



GRACE NOTES

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

December

Volume 2011

Issue 12



Worship at Advent and Christmas

It's a long Advent this year, beginning November 27. The Fourth Sunday in Advent is December 18, with a full week to go before Christmas morning Sunday, December 25th. During the penitential season of Advent Sunday worship will begin with the lighting of the Advent wreath. We will be using the very beautiful Setting 5 in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, based on an ancient plainsong melody. Plenty of special music will be provided by our newly forming choral group, our bell choir, and three different

string soloists from the Hartt School (see related article, *Graceful Music*).



On Saturday, December 24, Christmas Eve festivities will begin with our second annual free Christmas Eve Dinner for friends and neighbors, with wonderful food served continuously from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m., along with plenty of

music. The traditional candlelight service with Holy Communion begins at 7:30 p.m. **Wayne Dixon** will be our guest pianist.

Christmas morning, December 25, a Sunday, Holy Communion will feature many of our very favorite Christmas Carols and more special music. This is a quiet, serene service, one of the most beautiful of the year as we celebrate the incarnation - coming to be with us - of Emanuel, our Lord Jesus Christ. Glory in the highest!

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Service Of Installation

For

The Reverend Lydia Wittman-Grebe
as Pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church

On the 11th Day of December, 2011 at 3:00 P.M.

75 Griswold Street, Glastonbury, CT

The Reverend JoAnn Post, Dean of GHCC, Installer

Reception immediately following in the Parish Hall

We do not quench the Spirit

Note from Pastor

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹ *Thessalonians 5:18*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Well, we had a couple of weeks at the beginning of November when giving thanks was hard to do for most people in Connecticut. Downtown Hartford has quite a bit of underground wiring, apparently, so the heavy wet snows of late October piling up and breaking down leafy branches did less damage there than other places in the state. But Bloomfield and West Hartford, where most of our members live, and all the other towns surrounding Hartford were plunged into darkness and cold for a week or more while everyone's frozen food thawed. It was especially hard for those who were still recovering from the floods after Irene.

The phones were out at Grace for over a week, so many people who called in assumed the office was closed. We were open, but communication was difficult without phones, and e-mail didn't help because most of our members' internet systems were down. It was

awfully quiet! The Annual Meeting was postponed for a week, since so many people couldn't be present, but that was a major inconvenience for others who had made travel plans the following week.

The street in front of our house was closed, with huge branches carrying down some live electrical wires. The street leading up to our corner was also blocked off for a week. Miraculously, we and our neighbors never lost power, but when the cherry picker people finally came to put everything together way up overhead, they knocked out all our phones, internet, and TV for several days.

How do we give thanks in all circumstances, as Paul will instruct the Thessalonian church on the Third Sunday of Advent? We can be thankful that no-one's life was endangered during that time. We can be thankful that the church was a warm place where people could come and get warm during that week.

We can be thankful for the many stories of people opening their homes for people who were freezing. Certainly we can be grateful that the power and everything else did come back on eventually.

More important, we do not 'quench the spirit,' as Paul says, but abstaining from evil, we hold onto what is good. We take care of one another. We know that the One who calls us is faithful. God will bring us through the troublesome times of this life, and will one day welcome us into the heavenly realm that has already been begun in the birth of Christ.

As Paul says to the church he loved, May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹ *Thessalonians 5:23*



Pastor Steege



Bible Study to begin at 10 Marshall Street

Since a number of people who live near the church are coming to Grace, we have an opportunity to reach out to our neighbors on Asylum Hill. At the suggestion of **Louisa Barton-Duguay** and **Waneta Wiggins**, Grace will be offering a Bible Study at 10 Marshall Street, an apartment building two blocks away that has a large conference room.

The management at the building has welcomed us very warmly, and the hope is that people from the building and the neighborhood will come, who might still not be comfortable coming to the church.

The Bible study will be held on Wednesday mornings from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. There are

many Spanish-speaking people in the building, so the scriptures will be made available in both English and Spanish. However, Pastor Steege is looking for someone who might be able to provide Spanish interpretation for the study conversation.

Please pray for God's blessing on this exciting new program.

Child Care available during worship

At the recommendation of the Worship Committee, the Congregation Council has approved hiring a person to attend the nursery during worship, so that parents and grandparents whose children are restless or too young for adult worship have an alternative place to bring them.

