that, the MAIN MESSAGE FOR THIS DAY, no matter what is happening in our world, is this: There is no Herod, no Caesar, no Pharaoh, no tyrant, no dictator, no president, or elected official that can stop the persevering power and blessing of the message of Christmas of coming for you, for me, for all.

Today’s the day to rejoice in the fact that God’s love keeps coming no matter the time, no matter the place. God’s love for you comes no matter the struggles in your life or in your family. God’s love, mercy, and forgiveness keeps coming no matter the foolishness or the bravado of the culture in which we live. Today’s a day to rejoice with those first shepherds on Christmas day. Today’s the day to remember my favorite Bible verse from Rom. 8:31-38.

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?....

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Merry Christmas! And may the certainty of God’s love for you in Jesus Christ give you strength, comfort, and confidence this day to face whatever comes tomorrow. For, nothing can overpower the persevering power and blessing of Christmas IN CHRIST FOR YOU!

The Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz serves as executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty.

January Birthdays



7	Barb Morlok
12	Maggie Anderson
13	Sarah Davis
20	Marilyn Meier
24	Karen Gisclon

January Wedding Anniversaries



January 19, 2002

Thom & Krista Hepford

Those Who Serve In January

Lay Ministers

January 3 Shirley Westerberg
January 10 Pat Meierhoff
January 17 Shirley Westerberg
January 24 Pat Meierhoff
January 31 Ray Kistler

Lay Readers

January 3 Judy Rupp
Mike Bahr
January 10 Nan Gunderson
Mike Neely
January 17 Ruth Luce
January 24 Sandra Hinrichs
January 31 Nancy Casazza

Sound System

John Gisclon

Zoom Host

Bob Janssen



January 2021



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
HAPPY NEW YEAR					1	2
3 10:00 am Worship 11:00 am Fellowship	4	5 10:00 am Women's Study 4:00pm Lay Ministry	6 	7	8	9 No Men's Study
10 <i>Baptism of Our Lord</i> 10:00 am Worship 11:00 am Fellowship	11 Circuit Pastor's Mtg. 	12 10:00 am Women's Study	13	14	15	16
17 10:00 am Worship 11:00 am Fellowship	18 	19 10:00 am Women's Study 12:00 pm LVML 6:30 pm Church Council	20	21	22 	23
24/31 10:00 am Worship	25	26 10:00 am Women's Study	27	28	29	30

“Looking to the Future with Hope”

Grace Lutheran Church

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2021 Peace, Love, Joy and Hope

“Grace Guides and Sustains”