



# The Friendly Visitor

Christmas Edition 2024 – January 2025

Newsletter of Grace Lutheran Church and Community

*Grace Lutheran Church:*

- *A community of faith, centered in worship, held in Grace, strengthened in love, sent forth in mission, in Jesus' name.*
- *Home of the Being New Spirituality Center.*

**Pastor Michael Schmidt**  
**Vicar Jesse Hershberger**

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### **Resuming January 2:**

#### **Office & Open Building Hours**

9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Monday – Thursday  
Or by appointment

#### **Sunday Schedule**

9:00 a.m. Worship: In-person and Online  
10:00 a.m. Fellowship & Coffee  
10:15 a.m. Adult & Youth Education

#### **Morning Prayer**

**Mondays & Fridays at 9:30 a.m.**  
@Gracelutherandm

Grace Lutheran Church  
5201 Urbandale Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50310  
515-276-6873



*Merry Christmas  
from the Staff of  
Grace Lutheran Church*

*Pastor Michael Schmidt*

*Vicar Jesse Hershberger*

*Kathy Bowermaster*

*Jessye Flannery*

*Todd Haugen*

*Mike Hilsabeck*

*Rich Snyder*

*Michelle Voelker*

## Christmas Lights

I love Christmas lights. It brings joy to drive around and see all of the different displays, from those coordinated to music to those that are simple and peaceful. They all bring me joy. We have a modest display of our own, which grows every year. My family has started calling me “Clark” after the character from Christmas Vacation. No, I am not stapling lights to the roof. I do enjoy getting everything set up and then watching cars (occasionally) slow down to look at our yard.

No individual light is that dynamic on its own. When strung together with other lights, it becomes something more. There are strings of lights, or groupings of lights in the shape of something else. Some strings are one color, others are multiple, and even others can change color. Yet a single string of light is just that, a string. When these are combined with other lights it becomes even more magical. The light and joy grow and grow.

I find the same to be true in our journey together. Can someone live a life of faith on their own? Yes. And light will burst forth from that one person. Connect that person with a smaller group, perhaps within friendships or family, and there is a string of light shining in a broken world. As a community of faith, we become the collection of all of these strings of light and become something even more. And as a community of faith, we are connected with others within the ELCA, which is part of the global church.

I am so thankful to have the opportunity to witness light shining through each of you. It brings me joy to see the display of lights as we live our faith together as the people of God at Grace Lutheran Church.

Merry Christmas!  
Pastor Mike

## Worship with us through the holidays

All worship services will be livestreamed, available at [www.gracedm.org](http://www.gracedm.org), **with the exception** of Christmas Eve at 9 p.m., and Christmas Day at 10 a.m.

### Sunday, December 22: Advent worship at 9 a.m.

No Education hour this morning. Please stay for coffee, donuts, and fellowship in the Gathering Hall after worship.

### Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship, Tuesday, December 24 – 5 p.m.

### Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship, Tuesday, December 24 – 9 p.m.

*There will be a special treat for everyone in the Gathering Hall after worship.*

### Christmas Day Worship, Wednesday, December 25 – 10 a.m.

No donuts/coffeetime or Education hour this morning, however, there will be a special treat for everyone in the Gathering Hall after worship.

### Lessons and Carols, Sunday, December 29 – 9 a.m.

*Join us for a joyful worship of readings and singing! There will be an opportunity for an abbreviated fellowship with coffee and donuts in the Gathering Hall after worship.*

### January 5, Sunday Worship – 9 a.m.

*Fellowship/coffeetime and Education Hour return. We will all meet in Grace Hall to make cozy fleece hats for the Little Free Pantry. Jill and Cathy and a team of volunteers spent time this week cutting and prepping so we can do the fun part while working to help our neighbors and visitors keep warm through the winter. No sewing skills needed for this activity!*



## Advent & Christmas Worship volunteer needs

Clipboards in the Gathering Hall list all our current needs for December 22, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the Annual Lessons and Carols worship on December 29. Sign up there, or online at the link: [Online Worship Volunteer Signup](#). You may also contact the office at 515-276-6873.

## Longest Night Worship at Immanuel United Methodist Church

This time of year can be difficult for many, and not the joyous celebration many of us expect the holidays to be. In the past few years we have held a Longest Night Worship here at Grace in recognition of that need. This year, Contemplative Outreach of Central Iowa is teaming with Immanuel United Methodist Church — just down the street from Grace — to provide an evening worship option on Saturday, December 21.

### Longest Night Worship

**Saturday, December 21 at 6:30 p.m.**

**Immanuel United Methodist Church, 2900 49th Street, Des Moines**

This service will share the beautiful songs and prayers of Taizè to move with hope into the darkness of the Winter Solstice. Readings during worship will feature writings of or about St. John of the Cross and the Dark Night of the Soul. We lean into the darkness of this night for healing, grace and transformation.

