

# GRACE MESSENGER

JANUARY 2020

## Pastor's Brodbeck's Reflection

Welcome to 2020! Those four digits remind me of my annual visit to the optometrist. That's the goal: 2020 vision. I haven't been there for years, but that is the standard by which my eyesight is always measured. How well do I see? How close am I to having 2020 vision?

One of my favorite Old Testament stories is found in 2 Kings 6. There the prophet Elisha finds himself surrounded by the armies of the king of Aram. Elisha has been an irritant to this powerful king, so the king has come to put an end to the prophet's constant interference. The army arrives in the middle of the night, making it impossible for Elisha and his servant to escape. Or so he thought.

Not surprisingly, the servant panicked when he saw the army. Wouldn't you? But not so with Elisha, for he saw what the servant could not. His words were confusing: "Don't worry," Elisha said. "There are more of us than there are of them." And then the prophet prayed a simple prayer, asking God to give his faithful servant a divine dose of 2020 vision: "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." (2 Kings 6:17).

That is my prayer for myself and for our entire congregation as we head into this new year. "Open our eyes, Lord, so that we may see." I invite you to pray that prayer with me this year.

I don't have a particular agenda in mind as I pray that prayer. Not yet, anyway. I am, however, trusting that as God moves among us and answers this prayer, He will show us what we need to see. I am also believing that once we see it, we will be eager and diligent in our pursuit of that vision God gives to us.

Let me conclude by thanking each of you for your support – both in your prayers and through your actions – for this time of transition in our congregation. For us to have a full pastoral team in place in the short span of six months is nothing short of a miracle. That may well be one of the shortest transition times in Lutheran history. God's hand in all of this only heightens my belief about what God has planned for us now. We just need to see it. I'm glad you are on this journey with me. To Him be the Glory!

## Endowment Fund Reminder

The Endowment Committee is alerting all Ministry Coordinators, Staff, Pastors and Guilds to the upcoming March release of Distribution Request Forms. These forms are used to apply for Endowment Fund Distributions. These distributions, when awarded, can open new or expanded ministry opportunities for any group which identifies a project or program and supports it with a full explanation of projected results and cost justification.

The Endowment Committee, in 2020, is hoping to see some additional opportunities in our Outreach Ministries. If you are involved in one of these, please be thinking about ways to expand or enhance an existing program, or start a new one, if you had some additional funding. The Committee encourages participation of all ministries, not just outreach. At the March Congregational Meeting, we will announce the availability of investment returns for 2020. We will also have the forms for fund requests available for distribution. You will have until late May to submit any request for funds. The committee will determine results for distributions and release the funds in June.

This is an annual event. Funds are released each year, and each year we have a wide variety of requests for distributions. Please give some thought to this so that when March arrives, you may already have something in mind. - The Endowment Committee

## Offering Envelopes

2020 offering envelopes are available in the narthex to be picked up. If you do not find a set of envelopes with your name, please contact Darla Kalifoot (399-6257 ext. 102). If you use leftover 2019 offering envelopes, please scratch out the offering envelope number, as your 2020 envelope number has changed. For 2019 tax credit, your offering must be received in the Grace office by noon on December 31, 2019, or postmarked December 31, 2019.

## Letter from Pastor McGee

Dear Disciples of Jesus Christ,

As we begin a new liturgical calendar year, we also begin a new journey of Advent. Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming," which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*. In the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany. During these forty days of preparation, Christians would spend time in penance, prayer and fasting.

By the 6<sup>th</sup> century, however, Roman Christians joined Advent to the coming of Jesus Christ. But their preparation for Advent was not for Jesus' first coming in a manger as a baby, but his second coming when he would come back to judge the living and the dead. It was not until the Middle Ages that Advent and Christ were first linked together to Jesus' first coming at Christmas.

Jesus Christ has come to us over two thousand years ago as a baby in a manger as the promised Messiah foretold in the Old Testament scriptures. Jesus Christ has come and he will come again. We confess this in the second article of the Apostles' Creed: "He will come to judge the living and the dead." Because we know this to be true, let us, then, prepare our hearts and be ready for his coming. Let us keep watch for the night is nearly over and the day is almost near. Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us prepare ourselves for the coming of our Lord.

May this be a time in our church when we prepare our hearts for our Lord's coming. Do not get caught up in the hustle and bustle that, so often, this season brings. While there will be many opportunities to get distracted in all the Christmas festivities, keep your eyes upon Jesus. He is coming and he is coming soon.

