

20 *January* 26

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church Messenger



Pastor's Reflection

Tom Brodbeck

As you may know, our family was recently blessed with the addition of our seventh grandchild. When we see her again for our Christmas gathering, she will be two months old. What will 2026 hold for her, or for any child like her?

By this time next year, she will be walking, interrupting her siblings' efforts to play a game, feeding herself, sleeping through the night, saying "Mama" and "Dada" (or better yet, "Papa") and other simple words. The Lord willing, it will be a fun and peaceful year.

When Jesus was born, He and his earthly family had that same experience. Can you picture it? His first steps, first words? His parents enjoyed everything that parents today enjoy with their newborns.

It will take about two years before King Herod will launch his murderous rampage. We date that on the basis of Herod's decree (Matthew 2:16). Everything changes when that happens. But for those first two years, the Holy Family was a regular family. Just like us.

Part of the beauty of the story of Jesus was that He was in every way fully human (as well as fully divine). "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). In order to pay the price for the sins of humanity He had to become one with humanity. And so He started as a little boy. Imagine. Jesus in the nursery at synagogue. Jesus carried through the market.

He became one of us. And He did it for us.

JANUARY OUTREACH CORNER



OUTREACH BREAKFAST BREAK – PLEASE JOIN US!

When: Sunday, January 4th, during the Sunday School hour

Who: David and Theresa Mabry, the new directors of **Encompass Connection Center**

Join us for breakfast and conversation as David and Theresa share about the incredible work Encompass Connection Center is doing to strengthen relationships—whether in marriage, the workplace, or our broader community.

This is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about how they are making a positive impact and how we can support their mission. Don't miss it—please plan to join us!



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY ANNUAL HOME FOR HOLIDAYS:

During the month of January, we will be collecting our spare change to support the Habitat for Humanity's annual Home for the Holidays campaign. Please pick up a blue bank, fill it with your spare change, and return to Grace by Sunday, January 25, 2026. See Sandy Thompson for more information.



ST JOHN'S FOOD PANTRY:

February is one of our months to serve at St John's Food Pantry on Wednesday mornings. If you are interested in helping to distribute food, please contact Judy Fredrich at 937-925-1177. They could also use fruit, soup, Ramen Noodles, Cereal, bread, toilet paper, soap, laundry detergent, toothpaste, etc. PLEASE PLACE IN ST JOHN'S GROCERY CART BY 2/15/26

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.

HELP SUPPORT OUR YOUTH



During this season without a Director of Youth Ministry, we want to be especially intentional about caring for and supporting the youth of Grace Lutheran Church. Our young people are a vital and cherished part of our congregation, and it is important that they continue to feel loved, connected, and valued during this time.

We are inviting adults in our congregation to serve as **Youth Connectors**. A Youth Connector is someone willing to come alongside one of our youth through prayer, presence, and simple acts of care. This might look like checking in occasionally, attending a sporting event or performance, meeting for coffee, or simply offering encouragement and support in ways that feel natural to you.

No special training is required—just a caring heart and a willingness to show up. If you are interested in becoming a Youth Connector, please let **Sandy Thompson** know, and she will gladly help match you with a youth.

Together, we can continue to surround our youth with the love, encouragement, and faith community they need and deserve.



SECRET SISTERS PROGRAM RETURNS TO GRACE



You may be wondering what a Secret Sisters Program is. Here are some details that may help your understanding of our 2026 Secret Sister Program.

- Purpose: To foster deeper relationships among women within our church
- Concept: Women sign up to be paired with a "Secret Partner" for a set period. (Our set period is Feb. 1 – May 11, 2026.) Why is it secret? Each participant has no idea who is praying for her, giving her cards and/or notes and small tokens.
- Activities: Each Secret Sister prays for her assigned sister and at least once per month surprises her assigned sister with anonymous cards or notes which offer encouragement, prayers and/or small tokens of affection.
- Reveal Party: The anonymity will conclude at a big reveal party, on the evening of May 11 and that's where Secret Sisters get a final gift.

To become a Secret Sister, complete both sides of the application form which is called "All About Me" which will be available January 4 – January 18, 2026, at the Secret Sister Station in Grace's Library. Once finished with both sides, fold the form in half and put the form in the slot on the wooden box at the Secret Sister Station. I will mail the information to your assigned Secret Sister in late January. Additional information titled "Consider Being a Secret Sister" is available in the Library at the Secret Sister Station. If you need additional information, please reach out to me at dmstelzer@gmail.com.



