

amazing

IN YOUR LIFE | IN OUR COMMUNITY | IN THE WORLD

Grace

A monthly publication for members and friends of Grace Presbyterian Church in Walnut Creek, California December 2020

Dear Grace Church Family,

As the calendar turns to December, we move into the season of Advent. Advent is a time of waiting—a period of watchful preparation—we both celebrate Christ’s coming into the world and watch with expectant hope for his coming again. The season originally began as a period of fasting, similar to Lent. Although the practice of abstaining has been relaxed, Advent retains the spirit of atonement and contrition.

One of the most popular traditions is the Advent wreath, which started in Germany as a Lutheran family custom and was originally used in the home. They didn’t become popular in churches until the middle of the twentieth century. Now they are nearly universal.

Historically, the candles had no more meaning than a countdown. That is, they originally stood for 4, 3, 2, and 1. However, the candles have gradually acquired meanings. If someone tells you that the candles have some other meaning than Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, they aren’t wrong, they are just different. The meanings are so new that they aren’t completely standardized.

In some locations, the third candle is pink, in others the fourth candle is pink; in still others, all four candles are purple. The purple candles are lit during Advent, when the liturgical color is purple, and the white candle is lit on Christmas Eve, when the liturgical color is white. So that explains the colors of the purple and white candles—they just match the liturgical decor. But what about the pink candle, if there is one?

The pink candle is becoming more and more popular, but it has a strange origin. Long ago, the Pope had the custom of giving someone a rose on the fourth Sunday in Lent. This led the Roman Catholic clergy to wear rose-colored vestments on that Sunday (called *Gaudete* Sunday). The effect was to give some relief from the somberness of Lent, so this was a very popular custom. Originally, Advent was a solemn fast in preparation for Christmas, so the custom was extended to the third Sunday in Advent to liven it up a little bit. Somewhere in there the third candle of the Advent wreath turned pink.

So you can think of it this way: Presbyterians now put a pink candle in a Lutheran Advent wreath because the Pope used to have the custom of giving out roses during Lent! Strange as it is, I’m heartened by the wonderful ways we are enriched by other traditions.

Speaking of traditions, the ongoing restrictions due to the pandemic mean that we will have to adjust some of our Advent and Christmas traditions. The Giving tree that is usually in the Narthex will be done “virtually” this year. Please see the details in this newsletter.

We will have a Blue Christmas service (on December 21) and Christmas Eve worship, but both will be recorded and then shared via a Zoom gathering. On Christmas Eve, we will have a “Lessons and Carols” style service at 4:00 pm, and will sing “Silent Night” but you will need to have candles ready at home to light!

I will close with a blessing from St. Columba: *“May God be a bright flame before you, be a guiding star above you, be a smooth path below you, be a kindly shepherd behind you, today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen.”*

Grace and peace, Mark

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Christmas Joy Offering, Commemorations.

WORSHIP AT 10 AM ON
SUNDAYS VIA ZOOM
DECEMBER SUNDAY WORSHIP

Dec 6 (2nd Advent) - Mark 1:1-8

Dec 13 (3rd Advent) - Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Dec 20 (4th Advent) - Luke 1:26-38

Dec 27 (1st Christmas) - Luke 2:22-40

For information, to view recorded worship services and more, go to <https://www.gracewc.org>.

Contact us:

gracepreschurchwc@gmail.com
or 925-935-2100

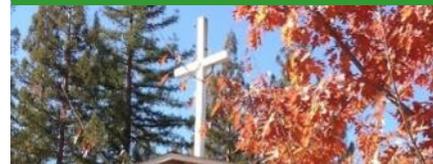
Sr. Pastor Mark Burnham:
925-433-5459 or
revmrb@gmail.com

Associate Pastor Karen Hastings-Flegel: 925-433-5458 or
korgan81@yahoo.com.

Pastors Emeriti:

Charie Reid and Robert Williams
Parish Associate: Diana Barkley
Office Manager: Judy Williams
Treasurer: Linda Neyer
Asst. Treasurer: Geri Rentz
Financial Scty: Jennifer Wallace
Headshot Photos: Carol King

EARLY DEADLINE
All Articles must be submitted
by December 14
to be included in the next issue.

