

STORIES OF GRACE

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, MANKATO

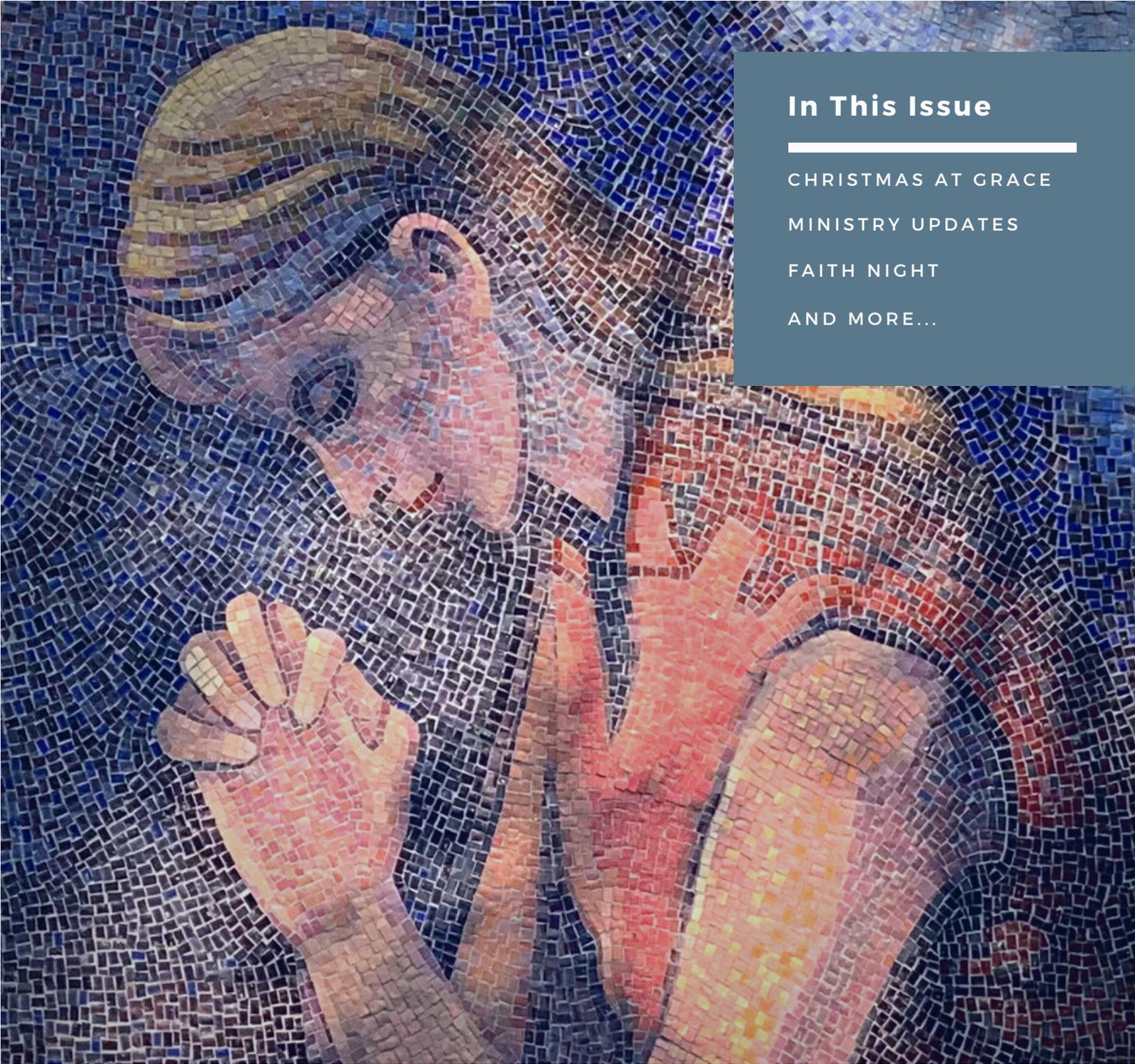
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AND MORE...



THROUGH GOD'S ABUNDANT LOVE

WE WILL LIVE AND WORK TO SERVE OTHERS



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK:

REV. JOHN ODEGARD

Friends of Grace,

Another Holiday Season is here and I am so excited to share it with you. This marks my 7th Christmas season with you and I am getting used to the ways we celebrate our traditions and introduce new opportunities to share Christmas cheer throughout the month.

Some of these traditions have had to change due to Covid, and its effects on how we gather, but I am heartened to see this congregation adapt in ways that will allow us to celebrate and keep traditions while also make smart decisions for the wellbeing of others.

One of my favorite times at grace has always been St. Lucia and the wonderful treats prepared here for that day. Who would have thought? When the GLCW asked for help to make it happen this year, it was amazing how people turned out for it as well!

