



GRACE NOTES

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, 46 WOODLAND STREET, HARTFORD, CT 06105 (860) 527-7792

Christmas at Grace



December

Volume 2009

Issue 12



Inside this issue:

Sunday, December 20 - Fourth Sunday in Advent

9:30am - Children's Christmas Pageant

Celebrate with our children as they present our traditional pageant of Christmas story and song.

Thursday, December 24 - The Nativity of Our Lord

7:30pm - Christmas Eve Candlelight Service; Holy Communion

Friday, December 25 - The Nativity of Our Lord

9:30am - Christmas Morning, Holy Communion

Sunday, December 27 - The First Sunday After Christmas

9:30am - Lessons and Carols for Christmas

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Join us on Sunday, December 6 for . . .

Advent Workshop

Everyone, young and older, is invited to the fellowship hall following worship. We will be making greeting cards for our members who are ill

or homebound and creating a banner for the Christmas Season. Supplies for making a Chrismon will also be available. This is a wonderful opportunity to be in

fellowship with the Sunday School children and other members of Grace as we work together on these projects.

Cookie Sale

As part of the Advent Event, "Fill A Cookie Tin" will again be offered. You can choose from a variety of cookies and tins (\$2.00 - \$15.00).

Cookies can be easily frozen to keep for special occasions and a tin of homemade cookies also makes a nice gift.

While we enjoy delicious cookies, the money donated will go to Loaves and Fishes to help feed those who are hungry.



Note From Pastor Celebrating the dawn of salvation

“Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Luke 21:27-28

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Here we are in Advent already! The First Sunday of Advent is New Year’s Day in the life of the church, when we begin all over again to hear and ponder the story of God’s plan for our salvation. This year we will hear it from the writer of the Gospel of Luke, who knew and expanded on Mark’s account, and went on in the book of Acts to tell the thrilling story of the explosive growth of a new church.

Of course we know the story. We’ve heard it all our lives, and if we were ever in a Sunday School Christmas program or sang in Handel’s *Messiah*, we have literally memorized parts of it.

So why tell it again? After all, when Luke was written, the people who read it – or who had it read to them – already knew the story.

Well, in the first place, the story had been passed along for a generation or two, and

we all know what happens when stories get passed along. They get changed. They get embellished. They get garbled. So the first purpose, as stated in the opening verses of Luke, is to write down “an orderly account” to make sure the story was accurate and complete.

But there was and is a more important reason for going through the story yet again, and that reason is evangelical, in the original (and may I say, Lutheran) sense of the word. Evangelism is good news. It’s not just a well-loved story. It’s good news. The story recounted in Luke is part of the sweeping story of the Bible, namely, the story of God’s salvation. The story begins at creation and ends in our hearts – we “stand up and raise our heads because salvation is near.” The arrival of Jesus is the beginning of the fulfillment of the story. The facts are there; the *meaning* of the facts is that through Jesus

Christ we have been reconciled to God forever. Yet it is possible to hear the story many times and still never *receive* the story.

Have you ever heard an old song you’ve known forever and suddenly heard a line in it – a lyric or even just a melodic line – and been suddenly, deeply stirred? As if it were brand new? Often such an experience feels like a jolt of recognition. Something comes together in your heart.

When we are reconciled with God, it is a kind of recognition. We are no longer strangers, but beloved children of the God whose voice we have always known.

That is why we keep needing to hear the story – and why we keep needing to tell it.

May your hearts rejoice in this blessed season!



Pastor Steege

*By the grace of God, we are a Lutheran congregation,
diverse in worship, Christ-centered in fellowship,
committed to prayer, deepening of faith,
and the stewardship of the gospel and God’s world.*

Memorial service for Hartford's homeless people Gifts and volunteers needed

Grace Lutheran Church is one of about 20 local congregations who are sponsoring a memorial service for homeless people in Hartford who have died in the past year. **The service will be held at 11 a.m. December 21, the shortest day of the year, at Trinity Episcopal Church, 120 Sigourney Street.**

Following the service, a lunch will be served to an estimated 400 homeless people. The lunch is being provided by FoodShare through the Salvation Army, and catered by the newly named Lincoln Culinary Institute located on Farmington Avenue.