The nursery is the small room just off the narthex (a/k/a front entry). It is outfitted with a crib, a couch, rocking chair, plenty of toys, and basic diaper-changing equipment. **Dale Eberhardt** is installing sound equipment, so that people in the room can hear the service.

Amy Nolen has offered to fill this position. With her own three little ones, she says she's probably likely to get more out of the service piped into the nursery than trying to mind her children in the back pew! We are grateful to both Amy and Dale for making this service available.

Noontime Prayer Circle on Wednesdays

The front doors of the church are open on Wednesdays and all are invited to stop by for half an hour of prayer from

12:15 to 12:45 p.m. Please join us! If this is not possible, consider setting aside a moment for your own prayer

at that hour on Wednesdays, joining us in Spirit, and remembering the Circle as we pray together.

*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.*

Annual Congregational Meeting

Because of the record-breaking storm, Grace held its Annual Congregational Meeting November 13, 2011, postponing it from November 6. Thirty members were present to review annual committee reports and the draft of the Long-Range Financial Reports. **Council President Emma Coleman-Carr, Pastor Steege,** and committee chairs presented their reports and thanked those who support the ministries of Grace.

Dale Eberhardt reported that members are on schedule with their donations to the Build Us Up, Lord campaign. **Phyllis and Chad Thompson** showed two digital stories produced by the Sunday School. **Susan Carey** explained that the Outreach and Visioning Committee is transforming back to working as the Holy

Listening Committee. Members are attending meetings of neighborhood groups and reinforcing Grace's presence on Asylum Hill. Speaking for the Property Committee, **Barbara Ruhe** announced that the Council has decided to go ahead with the approved updating of Grace's lightning protection system. The Nominating Committee reported that **Belinda Yigle-Kaljob, Susan Carey, and Waneta Wiggins** accepted their nominations to join the Council, and they were elected by approval of the report.

Maribel Santana introduced the presentation of the Long-Range Financial Plan draft by saying it would be a beginning discussion of an effort to stabilize the budget. The discussion will be continued during some second hour

sessions before the annual congregational financial meeting in February.

Emma Coleman-Carr read the report and asked members to express their ideas as she read each section. Members were also encouraged to leave written "Parking Lot" comments with their suggestions. Members discussed issues including the use of space at Grace by other organizations, investment funds, the use of holiday mailings of envelopes, reminders to remember Grace in wills and memorials, marketing the Guy Duguay art collection, encouraging volunteerism for property maintenance, reducing printing and paper use, and reducing the cost of altar flowers.

Bruce Klotz, Secretary

Council Corner

Highlights from the 11/12/11 Council meeting:

The Congregation Council voted to move ahead with the lightning protection project that was previously approved by the congregation at a cost of \$12,000. **Dale Eberhardt** will inquire to see if the proposal is still available at this price.

Council passed several recommendations from the Outreach Committee. As a result, the Outreach

Committee is dissolved and the Holy Listening Committee is being resumed in its place. The Council will recommend a separate budget line for the Friday Gatherings in next year's budget and another line item for new outreach opportunities for \$1,000. Council also voted to oversee new outreach activities.

Council Installation will be held during worship on November 27, 2011. **Belinda Yigle-Kaljob, Susan Carey,**

and Waneta Wiggins have accepted nominations to join the Council.

Artist-in-Residence **Louisa Barton-Duguay**, who recently became a member of Grace, celebrated her first anniversary here. The Council thanked her for her enthusiastic ministry in our neighborhood, especially her work with the Friday Gatherings.

Bruce Klotz, Secretary

ELCA Good Gifts

What is the best gift you ever received? It was probably given out of love. Love comes to us as a gift from God, and we are called to share it with others. The best gifts are those that deepen our relationships with one another. They are unexpected. They are filled with love. And, they are impossible to wrap.



ELCA Good Gifts make great gifts for your loved ones and carry that love on to others, making a difference in their lives and the world. Take a few

moments to explore the catalog, and discover the life-changing ministry we do together as a response to Christ's love in our lives. You can give a gift right now to support the work of ELCA World Hunger. For a catalogue, google elca good gifts, or call 800-638-3522.

Christmas Card Project



Anna Lee and Catherine Thompson are making the Christmas cards for the Grace holiday dinner. You can help by contributing gently used Christmas cards you received

last year and do not need. Bring them in over the next few weeks and give them to the girls. They plan to make 250 cards this year (last year they made 175 and used all

but 35 of them). The cards will include a nice message and the contact information for our church.