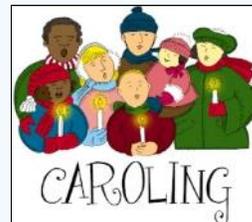


DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Phyllis Hewett	12/1
Elsie Nungesser	12/1
Gary Brasser	12/3
Daniel Rogers	12/6
Marianne Seals	12/7
Jim Black	12/8
Pat Devine-Cummings	12/8
Timothy Hamilton	12/11
Ivy Knott	12/13
Geoff Eukel	12/18
Dan Hasselbrink	12/21
Betty Foster	12/21
Andrew Rogers	12/22
Frances Whipple	12/22
Elise Teagle	12/22
Julie Kim	12/25
Nancy Lee	12/25

Christmas Caroling Pandemic Style December 13

We are excited to announce a new-style Christmas Caroling event in the courtyard on Sunday, December 13 at 5:00. Grace's Worship & Education department calls it "non-singing Christmas caroling." The plan is to hum or think the words behind our masks as Karen Hastings-Flegel plays familiar carols and hymns on the organ for half an hour. It will be great to see one another and chat a bit afterwards—socially distanced, of course!



Giving Tree for 2020

This year has been so unusual that it is a good thing to have some things remain the same. The Giving Tree will appear again in the Narthex, ready to receive your gifts to local folks that need a helping hand. Donations received will be distributed through Contra Costa Interfaith Coalition (CCIC).



This year, it will be most helpful to send a monetary donations by check or online giving. Your donations will be combined and one check will be sent to CCIC to buy gift cards from local food retailers that are most used by their clients. You may also give a food card from a local retailer such as Safeway (Mark the value on the card). **Deadline—December 17.**

There are several ways to get your gift to the office.

- 1) **Mail** a check (or card) to the church office. Make your check to Grace Presbyterian Church. Note *Giving Tree* on the memo line of the check.
- 2) **Drop your check (or card) into our locked mailbox** located in the courtyard near the Library door.
- 3) **Bring it with you on a Thursday when the sanctuary is open** (9:30-3pm) and leave it in the box just inside the office door marked "Giving Tree".
- 4) **Give online through the website, www.gracewc.org.**

Donating to the giving tree will help make a happy holiday for others – just as God wants. Thank you for your consideration.

Witness and Ministry Department, Marlene Hall, Lynn Lyons, Freddie Delamain, Bob Flegel and Sharon Lyons, CCIC Rep.

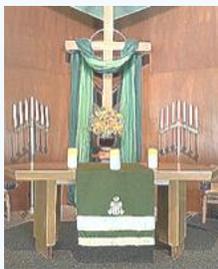
CHURCH OFFICERS RETREAT

The 2021 Officer's Retreat will take place on Sat., January 9 from 10 to noon.

The meeting will take place on Zoom. An email will be sent to elders and deacons in early January. Please save the date.

Sanctuary Open for Prayer

On December Thursdays from **9:30 am to 3:00 pm**, a "Sacred Space" is offered in the Sanctuary for individual prayer.



No sign-ups are necessary.

Blue Christmas/Longest Night Service December 21 at 4:00

For many, Christmas may not feel like "the most wonderful time of the year"—especially if you are bereaved or lonely. It is hard not to have a sense of loss when we contrast this scaled-down Christmas season with previous years. **The Blue Christmas service could help.** Traditionally held on the Longest Night of the year, the winter solstice, this service offers opportunities to lament and lift each other up as we pray, share, light candles in honor or memory of loved ones, and worship God. There will also be lighting of the Advent Wreath candles and some music.

This year, it will be a Zoom service. (Meeting ID is 999 5313 0677; passcode is 843760.) If you have questions, please contact Karen. Please consider joining Pastors Mark and Karen on Monday, Dec. 21 at 4:00 for this contemplative, meaningful service.



Stewardship Campaign Update

*"In Trust....
with Thanks....
We Give"*



Thank you to all who have submitted a pledge for 2021!

As you know, next year will be another financially challenging year for Grace Church, because of the restrictions on facility use. **As of mid-November, we have 43 pledges totaling \$148,080 which is a wonderful response to-date from our generous Grace community.** We hope others prayerfully consider and submit their pledges to help us achieve our goal of \$245,000 in the proposed budget for 2021.

Pledging enables the Session to plan for the year and finalize a budget - making those difficult decisions about staffing, programs, and missions.

If you haven't pledged, it isn't too late to mail your pledge card (included in the November newsletter) or to use the online pledge form link on the **Ways to Donate** page of the church website. This takes you to a secure webpage connected to our church database. If you have any questions, please call or email Jennifer Wallace, the Financial Secretary.

