

keeping pace with
Grace

THE NEWSLETTER OF GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Singing
with
Angels

If you've been around Grace for a while, then you may have heard me share my belief about music. I believe that music is not a thing of creation. I believe that music is a thing of heaven – a thing of heaven that God shares with us. God shares music with us for the same reason that God shares other things of heaven with us – namely, to bring to our hearts, minds, and spirits the deep and abiding joy, and peace, and hope that God intends for us. It just so happens that things of heaven are very good at doing that. This is especially true of the thing of heaven called music when it comes to us in the form of Christian hymnody. Have any of us **not** had, on occasion, that sudden peace of spirit, or that strange but nice lump in our throat, as we sang a favorite hymn?

And so we will soon gather in Grace's candlelit sanctuary and open God's gift to us of music once again as we sing hymns that proclaim the birth of the Savior, the praise of the angels, the reverent awe of the shepherds. Truth be told, I've been listening to those hymns, and singing along with them, for a couple of weeks now. Their message is so precious that I don't think God minds us opening the gift a bit early. But it's when we hear and sing them within the gathered community during a time of worship that they hold their deepest power to bring joy, and peace, and hope – and remind us that we are a community unlike any other – a holy community gathered into the holy life of our Savior and given a holy purpose in the world.

*Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."
And by the grace and gifts of God, we sing with them.*

Christmas peace,
Pastor Steve

Our Advent and Christmas Schedule

* Following morning worship on the 17th, we will travel across the street to Apple Rehab for **Christmas Caroling** through the building.

* **Our Mid-Advent Service of Light, Song, and Prayer** will take place on Sunday, December 17th beginning at 4:00pm, and will be followed by a time of fellowship and food. More information is given to the right.

* **The 4th Sunday of Advent, December 24th, will include a special time for Children during morning worship.** Pastor Steve will create a fireplace that he and the children can gather around for the hearing of the Christmas story and a special Children's Time. The children will be invited to dress in Christmas Program costumes for this event.

* This year's **Christmas Eve service** begins at 5 PM on Sunday, the 24th. This will be a service of lessons, carols, Holy Communion and, of course, the candlelight singing of Silent Night.

* This year's **Christmas morning service** will begin at 10 am on Monday, the 25th.

* **The First Sunday of Christmas, December 31st,** will be a Service of Lessons & Carols - some of which will be played in our 1st Sunday Worship style.

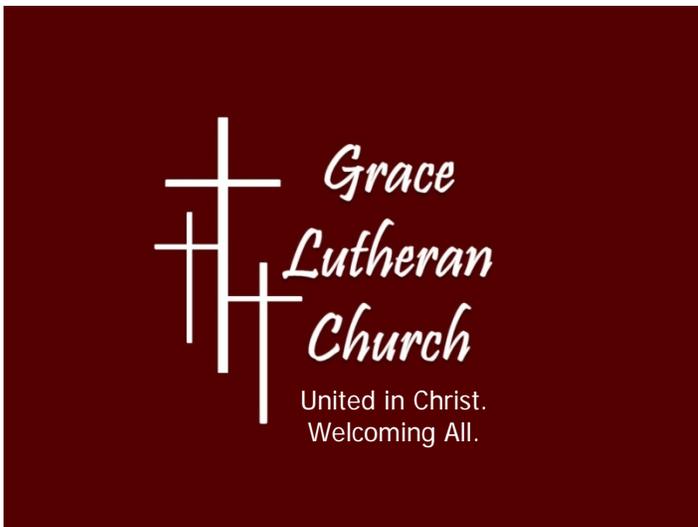
Mid-Advent Service of Light, Song, and Prayer

On Sunday afternoon, December 17, we will gather at 4:00 pm at Grace for our Mid-Advent Service of Light, Song, and Prayer. At the heart of this service is a 'Lesson-Prayer-Hymn-Lighting of a candle' pattern that will be repeated several times. Each instance will have its own prayer focus: God's help in preparing our hearts and lives for the celebration of the birth of Jesus; God's comfort for families that will celebrate Christmas apart from each other due to service in the military or some other public-service agency, expectations of employers, etc.; God's peace for those who are experiencing sadness during this time of year; and so on. The service will be followed with fellowship and food. You are invited to bring along your own sandwich. Beverages and dessert will be provided. Those who have attended this service have found it to be a meaningful time of prayer, song, and community - and a wonderful way of preparing our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Please consider inviting family & friends.



Grace News

After a time of study and conversation, Grace's Council, with the authorization of the congregation, approved the Affirmation of Welcome written by our Evangelism Ministry Team. The Affirmation of Welcome was then submitted to an organization called *Reconciling Works: Lutherans for Full Participation*, along with a request to be listed by them as a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation. The request was approved. Grace is now listed on their website as a congregation that practices full welcome and inclusion of all. The Affirmation of Welcome and RIC Certification are shown on this page – and will be displayed in the narthex. We give God thanks and praise for leading us in this process.



We Welcome All

As followers of Christ, Grace Lutheran Church is guided by the Gospel to seek reconciliation and wholeness in a world that is too often an unloving place.

We welcome all who are seeking God's love and grace because God welcomes all, regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or relationship status.

We welcome all without regard to addictions, physical or mental health, imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances, or anything that too often divides us.

Our Unity is in Christ.

A Study at Grace of a Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice

As you may know, the ELCA has a number of 'Social Statements' – teaching and policy documents that state ELCA understandings of social issues, and assist us in thinking about and discussing those issues in the context of faith and life. The Statements are a product of the entire ELCA – the draft written by a Task Force is made available to congregations for study and response. The responses are used to create a final document which must be adopted by the Voting Members at a National Assembly.

Early next year, the Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice will be studied at Grace. The news of recent months makes clear the importance of this Statement, and conversation around it. If you're interested, watch for more information after the first of the year.

*Joy to the world,
the Lord is come!
Let earth receive it's king.
Let ev'ry heart
prepare him room
and heav'n and nature sing!*



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
222 Farmington Avenue
P.O. Box 306
Plainville, CT 06062