

The News of Grace

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“The Importance of STABLE-ITY”

“This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:12)

“Were you born in a barn?” That phrase is usually used when someone leaves the door open much like the door is left open in a barn so that the farm animals can go out and come in. It is also used in a little more derogatory way as it relates to one’s intelligence. I must say, however, that I have known quite a few farmers who were very intelligent people and I was proud to call them my grandparents, both sides of my family.

Jesus was born in a barn, so to speak. Some suggest it was a stable, while others opt that it was a cave-like area used to house animals. The stable area may have just been the lowest area of a house structure where the animals were kept and the heat they generated would help warm the living area above when the temperatures cooled off.

Whether it was a stable or a cave really does not make any difference, unless you want to make sure the ‘manger scene’ you have is an accurate depiction of what things would have been like when Jesus was born. It does however give me an opportunity to use this page for reflection and speak about something that we all need as we move through the changes of life. That is ‘STABLE-ity.’

I have used this title for my front page previously several years ago, but it came to mind again this year as it relates to the old manger scene that we had at home as I was growing up, the one that resurfaced as we went through things after we moved Dad this past June. It was an S.S. Kresge purchase by my parents sometime in the late 1950’s. It was always the center of attention under our tree until it became hidden by presents during the last few days before Christmas. It was a thick cardboard stable covered by a painted scene. It had a connected fence to keep in the formed and painted plastic animals that they had purchased to go with it. There was a hole in the center of the rear wall that a white Christmas light could go through to shed light on the scene of Mary and Joseph, the baby Jesus in a manger, shepherds and wise men along with some farm animals and a camel or two. It was definitely a stable.

After we moved my father in June from the house that my parents built when I was twelve, we had all of the possessions to go through. While Dad was still mobile, the last thing he wanted to do or could spend time doing, was going through much of the stuff that had accumulated over fifty plus years in that house. Most things around the house were pretty much like they were when my mother was alive and living there, which means that things had not changed much since before 2000. We had moved her into an Alzheimer's facility in 2001 and mother died early in 2004. We had purchased Dad some new furniture for the downstairs family room where he spent most of his down time, reading, watching television or taking an unscheduled nap. The furniture was more for us than him as that is where we would sit and visit.

However, Dad did stay busy with things working at the facility that brought him there off the farm and out of college from Ohio in 1951 and from which he retired in 1993. He worked on projects there until a year and a half ago. (As he said, "I got laid off!") He continued volunteering at the Catholic hospital in Paducah three days a week, though the last month before he died he missed a few of those days, which was quite unusual for him. One thing for sure was that he was not concerned with interior decorating, and so however mother had left things that was pretty much how they were until mid-summer when my brothers and I began to work through all of those things that needed to be discarded or divided amongst us. Dad was not interested in those things any longer, and he had not put things up for Christmas in quite a few years. We had previously taken for ourselves some of the old glass ornaments that we remember being on the trees during our childhood.

Actually the attic was not stuffed with things, and was relatively empty. That was where we always kept the Christmas items, but they had made their way downstairs into my old room which had been converted into an office for Dad. (I learned how to keep my office from him.) The garage had many of his tools and needed to be cleaned, but he still used it for his car, which meant that he didn't have too many big things in the way. I know that many of you have worked through this process, and this space allows me to share some things that have been on my mind of late. Please know that I do appreciate all of the cards and notes that I have received from you. If you have read to this point, thanks for hearing me out. Given time for reflection the last couple of weeks has served to remind me that there has always been stability for me just knowing Dad was around, even if it had been a while since I had seen him or even spoken with him on the phone. I guess I have struggled a little with a lost sense of that now as it relates to life. Again, I realize that many of you know this feeling, as I have served as your Pastor.

Whether it was a stable or a cave is not important. St. Luke does not tell us anything more except that when Jesus was born they laid Him, wrapped in swaddling clothes, in a manger. Possibly they had looked for lodging in someone's home, but we are not given that information. Because of the mention of a manger, a feed box for animals, we have assumed that it was a stable. It could have been a stable in a cave, for there were many caves that spotted the landscape in the vicinity of Bethlehem.

