



GRACE NOTES

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

January

Volume 2012

Issue 1

Inside this issue:

The Lutheran Course

Saints and Sinners welcome!

Starts Saturday, January 21, 10:00am

Are you new to the Lutheran faith? Are you curious about what makes Lutherans Lutheran? Or, on the other hand, is it quite a while since your confirmation - long enough so you've kind of forgotten how to tell the difference between the Law and the Gospel, or what Baptism is really about, or how to receive Communion, or how to share your faith with someone? Do you know why Martin Luther was so fond of paradoxes? And how *did* he and

Katie manage all that company?

The Lutheran Course is perfect for inquirers, new members looking for more information about our faith, and cold-time Lutherans hoping for a refresher course. Using the winning combination of sound theology and offbeat humor, the Lutheran Course takes adult learners through the fundamentals of Lutheranism in seven sessions. Each session begins with refreshments (a/k/a "Table Talk")

followed by a DVD presentation by a top-notch theologian. Group discussions work through the ideas with humor and shared insight.

The course begins Saturday, January 21, at 10 a.m., and the group will then decide when and how frequently they will continue to meet. The cost for materials - handbook and workbook - is \$14.00.

Sound good? Please call the Church Office, 860-527-7792, and let us know you're coming!

<i>The Lutheran Course</i>	1
<i>Council Members</i>	1
<i>Note from Pastor</i>	2
<i>Believe in Tomorrow</i>	3
<i>Marshall Street Bible Study</i>	3
<i>Council Corner</i>	3
<i>Church by the Pond</i>	4
<i>Council Elects Officers</i>	4
<i>Financial Strategy Discussions</i>	5
<i>People of Grace</i>	5
<i>Stormy Weather</i>	5
<i>Angels of Grace: Lloyd & Mavis Smith</i>	6
<i>Paper & Hygiene Products Needed</i>	7
<i>Pastor's Hours</i>	7
<i>Save the Date!!!</i>	7
<i>"Sauce Boss" comes to dinner Friday Night</i>	8
<i>"Living Room Players"</i>	8

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The season of Epiphany

Note from Pastor

When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. Matthew 2:10

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

One of my favorite cartoons is in Garfield where Odie has (miracle of miracles) an idea. You know how they usually symbolize an idea with a light bulb? In Odie's case it's a little, flickering candle flame. Dim, but Odie is obviously delighted.

An idea. An insight. A sudden recognition. The light clicks on. That's what we mean by Epiphany. It's a new understanding that can be life changing. Teachers live for the moments when they see a light bulb, so to speak, suddenly light up for student. The student gets it! In psychology they say that learning something new is one of the best positive reinforcements for studying there is. So a programmed learning book keeps rewarding students for getting each new item right, and the student keeps turning to the next page. At least that's how it's supposed to work.

The wise men didn't know exactly what they were looking for. They just remembered a prophecy from Micah (5:2)

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.

Everyone believed a new ruler was coming, an even better one than David. They were even used to the idea of "shepherd" as a term for a really good king. The wise men must have had that picture in their heads, too, but they were also willing to follow that star until it stopped. And they were ready to see what they saw. A little, helpless, *human* child who was also, somehow, divine. They didn't need to understand it. They were fine with the mystery. They were delighted by the surprise.

Two thousand years later, it happens to us, every now and again. We are delighted by a surprise. Last year's Thrivent calendar had a photograph on each page of a scene or a still life within which, if you looked carefully, you could see a cross. Since then, I've been looking for that sign, the cross, in everyday things, and I've

often been surprised and delighted to find one. There was a time, years ago, when I felt overwhelmed by a sense of general estrangement and guilt. I took it to my pastor, who read with me through the Order of Confession and Forgiveness in the green hymnal. At the end, when he said my sins were forgiven through Jesus Christ, I was astonished by how much physically lighter I felt. The burden was gone. *That's* what forgiveness is like! I was delighted by the surprise.

