

GRACE NOTES

December 2016



Advent is a season of hope. A new church year begins. We hear the promise of the Savior's birth. And we follow Jesus to life in his kingdom.

Experiencing God's Amazing Grace!

through

-  Meaningful Worship
-  Caring Community
-  Inspirational Learning
-  Loving Service
-  Gracious Invitation

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A NOTE from the Pastor

Living with Hope



Christians are not exempt from challenges in life. We get frustrated or worried like anyone else. But, speaking from experience, the apostle Paul encouraged others not to lose hope.

In fact, we Christians are living with hope in the midst of the messiness of this world and uncertainty of the future. Or rather we live with certainty of the future and thus can deal with imperfection or adversities differently.

Hope makes all the difference. It can keep you calm and patient in all kinds of situations. It can get you through grief. It can help teams win a losing game, or break a 108 year streak like that of the Cubs!

Our hope is not just wishful thinking of a better outcome. Our hope as followers of Jesus is founded on the guarantee of eternal salvation. Jesus died and rose again. And he ascended to reign and he will come again.



“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.”
(Romans 15:13)

This past year, we have lived under the theme of *“Following Jesus”* here at Grace. **Jesus invites you this Advent to keep following him by living with hope into 2017.**

>> As we prepare for the celebration of Jesus’ birth, remember his promise to be with us to the end of the earth, and come again to give us everlasting peace. In the meantime, keep following him with faith, hope, and love.

Yours hopefully, *Pastor Stefan Munker*

Pastor’s Open Letter

Response of Humble Gratitude and Invitation to Mutual Commitment

In response to Council’s announcement last month I would like to share my commitment to you and invite you to support our work together:

I am honored to be called by God and the people of Grace to be pastor to proclaim the gospel and offer spiritual leadership. During the last year, I have come to learn important things about our congregation and myself.

First, the challenges I have tried to address with previous councils are no longer avoidable. The CAT and any follow up are helping us come to terms with symptoms like

membership decline, reasons for demographic and social changes, and to look for new questions and God's purpose.

Second, I have learned that this congregation is highly relational and that you want me to spend more time with you in person. I am learning that I need to listen more and show that I care. So, I have reached out more, made myself more accessible, and will make efforts to strengthen relationships.

Now what? Going from here, I hope that we can come together for the good of Grace and God's mission. I pray for reconciliation and renewal. Will you join me in that prayer, and in working together? This is not about me or you. It is about God, and we need God's help for our church and its future.

>> God's grace is what saved us, God's grace is what unites us, and God's grace is what you and others need. Let's experience, celebrate and share: faith, hope and love.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Stefan Munker*

WHAT IS ... *The Church Year?*

On November 27, a new church year began with the first Sunday in the season of Advent. The church year is a yearly commemoration of major events of God's saving love through the life and ministry of Jesus. This yearly cycle follows major events of Jesus' birth, ministry, death and resurrection.

Hence, the church year is divided up into seasons which vary in length and are marked by special days. Colors help to distinguish particular emphases. The church year invites us to renew and celebrate our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus each week in light of the fullness of God's activity in the past, present and future.

>> *2017 is the so-called Year A of Matthew. Readings from the gospel according to this evangelist will present the good news on most Sundays. Jesus invites you to enter the ongoing story of God this church year.*

A Letter from Bishop Miller **ADDRESSING THE 2016 ELECTION**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

In a recently released video message addressing the election, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton shares three things the church can do and reminds us: "No human candidates can guarantee our life or future, That is work that God has done through the death and resurrection of Jesus."

Adding to Bishop Eaton's words, I offer you a modest word of encouragement and reassurance.

This Church is the same church it has always been, We are a community centered in the boundless love of Christ that we have received and the boundless love of Christ that we are called to share. This Church is a place of respect and hospitality for all people. This Church will continue to speak truth to power and to advocate for the powerless, no matter what the cost to us personally or institutionally. This Church will continue to resist evil without wavering in our commitment to non-violence. This Church will continue to preach, teach, and live Jesus Christ and Christ alone as the source and the goal of everything we are and everything we do. This Church will continue to encourage and support the work of our members in seeking a just and peaceful society, governed by upright, fair, and honest leaders. This Church will continue to celebrate and cultivate the promised fruits of the Spirit, namely, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, generosity, and self-control, in every aspect of our lives as individuals and as a community. And above all this Church will continue to trust in the power of the cross to lift us up when we are down and to give us life when we have been left for dead.

Be of good courage, for Christ has called you, and your labor in the Lord will not be in vain. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear..." I John 4:18.

