



# Grace Notes

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH AT  
GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, CASTALIA, OH

**JANUARY 2023**



## FROM THE PASTOR: COFFEE SHOP CONVERSATIONS AND THE BIBLE

One morning, a pastor was sitting in a coffee shop working on her sermon. Papers were strewn across the table, a study bible was open in front of her, colored pens were sitting at the ready, and she was scribbling notes on one of the papers. Somewhere in the clutter on the table was a cup brimming with a supply of caffeine in case a little boost to get the grey cells percolating was required. A man walked by the table, glancing at the chaos as he passed. She paid little attention as he did, other than to notice jeans and a navy pea coat in her peripheral vision. She was in the sermon prep zone.

Moments later, she heard a voice ask, “What are you doing?” It was the man who had passed by. Explaining that she was a pastor doing research for the sermon for the upcoming Sunday, she watched with consternation as he lifted the edge of the Bible, looked at the front and asked what seemed like a peculiar question particularly since she had just told him that she was a pastor.

“Have you read this,” he questioned.

“Yes,” came the reply.

“All of it?”

“Yes.”

“All the way through from beginning to end?”

“All the way through from beginning to end.”

He cocked his head a little and gave her a look. She swore she could see disbelief written on his face.

“I have tried to read the Bible. A few times. I always quit. I have a hard time understanding it,” he said. “Do you? Understand it, I mean.”

Either sensing that this was a moment for brutal honesty or just not being quick-witted enough to say anything else, the pastor looked the man in the eyes and said, “Not always, no. And certainly not everything. But I am learning, and every time I read it or study it, I learn something new.”

Well, that surely wasn’t the answer the man was expecting, because he plopped himself into the chair across from her and said, “For real?”

“For real,” she replied.

He nodded toward the clutter on the table and asked the million-dollar question. “So how does that work? What with you being a preacher and all.” The pastor shrugged and smiled. “Sometimes better than others, I guess, but with the Holy Spirit in the mix there is always something that comes to the surface.

And with that a morning of sermon prep work turned into an enjoyable conversation with a curious young man over a second cup of coffee.

By now, you may have figured out that I am that pastor. I suppose pastors aren’t expected to admit that they don’t know and understand everything about the Bible. Maybe it even makes some people uncomfortable to think about it. Or maybe, it gives people – like the young man in the coffee shop that day – permission to wonder and ask questions.

I have been hearing Bibles passages in church since before I can remember, reading them publicly in worship since 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. I was 20 years old when I received my first bible as a gift. (That’s a story for another time.) I have read the Bible from beginning to end more than once, participated in and taught Bible studies, and spent entire seminary terms studying just one single book of the Bible. I am not a Bible scholar by any stretch of the imagination, and I have never been especially good at memorizing Bible passages and citations; but I have a love for the word of God and especially the Word of God, Jesus. That didn’t necessarily happen overnight the very first time I read the Bible.

I confess that I did not successfully complete reading the Bible from beginning to end on my first try. Or my second, for that matter. Even today, I struggle and lose focus when reading the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. By the time I finally made my first successful journey through the entire Bible, I was out of college, in my first job, and had stumbled my way into a Lutheran church. It was there that I learned there might be more to this Bible than just passages to memorize. I discovered study Bibles and commentaries. I learned to find common themes and connecting threads in what had seemed like a bunch of random stories. I learned that stories are important; they are the ways by which we make sense of our world. With the guidance of a wise and patient pastor, I saw the single large story of God to which all the books and stories in the Bible pointed and served to draw our attention.

That was when my fascination with the word of God blossomed into a curiosity about and hunger for the God to whom the stories pointed. Which is why, at the end of our conversation, I suggested to the young man that he might consider reading another book before he tried tackling reading the Bible from cover to cover again. I suggested that he read a book titled “Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God’s Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe” by Daniel Erlander. If you are a catechism student, parent, or council member that title may sound familiar to you.

