

Living with Christ, Growing in Grace!



Evangelical
Lutheran
Church in America



*Rooted In Christ - Growing in Love -
Branching out in Service*



Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

104 S. Colfax St.

West Point, NE. 68788

402-372-2050

gracewpn@hotmail.com

www.gracewpn.org

Missionary:

Rev. Linda Johnson Swyenkulo

Ministers: Everyone!

Pastor: Rev. Priscilla Hukki

402-841-0220

pjhukki@gmail.com

Administrative Assistant:

Teala Connealy

Trinity Church UCC/UMC

P.O. Box 156

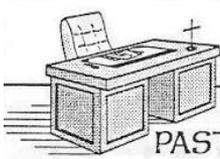
West Point, NE. 68788

402-372-2271

trinity.church.ucc.umc@gmail.com

Grace & Trinity Newsbites

JANUARY 2021



FROM THE
PASTOR'S DESK

We ended Christmas celebrating the feast of the Epiphany, for us, the arrival of the wise men who followed a star so they could worship a great king. For many in the Orthodox tradition the Gospel for the Epiphany is the baptism of Jesus. An epiphany is when something is made plain, clear, an 'ah hah' moment when the light dawns. The Baptism of Jesus is such a grand Epiphany – a showing forth – a making manifest just who Jesus is. A line from an orthodox hymn used for the celebration of the Nativity of our Lord: "Christ is born! Glorify Him! Christ comes from heaven, meet Him" gives two directions that are really nice ones for daily life, aren't they? God is with us – give glory to God. Jesus is with us – meet him. Expect to see him daily. How shall we live in such a way that we glorify God and meet Christ every day?

Jesus' baptism is the beginning of his public ministry. He is baptized and sent into the wilderness to face the temptations that would have derailed his calling. He faces them and then begins the journey to Jerusalem; preaching, teaching, healing; calling and sending out disciples and apostles to proclaim the kingdom of God.

We who are baptized are members, not of a club, but integral parts of the body of Christ. I wonder what temptations we face in our callings – to be unfaithful, to create idols, to be someone other than who God created us to be? What temptations in our vocations – to take the easy road, to work and live according to cultural standards rather than Gospel ethics? What does it mean to be baptized? To be washed and set free? To repent and turn our lives around? To be children of God in this century, in this year, on this day?

What does it mean to be the church? What are our responsibilities? What is our part in the formation of a vital, alive community of faith? How are we living out of, and into our Baptism? How are we practicing faith? How are we passing on faith? How are we glorifying God and meeting Christ who has come from heaven, God with us?

Here's the thing – these questions are not meant as a burden, nor as critique, nor as judgment. They are simply basic questions for people of faith, every day. How does our faith show up and impact our day-to-day life; and how are we supported by and supporting others in these daily choices – this is the bottom line for Christians. The structure and organization and faith practices of the church are meant to be in support of discipleship and evangelism – following Jesus and proclaiming the Gospel. The church is us, with God's help, living, breathing, loving, working in this world; and all of us are essential bits and pieces of the whole. Sure, it could limp along without some of us, sometimes; but never what it could be with all of us functioning together – the living, loving, growing, changing body of Christ for this day and time.

So, two challenges as we figure out life together. (I have great hopes for a more 'normal' Holy Week and Easter, but the reality is that we may be dealing with pandemic limitations for a longer while.): First, a realization from Christmas Eve - there are lots of creative ways to enhance our worship together. Videos, special music. Instruments, a single voice acting for the congregation; duets...all add so much. I think we could have those special additions most weeks, at both Trinity and Grace; from now until at least Easter. So, if you have musical, tech and/or other gifts and skills- I invite you to take the risk of putting yourself on the schedule. Here's the thing -all might not go perfectly smoothly; you might make a mistake; there might be a tech glitch; and no one likes to make mistakes, especially in public. Thankfully grace abounds; we do our best and trust that God can use us, imperfect as we are, to be a blessing.

Secondly, though I know Zoom is a stretch for many – it is a way for people who need to be at home to be connected. I propose that we explore how to better use Zoom to connect. A weekly 'coffee' chat; a class; support system for young parents or caregivers; a discussion group; a reading or knitting group. To make this work might mean we pair some folks who need help getting Zoom up and running with those who could make that happen. Maybe someone who is good with Facetime could set up some groups with that. Or maybe someone knows how to use other formats. The thing is, even after the pandemic ends, these venues could be useful ways to connect and build relationships for those for whom weekly worship 'in -person' is not always possible.