For the moment of Jesus' birth, this place provided shelter for Mary and Joseph. It is certainly safe to say that their lives needed STABLE-ity. Recall the events that led up to Jesus' birth. Mary is visited by the angel of the Lord and she is very troubled by his words that she will bear the Son of the Most High. When Mary is found to be with child, Joseph wonders if he should put her away quietly. Until the angel appeared to him and made clear to him what had truly happened, his world had been turned upside down by the news of Mary's pregnancy. This child would be named Jesus "because He will save His people from their sins" Joseph was told. What was he to make of that? Certainly there would have been issues for both of them to deal with in Nazareth as Mary's condition came to light, so she went and visited her cousin Elizabeth.

Then there was a call for a census for tax purposes. That meant that they would need to leave Nazareth and go to Bethlehem because it had been so decreed from Rome by Caesar Augustus. It was important not to get in trouble with the powers that be, so they had to do as they were told. It would not be an easy journey, especially in light of Mary's condition. It was in that condition that a stable would have to suffice, for there they would have to take refuge and there a manger would have to serve our Lord as His bed. This was not the best of situations.

We all long for STABLE-ity in our lives. We need that comfort as we are confronted by the twists and turns that our lives seem to take, and it seems as if they come when it is most difficult to deal with them. December is a very busy month. It is not a time for us to have our lives turned upside down, but sometimes it happens that way. It is not enough that we don't seem to have the time to get everything else done that we are placed in situations that challenge us emotionally and maybe even spiritually. The stresses we all face are numerous. We need STABLE-ity and we find that in a stable or cave, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Make it a point to journey there this month so that you may know the peace and stability for living given to us there.

Blessed Christmas to you and your family! Pastor Walter

“An Interesting ‘Christ’mas Tree”

Mid-Week Advent Series

It has been reported that there is a shortage of live Christmas trees this year because of the reduced planting of trees in 2008 because of the recession. Though it appears that this is not a problem in Arkansas, some varieties might not be available if you have waited too long to get yours. Of course there are those of us who will go to our attics or our closets and pull out the one that we have been using the last few or several years. Having an artificial tree takes away the challenge or the adventure of finding a live one. During this Advent we will be considering Christ’s tree, His family tree.

In Holy Scripture we find amazing stories, parables and historical records. They make for interesting reading but sometimes we may be left to wonder what some of the accounts have to do with our salvation and even why they are recorded. The record of genealogies might be something that we are left to wonder about as we get to them in our reading. The first book of the Bible, Genesis, traces the passing of the promise of God’s Savior from generation to generation, to all Israel and to all nations. The Evangelists Matthew and Luke both have the genealogy of Jesus, in fact that is the way the Gospel according to St. Matthew begins. Matthew’s genealogy goes from Abraham to Jesus. Luke’s genealogy, which comes in what we number as the third chapter and is found at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, starts with Jesus and goes back to Adam. Certainly there are differences between Matthew and Luke. It is believed that these particular placements are the result of, and are consistent with, the interests of each evangelist.

Just as many of us may wish to take a closer look at our genealogies, only to find that some on our family tree might better be kept away in a closet, so too we may wonder about some of those found on Christ’s family tree. In particular there are five women found in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus. There has been much speculation as to why they are included. One interpretation is that “God can use even the humble and despised to accomplish His purpose.” We will have a look at three of the five during our Mid-Week Advent Services and we will also consider the last, His mother Mary, as we gather for Services on December 24th, The Fourth Sunday in Advent and Christmas Eve.

December 6 – Rahab

December 13 – Ruth

December 20 – The wife of Uriah

“The Great ‘O Antiphons’ of Advent”

O Emmanuel, our king and our Lord, the anointed for the nations and their Savior: Come and save us, O Lord our God. (“O” Antiphon for December 23)

Greetings in Christ! It may be a little early for me to say “Happy New Year,” though we are very much at the beginning of a new year! The First Sunday in Advent, which we observe this year on December 3, is the first Sunday of the church year. Fittingly, in Advent we mark the beginning of the life of Jesus Christ on earth, as we focus on themes regarding the coming of Christ. Further, in Christmas we celebrate Christ’s birth, followed by His ministry in Epiphany. In Advent, we can focus on the coming of Christ in three senses: **Past** (the Old Testament prophecies), **Present** (Word and Sacrament) and **Future** (the Last Day). Certainly, we want to be prepared for the coming of Christ and are eager for His coming!

