

Grace Messenger



December 2019

Pastor's Reflection

Prepare: *verb (used with object)*, to put into a state of readiness, as in *to prepare a patient for surgery*.
(Source: www.dictionary.com)

"Getting ready" is a concept with which we are most familiar. We hear that phrase multiple times a day. My wife might tell me "Dinner is almost ready" or "I'll be ready to leave in five minutes." During the course of any given week, I will get a sermon or Sunday School lesson ready, or pull together the pieces of information I will need at an upcoming meeting so that I am ready to participate.

December is a month for getting ready. The decorations are unpacked, presents are bought, plans are made so that everything is in a state of readiness for Christmas Day.

I love Christmas. I love the sights, the sounds, the smells. I love carols on the radio. I love turning on the lights of the Christmas tree each morning while the rest of the house is still dark. I love meals served on the Christmas dishes. While shopping has never risen to the level of "favorite things," I do love wrapping the presents that have been purchased. I love getting ready for Christmas.

I love getting my heart and spirit ready too. That's why I love the season of Advent. The goal of this time in the Christian calendar is to get us ready to truly celebrate Christmas. Advent is at its very core a season of preparation, with the anticipation of Christ's birth growing each day as we move closer and closer to Christmas. I love the anticipation of the birth of Jesus. That is the goal of the season of Advent, a season that begins on December 1 this year.

The worship services throughout the Advent season are designed to "put us into a state of readiness." Whether those services be our regular Sunday morning services (at 8:00 and 10:45 a.m.) or on Thursday evenings (December 5, 12, and 19 at 7:00 p.m.), you will find yourself stepping aside from the hectic pace of the secular celebrations to the quiet contemplative atmosphere of spiritual preparation.

Our theme for this Advent season is "New Life." A baby is a new life, but more than that, the baby Jesus came to bring us new life. That theme will be carried through each sermon preached by Pastors Brodbeck and McGee, culminating in our two Christmas Eve services (6:30 and 9:00 p.m.). Come celebrate with us all season long. That way, whenever someone asks "Are you ready for Christmas?" you will be able to respond from the depths of your heart "Yes I am!"

Message from Pastor Brian S. McGee

Disciples of Jesus Christ, here we are—the start of a new journey together!

I am so excited to be with you, as your new associate pastor, partnering together to see God's kingdom advanced in Springfield and in the surrounding communities. I am excited to see what God has in store for us in the days ahead, keeping a forward focus on the Lord Jesus and asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us.

I want you to know how blessed you are to have Pastor Tom Brodbeck as your senior pastor. As many of you know, I came to know Pastor Tom two years ago as a mentor in the life-to-life discipleship process in the North American Lutheran Church. What I didn't know then I know now: the relationship that had started to form as a life coach has now transmuted into a working relationship as senior and associate pastor. And for this I'm grateful.

Some of you might be asking: What is our new associate pastor going to do when he comes? That is a great question. Because a healthy church is based upon healthy relationships, I plan to spend a lot of time getting to know you—getting to know you and your families. It is extremely important to me, as your associate pastor, that I know the people God has called me to lead. Over time, I hope to get to know you—not merely to know about you, but to really know you—so that, together, we can each play the part God has called us to play in his glorious kingdom. Remember, we are the family of God and He has called us together to advance His kingdom on earth.

In addition, I plan on spending time in the community, getting to know the people of Springfield and the rich history of this community. Pastor Tom and I will be spending time in prayer, praying for our church and our community. I am a huge advocate of partnering together with other churches and ministries, so that our ministry might be even more impactful and reach more people locally, domestically and globally. I want to encourage you to be open to new ways of reaching God's people through various evangelistic outreach strategies. While the message of Jesus Christ will never change, the way in which we communicate that message will change. As our methodologies change, the message of Jesus Christ is communicated to them in the various ways in which our world can hear and understand. This is why the church must always change.