This season we are invited to look for the Christ child. But we had better be willing to be surprised. It might be a homeless man giving thanks that it hasn't snowed yet. It might be a very sick young man praying for his brother. It might be a check-out person at the end of her very long day who still smiles at you and says "Hi! How are you today?" It might be a child singing a Christmas carol you thought you'd forgotten.

My prayer for you this season is that you will be overwhelmed with joy.

In Christ,

Pastor Steege

Believe in Tomorrow

Stewardship campaign a success

Although not all the pledges were in at this writing (December 15), it is already clear that this year's will show an increase over last year. Pledges reached \$98, 010.50 and counting, already an increase over last year of \$254.50. This seems like small increase, but a few more pledges are expected, and in these times of financial stress,

this result is a resounding affirmation of the vibrant ministry of Grace and a firm statement from people who *Believe in Tomorrow*.

Special thanks to **Jody Wynn Rodiger**, who chaired the campaign, and huge thanks to everyone who dug a little deeper and found a way to commit time, talent, and

treasure to do God's work. As the Council said when they first began working on a financial strategy, pledging is an act of faith. Although we will have to look hard at ways to reduce spending while our numbers continue to grow, we can give thanks above all to God who promises us grace and blessings every day.

Bible Study Continues at 10 Marshall Street

Grace is now 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. People who live in the building and the neighborhood, as well as

members of Grace, have been enjoying a lively discussion of the book of Ephesians.

The Bible study is held on Wednesday mornings from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Since there are many Spanish-speaking people in the building, the Bible Study is being co-

facilitated by Pastor Steege and the **Rev. Edwin Ayala**, from the Christian Activities Council, the agency that provides our children's summer program. Please come if you can, and please keep this new program in your prayers.

Council Corner

The new council is elected and ready to start the good work for 2012.

The new council executive committee is as follows:

President - Sue Carey

Vice President - Lou Oliver

Finance - Dale Eberhardt

Secretary - Jody Wynn Rodiger

The first order of business was to select a meeting time that would be good for all

council members. The new date that will start in January will be the 1st Saturday of the month, January 7th.

The council started a new bible study or reflection last month from the "Doing What Matters" Program which has been embraced by the New England Synod. The council hopes that the Grace Committee's will take on the same format.

The council voted to host the Wagner College Choir from

Staten Island, NY on March 8th. We are hoping this will be a wonderful "Spring is Coming" Concert and we will be looking for some host families to house the 40 members that will grace our sanctuary.

There were no other motions this council meeting, but much good work was shared from the committee's.

Jody Wynn Rodiger, Secretary

Church by the Pond

Grace Lutheran Church has been invited to participate in Church by the Pond, which meets Saturdays at 2 p.m. in Bushnell Park.

The program grew out of Church Street Eats, a weekend food/clothing program at Christ Church Cathedral. While it's "housed" under the Cathedral, it is really the people's church. God called it from the streets. So far Episcopal priests and one retired Methodist pastor have taken turns celebrating.

Since it is intended to be an ecumenical project, they have reached out to Grace to provide a Lutheran presence. I will preside there for the first time on February 25th, although of course we are invited to come and participate any Saturday.

A simple altar is set up on a folding table, with chalice and plate - pita bread and grape juice. There is a standard liturgy, but those who preside are invited to make their own choices, and we have been encouraged to make it very simple, as we do on Friday. The Gospel for that Sunday is read and people are invited to comment. There are common prayers, and then the elements are taken around to folks. Participants are encouraged to do as many roles as possible. Music is *a capella*. Groups from around the state - churches, retirement homes, organizations, etc. - volunteer to bring bagged lunches, which are distributed after the service at 2:45. Approximately 20-40 people attend the worship service, and about twice that many for lunch.

(Numbers may drop some when weather gets bad.)

This invitation is a result of a visit from Amy Malick, a member of Christ Church, who visited our Friday Evening Gathering December 10. She says, "We have a lot to learn about building community and worshiping/eating together, and I think Grace has lots to show us."