Grace is grateful for all of your gifts – your time, your talents, your generosity.

The Discipleship Team,
Sara Allen, Pat Hansen, Reta Wilcox, Linda Neyer

Financial Secretary Update

Thank you to everyone who has submitted a pledge for 2021. For those who have pledged, weekly and monthly envelopes for 2021 will be available in December. **We will let you know when your envelopes are ready. They may be picked up in the sanctuary on Thursdays, or if you are not able to come in person, please let us know and we will make sure they are mailed or delivered to you.**



We are still welcoming pledges for next year. To make a pledge either mail in the pledge card found in the November newsletter, or use our online pledge card found on the church website under the "ways to donate" tab. I am also available to answer any questions or take new pledge information directly. Please call or email me if I can help in any way.

Thank you again, Jennifer Wallace

Preschool News

The preschool held a fall fundraiser again this year. Pies were sold for \$15 each to the preschool and church families. Over 200 pies were sold and the sale yielded a whopping \$1,500. **Thank you to everyone who bought a pie, or two, or three.**

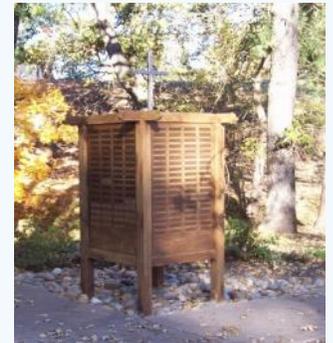


Thank you to all who have donated flowers for the sanctuary this past year. A new schedule is available now for 2021 dates. Please email or call the church office if you are interesting in donating flowers. The 2021 cost will remain at \$75 for a gorgeous arrangement. Donators are encouraged to pick up their flowers after Friday recording so they may be enjoyed at home.

Memorial Garden

At long last, plans are underway to do some enhancements to the Grace Memorial Garden. Upgrades include work on the sprinkling system, new plantings, staining benches and enhancements to the kiosk. The Business Department is working with Bethallyn Black, our resident plant specialist, and the Scouts of Troop 302 who will be providing some of the cleanup and labor for the project. Matt Lyons Construction is planning for the enhancements to the kiosk.

Since 1980 the Grace Memorial Garden has received the ashes of Grace members, friends and their loved ones.



Address Changes

Ralpa Storbeck

1172 Ivy Arbor Ln., Lincoln, CA 95648

Dorothy Miller-Nelson

204 Roberta Ave, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

In Loving Memory

Ermina Dykstra

August 10, 1914 to November 2020

Grace Presbyterian Church
2100 Tice Valley Boulevard
Walnut Creek, CA 94595

Sunday Worship at 10 AM
<https://www.gracewc.org>
December 2020



In spite of the shut-down of activities, the Grace Needlers continue their mission of knitting scarves for first responders and soldiers. They complete their knitting at home. Almost 300 scarves have been completed in 2020. Betty Adams, Diana Barkley, Betty Foster, Pat Hanson Judith Jones, Carol Parker and Marsha Stark are current Needlers. Contact Marsha Stark for more information. New members and yarn donations are always welcome.

ADVENT SEASON AT GRACE

See inside for details

The Giving Tree is here to receive your food gift cards and cash gifts. **Please have donations here by Dec. 17**



Caroling Pandemic Style

Dec. 13, 5:00 - 5:30 pm
in the Courtyard

Blue Christmas Service

Dec. 21, 4:00 pm via Zoom

Christmas Eve Worship

Dec. 24, 4:00 pm via Zoom
Virtual Choir and Bell Choir music

Merry Christmas

Dec. 25, Office will be closed.

Happy New Year 2021

Jan. 1, Office will be closed

Address Service Requested
Dated Material

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 8241
Concord, CA

All meetings are conducted via Zoom. Contact the church office for help connecting.

10:00 AM WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY
with Rev. Mark Burnham

**9:30 AM THURSDAY CONVERSATION
& COFFEE:** with Rev. Mark Burnham

10:00 AM MEN'S CLUB: Meets second Friday of each month

11:00 AM WOMENS' CIRCLES: Times TBA

10:00 AM SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE:
Welcome and social time, recorded worship followed by discussion.

Watch the recorded worship services anytime
by going to <https://www.gracewc.org>. Go to the Sunday Services page and click on the links to view.

Listen to the latest Sunday sermon on your phone. Dial 925-236-2487 anytime.

Call 1-925-236-2487
to hear our latest sermon