But then, as seems to be the story so often these days, Covid came back and our area was one of the highest for new cases in the country. When so many others might have simply given up, or ignored the potential consequences and just gone ahead anyway, I am proud to say that our ladies of the GLCW found a great compromise. Why not celebrate in a way that remembers our traditions but also takes into consideration the health of others? Rather than crowding into one room together, we will celebrate each week through Advent with special goodies. Grab some on your way out after worship and enjoy the Scandinavian roots of this congregation in the best way possible, with your taste buds!

This is just one small way that I have been so proud of this congregation over the last few years. You have not only endured, but adapted. In so many ways the spirit of hope that comes with the Christmas season is lived out here each day as we continue to work toward a new and better future.

We will be doing some of the same traditions, such as the Pathstone bows again, and throughout the month of December there will be groups making lefse in our basement as usual, but we

have not been content to simply scale back and try to keep the status quo. New ways of sharing the good news and loving our neighbors are taking root here as well.

From members serving Thanksgiving dinner to the guests of Connections Shelter to hearty meals being prepared by our families on a Wednesday night so that no one has to be hungry in our neighborhood this season. The Spirit of Hope is alive and at work here. Each week the Connections church meets in our fellowship hall, as do so many other groups. Our ministry is changing along with the world, but one thing remains: Grace Lutheran Church continues to be a place that proclaims in word and action, all are welcome here.

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness

ISAIAH 43:19



GROWING IN FAITH

BEN GEER, DSG

It feels great once again to have families together for Wednesday Faith Night at Grace. Being able to join with others for a meal, education, worship and most of all fellowship together is such a great thing. We've missed it so much. The meals once again have been amazing. Whether it's pizza, taco, hotdogs or meatball subs, every week we are well fed and there's plenty for everyone. We've had fantastic leaders for education. We've had a few high school students helping out with the youngest kids, Sam Anderson is once again lead the 5th and 6th graders and Kathy Mork has been leading a great series about the "Refugee Crisis" with adults.

This fall our confirmation students went on a retreat to Good Earth Village as we got to spend time in fellowship, worship and pray. Our 9th graders spent



time with Pastor John preparing for the affirmation service talking about the service and making their stoles. The 7th and 8th graders were able to do some service work around the camp. We hiked the trails and cleaned up branches and falling trees. We were able to spend time around the campfire as well. We cooked hotdogs and had s'mores. We also were able to worship around the campfire and I even heard some of the 9th grade boys singing along with the songs.

I'm looking forward to much more fun the rest of this year and 2022 Wednesday nights at Grace.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW AND WHAT'S TO COME IN THE FUTURE



Thank you to everyone that donated to the November Donation Drive! Thanks to you, we have many personal care items being delivered to residents at Pathstone. We are so thankful that we were able to be apart of this and were able to help those out who do not always have access to these items.

Christmas Bows are here!

We are so blessed to spread some Christmas joy with our friends at Pathstone. There will be a basket of bows where you can pick up one or two with the description of a member and some things they would be interested in or need in the Narthex. When you have your gift wrapped with the slip attached, you can drop off gifts here at Grace until December 12 or you can bring them to Pathstone in main entrance and they will take care of it from there. Thanks for being so generous!



Christmas Eve Service



All are welcome to come and celebrate the reason for the season during our candlelight service on December 24th at 4pm. As we gather to remember the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ, we hope you will join us!

St. Lucia Update

Celebrating St. Lucia Day has long been a tradition of Grace Lutheran Church. Due to high number of Covid cases in the area, we will be celebrating in a different way this year. From November 28th until December 19th, every Sunday we will have different Scandinavian treats out to celebrate in a safer way. We hope you will join us to celebrate this tradition and enjoy all of the goodies!



St. Lucia Day, a Grace tradition

Here is some info about what we celebrate



The Swedish Christmas (jul) begins on December 13th, known as Lucia Day. Early in the morning on this date, a first cock-crow, house-holds throughout the land are awakened by a “Lucia.” She is usually the eldest daughter of the family, dressed in a traditional white robe with a crimson colored sash, and is wearing a crown of lighted candles. It is customary for her to carry a tray with coffee and special saffron buns to each one in the family as she serenades them with the lovely old Sicilian melody, Santa Lucia. This custom began long ago. According to legend, Lucia was a medieval saint who carried food and drink to hungry folk in the province of Varmland during a period of famine. Because she was seen crossing Lake Vanern clothed in white and with a crown of light encircling her head, the modern Lucias dress in white and wear crowns with lighted candles, or levade ljus (living candles) as they are called in Sweden. This festival has been celebrated in many provinces since the Middle Ages, and its traditions have for centuries been passed from one generation to another. The Lucia legend is said to have originated in Syracuse, on the island of Sicily. There, the first Lucia, a young girl about to be a bride, gave her entire dowry to the poor people of her village and admitted that she had become a Christian. Accused of witchcraft, she was taken prisoner and burned at the stake, December 13, 304 C.E. Later, she was canonized by the early Church and thus received the name by which she is now known—Santa Lucia. She is sometimes pictured by Italian artists as a blind girl holding a lamp. There are many legends, but in each one, Lucia becomes the symbol of light and hope to humankind. She comes on the darkest day of the year to herald the glad Christmas time. Today, it is not only in the homes of Sweden, but also in schools, offices, hospitals, orphanages and other public buildings of the land that Lucia appears to open the Yuletide. She also visits everyone who is ill, poor, or lonely as the medieval Lucia is said to have done. Many towns and cities plan a special Lucia celebration and choose a local Queen of Light to reign during the festivities. She is often assisted by star boys, costumed traditionally and carrying star-tipped wands.