One of the great Advent hymns known to many throughout Christianity is “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel.” The first verse of this hymn will be sung at Grace as the opening canticle on December 3, setting an immediate theme for Advent. While the hymn that we know today was only matched with its melody, *Veni Emmanuel* (a 15th-century French Franciscan processional) in the nineteenth century, the hymn itself is a paraphrase of the “O” Antiphons of the eighth century.

An *antiphon* is a term that we encounter in most worship services here at Grace. An antiphon may be thought of as a refrain which is sung after and/or during a Psalm, usually taken from a Bible verse or other historic text.

The “O” Antiphons address Jesus Christ with seven titles from the Old Testament: O Wisdom, O Adonai (Lord), O Root of Jesse, O Key of David, O Dayspring, O King of the Nations, and O Emmanuel. In the eighth century, it was custom to have daily services in the seven days before Christmas Eve. Before and after the *Magnificat* (“My Soul Magnifies the Lord”), the assigned O Antiphon would be sung.¹

¹ Kevin Hildebrand, “O Antiphons: What Are They?” *The Lutheran Witness*, (November 2013). Accessed November 28, 2017. <https://blogs.lcms.org/2016/o-antiphons-what-are-they>.

Centuries later, these antiphons were paraphrased into verses which became the hymn, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," with the final antiphon (O Emmanuel) becoming the first stanza. The hymn was then translated from Latin to English by hymnist John Mason Neale in 1851, and was then paired with the tune *Veni Emmanuel*. Since then, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" has appeared in most major hymnals.

During this Advent season, we may appreciate this hymn as a wonderful expression of text and tune for Advent, showing us the many ways our Lord comes to us. As we sing these words, we recall the salvation God has prepared for us in Jesus Christ, and we pray that we may be ever watchful for His coming to enlighten and deliver us.

In His Service,

Charlie Russell, Director of Parish Music

ADVENT SUPPERS

ADVENT SUPPERS will be served at 5:30 p.m. before the Advent Evening Prayer Services each week in Parker Hall. The following menus will be served with salad and dessert.

December 6 th	Spaghetti served by ACTS
December 13 th	Soups served by JOY Club
December 20 th	Chili served by Parish Fellowship and The Grace Youth

THOSE WHO SERVE in DECEMBER

ACOLYTE/CRUCIFER SCHEDULE

8:15 a.m. Worship Service – Jack Stephens

10:45 a.m. Worship Services – Michael Gipson

December 6th - Advent Evening Prayer Service – Emma Schnackenberg

December 13th - Advent Evening Prayer Service – Heidi Litwa

December 20st – Advent Evening Prayer Service – James Junkans

December 24th - 7:00 p.m. - Christmas Eve

Acolyte: Sydney Manchester

Crucifer: Owen McCrory

December 25th - 9:00 a.m. – Christmas Day

Acolyte: James Junkans

Crucifer: Elias Found

December 31st - 7:00 p.m. - New Year's Eve

Acolyte: _____

Crucifer: _____

USHERS' SCHEDULE

8:15 a.m. Worship Services – Roy Bullard's team

Roy Andrews, Gary Proud

10:45 a.m. Worship Services – Gervais LeBlanc's team

Jeff Ralston, Paul Krueger

December 6th – Advent Service 1 – Tim Loyd's team

Bobby Bemberg, Daniel Loyd, Ed Mahnken

December 13th – Advent Service 2 – Tim Sweeney's team

Shaun Baker, Ron Krueger, Greg Warren

December 21st – Advent Service 3 – Robert Wilimzig's team

Robert Jones, Robert Nichols

December 17th – Children's Service – Combined Ushering team

December 24th – Christmas Eve Service – Combined Ushering Team

December 25th – Christmas Day Service – Combined Ushering team

December 31st – New Year's Eve Service – Roy Bullard's team

THOSE WHO SERVE in DECEMBER

CANTORS' SCHEDULE

8:15 a.m. Worship Service – Paula Walter
10:45 a.m. Worship Service – Jonathan Cline

