

Following Jesus' teachings, Grace seeks to educate, lead, and partner with all people through discipleship to worship, service, and faith celebration.

A Cozy Christmas

December 29, 2024 9:30am

Grace Lutheran Church, Davenport, Iowa
Pastor Stephanie Wood † Pastor Kirsten Lee

Welcome! We are so happy you have joined us!

Please complete an attendance card - located in the pews or at the usher's table.

*Please stand as you are able. **Congregational response in bold.**

Prelude

Variations to Adeste Fideles..... organ arrangement by Raynor Taylor

Announcements

Call to Worship

Jesus, the bright Morning Star, shine light in the world.

By day and night he shines for all to see.

Jesus was born in the midst of injustice and poverty.

That the world may see the justice and richness of God.

God so loved the world that God sent Jesus,

So that all who believe in him may not perish but have eternal life.

Jesus is the light of the world.

Jesus is the light of our lives.

Sing to God a new song!

A song of hope, joy, and peace around the world.

First Reading

One of Luther's students wrote:

"As Christmas approached, Luther grew increasingly cheerful. All his words and songs and thoughts concerned the incarnation of our Lord. Then he sighed and said, 'Oh, we poor people that we should be so cold and indifferent to this great joy that has been given us. For this is indeed the greatest gift, which far exceeds all else that God has created. Yet we believe so sluggishly, even though the angels proclaim and preach and sing, and their lovely song sums up the whole Christian faith, for 'Glory to God in the highest' is the very heart of worship."

Opening Hymn

By Request (Any Christmas ELW Hymns 269-300)

Confession & Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *(Silence for reflection.)*

Let us pray. Most merciful God, **we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. Throughout this past year we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us and renew us. As we begin this new year, lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Throughout this new year may our Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen.**

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray. O Lord God, **you know that we cannot place our trust in our own powers. As you protected the infant Jesus, so defend us and all those in need from harm and adversity, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

Hymn

By Request (Any Christmas ELW Hymns 269-300)

Second Reading

Love of the Universe hovering
over the waters of creation,
delighting in every living thing,
calling us good.
This is our story.

Love Incarnate born to poor ones
beneath a canopy of stars
in the company of livestock,
calling us to wonder.
This is our story.

Love re-membered by our gathering,
in our flesh and bones,
beckoning us to heal a hurting world,
calling us to dance.
This is our story.

Beloveds,

Have you ever heard of anything like this?

Has anything like this ever happened before—ever? Make sure you tell your children,

and your children tell their children, And their children, their children.

Don't let this message die out. (Joel 1:1-3 MSG)

[Today] we have heard the sacred story again:

Its truth, its power, its wisdom.

This story continues to remake the world,
birthing the reality of God's redeeming love
into our hearts anew,
remembering us into the family of God.

~John Rohde Schwehn

Genesis 1:1-5 and John 1:1-5

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

He was with God in the beginning.

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:6-14

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Hymn

By Request (Any Christmas ELW Hymns 269-300)

Third Reading | Our Greatest Need

If our greatest need had been information,
God would have sent an educator.
If our greatest need had been technology,
God would have sent us a scientist.
If our greatest need had been money,
God would have sent us an economist.
But since our greatest need was forgiveness,
God sent us a Savior.

~ Max Lucado

Isaiah 63:7-9

I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD, the praiseworthy acts of the LORD,

because of all that the LORD has done for us, and the great favor to the house of Israel

that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

For he said, "Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely"; and he became their savior in all their distress.

It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them;

in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

Fourth Reading | First Coming

He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.

He came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.

He did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy he came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

**We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!**

~Madeleine L'Engle

Hymn

By Request (Any Christmas ELW Hymns 269-300)

Fourth Reading

Do you think you could contain Niagara Falls in a teacup? Is there anyone in our midst who pretends to understand the awesome love in the heart of the Abba of Jesus that inspired, motivated and brought about Christmas? God entered the world not with the crushing impact of unbearable glory, but in the way of weakness, vulnerability and need. On a wintry night in an obscure cave, the infant Jesus was a humble, naked, helpless God who allowed us to get close to him... You could more easily catch a hurricane in a shrimp net than you can understand the wild, relentless, passionate, uncompromising, pursuing love of God made present in the manger.

~Brennan Manning

Colossians 3:12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Sharing the Peace

With the peace of Christ that rules in our hearts, we are one body, one community. The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

Call to Offering

The gifts we give today are but tokens of the blessings of the new life we live in Christ. Bring your gifts with joy, for they remind us of just how blessed we are to know this love that flows so generously from the spirit of God.

Offering Prayer

Let us pray. Gracious God, **May these gifts, given to these ministries of Grace, be a blessing to friends and strangers, those like us and those not, those deserving and those not, for in this way the love of God reaches all of God's beloved. Amen.**

Responsive Prayer

It is you, loving God, who lights our path with truth.
Your Word, Jesus, is truth.