A vital faith community, and communal worship, the Word and Table, are essential for forming and sustaining faith; for helping families and individuals say yes to being who God calls us to be and to doing what God calls us to do. How we accomplish this, changes over time. Think of the earlier immigrant communities in this country – the Germans, Swedes, Norwegians who built ethnic churches, and worshiped in their native tongue – for years. They served their purpose and are part of our heritage, but not our future. Think of lines once drawn so tight that marrying outside of ones’ denomination was practically forbidden. Where are we being led in this century, in this year, in this season? The Holy Spirit is up to the challenge of guiding us today; let’s be bold and fearless, listening and growing together.

Traveling mercies,
Pr. Priscilla

THANK YOU!

I want to thank everyone over the past year for your kindness, patience, words of encouragement, gifts, goodies, etc. It has meant a lot. Despite the craziness this past year has been, it has been wonderful getting to meet and know the congregation at Grace.

-Teala Connealy

Thank you for all the lovely Christmas greetings, treats and gifts. Your generosity is always appreciated.

-Pr. Priscilla

The **end of the year giving statements** will available after the worship service for both congregations the weekend of January 16 & 17. They will be available in the office to pick up until Wednesday, January 20. Those left will be mailed out on Thursday.

Christian Education –

Adults – what and when would you like to study together? Let Pastor know and we will put some times and dates on the calendar.

Families with children – at both Trinity and Grace we welcome children of all ages to the Table; with or without special instruction. We do, however, offer some special classes and a special celebration for children/families who would like to participate. It works best to have 2, 2-hour sessions, with children and parents; so that’s our plan for this winter/spring term. Let Pastor know if you are interested and we will plan our times together; with hopes of a First Communion celebration in March or April.

Worship -

If you would like to add your name to any of the 'those serving' areas on for weekend worship, please let the office know. Criteria for acolytes is being able to hold the candle lighter and reach the candles.

It's never too early to start making plans for the next liturgical season! Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17. How could we have a festive weekend ahead of time to feast before the fast? A bonfire and S'mores on Saturday night? Ice fishing or some other outdoor fun the afternoon of the 14th? Valentine delivery around town and to nursing homes? A winter barbecue on Sunday? And how shall we keep a good fast this year?

FYI Easter is April 4.

In Our Prayers this Week:

Please contact the office for an updated list!

Trinity News

End of the Year Finance Report of the congregation will be available January 16.

January Birthdays & Anniversaries

Please contact the office for an updated list!

Grace News

January Birthdays & Anniversaries

Please contact the office for an updated list!

THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for celebrating Connor's baptism with us and welcoming us to Grace Lutheran! It was a great day to celebrate!

-Brandon, Jamie, & Connor Ridder

Pastor Priscilla,

We wanted to thank you again for allowing us to do Addison's baptism at Grace, it meant a lot to us. Also, thank you for having church on Facebook every week, we really enjoy watching.

-James & Jane McElroy

Thank you! In spite of recent unimagined challenges, we want to thank you for your continued support of mission share, which continues to do God's work in your community, in Nebraska, and around the world. We are grateful for your ministry & partnership with gratitude & God's blessings on behalf of the whole Nebraska Synod.

-One Nebraska Synod ELCA Team

Our Entire Company Extends Our Warmest Wishes for a Happy New Year. We appreciated your business!

-Stan Ortmeier & Co., True Value Hardware & Lumber

Merry Christmas and Blessings to Pastor Priscilla and Teala for always every week sending me the weekly bulletin. I do watch the service on TV. Hope you are doing well, I am okay. Have a Happy & Healthy New Year, we need to keep praying for health and our country.

-Sharon Roberts

I would like to thank the Church for the Bluebird ornament; it is laying on my coffee table and it looks nice. I see my name in the newsletter on the Prayer list, I am getting dialysis treatment 3 times a week: Mon, Wed, Fri. I am 93 and still able to drive my car around Omaha.

-Thank you again, Donald Olsen P.S. I enjoy getting the newsletter.



Reminder: Friendship Circle does not have a regular meeting in January or February.

We can make a decision later on about our March meeting time.

Stay well.

Happy New Year!

Think Spring!

Do you have an eye for landscaping? Do you like to dig your fingers in the dirt? Is weeding your quiet time?



Contact Teala at the Grace office before Jan 21st. A committee will meet in February to discuss scope and plans for spring gardening.



Grace office: 372-2050

Included on these 2 pages are excerpts from two articles; 1 Methodist and 1 Lutheran. Each has to do with how we live out of our primary identity, baptized and claimed, beloved children of God. As we begin a new calendar year, as we spend time in this season of Epiphany or Ordinary time between Christmas and Lent, let us use these resources to carefully consider what it means to be baptized and set free.

The Wesley Covenant Prayer and the Baptismal Covenant. By Steve Manskar. umcdiscipleship.org

“I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things
to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.”