This invitation is a special blessing to Grace at a time, when Christians of all denominations recognize the importance of bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to people where they are. It is particularly wonderful to have an opportunity for Lutherans and Episcopalians to minister together in this way, since we have been full communion partners since 1999.

Pastor Steege

Council elects officers

At its first meeting December 10, the 2011-2012 Congregation Council's first order of business was the election of officers. These officers, plus Pastor Steege, comprise the Executive Committee, which meets once a month to set the agenda for

the next Council meeting. The Executive Committee is also authorized by the Constitution to make decisions in an emergency between Council meetings, as it did last winter when the old oil burner blew out. Our officers are:

President, Susan Carey
Vice President, Lou Oliver
Secretary, Jody Wynn
Rodiger
Treasurer, Dale Eberhardt

We give thanks that Grace is blessed with these dedicated, competent and faithful leaders!

Financial Strategy Discussions Scheduled

11:00am January 15 and January 29

The presentation of the Long-Range Financial Plan draft at the November Annual Meeting was the beginning of a congregational conversation about stabilizing the budget. (See the report in the December, 2011 Grace Notes, page 4.) A draft of the plan is posted in the Community Room, with some changes as a result of the November conversation. Copies are also available on the table in the Narthex, or may be requested by calling the office.

Next to the posted draft is a "Parking Lot" - a bulletin board where members are encouraged to leave written comments with their suggestions. It is hoped that thoughts and conversations about the plan have been taking place in the weeks since.

Informal group discussions will be continued during the Second Hour on January 15 and January 29. All interested members of the

congregation are encouraged to attend at least one of these sessions. The Council will then compile and consolidate what they learn from these conversations at their February 4 meeting in order to have a new draft available by February 5. The draft will be presented for approval at the Annual Congregational Meeting for the Budget on February 12.

People of Grace

Welcome! **Hazel Mae Abrom** arrived at 8:20 p.m. November 22, just in time for Thanksgiving, weighing 8 lb 11 oz. She is the daughter of

Catherine (Cat) Brown and Jerrold Abrom, and the granddaughter of **Gayle Brown**. Also welcoming her are her aunts **Sherri Brown**

and **Susie Brown**, and her cousin **Melissa Brown**. Congratulations to the whole family, and blessings in the joy of the gift of new life.

Stormy weather

In case of bad weather, church closings are announced on Channel 3 and WTIC radio,

and we will try to get an announcement on our outgoing phone message.

However, if the weather seems bad to you, we count on your using your good sense to stay home and safe.

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.

Angels of Grace Lloyd and Mavis Smith

One beautiful Sunday morning many long years ago, a future Angel of Grace decided to go to church. He looked up churches and found one whose service was at the right time. It was a Lutheran church. He didn't know anything about Lutherans, but he said to himself, either they'll usher him out, or they will welcome him. They welcomed him. Adelaide Eberhardt took him under her inimitable wing. Later that week Pastor Rotvig visited him, and the rest is history. Our Angel informed his wife, another future Angel, that he had found a church, and she came, and pretty soon they brought their children and invited a whole bunch of friends and relatives as well.

Our Angel quickly became deeply involved in every aspect of the life of the congregation of Grace. In recent years he has served on the Call Committee, the Mutual Ministry Committee, and the Property Committee, and was the first chairman of the Stewardship Committee. In earlier years, he also helped with Finance and was a member of the Congregation Council, including service as President. He has also served the wider church over many years. He is the Treasurer of the Greater Hartford

Conference of the New England Synod, and has represented Grace as a voting member of the New England Synod Assembly. He was elected as a voting member to several ELCA Churchwide Assemblies, including the most recent one, and next year he will be completing his second term as a member of the New England Synod Council. He was a member of the Synod's first School of Lay Ministry, a two-year program to enhance his already outstanding gifts of leadership in our congregation.