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS

December 3rd – 10:45 Service – Jon Cline
December 10th – 8:15 Service – Claude Riggin
December 17th – 10:45 Service – Gervais LeBlanc
December 24th - 9:00 a.m. Service – Jonathan Cline
December 25th – 9:00 a.m. Service – Joel Junkans
December 31st - 10:00 a.m. Service – Gervais LeBlanc
December 31st – New Year's Eve – 7:00 p.m. – Gary Proud

GREETERS' SCHEDULE

8:15 a.m. Worship Services – Jim and Florence Marvin
10:45 a.m. Worship Services – Gervais and Sharon LeBlanc
All Advent Services – Debbie Penny

ALTAR GUILD SCHEDULE

8:15 a.m. Service – Linda Riggin, Pat Funk
10:45 a.m. Service – Ginny Ralston
Advent Evening Prayer Services – Suzanne Raddle, Wilma Richter
December 31st – New Years Eve – Suzanne Raddle, Wilma Richter

If you are unable to serve please ask someone to fill in for you and then call the church office.

DECORATING THE CHURCH FOR CHRISTMAS

Join us as we decorate the trees in the sanctuary for Christmas on **Saturday, December 9th**, at **9:00 a.m.**

GRACE FAMILY NEWS AND NOTES

HOLY BAPTISM...

PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF HOLY BAPTISM - On Sunday December 3rd we recognized the baptism of Amelia Ruth Schluterman who was baptized by Pastor Walter on July 18, 2017, at Baptist Hospital here in Little Rock. Amelia's baptism was witnessed by her parents, Craig and Laura Schluterman and her aunt Julia Mickles. Amelia's sponsors are Nolan and Alexis Sheldon and Ryan and Julie Mickles.

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY...

OUR CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY to Pastor Walter and his family on the death of Pastor's father, Mr. Carl Walter, who died Monday, November 13th, in Paducah, Kentucky. Mr. Walter's funeral was at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Paducah. Please remember Pastor and Paula and their family in your thoughts and prayers.

OUR CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY to the family of Mrs. Marilyn Stankey, who died Tuesday, November 14th, near St. Louis. Mrs. Stankey is the mother of Barb Warren. Please remember Barb, Greg, Andrew and Matthew Warren and family in your prayers.

OUR CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY to the family of Sandy Price who died at home early Monday, November 27th. Sandy is the daughter of Bill Jones and sister of Robert Jones, Don Jones, and Pat Funk and cousin of Joyce Wilhelm. Sandy's funeral was Saturday, December 2nd, here at Grace with Pastor Walter officiating. Please remember Sandy's family in your thoughts and prayers.

OUR CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY to the family of Jim Weddle who died Thursday, November 9th, in Benton. Jim is the brother-in-law of Joyce Wilhelm and nephew of Bill Jones. His funeral was at Zion Lutheran Church in Avilla.

OUR CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY to the family of Warren Rivers who died Thursday, November 9th, in Hot Springs. Warren is survived by his wife Judy and daughters Sheri and Stacy. His funeral was here at Grace with Pastor Walter officiating.

CONGRATULATIONS...

CONGRATULATIONS AND GOD'S BLESSINGS to the Penny family as Debbie Penny's newest grandson, Martin Luther Penny, was baptized on Thanksgiving Day at St. James Lutheran Church in Chicago. Martin is the son of Jonathan and Michelle Penny.

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Children's Christmas Service
Sunday, December 17th - 3:00 p.m.

The children will practice during the Sunday School opening each Sunday morning. Please have your children downstairs by 9:45 a.m. for practice.

There will also be practices in the sanctuary on **Sunday, December 10th** following the 10:45 service and on **Saturday, December 16th, at 9:30 a.m.** Then the Children's Christmas Program will be Sunday afternoon, **December 17th** as...

