

December MESSENGER



Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

2024



Pastor's Reflection

Tom Brodbeck

Will we have a white Christmas this year? Forecasters seem to be projecting more rain than snow, so I don't know what to expect... although I'm fairly confident Christmas will come. What do you expect as we approach this special time of the year?

One of the great carols sung during the Advent season is "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus" (LBW #30). This hymn was written in 1744 by Charles Wesley. At that time, Wesley was burdened by the situation of children (particularly orphans) in the areas around him. He was also deeply concerned about the widening class divide in Great Britain (reminiscent of our own nation's divisions in the areas of politics, race, and social issues). Burdened by all of this, he passionately wanted Jesus to come back and set the world right. You can almost hear him cry out "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus."

The lyrics of this hymn focus on God choosing to give a Messiah to the world in the form of the baby Jesus and speaks of the longing of all people for a Messiah who would set them free from the burden of sin – something different from what most people expected.

Come, thou long-expected Jesus, Born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us; Let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, Hope of all the earth thou art,
Dear Desire of ev'ry nation, Joy of every longing heart.

Text: Charles Wesley. Tune: W Walker. Reproduced by permission, CCLI License #2861430.

I want that song to echo in my heart all month long. I am expecting Jesus! Are you?

December Outreach Corner

Giving Tree

Our annual Giving Tree is to help our Snowhill families during Christmas time. The tags on the tree reflect individual children (gender, age, size) and what they've asked for. Please take a tag, buy that item, wrap the gift, attach the tag to the gift, and deliver it to the church, no later than December 15th. See Sandy Thompson with any questions.



Save the Date: January Outreach Break

Sunday, January 5th during the Sunday school hour
The Haitian Community Help and Support Center will be here to tell us about the wonderful work they are doing to help our new neighbors find their way here in Springfield and how we can help support their efforts. Please plan to join us.

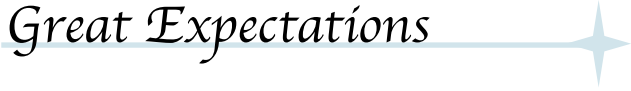


Laurel Mission Trip

A big thanks to all who supported our team this year for our one week trip to Laurel Mission in SE Kentucky. It was another great trip despite some last minute changes. God's love was shared well with two families with great need and much work was completed in a short time. We'd love to have you join us next year, see Sandy Thompson if you would like to know more.

Advent 2024

Great Expectations



As the carol suggests, "It's the most wonderful time of the year." And so we welcome Advent 2024, which begins on Sunday, December 1. Our theme will be "*Great Expectations*."

This theme shares its title with the 13th (and arguably the best) novel of Charles Dickens (whose prior work reappears every Christmas holiday season as we relive the tale of Ebenezer Scrooge and Tiny Tim).

The Dickens's version of *Great Expectations* is full of extreme imagery—poverty, prison ships and chains, and fights to the death. It has a colorful cast of characters and its themes include wealth and poverty, love and rejection, and the eventual triumph of good over evil. Ultimately Dickens points us toward "a legacy to come." And though not a Christian work per se, the novel is also concerned with questions relating to conscience and moral regeneration, as well as redemption through love. All of this is enough to make you think of the biblical Christmas story, isn't it?

Our version of *Great Expectations* will, of course, be based on the Scriptures (not on the paragraphs of the Dickens' novel). We will explore how Jesus fulfilled the expectations of the Old Testament prophets, even if He was not what the people of His day expected. There were so many "Great Expectations!"

Our Sunday worship services (at 8 and 10:45 a.m. on each of the month's five weeks) will be supplemented by three Thursday contemplative services at 7 p.m. Pastor Tom will be joined in the chancel by our seminarians Michelle Kouse and Sandy Thompson for these services.

We will also worship on Christmas Eve with our traditional candlelight services at 6:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. The earlier service will feature the children's stable processional, and both services will be filled with beautiful music.

Come expectantly as we worship the Baby of Bethlehem!





NORTH AMERICAN
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

20
20
VISION

Thanks to your generous support Grace has raised \$50,880 as of 10/31/24 towards our goal of \$60,000 by the end of 2025. This leaves us with \$9,120 to raise over the next 14 months. We are so grateful for your ongoing support in this effort and if we can continue this commitment, we could potentially exceed our goal.

NALC Vision 2020

You can donate through the Grace app or our website- (www.grace-nalc.org). On the website, you can find the link in the banner at the top of the home page. You also can mark your check or offering envelope for the 20/20 Vision Campaign. Any gift, no matter the size, makes an impact. Nothing is too small. Pledge cards are also available in the Narthex at the Connection Center table.

Please consider us for your 2024 end-of-year giving. **#GivingTuesday** is December 3, 2024. You may want to include Grace and NALC 20/20 Vision on your list this year.

Young At Heart

November We Enjoyed

- La Comedia Dinner Theater Musical Holiday Inn Christmas Show
- Ryan Roosen Music (United Methodist)
- Synidesy Flute Trio (Covenant Prebs).

December Upcoming Events

Dec 8th 3pm service of candles and lights (Covenant Church).

Dec 15th. Christmas At Carillion Historical Park. Dayton, Ohio

Meeting at grace 1:30pm to 8pm Free Admission if you Carpool!

Visit Historical Building, Train Ride (\$5)' Christmas lights, music, shops Dine Together (your \$).