Election Day Bake Sale

Many thanks to **Louisa Barton-Duguay** and **Waneta Wiggins**, organizers, and to all who brought an incredible amount

of goodies to the bake sale on Election Day November 8. The effort raised \$235.62, which will be donated to

ELCA World Hunger disaster relief and development.

Please remember, worship begins at 6:00pm on Fridays and 9:30am on Sundays. The psalmist says,
"I was glad when they said unto me,
'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'"
Join us for worship every week.

Haiti

Meet Esta

On the island nation of Haiti, most people live off the land – growing and selling potatoes, bananas, oranges and other fruits and vegetables. But in the lush, mountainous region of Thiotte, Haiti, soil erosion has made it increasingly harder to grow these crops. A vast majority of people depend on growing and selling one thing to make a living: coffee.

“Coffee is my life,” says Esta. She spends the better part of each day in the coffee nursery – picking, washing, drying and carefully packing coffee beans. For years, she had no other choice but to sell her coffee to merchants, known as “speculators,” who travel into

Thiotte to purchase coffee at a low price and sell it abroad for a large profit. As a result, Esta and her neighbors never earned a fair price for their coffee, and most live in poverty.



But now, Esta and 4,000 of her neighbors have joined one of seven local cooperatives established by your gifts to **ELCA World Hunger**. These cooperatives work on behalf of the farmers to ensure that all coffee farmers receive a fair price for their product.

Little by little, Esta saved extra funds until she was able to purchase a few chickens and honey bees for her family. With fresh eggs to eat and honey to sell on the market, Esta and her family have an added, dependable source of food and income. “My life has changed,” says Esta. “Thank you.”

Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger support this program and others like it in more than 60 countries around the world.

Synod Offers Two Mission Trips to Honduras in 2012

The Global Mission Team of the New England Synod is hosting two mission trips in 2012 to Honduras, one of our companion relationships: Feb. 18-25, Chachagualla on the north coast near the ocean, and April 14-21, Yuscaran in the mountains near the

Nicaraguan border. “Both dates coincide with many school vacations, so this is an opportunity to have families with school age children experience the most powerful vacation ever,” said the trip organizer, Pr. Jim Hazelwood, St. Andrew Lutheran Church,

Charlestown, R.I. To register now or to learn more about the synod’s companion relationships with Honduras and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, go to www.nesynod.org.

“Living Room Players” return to Grace

The **Living Room Players**, who presented a magnificent concert at Grace last May, are returning to Grace to perform a free concert on Saturday, December 10, at 5 p.m.

By way of New York, Massachusetts, Florida, Texas, California, Connecticut and Mexico, The Living Room Players’ paths converged through a common trajectory in Hartford, Connecticut at the Hartt School of Music. After playing together in various combinations and contexts for several years, The Living Room Players formally came together in early 2011. Beyond a mutual love and passion for making chamber music together, they found themselves with a common sense of obligation and responsibility to nurture an environment that ensures their art

remain relevant for our own and future generations. The group consists of highly ambitious young players with a passion that goes beyond just performing music. Through the performance and tradition of chamber music, they aim to forge relationships and connections with vastly diverse audiences throughout our community and region. They strongly believe in the importance of their roles as musical ambassadors, promoting the relevance and accessibility of their art.

Cellist **Anne Berry** is a doctoral candidate at the Hartt School of Music. She is active both as a performer and teacher. Last spring, Anne gave a lecture and performance of Brahms’ Op. 99 sonata at the Hartt School, and is currently writing an analytical

essay about the piece on the subject of “metrical dissonance.”

Anne has delighted us as a soloist at Grace, as has **Crystal Pascucci**, founder and cellist of Quartetto Vivo. Crystal specializes in chamber music and free improvisation. They will be joined by violinists **Fernando Vizcayno** and **Ryan Caparella**, and violists **Laura Krentzman** and **Andrew Knebel**.

The program December 10 will include W.A Mozart’s String Quintet in C Minor, Erno Dohnanyi’s Serenade for String Trio in C Major, and Zoltan Kodaly’s String Duo. The Living Room Players’ performance last May left us breathless with its beauty, passion, and precision. Don’t miss this new opportunity to hear them in our own beautiful space.