“When I was hungry, you fed me.”

MATTHEW 25:35

The food ministry at Grace is continuing to grow. So many new people are jumping in and doing their part to help things along. It's amazing how when there is something to be done at Grace you are there ready to get it done.

Recently there was an opportunity to have folks come together and pull chicken. We had an announcement on Facebook and in the welcome slides before worship on Sunday for helping out Tuesday. We got an amazing crew that week. Seven people who helped was there first time helping with Food Recovery at Grace. That Tuesday afternoon we pulled apart more than 80 chickens. We have had people of all ages in the kitchen helping. One thing I have really enjoyed about this ministry is we have been able to find something for anyone to do to help.

In the last few months we've:

- Made 210 Chicken Fajita Meals
- Made 160 Chicken Dinners
- Made 80 Chicken Zucchini Casseroles
- Saved over 150 chickens from the compost
- Saved 35 Butternut Squash from the compost
- Saved countless Green Peppers and onions from the compost
- Had more than 50 volunteers help prepare and put together meals in the Grace kitchen.



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THROUGH GOD'S ABUNDANT
LOVE, WE WILL LIVE AND WORK
TO SERVE OTHERS.

-GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT

“

Many of the meals are distributed to ECHO Food Shelf. Other local partners they have gone to are Partners for Housing, Vine, MVAC and MY Place.

The impact of our Food Ministry at Grace is being felt in many places. Some of you may be wondering where all the food we are making is going to. We are in close partnership with the South Central Minnesota Food Recovery (SCMNFR). SCMNFR is becoming a non-profit in the area and is housed in the garage next too Wooden Spoon. There is a large walk in freezer and cooler on site there. Many of the meals go to the freezer there on site to be distributed.

Now that Connections Shelter is back in operation, too this fall some of the chicken that has been saved was used to make an amazing white chicken chili that was fed to shelter guest as well as shelter church being hosted here at Grace every Sunday.

If you feel called to help more with food recovery or helping feed Connections shelter you can reach out to Ben.

WE ARE THANKFUL FOR YOU

When you think of volunteering it may not always be fun and it may not always seem rewarding, but we want you to know that it is rewarding but you don't get to see that reward right away. For example, when you are picking up trash off the side of the road you see the cleanliness of the ditch or highway right away. Compared to the meal prepping and filling containers for the meals you don't get to see the happiness that comes from the people that are in need of those meals but they are always so grateful for all your hard work. Another, example is on Wednesday Nights when some of the Youth group kids teach the younger kids their lessons. They love spending time with "the big kids" because they feel special and they have a younger roll model to look up too and they will always be thankful for you and the time you are spending with them!

With all that being said we want to tell all of you here at Grace that we are so Thankful for everything that everyone does here from helping with meal prep, teaching and talking about the good word of God, to making sure the church is ready every Sunday, and bringing all the food every week



“
If you do a good job for others,
you heal yourself at the same
time, because a dose of joy is a
spiritual cure
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer
”



Confirmation

TAKING THE NEXT STEP AS DISCIPLES

Continuing in their journey of faith, we had 6 students affirm their baptisms through the rite of confirmation on September 26th. Welcome to full membership in the church, we are excited to see how your contributions to our mission and ministry shape our church for years to come.