In just 77 pages – with illustrations – Erlander covers the Bible from Genesis to Revelation giving us an overview of the book and helping us to place each book within that larger over-arching story. Yes, I think it is a great foundational and Biblically accurate place to start your ‘love affair’ with God’s word and God’s Word (Jesus).

So, this year I would like to encourage you to consider digging into the Bible with a different approach.

Not much of a reader and never really tackled reading the Bible? Start with “Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God’s Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe” by Daniel Erlander. Have a Bible handy to refer to when M&M raises questions or piques your interest.

Always used “Christ in Our Home” as a devotional, but not done much else in the way of reading the Bible? Try switching it up this year. Again, have your Bible handy for a deeper dig. I suggest one of the following:

“Bread for the Day” published by Augsburg Fortress,

“By Faith Alone” taken from Martin Luther’s writings and published by Word Publishing

“A Year With Jesus” by Eugene Peterson

Read the Bible but never really studied it? Find a good Study Bible if you don’t already have one. The Contemporary English (CEB) Study Bible or The Harper Collins Study Bible (NRSV) are reliable translations with good notes.

Been at this for years and years and already have a well-used and much-loved study Bible? Freshen it up with a different translation or add a commentary to the mix. Consider one of the following:

Harper Collins Bible Commentary (1 volume)

Augsburg Fortress Commentary on the Bible (2 volume)

Pick your favorite New Testament book and do an in-depth study of that book. I highly recommend the “For Everyone” commentary Series written by N.T. Wright. N.T. Wright is a well-regarded contemporary New Testament scholar who has written commentaries covering all the New Testament books.

Still not sure where to start or what to try next? Feel free to ask me. We can discover together.

Wherever you are in your journey through God’s word, I encourage you to consider making this the year that you challenge yourself to take another step. After 60+ years of hearing, reading, and studying scripture I find that every time I read scripture I discover a different thought, question, or bit of insight that never fails to delight. May it be so for you, as well.

Pastor Katie

## MINISTRY UPDATES

### COMMUNITY MEAL

The December Community Meal served 184 individuals this month. We thank Jenna Miller's Girl Scout Troop for decorating 20 dozen cookies! Also, thank you to Civista for joining our other volunteers to serve our families. It was a super team effort!

Menu for January is Hamburger Gravy over mashed potatoes, buttered corn, vegetable sticks, and dessert.

### GRACE'S TABLE FOOD PANTRY

Drive-thru pantry was held on Saturday, December 17th, and boxes were distributed to 64 families. These boxes included items for a Christmas meal, including a ham. Due to increased demand, the pantry is in need of food and monetary donations. Needed items are: canned fruit and vegetables, hamburger/tuna helper, ready to cook side dishes, cleaning supplies, laundry supplies. There is always a very high demand for CEREAL, hot and cold.

Volunteers to assist with the pantry are always needed. Please come and help us with this important ministry. Thank you for your support!!

*Our sisters in Christ who reside at The Willows of Bellevue would like to send a huge thank-you to all the members of Grace for the lovely bags of Christmas Cards. On behalf of Marge Loroff, Sondra VanCauwenbergh, Betty Meggitt, Lois Paule, Jeanette Smith and Wanda Stewart, with warm hugs and love, THANK YOU!*

*To have your prayer request placed on the Grace Prayer Chain, please contact Carole Kuns at 419-684-5887.*



MARJORIE LOROFF:	The Willows of Bellevue, 101 Auxiliary Drive, Bellevue, OH 44811
LOIS PAULE:	The Willows of Bellevue, 101 Auxiliary Drive, Bellevue, OH 44811
SONDRA VANCAUWENBERGH:	The Willows of Bellevue, 101 Auxiliary Drive, Bellevue, OH 44811
JEANETTE SMITH:	The Willows of Bellevue, 101 Auxiliary Drive, Bellevue, OH 44811
BETTY MEGGITT:	The Willows of Bellevue, 101 Auxiliary Drive, Bellevue, OH 44811

*Please note: This list is comprised of individuals who have authorized their residence information to be published. If you are a member of Grace and would like to be placed on the homebound list, please contact Brenda in the office at 419-684-5059.*

## PROJECT SHARE

Thank you to everyone for your patience and support for Project Share this year. Use of the facilities was of great help and allowed us to have everything packed up and out of the way when pantry volunteers were ready to pack boxes. Working and coordinating all together certainly paid off. Project Share assisted 82 families for a total of 376 individuals. God's Spirit certainly lives in the hearts of many!