Our 500th Reformation Celebration Continues!
Come hear the story as only children can tell –

FROM HEAVEN ABOVE TO EARTH I COME

Children's Christmas Service
Sunday, December 17, 2017
3:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Followed by a Happy Birthday Jesus Reception in Parker Hall

THE GREAT COOKIE WALK
Sunday, December 17th
Between Services in Parker Hall

The annual Cookie Walk raises funds to assist Grace members.

Bake a batch of your favorite cookies to bring Sunday morning, **December 17th** to Parker Hall. Purchase a zip lock bag and fill it with your choice of cookies. Of course, we hope you will buy lots of cookies!! Thank you for your generous support of our Christmas season fundraiser. If you have questions, contact Bev Sanders at 425-8806 or 225-6390.

NOON DEVOTIONS WITH PASTOR

Noon Devotions with Pastor is **Thursday, December 14th**, at **12:00 noon in Parker Hall**. Bring a sandwich and join us for Bible study and fellowship. Drinks, chips, and dessert are provided. **This is a wonderful opportunity for fellowship!!**

CRAFT SHOW

Our 2017 Craft Show was another success! Hope you were able to attend and visit with our friendly vendors and see all our visitors. A special thank you goes to all the volunteers who made it possible, from the committee to the bakers to the table movers. The proceeds from the show, including bake sale, raffle quilt and booth rentals totals \$2,262. Half of that will benefit Josh Ralston at Concordia Seminary and half will be given to Zion Lutheran Church in Avilla to help with fire restoration. Thank you for your generous support.

STEWARDSHIP BUDGET RE-CAP

2017 budget totals \$573,932
which is an average weekly
General Fund contribution requirement of \$11,037

Budget needs through November 26	\$529,776
Actual expenses through November 26	\$456,880
Contributions to General Fund from all sources	\$447,020*
Average weekly contribution through November 26	\$9313

In summary, General Fund giving for the year is \$ 9860 less than actual expenses.

Non-budget giving to designated funds through November 26 \$50,023

*These contributions include a monthly payment from ECDC to help offset expenses. They also include some memorials and honorariums which are not designated to specific funds.

FELLOWSHIP CLUB

Tuesday, December 19TH - 12:00 noon

The Fellowship Club will meet on **Tuesday, December 19th at 12:00 noon** in Parker Hall for their Christmas lunch. Join us for fun, food, and Christmas carols!! Call the church office if you need more information.

SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE

COFFEE HOST SIGN UP

Volunteers Needed to Serve - Please take a minute and sign up for the Sunday on which you wish to serve. The sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board by the Parlor.

The schedule for **December, 2017** is:

December 3 rd	The Stephens Family
December 10 th	Jack and Pat Funk
December 17 th	JOY Club Cookie Walk in Parker Hall
December 24 th	Christmas Day – One Service 10:00 a.m.
December 31 st	New Year’s Day – One Service 10:00 a.m.

The schedule for **January, 2018** is:

January 7 th	_____
January 14 th	_____
January 21 st	_____
January 28 th	_____

Thanks!! We appreciate your help!!

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AND GOD'S BLESSINGS to Grace Family Members in the month of December:

- 3 – Tommy Borchert, Carol Jones, Beth Paulson
- 4 – Heidi Litwa
- 5 – Caleb Bryant, Kyla Wilbert, Samuel Schluterman
- 6 – Joshua Ralston
- 7 – Celeste Connor
- 9 – Bette Bogart
- 11 – Lance Whitney
- 12 – Carryl Blackburn
- 14 – David Cannon, Walter Zweifel
- 15 – Justine Baker, Sam Cate
- 16 – Emma Jane Ohnemus
- 17 – David Schroeder
- 19 – Gervais LeBlanc
- 22 – Carly Golladay
- 24 – Mikie Litwa
- 26 – Robert Bemberg, Sr., Mary Ann Dyer,
Andrea Faulkner, Cole Hill
- 27 – Mona DeMilt, Zachary de Anda
- 28 – Marietta Gutierrez, Beverly Sanders
- 29 – Krista Reeder, Thomas Wright
- 30 – Boone Bryant
- 31 – Harper Anne Cate, Ames Witte

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY to these couples in December:

- 1 – Betty and Chris Pils
- 7 – Suzanne and David Raddle
- 19 – Sammye and Raymond Harrill
- 20 – Susan and Edwin Mahnken
- 29 – Emily and Robert Bemberg, Jr.
- 30 – Wilma and Robert Richter

We apologize if we have missed your birthday or anniversary; please let us know in the church office so we can update our records. Thank you!!

BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES AT GRACE

Our nursery, downstairs in the church, is also available to take care of the infants and toddlers on Sunday morning not only during both Worship Services but also during Sunday School and Bible Class time. Mary Ann Dyer is our nursery attendant.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS – Pastor Walter’s class meets each Sunday morning at 9:45 a.m. upstairs in the Family Life Center in Parker Hall. This Sunday Pastor Walter will continue the study of the Book of Acts.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES for children ages 3 through 6th grade are held in the lower level of the Family Life Center. Parents are invited to join us for the opening service at 9:45 each Sunday. If you have questions, contact Colleen Moorman for more information.

JUNIOR HIGH YOUTH - Their class meets at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday in their classroom downstairs in the church. Joel Junkans will lead the class each Sunday morning.

SENIOR HIGH YOUTH - Their class meets each Sunday at 9:45 a.m. in their classroom downstairs in the church. Dave Roberts leads the class each Sunday morning.

MEN’S BIBLE STUDY class meets each Wednesday morning at 6:30 a.m. at St. Vincent Hospital in the 4th floor conference room (off the main elevator). Pastor Walter leads this Bible Study each week.



ECDC News & Notes . .

Where did November go? Seems I was just inviting you to our Stone Soup Feast – and now it’s another page in our ECDC memory book! As usual the kids had so much fun preparing the veggies and helping make the soup, then the pumpkin pies! They could hardly wait until lunchtime so they could eat THEIR Stone Soup – it’s amazing what kids will eat when they have had a hand in making it. Truly it was a great, fun, thank-full day!

Of course we have all the media telling us what lies just around the corner – like we need hype to get excited about Christmas – not! We’ll first celebrate Advent on our countdown to Christmas and learn how God sent us a special gift – His very own Son! Our ECDC Advent traditions are a popular addition to our morning routine. This is such a fun time with the kids (of all ages☺) – eyes glisten, joy bubbles, anticipation almost becomes too much! As you hear a child tell, in their own words, the story of Jesus being born in a manger, the angels proclaiming the good news, and the shepherds coming to worship – you can’t help but feel the awesome power of God’s love for each and every one of us kids!!



And once again we want YOU to know you are invited to what we call the “world’s best shortest” Christmas program – as the ECDC kids share the Christmas story and their Christmas joy with on Friday, December 15th at 10:30a.m. in Parker Hall. Our Junior and Senior classes will tell the real Christmas Story, followed by all the kids sharing the story in song. And the tradition wouldn’t be complete without the wonderful reception with a Happy Birthday Jesus party and pizza lunch following the program hosted by the Board of Christian Education.

More tradition – yes, we will have our ECDC Wish Lists posted on each classroom door and another on the bridge for those of you who don’t make it downstairs often. If you wish, take an ornament, make the purchase, and return the item to ECDC (or if you prefer, make a monetary donation for the item and we’ll pick it up). The easiest way to painlessly support ECDC is swipe your KrogerPlus Card and/or shop Smile.Amazon.com – if you need details give me a call! All wonderful traditions of our Grace family supporting this weekday ministry of our congregation!

Until next month, have a blessed Christ-filled holiday season — *Colleen*

POINSETTIA ORDER

We will be decorating the chancel area of our sanctuary with poinsettias for Christmas. If you would like to order one, please fill out this form and attach your check for \$13.50, made payable to Grace Lutheran Church. Please send your order to the church office. Deadline to order is Sunday, December 10TH.

I wish to order _____ poinsettia(s) at \$13.50 each =
Total \$ _____

My poinsettia is given in memory of _____

OR

My poinsettia is given in honor of _____

Given by _____
(Please Print Your Name)