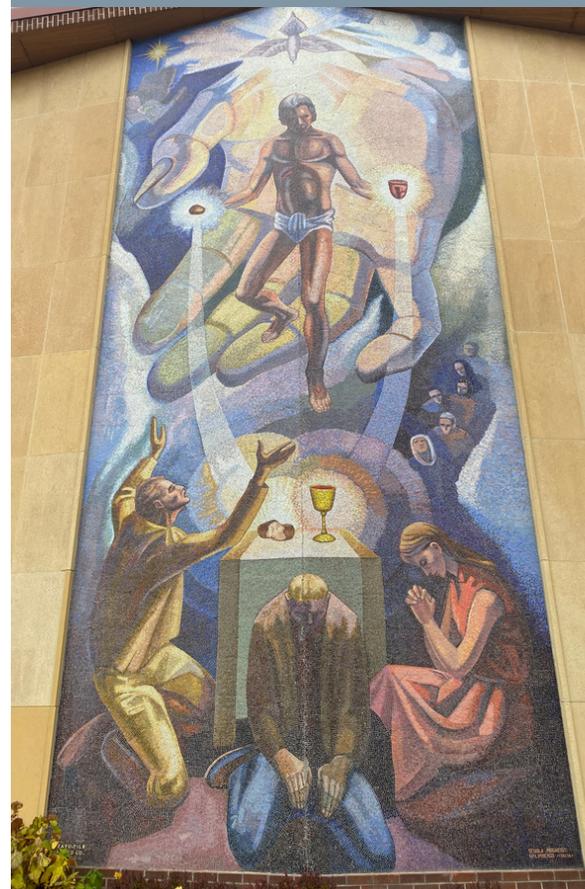
Back Row L-R: Esther Geer, Ashley Smook, Cody Joerg, Ben Geer
Front Row L-R: Ben Hoehn, Connor Yunkers, and Hunter Erickson

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you"

-Joshua 1-9

All Saints Sunday

All Saints' Day, also called All Hallows' Day, Halloween, or Feast of All Saints, in the Christian church, a day commemorating all the saints of the church, both known and unknown, who have attained heaven. It's celebrated on November 1 in the Western churches and on the first Sunday after Pentecost in the Eastern churches. The origin of All Saints' Day cannot be traced with certainty, but it has been observed on various days in different places. This year we remembered 12 members and with that we gave our congregation a chance to light a candle in memory of a loved ones who have also passed.



Staying Healthy for the Holiday Season

With the Holidays right around the corner, we want to make sure that everyone at Grace is staying healthy in every way possible. As you spend time making memories with your families, or just enjoying some quiet time to yourself, here are some simple but practical ways for you to stay safe and healthy during the holidays and especially the colder months.



As Benjamin Franklin said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

- 1) Pack an emergency kit in your car including a blanket, some food that won't spoil, water in a bottle that won't break if it freezes and other items that might come in handy.
- 2) Taking vitamins such as Vitamin C and Vitamin D helps with Immune support and to Strengthen Bones in a season where we get a little less sunshine.
- 3) Hand Washing until all the bubbles are gone
- 4) Get exams when you are feel sick
- 5) Stay Hydrated
- 6) Make time for yourself so you don't burn out from all the festive activities .

What's for Supper at Grace on this wonderful Faith Night?

Here is a list of what we are having for dinner for the rest of the 2021 year.

We hope to see you here and join us for a nice meal!

December

12/1 Tacos

12/8 Hotdogs

12/15 Pizza

12/22 or 12/29 No Meal- Christmas Break

January

1/5 Pizza

1/12 Meatball Subs

1/19 Tacos

1/26 Hotdogs



EVENTS

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



Thanksgiving Eve

Thank you to everyone that joined us for the Thanksgiving Service on November 24th at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Good Thunder.

No Faith Nights

These are future dates we will not be having Faith Night December 22nd and 29th, but we will start back up on Jan. 5th. We can't wait to see you in the New Year!

Christmas Eve Service

Friday December 24th
We will gather for a candlelight worship service at 4:00 pm on Christmas Eve. Join us as we celebrate the reason for the season.

Family BWCA Trip

Summer 2022 Dates TBD

Our Address is:

Grace Lutheran Church
110 N 4th St
Mankato, MN 56001

gracemankato.org

St. Lucia

Sunday December 12th
Join us for Swedish treats after worship from November 28th till December 19th.

Caroling In Oldtown

December 18th 2:00 - 3:30

Red Cross Blood Drive

Friday February 4th
Comes help end the Blood Shortage in Our Community.



Annual Meeting

February 5th, Following Worship



ELCA National Youth Gathering

July 24th - 28th 2022
Minneapolis, MN

Weekly Schedule for Fall

Sunday

Worship - 10:00 am
Fellowship - 11:00 am

Wednesday (starts Sept. 15)

Meal - 5:15 pm
Education - 6:00 pm
Worship - 6:45 pm

Thursday

Bible Study- 7:00 pm
Meet on ZOOM
Meeting ID: 857 5766 8823
Password: grace

Current Office Hours

Monday - Thursday
9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Call the office at: 507-345-4248
to make an appointment to see
Rev. John or Ben.

Contact A Staff Member:

Rev. John Odegard, Pastor pastor@gracemankato.org
Ben Geer, Director of Spiritual Growthdsg@gracemankato.org
Kathy Mork , Parish Adminparish@gracemankato.org
Morgan Lindely, Communicaton and Administrative Director office@gracemankato.org
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