But most of all, I want you to know this: God has called me to love you as His own. I have a deep love in my heart for each of you—a love that is not based on emotions or feelings; but a love that is rooted in commitment. I am committed to each of you, to our church and to our community. I have been called to preach the holy Word of God among us, to baptize and forgive sins, to lead worship and preside at the Lord's Supper. All of this I will do joyously giving thanks and praise to the One who is worthy of all praise, honor and glory—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christen and I are excited to be here with you all. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and secure in the love of Jesus. So, here we go, off to a new adventure where God is leading the way.

Be encouraged! Lift up your eyes. Set your hearts upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He is doing a new thing! Let us rejoice, be joyful, and thank Him in advance for what He will do in and through us!

Matching Gift Challenge

The challenge is on! Thanks to a very generous and anonymous donor, our congregation is actively in pursuit of a major goal. This goal is challenging to be sure, but it is very reachable and doable. The goal is clear: eliminate the remaining debt from the 2012 Ministry Expansion Program.

That expansion, which added additional classroom space on the west end of the building and a beautiful Community Center on the north end was a \$2.4 million dollar project. As of this writing (in mid-November) our indebtedness stands at just over \$579,000, meaning we have reduced that indebtedness by approximately \$1.8 million dollars in the last seven years – all without hindering any of our ministry efforts. Praise God!

The impact of eliminating our debt is far-reaching. Not only would it free up \$30,000 in the 2020 budget, but it would then allow us to use those additional funds for expanded ministry in a host of areas. After all, we entered into this project so that ministry could be expanded. Now is the time to see that vision fulfilled.

Here's how the challenge works. Every penny you give toward the challenge will be matched up to the \$100,000 threshold offered by the donor. If all we do is match the gift, we will almost cut the debt in half, but the reason the challenge was offered was the belief of the donor – a belief supported by the leadership of the congregation – that all of us together would be inspired to give generously and sacrificially so that we reached a zero balance by December 31.

December is a great time to make year end gifts, both for tax purposes and because we are already in the spirit of giving. Grace is also set up to receive stock transfers if that works better for your giving strategy. Talk to Darla Kalifoot in the Grace office (399-6257) if you have any questions.



A Savior Is Born by Pete Briscoe

Has Christmas lost its significance?

It's one of the most familiar stories in human history: the birth of Jesus in a lowly manger in Bethlehem. A Savior, which is Christ the Lord. Yet, how can we prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of our Savior in our frantic, consumer-driven society? How do we make sure the Christmas holiday remains a Holy Day?

In each of these four Advent sessions (Sunday School - Dates: 12-1, 12-8, 12-15, 12-22) in this video Bible study, participants will experience cinematic short films that capture events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ. Pete Briscoe, Pastor of Bent Tree Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas will open up Scripture to bring us back to the roots and heart of our faith in Christ.

In all the hustle and bustle, we invite you this Christmas to come and experience Emmanuel, the God who is with us in Jesus Christ—the baby born in a manger.

Entering the Church on Sunday Mornings

Locked or unlocked?

One of the ongoing tensions for leadership at Grace is the schedule for locking and unlocking doors on Sunday morning. One issue is that of safety and security, an issue that resurfaces with every school and church-related shooting that makes the daily news cycle. This facility also houses a lot of high value technology that might prove to be a tempting target for a thief with a cash flow problem. Yet, we also want this building to be a warm, inviting, welcoming place for members and visitors alike. How do we balance those two tensions?

Your leadership has recently decided to make a slight modification to our previous access procedures, a modification that will impact available entrance times at the children's wing and parlor doors. Both of these doors will be locked a few minutes after the beginning of the 8 a.m. worship service and will be unlocked at approximately 8:50 a.m. (at about the time we celebrate Holy Communion each Sunday). The children's wing door will remain locked through the rest of the morning. The parlor door will remain unlocked throughout Sunday School and Fellowship times, and will be locked, once again, after the 10:45 a.m. service begins.

No changes will occur with the four glass doors at the front (main) entrance of the church. These are unlocked at approximately 7 a.m. each Sunday and remain unlocked throughout both worship services.