In his light, draw all to the manger
To gather in wonder with the shepherds.

In his light, draw all to the manger
To kneel in reverence with the wise ones.

In his light, draw all to the manger
To sing for joy with the angels.

In the brightness of his life
Cast away the darkness of injustice, poverty, and hunger in the world.

It is you, loving God, who meets us on our way.
In the light of Jesus, show the world the way of life. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in Your kingdom, and teach us to pray.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn

By Request (Any Christmas ELW Hymns 269-300)

Fifth Reading

Again and again, it comes:
The Time of Recollection,
The Season of Remembrance.
Empty vessels of hope fill up again;
Forgotten treasures of dreams reclaim their place;
Long-lost memories come trooping back to me.
This is my season of remembrance,
My time of recollection.

Into the challenge of my anguish
I throw the strength of all my hope:
I match the darts of my despair with the treasures of my dreams;
Upon the current of my heart
I float the burdens of the years;
I challenge the mind of death with my love of life.
Such to me is the Time of Recollection,
The Season of Remembrance.

~Howard Thurman

Ecclesiastes 3:1-5

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

Letting Go & Letting God In

On this the first day of the year let us take a moment to give God that which we desire to leave behind in the past year. You will find a piece of paper in your bulletin. On it write the worries of the past year or the year to come, write them as prayer to leave with God.

When ready, you may bring the piece of paper forward and you can place it in the bowl of water. Watch as that sheet of paper is absorbed by the water, then pick up a star word next to it. These are words that we can prayerfully ponder throughout the year as God guides us with the light of Christ like the Magi following the star to Bethlehem.

The use of star words, also called "star gifts," is a prayer practice connected to Epiphany and the new year. You are invited to take a star word and use it as a guiding word throughout the year. Place your word somewhere you will see it regularly throughout the year to allow consistent reflection on how God has moved through, around, or in connection to that word.

Star Words Prayer

Let us Pray. God of open horizons and open roads, like the Magi so many years ago, we are here, seeking you. Step by step, we have wandered into this space with the hope of feeling you in our midst. Step by step, you have claimed us, loved us, and fed us.

Today we have drawn star words. For some, these words are full of meaning, challenge, and invitation already. For others, these words are a blank canvas—inviting you into our lives.

So as a new year dawns, we pray that just as you have spoken to the generations before us, you would speak to us again. Allow us to use these star words as a tool that might help us hear you more clearly. May they guide us, as the star guided the Magi.

And in a year, may we find ourselves here, together again, with mouths full of praise for the ways in which you have been present with us. Together we pray, with the saints before us. **Amen.**

Blessing for the New Year

Let us pray. O God, you have been our help in ages past, our hope for years to come. As we welcome this new year, bless us with peace. Fill our days with the light of Christ and lead us on the path of life until we see you in our heavenly home. You live and reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

Benediction

As you leave this place, may you go knowing that from generation to generation, we have been claimed and loved. From generation to generation, God has been by our side. From generation to generation, we are not alone. The God of yesterday and the God of tomorrow knows you by name, loves you, and calls you forth, saying, "Go be the person you are called to be, love wildly, do justice, and come back soon." May it be so. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn

Hark the Herald Angels Sing Projected

Sending

Christ the Savior is born! Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.

Thanks be to God!

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Sunday, December 29

Pastor Kirsten Vacation

9:30am Joint Worship Hymn Sing
10:30am Coffee Hour

Monday, December 30

Pastor Kirsten Vacation

10:30am Staff Meeting
4:30pm Centering Prayer

Tuesday, December 31

Pastor Kirsten Vacation

10:00am Pastor's Text Study - PBH

Wednesday, January 1

Pastor Kirsten Vacation

Office Closed for New Years

Thursday, January 2

Pastor Kirsten Vacation

Friday, January 3

Annual Reports Due

Pastor Kirsten Vacation

Saturday, January 4

11:30am Staff Luncheon - offsite

Sunday, January 5

Food Pantry Collection

8:30am Traditional Worship & Livestream
9:30am Coffee Hour
10:30am Contemporary Worship

Monday, January 6

10:30am Staff Meeting
4:30pm Centering Prayer on Zoom

Tuesday, January 7

10:00am Pastor's Text Study - PBH
1:30pm Personnel Committee Mtg
5:00pm Property Committee Mtg

Wednesday, January 8

11:00am THE STORY Bible Study - PBH
12:00pm Men's Lunch Group
7:00pm Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, January 9

12:00pm Prayer Group
7:00pm Praise Band Rehearsal

Friday, January 10

You Can Watch Us Online and Follow us on Facebook!