As we prepare to receive Christ this Advent season, stay in the Word of God. Saturate your mind and your heart in the truth of the Bible. Jesus comes to us in his Word. He creates faith in us through the proclamation of his Word. Like Luther, whose conscience was held captive to the word of Holy Scripture, may we, too, hold fast to the promises given to us by the Lord, so that we are not deceived and led astray.

A wonderful family practice is to read the Bible around the dinner table or at night before bed, lighting the Advent wreath and celebrating the hope, peace, joy and love of Jesus that only he brings. Journey through Advent with a devotional book entitled, "Blessed Is He Who Comes," written by the Rev. Dr. David Wendel. And share with your family and friends how the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, is coming to you this Christmas. That resource can be downloaded on your computer by going to <https://thenalc.org/advent-devotional-2019/>, or on your smartphone by downloading the free NALC Walk by Faith app via the App Store.

Be blessed this Advent season and stay in the Word. Keep watch and be ready for our Lord is coming soon. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God's grace, peace, and mercy be with you!

### Lay Ministry Successes

2019 is almost over and we've had some really great things happening at Grace. As for the Lay Ministry area, our Ministry Area Coordinators created articles for the Messenger by asking Team Coordinators to share why they serve in their particular ministry.

We had signs in the Narthex again this year, focusing on the Spiritual Gifts of each ministry, culminating, in September, with a Sunday School class entitled "Story Time." Each MAC shared the Spiritual Gifts of their area by relating to a "story time" character. This light hearted event was to show everyone that each Spiritual Gift can be displayed in the simplest way, with love and laughter.

We had a successful Time and Talent campaign increasing the number of people signing up to serve in 2020. Even with the increase, we still have ministries that could use more people serving on their teams. It's not too late for you to become a member of these teams. If you have questions about the tasks, please contact me and I will share what is involved and hopefully you'll use your Spiritual Gift in yet another service to God at Grace.

### Outreach Update for January

Join us on January 5th for a Breakfast Break featuring Casey Cockerham from the Nehemiah Foundation.

He will be presenting updates on their Ministry here in Springfield and how we can help meet their needs.

In December, on Tuesdays from 5-7 p.m., we will be serving at Central Community Center Inc, formerly Rainbow Table II. Please contact Robert Thompson if you are interested in serving, 937-605-0445. Thanks to all!

## Springfield Manor Christmas Party

On Sunday, December 8, members from the Agape Guild, Pastor Brodbeck and other Grace members gathered at the Manor to host the fourth annual Christmas party. Approximately 40 residents participated.

Stephen and Andy Schumacher led a meaningful worship service, reading from the book of Luke and singing Christmas hymns. Immediately following the service, refreshments of punch and cookies were served and Santa (John Maxwell) helped pass out gifts to all. Each resident received bottles of body wash and body lotion and two pair of socks.

**Heartfelt thanks** to our wonderful Grace family for donating the body washes, lotions and socks for 57 men and 29 women residents of Springfield Manor.



## NALC's Disaster Response

In November, Grace filled another 26 ft. truck to be sent to NALC's Disaster Response center with home furnishings to help others in need. This time, in addition to the 26 ft truck, we were able to send a pickup truck and trailer load of home furnishings directly to families in the Dayton area suffering from this past May's Tornadoes.

The NALC Disaster Response Mission Program is always in need of good used home furnishings (not clothing) to be given to needy families that have been displaced or hurt by hurricanes, floods or other disasters. Grace can continue to have an impact through these "Stuff the Truck" or other coordinated fundraising functions or events. One of the NALC's efforts is to Pray with and give Bibles to the families receiving aid. This is one of their actions that sets them/us apart from other organizations offering relief, working through God's Grace, to help others not only with physical and material aid, but with Spiritual aid as well. Stay tuned for the next event that will enable you to make a difference.

One can go to the NALC web site at [www.TheNALC.org](http://www.TheNALC.org) to gather more information or call Steven Schumacher at 937-624-7074.



# THE NEHEMIAH FOUNDATION



## Outreach Breakfast Break

Join us on January 5th at 9:15 a.m. in the Grace community center for a Breakfast Break featuring Casey Cockerham from the Nehemiah Foundation. He will be presenting updates on their Ministry here in Springfield and how we can help meet their needs.

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