As the guests leave they will be handed bags that have a pair of socks, a pair of gloves, and a warm hat. This is where Grace comes in. It is hoped that each of the sponsoring churches will contribute about 25 bags - preferably Christmas gift bags that are often used instead of traditional wrapping - or other bags, with socks, gloves, and a hat, and maybe a little card that says "Merry Christmas - we are praying for you." The bags will be marked as to size and gender.

Members of Grace are encouraged to gather socks, gloves, and hats, new or in

mint condition. Also search through your Christmas supplies for gift bags. Bring everything to Grace to be sorted and packaged. Those that arrive by December 6 (which by the way is St. Nicholas Day) can be put together during the Advent Workshop following worship.

Also Grace is expected to send three or four volunteers to help either to prepare food, serve the meals, hand out the gift bags, or help clean up, or any combination. Please notify Pastor Steege if you would like to help.

Cookie Bakers Wanted!

Have a favorite recipe? Like to bake? Our cookie sale will have great variety if you donate a batch of holiday cookies to the sale. Just bring them early on Sunday, Dec. 6th and we will add them to the table. Please indicate what kind they are and if they have any nuts in them.

Fair Trade Products Available

Need a hostess gift? Something special for the stocking or someone at work? Maybe you just like to gift yourself!

Concerned about carbon footprint, overuse of pesticides, unfair pricing for small farmers? The Parish Life committee has just what you need. Fair Trade Coffees and Teas are available each Sunday in the fellowship hall. These products support farmer cooperatives throughout the world, are grown using organic and sustainable methods and also support Lutheran World Relief. **WHAT A DEAL!**

Memorials from New England help spark letter from Bishop Hanson on Darfur

On Aug. 4, 2009, Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson released a letter on Sudan indicating the need to work for an end to the violence in Darfur and the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement which ended the North/South civil war in Sudan in 2005. Bishop Hanson's letter was partially in response to two memorials from the New England Synod

asking Bishop Hanson and the ELCA to do more to address the genocide in Darfur.

Pr. Tim Oslovich, Trinity Lutheran Church, Vernon, Conn., author of the two Darfur memorials, noted, "The people of the New England Synod can be grateful to Bishop Hanson for this statement as it reflects many of the concerns raised

by the synod in its memorials to the 2007 and 2009 Churchwide Assemblies. This is a good step toward more prayer and more advocacy for the people of Darfur and all of Sudan. However, the people of Darfur and South Sudan are still suffering and dying. As Bishop Hanson has encouraged us, everyone in the ELCA needs to do what we can to help bring peace."

ORR restores funding for refugee children

Sometimes, advocacy really does work! In early October, Lutheran Social Services (LSS) and the New England Synod announced that the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in Washington, D.C., had, without warning, terminated funding for an especially vulnerable group of refugee children: undocumented youth beyond age 18 who have been officially

determined to be "abused, abandoned, and neglected." And while we can't know how many actually responded by contacting their congressional representatives and officials at ORR, we do know that the great news Oct. 22 from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) was that the ORR plans to resume placing

children with approved I-360s into Unaccompanied Refugee Minors programs (URMP) if they are nearing their 18th birthday. "This is really good news for these children and a huge relief to us," said Olivia Faries from LIRS. LSS has a URMP program in Massachusetts.

Thank you!

Please remember, worship begins at 9:30am each and every Sunday. The psalmist says, "I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'" Join us for worship each Sunday.

Thank you!

An amazing Tag Sale and Bake Sale was held in the Community Room in uncertain weather on October 17th and generated over \$500.00 for the Building Fund Campaign! Special thanks to **Mavis Smith** for organizing this event in a very short time. Thank you also to all the people who helped make it a success, including everyone who donated goods,

and especially those who worked so hard to set up the sale, price the items, and work the tables that day: **Chet and Glenna Brodnicki, Sue Carey, Judy Dudek, Petre McAdams, and Lou Oliver.**

Then on Halloween morning, October 31st, a troupe of hardy souls raked millions of leaves and

cleaned up the church property. Special thanks to **Chet and Glenna Brodnicki, Guenther and Edith Mamet, Horst Scholz, Lloyd Smith, Ted Steege, and Paul, Belinda, and Fély Yigle-Kaljob.** Others were working inside that day, and although we don't have all the names, the congregation is grateful!