*THANK YOU: Mike and I appreciated the warm Christmas greetings we have received from you. It always cheers my day to find a card or greeting in the mailbox at church or at home.*



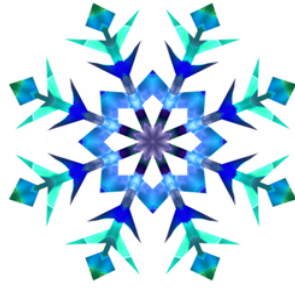
**2022 Giving Statements will be mailed no later than January 26, 2023.**

### FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS AS OF NOVEMBER 30, 2022

Operating Offerings:	\$ 15,482.00
Operating Expenses:	\$ 18,554.73
Operating Fund Balance:	\$(11,293.00)
Designated Giving:	\$ 29,337.73

Cash balance as of 11-30-22 was \$72,776.86

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Copies of the complete and detailed financial statements are available for review in the Church office.



# JANUARY

S	M	T	W	
<div>1</div> Worship – 9AM Happy New Year!!!	<div>2</div> CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	<div>3</div> Morning Prayer-6:15AM	<div>4</div> Choir – 7PM	Morn
<div>8</div> WORSHIP – 9AM	<div>9</div> Boy Scouts 6-7:30PM	<div>10</div> Morning Prayer-6:15AM Circle 3 – 1:30PM	<div>11</div> Choir – 7PM Community Meal 5-6:00PM – Drive Thru	Morn
<div>15</div> WORSHIP – 9AM	<div>16</div> Boy Scouts 6-7:30PM Dartball -AWAY – 7:30PM	<div>17</div> Morning Prayer 6:15AM CHURCH COUNCIL -6:00PM	<div>18</div> Choir – 7PM	Morn
<div>22</div> WORSHIP – 9AM	<div>23</div> Boy Scouts 6-7:30PM Dartball – HOME-7:30PM	<div>24</div> Morning Prayer 6:15AM	<div>25</div> Choir – 7PM	Morn
<div>29</div> WORSHIP – 9AM	<div>30</div> Boy Scouts 6-7:30PM Dartball – AWAY-7:30PM	<div>31</div> Morning Prayer 6:15AM		

## JANUARY READERS

- 1.
- 8. Rhonda Rice
- 15.
- 22.
- 29.

## JANUARY FLOWERS

- 1.
- 8. Jane Ann & Martha Cummings
- 15.
- 22.
- 29.

Henry  
Nikki  
Nancy  
Dean  
Bev M  
Terry  
Ethan

# Y 2023

T	F	S
5 ning Prayer 6:15AM	6 Daisy Troop Mtg. 6-7PM	7
12 ning Prayer 6:15AM	13 Daisy Troop Mtg. 6-7PM	14
19 ning Prayer-6:15AM	20 Daisy Troop Mtg. 6-7PM	21 Food Pantry 9-10:30AM
26 ning Prayer-6:15AM	27 Daisy Troop Mtg. 6-7PM	28