YouTube: [Grace Lutheran Davenport](https://www.youtube.com/GraceLutheranDavenport) Facebook: facebook.com/GraceWelcomesYou

Your offerings support and nurture ministries at Grace along with support for local and global organizations. Online giving is available at bit.ly/GraceGivingOnline.

Looking Ahead

- **January 1** New Years Day, Office Closed
- **January 5** Junior Bible Study resumes
- **January 8** THE STORY morning Bible study resumes
- **January 11** Seeking the Sacred Retreat
- **January 12** Kids Winter Party
- **January 16** ImpactLife Blood Drive
- **January 26** Joint Worship 9:30am and Annual Meeting
- **January 31** Dinner Service at Hope at the Brickhouse
- **February 2** IFF Brunch & Mimosas (details in January newsletter)
- **February 6** THE STORY evening Bible study resumes
- **March 5** Ash Wednesday
- **March 12** Midweek Lenten Worship Begins

Children's Winter Party! | January 12



Sunday, January 12 | 11:30am-2:00pm

Kids! Come enjoy some winter fun as we celebrate God's love for us in the new year. Parents! You get some time to yourself. To register, talk with Pastor Kirsten or complete an online form at bit.ly/KidsJan12Party, or scan this QR code.



End-of-Year Giving

All year-end offerings (including RMD's) need to be received in the office by **Monday, December 30**, to be counted for 2024. Thank you for your continued support of our missions!

Annual Reports

Annual Reports are due to the office no later than **Friday, January 3**, to have time to prepare for distribution on January 12 (two weeks before the annual meeting). Please email office@gracewelcomesyou.org with any questions.

Seeking the Sacred

Finding Holy Ground Near and Far

Saturday, January 11 | 9am-Noon

@ Grace Lutheran Church | 1140 E High St, Davenport, IA

What is it about the crossroads of travel and spirituality that calls us? Do we have to travel far or even travel at all to discover sacred sites and gain insight from them? And how can these experiences enhance our spiritual journeys?

Join us at "Seeking the sacred: Finding holy ground near and far," a free retreat featuring Lori Erickson, an Iowa City-based author of several books that highlight the intersection of travel and spirituality.

Register online at bit.ly/SeekingSacred or call 563-322-0769

Scan to Register

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Social Ministry Christmas Tree

The Grace Social Ministry Team is collecting hats and gloves (all sizes) for our local elementary schools. These items can be new or very gently used, should be unwrapped, and can be placed on or under the tree in the narthex - we will be collecting through Epiphany. Thank you for helping with this important ministry!

Grief Support Group | Next Mtg January 15

The Grief Support Group will not meet Wednesday, January 1.

The Grief Support Group meets the first and third Wednesdays of the month 5:30pm in Pat Bell Hall. Please join us! Anyone is welcome at anytime, and please be assured our conversations are kept in confidence. Questions? Contact: Cindy Lee 563-370-5386.

THE STORY Bible Study

The morning class is on hiatus for December and will resume January 8

The evening class will meet again February 6

Men's Lunch | Noon Wednesdays

Men's Lunch will not meet on Christmas Day or January 1.

Men's "Lunch & Conversation" meets every Wed at Noon at Grace. You can bring a lunch from home or pick something up from a restaurant. Contact Dennis Boehme at 563-320-2661 or boehmed@aol.com to be added to the email list.

Centering Prayer | Mondays 4:30pm

Mondays 4:30pm via Zoom In the Christian tradition, Contemplative Prayer is considered to be the pure gift of God. It is the opening of mind and heart--our whole being to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond thoughts, words, and emotions. Cheryl Kritsch facilitates the group which meets via Zoom every Monday (except holidays) at 4:30pm (link emailed in the Weekly Update). Please contact Cheryl with any questions at 563-343-0135.

Thrivent Choice Dollars

Thrivent members can direct their choice dollars to Grace! By directing Choice Dollars, eligible clients with membership can recommend where some of Thrivent's charitable outreach funds go. For more information talk to your Thrivent representative or go to thrivent.com/thriventchoice.

WELCA at Grace

Here at Grace we have three women's circles open to anyone who is interested. Please consider which one works best for you and feel free to contact the person listed. They'll be happy to answer any questions!

Deborah Circle meets the third Monday of the month at 6:30pm in members' homes for Bible study from the Gather Magazine. Contact: Claire Johansen 563-271-1311 or claire.d.johansen@gmail.com.

Naomi Circle meets the third Tuesday each month, Sept thru May, 9am at church for Bible study. Contact Marilyn Schreiber 563-340-0350 or marilyn.schreiber@icloud.com.

Service Day Quilters meet the second Tuesday & second Wednesday 9am-Noon each month. The quilts are donated to the community and LWR. In recent years we have made LWR school bags. Contact Gloria Lange langejg1@msn.com or 563-271-1542 or Kathy Miller 563-676-0914 or kathyk1679@aol.com.