Bishop Eaton's video is available on the ELCA Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Lutherans>), the synod's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/mcselca>), and on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nw2-f82fklc>).

I commend the video for your use, and know that we will all continue to pray for our leaders and our nation.

In Christ, Wayne N. Miller, Bishop, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, ELCA

REFUGEE MINISTRY *Update*

This fall has brought new experiences for our refugee family. Mahmoud got a job and is so happy to be working! Wafaa is a host twice a week for a Moms and Tots class run by RefugeeOne. A volunteer comes to their apartment to teach English and have fun with the young children. 4 other mothers attend with their children and Malak gets to join in on the fun. Dalal is enjoying school and is using English when speaking really frequently. Hala is getting bigger and seems to be a healthy baby! The entire family enjoyed Halloween activities hosted by RefugeeOne and they love how the leaves are changing colors. Please continue to keep them in your prayers as they learn English and adjust to living in Chicago.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR *Worship*

Christmas Program: At the 9:00am service on December 18, Sunday School children and youth in Confirmation and High School will present the story of Jesus' birth. Come and show your support for our children.

Christmas Eve Worship: On Saturday, December 24, celebrate the gift of hope in Christ's birth during a family service at 4:30pm and midnight celebration at 11:00pm. Both services will include Holy Communion and candle lighting. We plan to gather again for singing of carols 15 minutes before each service.

Special Worship Times: On two Sundays, December 25 and January 1, we will gather for only one service at 10:45am to celebrate Christmas and New Year's Day.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR *Fellowship*

Friendship Group Gathering: "A Season to Sing" Potluck appetizer buffet luncheon on Wednesday, December 7, 2016 at 11:30am. The fun begins with the buffet luncheon followed by dessert and entertainment. Come hear Susan Nelson as she plays and sings old favorites and new inspirations, along with a sing-a-long of classic Christmas music!

Buy your tickets for this fun event beginning Sunday, November 18, 2016. Tickets are \$15.00 per person. All are welcome whether or not you are a regular Friendship Group member. Why not invite a friend to come. Bring your favorite appetizer to share. For more information contact Pam Walger at 847-824-7408.

Mail Holiday Wishes: Share Christmas blessings by sending a card to those on our list of homebound members and "Just Because Friends" who will be cheered when receiving your greetings. An updated list of their names and addresses can be found on the poster with the tree on it in the atrium.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR *Learning*

Life of Purpose Group: You heard about God's plan for your life. Now what? Join others in applying your 5 purposes through inspirational learning and motivating support. The group is meeting the 1st Tuesday of the month from 2-3:30pm. Current sessions focus on fulfilling "Your Life's Mission".

OPPORTUNITIES FOR *Service*

Website Volunteers Wanted: We need new webmasters. Are you interested in helping set up a redesigned and user friendly website for our church? Would you help keep it up to date? Can you post special announcements, or enhance its appeal? Please let the office know if you want to help Grace's online outreach and communication.

Christmas Poinsettia Garden: Help set up the Christmas Poinsettia Garden on Saturday, December 17, 2016 at 9:00am. For more information contact Betty Carlson at 847-803-9646.

Cookie Walk: Our 9th annual Cookie Walk will be held on Sunday, December 18, 2016 between services. We look forward to enjoying the homemade cookies of all of our talented bakers. Please plan to bake and bring your cookies to church by 9am on December 18. All proceeds for the cookie walk will be donated to the Youth in memory of Jayne Boom.

Coffee Servers: We would like some new people to consider signing up to serve coffee on Sunday mornings between services. We all enjoy the fellowship during this time. Why not offer to serve the treats. Let Barb Willis or Pam Walger know if you will volunteer.

Altar Guild: The Altar Guild is in need of some helping hands, especially for the month of January. Please speak with Betty Carlson at 847-803-9646. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

“Downing of the Greens:” Please save Saturday, January 7, 2017 for the taking down of the greens. We will meet at 9:00am.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR *Outreach*

Share Hope: Invite someone to come with you to worship on Sundays in Advent and Christmas Eve, or special events like our Sunday School Program. You will have a good time with friends, neighbors or unchurched acquaintances. Share the hope of God’s amazing grace and introduce them to our church.

The Giving Tree: A Grace tradition of collecting Christmas gifts for children in need is continuing in 2016. Gifts for children in School Districts 21 and 26 are due back at church by December 4th. Place the wrapped gifts under the tree in the east entryway.

Hats, mittens and gloves for all ages at La Trinidad will be collected on Sunday, December 18th. Place the unwrapped items under the tree in the east entryway. We will be delivering them to La Trinidad in time for Christmas.