During the day prior to the Taizè service, there will be 7 shared periods of prayer with Psalms of lament on the Winter Solstice. From their website:

You are invited to join our contemplative community for shared periods of prayer with Psalms of Lament on the Winter Solstice. We will gather in the newly remodeled chapel space at Immanuel UMC. Come in the doors at the covered drive and go upstairs, following the hall to the left. Prayer periods will last about 30 minutes, including brief readings before and after Centering Prayer. You are welcome to remain in the building for extended periods of prayer and reflection.

- 7 a.m. Psalm 13 How Long will this pain go on?
- 9 a.m. Psalm 12 I call out to You
- 11 a.m. Psalm 25 I lift my heart to You
- Noon Psalm 44 It is You, God, who released us from our torment.
- 1 p.m. Psalm 22 My God, My God, why?
- 3 p.m. Psalm 85 Rescue is near... justice and peace have been kissed.
- 5 p.m. Psalm 77 You stand beside us as we walk through our fears to the path of wholeness and love.

## Schedule an appointment with the Pastor or Vicar

Pastor Mike or Vicar Jesse are available to meet with you, to listen, to support, to pray with you. Please don't hesitate to reach out. Call 515-276-6873 or send an email.

Pastor Mike's direct extension is 203; [mike@gracedm.org](mailto:mike@gracedm.org)

Vicar Jesse's direct extension is 206; [jesse@gracedm.org](mailto:jesse@gracedm.org)



## Spiritual Direction

Spiritual Direction (or spiritual friendship, guidance, or companionship) is an opportunity to engage more deeply with your faith. Despite all the fancy terms, spiritual direction is really just a conversation. It's a conversation much like the others that take place in our everyday lives, but with more intention. And greater **attention**. It's a chance to explore what you truly think and feel, in a safe, non-judgmental space.

Meeting in the company of a trained spiritual director supports our sense of well-being, and is a place to ask real questions, and make meaning of our experiences.

Ready to give it a try? You can meet with Deb Richards free of charge, because Grace Lutheran Church would like to cover the cost of your first three sessions. Contact Deb at (515) 422-4510 or [Yobel49@yahoo.com](mailto:Yobel49@yahoo.com).

### **Step into the new year with a walking meditation**

**Saturday, January 11 from 9:00-3:00 and Sunday, January 12 from 10:00-noon**

Labyrinth walking is an ancient practice used by many faiths for centering, contemplation, and prayer. Entering the serpentine path of a labyrinth, you stroll while quieting your mind and focusing on a spiritual question or prayer, walking first toward the center and then out again. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Often walkers set an intention, sometimes with the sense of letting go of what it is time to shed on the walk in, opening oneself to inspiration or guidance in the center, and then emerging back into life, renewed, refreshed, ready to live into the next unfolding steps of life. An excellent way indeed to start a new year.



While one walks in the silence of their heart, it can also be meaningful to walk with others who are bringing their own silent focus. Saturday you will also have an opportunity to participate in Group walks which will begin at 10:00, noon and 2:00. You are invited to meditate, journal or pray before or after your walk.

Plans are in the works to convert what was the daycare playground into an accessible community labyrinth and prayer garden. After worship on January 12 we will update the congregation on our progress and invite you to experience this ancient way of prayer walking an indoor labyrinth set up in Grace Hall.

### **Being New Spiritual Center January and Inauguration Day Offerings**

#### **“A Moment in Time: Reflecting and Dreaming”**

**Saturday, January 4, 2025 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** at Grace (Hybrid Event). Join us as we pause for a Moment in Time of Reflecting and Dreaming. This special New Year’s Silent Saturday invites you to reflect on the past year... listen for a “word” for the new year... create an intention for 2025... or just BE in the presence of God. The day will include a variety of spiritual practices you can choose to reflect on and be with for the day, along with centering prayer, the welcoming prayer and the gift of silence.

*Lunch from “In the Bag” will be provided along with coffee, tea and light snacks. Please register at [centeriowa.org](http://centeriowa.org) Zoom: \$15 In Person: \$40.00 Make checks payable to COCI, and send to: Tim Goldman, Chapter Coordinator 709 22nd Street West Des Moines, IA 50265*

#### **Inauguration Day Meditation**

Join us for centering prayer/silent meditation at 10:00 on Monday, January 20. We will gather in Grace Hall as well as online. Contact Julie Honsey ([honsey.julie@gmail.com](mailto:honsey.julie@gmail.com)) if you would like the Zoom link. Co-sponsored by Being New and COCI.