Music at Grace

“And heaven and nature sing!” This Season of Advent and Christmas Grace will be blessed with especially beautiful music during worship. **Dale**

Eberhardt’s new Grace Choral Group has been preparing special songs as preludes, anthems, and communion music almost every Sunday. The Handbell Choir, under **Mildred Unfried’s** direction, was hampered at the beginning because of the storm in late October, but they are now back in full force and will play for the first time on the Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 18.

Several musicians, who came to us originally from the Hartt School and are now teachers, are holding

their students’ recitals at Grace, taking advantage of our outstanding acoustics. In exchange, they themselves are contributing music during worship. On November 27, cellist **Anne Berry**, who has played here so beautifully before, and her colleague, violinist **Ryan Caparella** will be playing during worship. (Anne’s chamber music group, “Living Room Players,” will present a formal, free concert at Grace at 5 p.m. Saturday, December 10. Please see separate article for details.) On December 4 we will hear violist **Jessica Ronnevik**, whose cellist husband **Carl** played for us last year. On December 11 cellist

Emily Wolfram will provide the special music. Her students’ recital is that afternoon.

Then of course there will be Christmas Eve and Christmas. **Wayne Dixon** will be our guest pianist Saturday evening’s candlelight service, which now traditionally ends with a rousing version of the Hallelujah Chorus. Both Saturday evening and Sunday morning services will include as many favorite carols as can reasonably be fit in.

There are more carols, of course, so those who come to worship on New Year’s Day, Sunday, January 1, will be treated to a Christmas Festival of Carols. “Repeat the sounding joy!”

People of Grace

Congratulations to **Lloyd Smith**, who was an honoree at the Archdiocese of Hartford Catholic Charities 2011 Help & Hope award at their annual banquet October 27th. Lloyd began his career with Catholic Charities in their Finance Office. He has served as the agency's representative in the Loaned Executive Program of the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut. Since his retirement from Catholic Charities, he has served on the Hartford Advisory Board and as Chair of the Black Family Enrichment Program Advisory Board. During his tenure the program was awarded the Pierre Toussaint Trophy, given by the Office of Black Catholic Ministries of the Diocese of Hartford.

Invitation

Anna-Lee Thompson is a member of the Children's Chorus of Springfield, a fabulous group of 70 youth from Springfield Public Schools that are chosen to be in this choir. On Saturday, December 3 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, December 4 at 3 p.m. the Chorus will perform with the Springfield Symphony Orchestra. Tickets are

Susan Carey was nominated by the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association and has been elected to the board of Hartford 2000, the umbrella organization for the neighborhood revitalization zones.

Phyllis Thompson is the National Manager for the Prematurity Campaign Outreach, a program of the March of Dimes. She writes, "We're thrilled to celebrate the fourth consecutive decline in our nation's preterm birth rate while we recognize the first-ever World Prematurity Day and honor the 13 million babies worldwide who are born too soon. A National Center for Health Statistics Report (NCHS)... shows that the U.S. preliminary preterm birth rate in 2010 is 11.99

percent, slipping below 12 percent for the first time in nearly a decade. It also shows that rates declined significantly in 44 states from the 2006 national peak. Late preterm births accounted for most of the decline. We have issued a news release, which coincides with the NCHS release.

"People everywhere can show their support for global prematurity prevention efforts by going to facebook.com/WorldPrematurityDay and joining the virtual campaign by changing their Facebook status to reflect a prematurity awareness message. Many of our campaign alliances have already posted to the World Prematurity Day page.... There are thousands of amazing stories on the page!"

reasonable, but folks would be responsible for purchasing them on their own. If enough folks from Grace and other friends come on Sunday, December 4, the Thompson family would have a pre-reception/luncheon at their house from 12 - 2 p.m. and then carpool the 1.5 mile over to the Symphony. (Parking in the

Garage for the Symphony is either reduced or comped with a Symphony ticket.) For tickets, go to the Box Office at http://www.springfieldsymphony.org and "buy tickets now" for the Holiday Family Festival, or call the Box Office at 413-733-2291. Children between the ages of 4 and 17 are half price. Let the Thompsons know you've got the tickets!





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for Outreach

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

PLEASE NOTE:

The submission deadline for the January 2012 edition of Grace Notes is December 15th. Please forward information to Sally Nolen (sallynolen@live.com) by this date. Thank you.

www.graceistheplace.org