We believe these modifications, though slight indeed, continue to allow access to those who prefer to enter through these ancillary entrances while adding an extra layer of protection during times when activity in those areas is limited. Ideally, we would prefer that everyone use the main entrance each Sunday. Doing so would certainly simplify the process for all involved, but we recognize that those side entrances provide the shortest outside distance from many parking spots – something even more desirable as the weather turns bitter.

Christmas Food Baskets Collection – Volunteers Needed

Grace has committed to 45 Christmas food baskets for this year. The following items should be included in each basket: (3) 10 oz soups, (1) 16 oz. cracker, (8) packages of Ramen noodles, (1) large box instant potatoes, (3) 10 oz fruit cans, (6) 10 oz vegetable cans – 2 each of the same kind, (1) 22-24 oz box of cereal, (1) 64 oz juice, and (1) large bag of snacks or cookies. Feel free to bring in some of the food items for a basket as your finances allow, or feel free to complete a whole basket. Through your faithful giving, Grace will be providing the requested 10 lb. hams included in each basket.

Please place your contributions in the Grace Community Center on the tables provided. On December 15, following the 10:45 worship service, the food will be distributed and boxed up. Please feel free to be a member of the boxing team that afternoon. We are seeking some more people to assist in the boxing of the food items. Many hands make light the work and it's an incredible way to witness to God's grace and glory to our neighbors in need. More details will appear in future bulletins. Thank you for your contribution to our neighbors in need.

Erynn Hanford, Ministry Coordinator

KAIROS COOKIES UPDATE

Many thanks to those in the congregation who baked cookies for the Kairos Prison Ministry Weekend #11 that was held at the Madison Correctional Institution on October 10-13. The **82 dozen cookies** you so generously baked and prayed over were literally a gift from God to the inmates and they were an important part in opening hearts to the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit led our team and everything went as planned during the 4-day spiritual weekend. We heard many expressions of hope from the 36 prisoners, including the following thoughts shared during the Open-Microphone segment:

~"Started out this year wanting to take my life. I feel healed by this ministry and praise God for showing Himself to me this weekend."

~"My term is about up and I'm going to be out in civilization again. I needed this as a kick in the rear and to reconnect to God."

~"I want to thank God for putting me in prison. I was a lost sheep but now He found me."

Your cookies helped transform lives at the Madison Correctional Institution. May God richly bless you!

Sam Poston and Dan Shroyer, Kairos Team Members

Heartfelt Thank You

Being chosen by **I Spy** as the selectee for the month of November was a very unexpected and humbling experience for me. The gracious expressions of gratitude for my acts of service to Grace church for over 65 years overwhelmed me to say the least. There was a time, shamefully, that I believed if I did enough good works it would secure my entry into heaven. However, as time matured my faith in our Lord, I found an absolute joy in serving without reservation or pretext. How can I not serve a God who is so gracious to and forgiving of a sinner like me? I am so grateful to my wonderful wife Marcia for introducing me to Grace in July of 1956. I can't imagine not being a member of this fantastic congregation. Thank you for the wonderful cards. God bless you all! Clem Meyer

To our Grace family and friends,

Our heartfelt thanks to our Grace family for all of your cards, visits, prayers and support during our mother's, Pat Stelzer, illness and passing. We are truly blessed to belong to such a loving and caring congregation.

Yours In Christ, Mike & Mary Beth Stelzer

Women of Grace Christmas Ornament Exchange

Saturday, Dec. 7, 12 p.m.—2 p.m.

Springfield Country Club

Attention All Ladies!!! Please join us for a "Joyful" gathering in celebrating the Savior's birth, enjoying food, fellowship and ornament exchange.

Luncheon buffet includes Dublin herb chicken, Boursin stuffed redskins potatoes, green beans, dessert, and beverages.

Please bring a wrapped Christmas ornament (\$10 and under) for the exchange.