#### **Book Circle**

Starting Wednesday, **January 8, from 1:00-3:00** in person or on Zoom. Julie Honsey will lead a study of **Cynthia Bourgeault’s *Wisdom Way of Knowing: Reclaiming an Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart***. Contact Julie ([honsey.julie@gmail.com](mailto:honsey.julie@gmail.com)) if you would like to be a part of this transformative offering.

Stay alert to all offerings from the Being New Spiritual Center and Contemplative Outreach of Central Iowa Offerings by requesting our newsletter: email [beingnew@gracedm.org](mailto:beingnew@gracedm.org).



## Little Free Pantry Drive

During the month of December, we are having a funding drive for our Little Free Pantry.

In 2019, the Little Free Pantry ("LFP") was erected to help with the rising food insecurity. In 2022, the LFP backstock room was created to have an inventory of food. **On average, we have purchased \$923 on food and personal care items monthly this year.** We have a team of volunteers who stock the LFP with 50+ items 1-2 times a day. The pantry provides sustenance for a growing need in the area where nearly 72% of students at the neighborhood elementary school qualify for "free & reduced lunch". Typically, the pantry is empty when the volunteers arrive to refill each day. On occasion, the volunteers get to meet some of the people using the pantry who take what they need to help supplement a meal for a day or two. We also know that there are residents in the neighborhood who regularly put food in the pantry.

**We are asking for additional contributions during this holiday season to build up our funds for the Little Free Pantry. You can also provide donations online through the [GIVE](#) page\* or by check payable to Grace Lutheran Church designated for "Little Free Pantry".**

\*If reading this in print, you can type this address into your browser window to donate:  
<https://gracedm.org/give-to-grace/>

## December Little Free Pantry Request of the Month:

We are collecting personal items for the Little Free Pantry that can tolerate the colder temps: soap, diapers, feminine products, deodorant, and toothpaste. You can also provide donations online through the [GIVE](#) page or check payable to Grace Lutheran Church with "Little Free Pantry" in the memo.

There is also an [Amazon Grace Wish List](#) available where items will be shipped directly to the church. AS there will be no January newsletter, check this list, the Sunday Announcements, and the website news for updated requests. Thank you for your donations.

## Grace Endowment Fund

Endowment grants are awarded each year to groups both inside and outside of Grace. A certain percentage of the funds given each year must be awarded to community groups outside of the Grace community, so please share and promote this opportunity widely.



Requests for specific, finite projects are preferred. The Endowment does not fund operational expenses. Applications are due January 31, 2025. Additional details and examples of projects can be found [on our website https://gracedm.org/support-of-others/grace-endowment-fund/](https://gracedm.org/support-of-others/grace-endowment-fund/)

## Finance Report – November Results

Financial results for November YTD are as follows:

- Income – Actual \$414,750, Budget \$378,013, Prior Year \$362,054
- Expenses – Actual \$425,482, Budget \$383,067, Prior Year \$398,995
- Net activity – Actual (\$10,732), Budget (\$5,054), Prior Year (\$36,941)



Results are great considering some large expenses. Thanks to everyone who has made this happen. Activity is \$6K behind budget, including \$37K of unbudgeted roof repair work, \$16K of HVAC repairs and \$23K of drainage work.

The December Council report will be included as part of the Annual Report, which will be available in Mid-January. You are always welcome to request the minutes from Council.

## New Member Classes With Pastor Mike

The next New Member Class with Pastor Mike will be held on Sunday, January 5. Take a few minutes to enjoy the coffee and donuts, then meet Pastor Mike in the office. You can let us know in advance if you are coming, or just show up!

If January doesn't work for you, there will be another opportunity on Sunday, February 23. If you have questions, please contact Pastor Mike [Mike@gracedm.org](mailto:Mike@gracedm.org) or 515/276-6873.

## Upcoming Worship Text Summaries

If you are someone who likes to ponder the texts in advance, we've provided a short summary of each week's readings as well as the specific verses. With 8 readings for December 29 Lessons and Carols Worship, we opted not to include the summaries of each. With no January newsletter, the January readings and summaries will be included in each week's announcements and Tuesday email newsletter.

### December 22: Luke 1:26-56

*Elizabeth, John's mother, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, are two women filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. In Elizabeth's inspired greeting and Mary's song of praise we hear of a saving God who remembers, scatters, lifts up, and fulfills all things.*

### December 24: Luke 2:1-20

*God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.*

### December 25: Luke 2:8-20

*The angel of the Lord proclaims the birth of the Messiah to the shepherds in the fields, who then go on to share the good news with others after meeting Jesus in Bethlehem*

**December 29: Lessons and Carols Worship** – Genesis 1:1–10, Isaiah 9:2-7, Micah 5:2–5a, Matthew 1:18–25, Luke 2:8–20, Luke 2:21-38, Matthew 2:1–11, John 1:1–14.