Secret Sisters

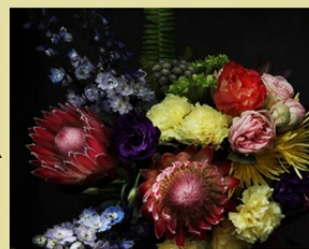
*Secret Sisters will return on
February 1, 2026.*

*To become a Secret Sister, pick
up and complete the Secret
Sister Info form at the Secret
Sister station in Grace's*

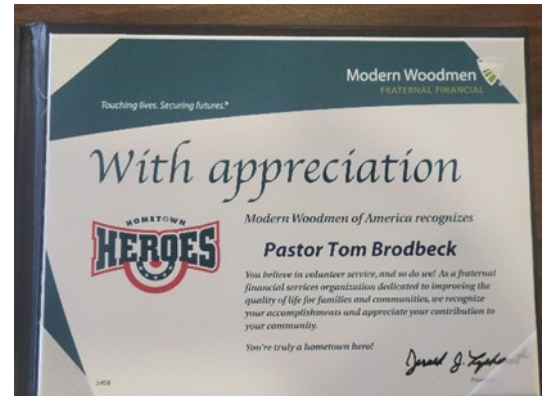
Library: Jan. 4 – Jan. 18.

*After you complete both sides of the Info Form fold the
form in half & drop that application into the wooden box on
the table by Noon on January 18. You will be mailed
information about your new Secret Sister to your home
address as listed on the Secret Sister Form. Questions?*

Contact dmstelzer@gmail.com



PASTOR TOM HONORED WITH MODERN WOODMEN OF AMERICA HOMETOWN HERO AWARD



The congregation and community are celebrating Pastor Tom, who was recently recognized with the **Modern Woodmen of America Hometown Hero Award**. This award honors individuals who make a lasting impact on their community through dedication, service, and compassion for others.

Pastor Tom is known for his generosity and commitment to the wider community. Opening the use of our Grace building and grounds has been important to him for many years, and Grace's reputation for wonderful hospitality is rooted in his leadership and vision.

Congratulations to Pastor Tom on this well-deserved honor and thank you for continuing to inspire the community through faith, compassion, and service.

COUNCIL AND STAFF RETREAT

On Saturday, January 10 your Grace Council and Staff will convene in the Grace Fellowship Hall for its annual start-of-the-year retreat. This event provides our two leadership teams with time to interact over key topics regarding our church and its future.

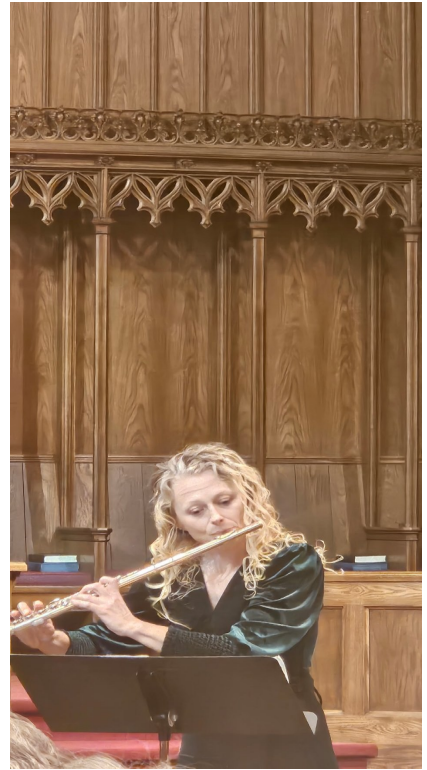
Headlining the agenda this year is a conversation driven by these questions: How do we manage the growing pastoral needs of this congregation? What are our options and priorities?

Please be in prayer for God's wisdom and guidance for that event.

YOUNG AT HEART

The Young at Heart Group in November listen to music from the flute and the piano at the Covenant Presbyterian Church.

We finish the year honoring our Lord's birth with a dinner Christmas party and singing Christmas carols. Also The Best Christmas Pageant Ever movie was played to conclude the night. In 2026 come join us for Christian love and fun.



THANK YOU LETTER

I want to thank everyone for the prayers, cards, meals, and flowers we have received over the past months of Max's cancer diagnosis and ultimately his passing forward in September. I want you to know that we felt the love and prayers you sent up. I thankfully, continue to feel the love and prayers from my church family.

Yours in Christ,

Valerie Holly and Family

THANK YOU LETTER

Thank you so very much for all the cards and prayers. I have been absolutely humbled by the number of people from Grace who have taken the time to pray for us and to make us aware of their prayers by sending us warm remembrances. I only served Grace for a year at a very limited capacity and your love continues to overflow towards us. Words cannot express the honor you have shown to us. Thank you.

Pastor Daniel G. Mershon

NOVEMBER PRAYER PARTNERS

In November, our Prayer Partners got together to celebrate Thanksgiving by playing games and eating pumpkin and apple pies in a cup. Our service project was making Thanksgiving Cards, which Steve and Andy Schumacher delivered to the Springfield Manor.





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