Mallternative: Please consider buying one of the gifts for a friend or relative. This year you can purchase the ever popular farm animals, provide health supplies, help refugees, or help the less fortunate right here in the United States. Order forms will be in the church bulletins starting in Advent. Orders will be accepted December 4th and December 11th.

Shop for the Food Pantry: The following items are always needed: juice, small cans coffee, tea, tomato products, condiments/seasonings like ketchup, mustard, mayo, salt, pepper, detergent, dried beans/peas, canned fruit, fruit/vegetable juice, oil, pancake mix

and syrup, pasta, paper products, dry milk, rice, soap, shampoo, soup, snacks, and toilet paper. If you forget to shop you can also choose to donate money in a pink pew envelope and mark it "Food Pantry" and food gift cards will be purchased for the pantry.

FINANCIAL Update

Current year financial status thru October 31, 2016

	Budget	Actual	Difference
Weekly Envelope Income	\$240,130	\$206,985	(\$33,145)
Special Income	26,700	26,661	(39)
Prepaid Budget Income	9,727	11,485	1,758
Total Budget Income	<u>\$276,557</u>	<u>\$245,131</u>	<u>(\$31,426)</u>
Operating Expenses thru Oct	<u>276,551</u>	<u>257,653</u>	
Surplus or (Deficit)		(\$ 12,522)	

This month shows a **tremendous improvement** over last month brought on by first, a sizeable donation from Grace Preschool, and, second, by some members stepping forward with donations allocated towards deficit reduction totaling \$2,350.00. With continued support from all members to the end of the year, we will look to continue this enlightening trend towards reducing the deficit. **THANK YOU!**

Grace Family: We have been so happy to be home with you all these last 7 months. As we prepare to leave for Florida, we have a major reservation- leaving home while Grace is still in the RED by quite a large dollar amount. As we leave, we are issuing you all a challenge. Can you help Grace by providing a 13th month donation equal to your monthly pledge gift? For those who don't pledge, could you give an extra month's contribution?

By our calculations this could help end our fiscal year with an extra \$19,024. Thanks for thinking about our challenge. We know we must work as a family to keep Grace thriving and in the BLACK to begin 2017.

Bob andCarolynn White

Notes of **THANKS**

Dear People of Grace: Thank you for the gift of support for my continuing education class at Wartburg Seminary. I pray that the insights I gain will help me in leading Grace as we consider together how to be the church of the 21st century.

Pastor Stefan Munker

It was so kind of the Rogers family to provide a special surprise Halloween fellowship and treats for the kids. Thank you.

Thank you for the many and generous gifts to support the mission team of our sister congregation Martha and Mary in Mount Prospect which went to Haiti in November to help improve community health and rebuild an orphanage after Hurricane Matthew.

Friends of Grace Church: Thank you so much for the Halloween treats! My roommate and I loved receiving them. Happy Halloween and thanks again!

Payton Chantry

Dear Grace: Thank you so much for the Halloween treat package! I have looked forward to getting one ever since my first one freshman year. My roommates and I are all enjoying the treats, and it is so nice to know that people back at GLC are thinking of me. Thanks again so much!

Sincerely, Joanna Josten

Dear Grace: Thank you for the scholarship this year! It really goes a long way to pay for books and other school supplies that I need to get, especially with how much text books costs these days. I'm extremely busy this year, again, with all the clubs and teams I'm part of. This year I planned all of my fraternity's recruitment events, and am working on the fuel tank for my racecar, as well as going to job fairs and other professional events. I'll be back over Thanksgiving so hope I'll see you then.

Thank again, Teddy

Dear Friends in Christ: Thank you for your recent gift of \$800 to Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI). We are grateful to your congregation for investing in the wellbeing of all Illinois citizens, offering people the opportunity to reach their full, God-given potential.

Your generosity helps bring health, healing and wholeness to thousands of people across the state. Over 80% of LSSI's clients have an income of under \$15,000 per year. The faithfulness of congregations like Grace is critically important in this work.

As Christians we believe that all things work together for good. Surely your congregation's gift will bring good to those who rely on Lutheran Social Services of Illinois and its ministries. Thanks again for your thoughtfulness.

Peace and prayers, Mark Stutrud, President and CEO

Dear Friends: On behalf of the Staff and Board of Directors please accept our heartfelt thanks for your generous support of JOURNEYS / The Road Home. Your support is crucial to our neighbors in need as they find their way home. Your \$800.00 donation is greatly appreciated.