Cost is \$20 a person, registration and payment must be received by December 1, 2019

December Events



Sunday, December 1

8:00 am Worship
9:15 am Sunday School for all ages
10:45 am Contemporary Worship

Monday, December 2

6:00 pm Stephen Ministry

Tuesday, December 3

8:00 am Men's Bible Study
11:30 am —1:30pm Staff meeting/
office closed

Wednesday, December 4

9:30 am Embroiderer's Guild
5:30 pm Grace Notes rehearsal
6:45 pm 8-12 grade youth
7:00 pm Sanctuary Choir rehearsal

Thursday, December 5

11:00 am Adult Bible Study
1:00 pm Service Quilter's Guild
7:00 pm Worship

Friday, December 6

Saturday, December 7

8:00 am Men's Bible Study
12:00 pm Women of Grace Ornament
Exchange

Sunday, December 8

8:00 am Worship
9:15 am Sunday School for all ages
10:15 am Fellowship
10:45 am Worship
12:15 pm Handchimes rehearsal
2:30 pm Worship/Christmas party at
Springfield Manor

Monday, December 9

Tuesday, December 10

8:00 am Men's Bible Study
9:30 am Faith Guild
11:30 am —1:30pm Staff meeting/
office closed
2:00 pm Joy Guild
6:00 pm Executive committee
7:00 pm Agape Guild

Wednesday, December 11

9:30 am Hope Guild
5:30 pm Grace Notes rehearsal
6:45 pm 8-12 grade youth group
7:00 pm Sanctuary Choir rehearsal

Thursday, December 12

11:00 am Adult Bible Study
1:00 pm Service Quilter's Guild
7:00 pm Worship

Friday, December 13

Saturday, December 14

8:00 am Men's Bible Study

Sunday, December 15

8:00 am Worship
9:15 am Sunday School for all ages
10:15 am Fellowship
10:45 am Worship
12:15 pm Handchimes rehearsal
3:30 pm Pastor McGee Installation

Monday, December 16

Tuesday, December 17

8:00 am Men's Bible Study
11:30 am —1:30pm Staff meeting/
office closed
7:00 pm Grace Council

Wednesday, December 18

5:30 pm Grace Notes rehearsal
6:45 pm 8-12 grade youth group
7:00 pm Sanctuary Choir rehearsal

Thursday, December 19

9:30 am Messenger Mailing Team
11:00 am Adult Bible Study
6:00 pm Prayer Support Team
7:00 pm Worship

Friday, December 20

9:30 am Stable Recession Procession
rehearsal

Saturday, December 21

8:00 am Men's Bible Study

Sunday, December 22

8:00 am Worship
9:15 am Sunday School for youth
10:15 am Fellowship
10:45 am Worship

Monday, December 23

Tuesday, December 24

8:00 am Men's Bible Study
12:00 pm Grace office closed
6:30 pm Christmas Eve worship
9:00 pm Christmas Eve worship

Wednesday, December 25

Grace office closed

Thursday, December 26

Grace office closed

Friday, December 27

Saturday, December 28

8:00 am Men's Bible Study

Sunday, December 29

8:00 am Worship
9:15 am Sunday School for youth
9:15 am Cookies & Carols for adults
10:45 am Worship

Monday, December 30

Tuesday, December 31

8:00 am Men's Bible Study
12:00 pm Grace office closed

Service Quilt Guild Meeting at a New Time

The Service Quilt Guild will be meeting at a new time, 1-3 pm. The guild meets on the 1st and 2nd Thursday of the month in room N108. We are always looking for new members and you do not need to know how to sew. For more information please contact Rebecca Stuchell or call the church office, 399-6257.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED

Service of Installation

FOR

Pastor Brian S. McGee

AS

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

1801 ST. PARIS PIKE, SPRINGFIELD, OH 45504

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2019 3:30 p.m.

Light refreshments will follow the service.

Clergy are invited to vest. The color of the day is red.

CURRENT RESIDENT OR

www.grace-nalc.org 937-399-6257

Springfield, OH 45504

1801 St. Paris Pike

Evangelical Lutheran Church



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