At the beginning of the new year congregations of the Wesleyan/Methodist family renew their covenant with God using the traditional Covenant Service. You will find it in *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. A piece of this important part of our tradition is the Covenant Prayer (above).

John Wesley adapted this prayer from the Puritan tradition that was so important to his parents, Samuel and Suzannah, and life in the Epworth rectory. It informed his theology and preaching. He expected the people called "Methodists" to pray this prayer at the beginning of each new year as a way of remembering and renewing their baptismal covenant.

When we pray this prayer we remember that we are baptized. We renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin. We accept the freedom and power God gives to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves. We confess Jesus Christ as our Savior, trust wholeheartedly in his grace, and promise to serve him as Lord, in union with the church. And we renew our promise to live as faithful members of Christ's church and serve as his representatives in the world.

The Covenant Prayer describes missional life devoted to following Jesus and serving as Christ's representative in the world he loves and is working to redeem. It tells us that being a Christian is more a way of life than a system of beliefs. The Covenant Prayer describes the Jesus way of self-giving and self-emptying love.

Faith Practices for Epiphany. Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade. Copyright 2016. elca.org/faithpractices.

At baptism, the presiding minister places water upon the person in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, marks the sign of the cross on the forehead of the baptized and offers these words, "Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever." (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 231)

To be sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever is significant and life-changing. As we affirm our baptism, we are asked the following question: Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

to live among God's faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth? (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 236)

Each of us responds: "I do, and I ask God to help and guide me." This response sounds like a New Year's resolution for daily living. This response is not an obligation, but rather a five-fold gift from God. Each gift contains the potential of blessing.

Grace Lutheran Church

Council Minutes December 8, 2020 (pending council approval)

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by Vicki Furchert. Other council members present: Lynn Stofferahn, Melissa Nielsen, Pam Petersen, Kathy Mahannah, and Bob Wilson. Pastor was also in attendance.

Melissa made a motion to accept the amended agenda, which added North Star cleaning to New Business. Kathy seconded and motion passed.

Kathy made a motion to accept the amended minutes from the November 10, 2020 meeting. The correction to the minutes was the meeting date. Pam seconded, and motion passed.

Pastor report: planned vacation dates are December 25 – Jan 2nd. She will ask lay leader to preside over service on the 27th.

President's report: Through Immanuel Vision Foundation, we have been approved for a grant spearheaded by Kathy Mahannah in the amount of \$5,000. The grant is to be used to support the purchase of dairy and protein for people with food insecurities. We will purchase the food and disburse through Salvation Army's distributions at Trinity. We are also able to get another \$3,000 if we can raise matching funds to continue the program.

We met our goal with our food drive and received \$500 from Thrivent for the West Point Food Pantry. The Synod sent a letter outlining proposed amendments to their constitution. It will be on the agenda of the Synod assembly June 4-5, 2021.

Synod is also recommending we discuss how to conduct annual meetings due to COVID-19. Live stream with texting votes could be an option to those who can't be in person.

Treasurer Report: Pam moved to accept the treasurer's report, second by Bob and motion passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Property: West Point Travel Plaza agreed to buy the toilet paper that matches their dispensers that we don't use.

Worship & Music: Bells will play Christmas Eve. Still working out the music for all Christmas Eve services.

Christian Education: Classes continue Wednesday evenings. They made a DVD for the nursing home residents.

Endowment: Stephanie Mandel explained the amounts remaining to request from Endowment for 2020 and suggested reports she can run in the future to make it easier for the council to see what bills need to be reimbursed.

OLD BUSINESS:

· Approve Budget to present to congregation at annual meeting. Lynn made a motion to present *the proposed budget to the congregation at **the annual meeting, January 31, 2021**. Kathy seconded and motion passed.

· Christmas Eve services: Reservations have been coming in for all the Christmas Eve services. Ushers and candle lighters have been secured. We will work December 20th on getting the fellowship hall ready for spillover which includes setting up tables and getting the video system ready.

NEW BUSINESS:

· North Star Schedule: North Star will not be cleaning the rest of December due to COVID-19. We will spend time after the December 20th service cleaning.

**Grace Lutheran Church
Financial Report – November 2020
General Fund for November**

Please contact the office for an updated list!

End of the Year Report will be available soon.

* The Proposed Budget is included as a separate sheet with this newsletter.

We apologize that in the Christmas Eve bulletins on the Poinsettia List - Russell Selletin's name was left off. Please don't ever hesitate to let us know if there are any errors. Thank you!

Address Service Requested

**Grace Ev. Lutheran Church
104 South Colfax Street
West Point, NE 68788-1811**