Photo by Dale Eberhardt

But he is not alone! Remember the wife he told about Grace? She came, too, and completely immersed herself ever since in the life of Grace. She has served on many committees, including Christian Education, Mutual Ministry, and the Altar Guild. She has been a member of the Church Council, where she

was Council President, and has also represented Grace as a voting member of the New England Synod Assembly. She is also, of course, one of the several wonderful people to call when a special occasion requires a meal. Her greatest blessing to Grace, however, is her dedication to children. She has taught Sunday School off and on for many years, and helped with other children's programs. In the summer she even finds her way as a volunteer to help with the Christian Activities Council's "Adventures in the City" summer program held at Grace.

In the end, however, none of these lists are sufficient to convey the stature **Lloyd and Mavis Smith** hold in the hearts of this congregation. Their love, their hospitality, and their commitment to excellence in the ministry we have been called to by Jesus Christ have shaped the kind of church Grace is and will be for many years to come.



Paper and Hygiene Products Needed

People who depend on food stamps (SNAP) cannot use them for non-food items such as paper towels, bathroom tissue, soaps, deodorant, toothpaste, etc. Therefore we are collecting these items to contribute in two ways:

For people who come to our Friday Supper Gathering,

there is a *large white basket*, donated by **Nancy Urban**, right outside the Sanctuary. The basket is brought downstairs on Fridays for people to take what they need or make contributions.

For West Middle School, please leave these items, as well as nutritious non-

perishable food, *in or by the Forum Room* at the end of the hall upstairs. **Chet and Glenna Brodnicki** bring bags of food and paper goods for distribution to families at the school who would otherwise be hungry on weekends.

Pastor's Hours

Because of the Bible Study now held at 10 Marshall Street on Wednesday mornings, Pastor's hours have

changed. They are now Tuesdays, from 2 to 5 p.m., and Thursday and Friday mornings from 9 until noon.

She is in the office at other times as well, and will be happy to meet with you by chance or appointment.

SAVE THE DATE! Spring Mission Area Assemblies

The Ad Hoc Committee for the Election of a New Bishop and the *Doing What Matters* Facilitateam are coming to a mission area assembly near you!

The date and time for us is in the South Central Mission area is Saturday, March 31st at First, New Britain, CT. We should have a BIG crew from

your congregation to participate!

Be Who You Are. . . See What You Have. . . Do What Matters to God!

*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.*

“Sauce Boss” comes to dinner Friday Night

One day late last fall blues musician **Bill Wharton** called FoodShare to say he and his two sidekicks were going to be playing at Blackeyed Sally’s in early December. When they come to a town, he explained, on their night off they like to go to a soup kitchen or food program of some kind and make gumbo and entertain the group. But it needed to be a Friday night.

The one program FoodShare thought of for a Friday night was at Grace Lutheran Church! So Mr. Wharton called **Louisa Barton-Duguay** and the connection was made. On Friday evening, December 9, the “Sauce Boss”

came with his huge kettle and entertained the happy group with lively music while, at the same time, making chicken gumbo!



Photo by Dale Eberhardt

He started with a beautiful roux he had prepared in advance, and then for the next hour added the rest of the ingredients one at a time, cooking and stirring them occasionally, but mostly playing his guitar and singing. Before long he had most of the group singing and dancing right with him.

The gumbo was delicious, by the way. Special thanks go to **Nancy Urban** and **Jody Wynn Rodiger** who spent many hours that afternoon cooking and de-boning a lot of chickens and making a beautiful stock for the gumbo. And thanks again to the “Sauce Boss”! It was a great evening.

The Living Room Players give their second concert at Grace

The Living Room Players returned to Grace to offer a free concert on Saturday, December 10. About forty people gathered at 5 p.m. to hear 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.

Cellist Anne Berry, violinist Ryan Caparella cellist Madalyne Cross, violinist Fernando Vizcayno and , and violists Laura Krentzman and

Andrew Knebel thrilled the audience with their precision, virtuosity and artistry. Anne Berry and Ryan Caparella also played beautifully during worship the preceding Sunday, November 27th.



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



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

PLEASE NOTE:

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

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