Build Us Up, Lord!

Building Fund Campaign Update

Dale Eberhardt is General Chairperson

The Congregation Council and the Stewardship Committee met together twice recently in order to compile a great deal of information about Grace for the ELCA Key Leader, the Rev. Michael Meier, to use in preparation of materials for our upcoming Building Fund campaign. They also selected a theme based on a hymn in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship hymnbook: Hymn number 670, *Build Us Up, Lord!*

In addition, the group selected a Leadership Team to guide the campaign, which will be launched officially on Sunday,

January 10, and finish with a celebration on Sunday, February 21. **Dale Eberhardt** is the campaign's General Chairperson. Other team members are: Communications Chairperson **Barbara Van Fleet**, Hospitality Chairperson **Mavis Smith**, Spiritual Emphasis Chairperson **Gail Lindstrom**, Children and Youth Chairperson **Lou Oliver**, Personal Contacts Chairperson **Ted Steege**, and Financial Oversight Chairperson **Mildred Unfried.**

One remaining leader to be identified is the Follow-up Chairperson, who will recruit at least 3-4 respected members to meet with the Pastor Meier on Saturday of Commitment Weekend or following worship on Sunday. The Follow-up Chairperson will work with Pastor Steege and selected others to provide the necessary follow-up after the Commitment Sunday.

Also in the works is a stunning logo being prepared by **Michael Smith.** Stay tuned!



Meditation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders to be held at Grace

Grace Lutheran Church will be the site of a Mediation Skills Training Institute presented by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center (LMPC) May 3-7, 2010.

This grew out of Bishop Payne's request at Bishop's Convocation two years ago for volunteers who would be willing to work with congregations in conflict. After a couple of false starts, she asked Pastors Patricia Harris, Jeff Stalley, Karen DeWerth-Wamester, and Bob Matthias to begin working with her to plan an effort. One of the projects coming out of the planning is to train a few teams (members selected by Bishop Payne) to be available to assist congregations in conflict. In May, the group affirmed that

they wanted the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center Mediation Skills training to be at the heart of the training for trained teams who will be working with congregations. Grace Lutheran Church was selected to be the site of the training.

The Institute is designed to equip church leaders with the skills necessary to deal effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict. The five-day institute also includes a component on congregational intervention and consultation, placed within the context of family systems theory. Although focused primarily on the church setting, the skills learned are directly transferable to other settings.

Therefore managers in business, attorneys, experienced mediators and others in leadership will be enriched by the training as well.

In return for opening our space for the Institute, Pastor Steege and one other member of Grace are invited to participate in the Institute free of charge. They and a few other volunteers will be expected to provide morning coffee, snacks, and two inexpensive meals during the week. (The Institute covers the expenses for the meals.) The Mediation Skills Training Institute runs daily from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with the exception of Monday, which starts at 9:00 a.m., and Friday, which concludes at 4:00 p.m.

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the lovely lapel pin, pen, and the card on the occasion of National Clergy Appreciation Day. The pin reminds me of one my pastor grandfather is wearing in a drawing we have. I never saw him wear a clergy collar, but he always had a small cross in his lapel.

The pen has "Jeremiah 29:11" printed on the side. Jeremiah is my favorite prophet, as you know, because he was so irate so much of the time. But every once in a while he said something like this: "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

My plans are always full of hope because of the kindness of the people of Grace. Thank you!

Pastor Steege



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PLEASE NOTE:

The submission deadline for the January 2010 edition of Grace Notes is December 15th. Please forward information to Sally Nolen (sallynolen@live.com) by this date. Thank you.

www.graceistheplace.org