## 2025 Altar Flowers

The 2025 altar flower sign up

sheet is now online:

<https://volunteersignup.org/ADMHD>

We invite you to sponsor a bouquet of flowers for the altar. You can include a special message in the bulletin, and the flowers are yours to take home after the worship service on Sunday.

The cost is \$25 and you can pay through Grace's online giving site (<https://gracedm.org/give-to-grace/>) or by check or cash to the office. Please put your first AND last name(s) in the first name field and type a special message (optional) in the last name field (in memory of ... in honor of). Contact Kathy at [kbowerma@hotmail.com](mailto:kbowerma@hotmail.com) with questions or to sign up if you are not online. Thank you!



## Thank You!

Thank you to the residents of Windsor Place Senior Apartments, who provided a generous donation to the Grace Little Free Pantry on December 16, 2024! You are fabulous!

## Happy January Birthday

- 1 Gumarito Marquez  
Tana Friesth Perry
- 2 Andrew Allen  
Nicholas Jessen
- 3 Jay Wangerin  
Eric Weber
- 6 Julie Honsey  
Tammy Denton  
Amy Schmelzer  
Paul Calahan
- 8 Kathy Roat  
Catherine Lewis
- 9 Sandra Briggs  
Michael Friesth
- 10 Caden Mendez
- 13 Jacqueline Villela
- 14 Tessa Fenimore
- 15 Laria Preston  
Cyrus Stammer
- 16 Daniel Robbins
- 17 McKenzie Carney
- 18 Carli Stee  
Lon Friesth  
Lonnie Jessen  
Stephen Kallenbach  
Cooper Bigg
- 19 Becky Selander
- 20 Tammi Simet  
Samuel Speck
- 21 Mary Helt  
Cheryl Wilner
- 23 Donald Peterson  
Alice Kulzer
- 24 Garry Lenhart
- 26 Patricia Allen  
Valerie Culp  
Haley Honnold
- 29 Norman Trentmann
- 30 Elizabeth Prescott  
Nayeli Rodriguez
- 31 Carter Bigg  
Maryena Petty-Lee



## Happy Anniversary!

9 – Joie and David Gronert

## Important Dates

### Holiday Church Office Schedule

Monday, December 23: Open

December 24 - 29: Closed

Monday, December 30: Open, last day for 2024 contributions

December 31 & January 1: Closed

Thursday, January 2: Open



### Last Day for 2024 contributions: Monday, December 30.

All contributions received after this will be counted toward 2025. This includes mailed items that arrive late. Please plan ahead, keeping in mind the heavy use of the postal system during the holidays. You may also use the online giving site on our website [www.gracedm.org](http://www.gracedm.org). Click on the word "Give" at the upper right corner of the page. Or go direct to <https://gracedm.org/give-to-grace/>. Then scroll down, click on the red "Donate" button, and follow the instructions from there.

### Committee Reports Due: Tuesday, January 7

Our goal is always to assemble, format, print and mail the annual report in time for the Budget and Finance Forum on Sunday January 19. Please email your reports to [Michelle@gracedm.org](mailto:Michelle@gracedm.org)

### Budget and Finance Forum: Sunday, January 19

### Annual Meeting: Sunday, January 26, 2025

The meeting will take place in Grace Hall after worship.

## Thank you!

In December, Christmas bags were assembled and cards signed for members and friends who are unable to attend church in person. Items were chosen or made by Member Care, Martha/Lydia Circle, and members of all ages. Members have been delivering these bags over the past few weeks while enjoying their visits with Grace friends old and new.

Thank you for the Christmas bag filled with special gifts. I appreciated the visit and I miss all of you.

Barb Powers

Thank you to all involved in preparing the bag of treats and surprises – I appreciate all the fun items and it sure was fun opening the package!

Virgil Olson

I want to say thanks to all those involved in bringing Christmas to those of us who cannot get out for activities in celebration of the season. Your efforts are deeply appreciated. May you all have a blessed Christmas

Thank you so much, Karen Crooks



## The Jesse Tree

Each week during Advent the congregation has been adding to the Jesse Tree. Prompting questions in the bulletin invite us to reflect on where we find God's hope, peace, joy, and love in the Old Testament and in our lives. After writing our responses on a provided bookmark we place them on the Jesse Tree in the Gathering Hall. Each week, the witness of God's hope, peace, joy, and love grow as the bare branches fill.



## 2024 Congregational Council Members

Term ends 2025: Carter Woodruff, Mike Hilsabeck, Kevin Drury, Jenny Rehder

Term Ends 2026: Valerie Culp, Greg Boesch

Term Ends 2027: Tom McCleary, Linda Moravec, Brian Gerling, Stuart Mitchell



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