As you may have heard, HUD recently slashed 21% of JOURNEYS' budget. Your donation, which helps to support all of our programs and services throughout the year, will help us to make up for the loss of HUD funding.

As the only provider in the north/northwest Cook County to offer both shelter and social services to the homeless and at-risk, your support is so important to our mission. We are working to empower individuals to take control of their lives and find an independent way to a more stable and secure life's journey. Sincerely,

Elizabeth Nabors, Executive Director; Suzanne Ploger, Development Director

Thank you for your generous donation to the American Liver Foundation on behalf of Matthew's Liver Savers. I appreciate your continued support and generosity.

While I was nervous about running 13.1 miles, I had a great race and finished in 2:31. I am looking forward to a new training season and running another half marathon with the Liver Life Challenge Team.

Thank you. Matthew (Pracko)

Grace Lutheran Church: Thanks so much for sending the care package. I really appreciate it! I'm so thankful to be a part of this congregation and I can't wait to be home and back at church for the holidays!

Thanks again Julie Josten

SPECIAL *Events*

- **Friendship Group Gathering "A Season to Sing:"** on Wednesday, December 7, 2016 at 11:30am.
- **Poinsettia Garden Set Up:** Saturday, December 17, 2016 at 9:00am.
- **Sunday School Christmas Program:** Sunday, December 18, 2016 during the 9:00am worship service
- **Annual Cookie Walk:** Sunday, December 18, 2016 between services in Charter Hall
- **Christmas Eve Worship Services:** Saturday, December 24, 2016 at 4:30 and 11:00pm. A hymn sing will begin 15 minutes prior to each service.
- **Christmas Day Worship Service:** Sunday, December 25, 2016 at 10:45am.
- **New Year's Day Worship Service:** Sunday, January 1, 2017 at 10:45am.
- **"Downing of the Greens:"** Saturday, January 7, 2017 at 9:00am

Around the **PARISH**

Welcome New Members: We welcomed into the fellowship of Grace Rand Burdette and Barbara Nagle on October 23, 2016.

Rand Burdette

250 W Parliament Place

Mount Prospect 6056

224-805-6628

Barbara Nagle

250 W Parliament Place

Mount Prospect 60056

847-800-6674

2016 Confirmands: Our 7th Grade Confirmands received a Bible as a gift from the congregation on October 30, 2016. Confirmands are Cory Cordier, Connor Dietrich, Gianna Lauletta and Andrew Stutheit. God bless them in their learning these next two years as they prepare to affirm their baptismal faith!

In Sympathy: We ask God to be with Arlene Kieffer and her family upon the death of her sister on November 13, 2016. May He grant her comfort and peace in this time of sorrow.

We ask God to be with Mary Kaye Martin and family on the death of her husband John on Sunday, November 13, 2016. May God grant the family comfort and peace at this time of sorrow.

MERRY
Christmas
AND A
BLESSED
New Year

Grace Church Staff
Pastor Stefan Munker,
Barb Willis,
Pam Walger, and
Susan Nelson
wish you and yours a joyous
celebration of the birth of
Jesus. our Savior and Lord.

Birthday **LIST**

December

2	Allison Gharagozlou	15	Harvey Willis Beth Jozefat
4	Nick Lovdjieff Linda Pettingill Joanne Schulze	19	Sheila Fencil Mark Loeb Jenna Lazzara Jseph Torres
6	Colton Kochanski		
7	Carrie Bouris Mike Imburgia	21	Ardell Mueller
8	Barb Carlson Lynda Weiss Daniel Garza	22	Carol Victor Kaitlin Eschbach
9	Brigitte Bierlich	23	Sandi Johnson Mike Pirron
10	Teddy Reimann	24	Matt Langreder
11	Brian Imburgia	26	Holly Schirmer
12	Chris Hammer	28	Payton Chantry
13	Amy Pracko Brian Martin	29	James A. Shaffer
14	Kari Nickl Abigail Shaffer Luis Rosado	31	Allison Eschbach
		...	

CELEBRATIONS OF *Life*

Baptisms

Receiving Christ's gifts of grace with water and word, we are welcomed into God's family of the church.

Linnea Rose, Liliana Sophia and Livia Grace, daughters of Thomas and Jacyln Sutter, were baptized on October 23, 2016.

Hannah Elizabeth, infant daughter of Tom and Jennifer Roth, was baptized on October 30, 2016.



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A congregation of the
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OUR *Mission AND Vision*

Our mission is to tell the good news of Jesus and touch people with his love.

Our vision is to joyfully praise and serve God, committed to being a church of friendship, openness and diversity.

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ARTICLE *Deadline:* December 18