Come All Join the Fellowship!



Financial Information

Offering Envelopes ✦

2025 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 2024 offering envelopes, please scratch out the offering envelope number, as your 2025 envelope number has changed. For the 2024 tax credit, your offering must be received in the Grace office by noon on December 31, 2024, or postmarked December 31, 2024.



Vanco Simply Giving ✦

The Simply Giving program is a convenient, safe and simple way for you to make your church offerings through electronic funds transfer (EFT) directly from your checking or savings account.

Contact Darla Kalifoot at 937-399-6257 ext. 102 or darla.kalifoot@grace-nalc.org for the application and we can get the process started for you at your convenience.



✦ Inclement Weather Policy

The policy for how and when Grace worship and/or other ministries might be closed or cancelled due to inclement weather is as follows: Pastor Brodbeck will contact at least two

members of the executive committee for consultation and assistance. If they decide to cancel activities or worship, we will use the One Call Now service that allows each of our households to receive a phone call when we cancel services. Television station WHIO channel 7 will also be alerted. A post will be made on the Grace Facebook page, a notification will be sent out on the Grace APP.

Women of Grace

Women of Grace are Encouraged to Register to be a Secret Sister by December 15

Grace's Secret Sister program returns on January 1, 2025. A Secret Sisters program at a church is a ministry where participants anonymously encourage their assigned Secret Sister through prayers, cards and a small gift at the end of the program on the designated "reveal" date. It's a great way to get to know someone new at Grace!

Our time period at Grace for Secret Sisters in the coming year, begins on Jan. 1, 2025, and ends on May 5, 2025. Participants will be assigned to a "sister" via US mail before the end of December 2024, so any woman from Grace, who wants to participate, needs to sign up by December 15.

To sign up to be a Secret Sister, please pick up the Secret Sister Guidelines sheet in the Narthex and, after reading that, complete the form titled "About Me" to sign up to be a Secret Sister and drop the form in the box in the Narthex. Be sure to fill out your form carefully because your assigned Secret Sister will be receiving that form to learn more about you. You must have your form "About Me" in the box in the Narthex by Dec. 15. You will receive information about your Secret Sister and the guidelines about your Secret Sister toward the end of December. If you have any questions, please contact Donna Stelzer at 937 902 0671 or dmstelzer@gmail.com

**Secret Sisters is
Returning
to Grace**

Jan. 1 - May 5, 2025

**To learn more
about Secret Sisters,
pick up a form up
in the church
Narthex called
*Consider Being A
Secret Sister***

**Sign up to
Become a Grace
Secret Sister for
2025
by Dec. 15**

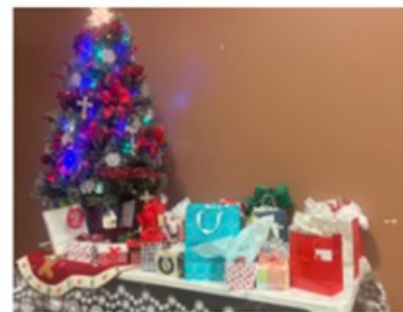
**To
Register for Secret
Sisters, Drop Your
Completed Form
"About Me" in the
Wooden Box in
Narthex**

A Secret Sister program is part of our Women of Grace Ministry Program. It's a 4-month program with the secret exchanging of names within a group of Women of Grace who sign up. You give encouragement by the way of cards, prayers and a small gift to the "sister" without revealing your name to them until the end on May 5. Our reveal experience will be on May 5! Questions? Call Donna Stelzer at 937 902 0671.

Women of Grace

Joy for the Women of Grace ✦

The Women of Grace gathered for a Luncheon and Ornament Exchange on Nov. 9 in Grace's Fellowship Hall. They were filled with joy as they enjoyed great fellowship and fun activities. Under the direction of Barbara Blackburn, they each took turns playing a bell as they all sang Christmas Carols and learned a bit of history about each carol. They also had lots of laughter and fun exchanging ornaments through a scripture-based activity. Thanks to all who participated and helped to make this celebration a joy-filled event!



Children's Ministry

Children's Prayer Partners ✨

On October 26th, the children got to meet their prayer partners and we spent the morning playing games. It was a fun-filled and meaningful morning. Both the adults and children have started making connections during the week by sending cards, drawing pictures and finding each other during Fellowship.



December Stewardship

Walking Through the New Testament in 2024

As the year comes to a close, also does our "Bible Reading Plan 5×5×5". The 5×5×5 plan was to be a helpful aid into how all could discipline our approach to reading the New Testament.

The first "5" was to read 5 minutes a day. (OK, I can do that.)

The second "5" was to read 5 days a week. (OK, I can do that, too.)

But, I had a hard time remembering what the third "5" was to help with. After referring back to the reading plan, it stood for 5 ways to dig deeper into our reading. When I set aside my 5 minutes for reading, I don't just read. I need to concentrate on the five suggestions for digging deeper as the plan suggests.

1. Underline and highlight key words.
2. Put the reading into your own words.
3. Ask and answer questions of your self about what you just read.
4. Capture the big idea and understand why.
5. Personalize the meaning.

(I found that if I used all of these 5 points, I needed to read much longer than 5 minutes!)

After using this approach for reading the New Testament, it will be a great approach to READ THE OLD TESTAMENT!

Neal Blackburn





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