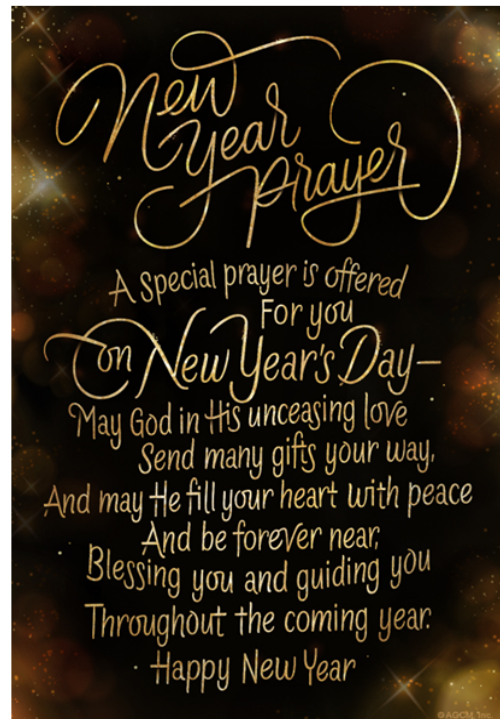
## BAPTISMAL ANNIVERSARIES IN JANUARY

Churchill	Lydia Churchill	Becky Sessler
Gysan	Robert Gysan	Gabriel Yetter
Hagelberger	Richard Henry	Kate Yetter
Koch	Robin Koch	
Iix	Marion Perkins	
Perkins	Halle Rice	
Ronto	Donna Sessler	



## JANUARY Birthdays

1. Brion Ronto
2. Karen Brandal
6. Bradley Yetter, Paula Klunk
9. Lydia Churchill
12. Joanne Shelley
13. Jeanette Smith
17. Pete Klunk
20. Kyle Galindo
22. James Churchill
24. Grant Churhill
28. John Hagelberger
29. Rhonda Rice, Carolyn Lickfelt
31. Matt Yetter



## Grace Lutheran Church Council Minutes November 15, 2022

Pastor Katie Suggitt		X	Christian Education:	Brent Lander	X
President:	Dave Bodi	X	Social Ministry & Outreach:	Vacant	
Vice President:	Brad Yetter		Stewardship & Finance:	Jordan Kuns	
Treasurer:	Don Hanck		Church Property:	Larry Krogh	X
Secretary:	Christine Bohn	X		Jim Floro	X
Worship:	Toni Borchardt	X			

President Dave Bodi called the meeting to order. The Mission Statement was recited.

Special Guests Jean Smith and Brenda Ried were present. Jean explained that the Community Meal Committee served the meal from the fellowship hall this month. They compared serving from there versus serving from the Gathering Area. Jean expressed that there were a few positives serving from the fellowship hall, but they were outweighed by the negatives. Serving from the fellowship hall created a greater distance between the cars and the meals. This created for more work and more volunteers. She requested that Council consider any person, group, or organization for a church-related event or activity be permitted to serve food in the Gathering Area. (NOTE: This would not require any policy changes since no guidelines within the policies to "Use of church facilities and equipment" make reference to meals in the Gathering Room.) Council discussed this issue during "New Business". Council agreed that the Community Meal can continue to be served from the Gathering Area. President Dave Bodi will inform Jean Smith.

### Minutes:

Larry Krogh moved and Pastor Katie seconded to approve the September 20, 2022 minutes. Motion passed. Toni Borchardt moved and Brent Lander seconded to approve the October 18, 2022 minutes with one correction that Barnes & Wendling (Don Hanck) will still be contracted to do our payroll and payroll tax preparation.

### Pastor's Report:

Pastor Katie officiated at a wedding and held two pre-marital sessions. She led Bible study for the Eastern Conference WELCA fall retreat, conducted pre-confirmation interviews, reviewed faith statements for seven catechism students, and did four home communion visits. Pastor Katie conducted a "Wilderness School" activity with current catechism students and assisted when able with Sunday School. Her primary roles are coach and resource for Amanda Bohn, who is doing a fantastic job. Pastor is again attending routine clergy meetings. She is currently working on a script for a simple Christmas program for the Sunday School. Advent worship planning is almost complete. Pastor Katie has committed to a brief worship service of prayer, scripture, and Holy Communion on Sunday, December 25<sup>th</sup> at our usual worship time. She will be taking vacation time December 4 through 11 and December 14 & 15. Pastor Gardner will provide pulpit supply on December 11. The annual Rostered Ministers Retreat will be held at Sawmill in January. Some area women clergy are discussing the possibility of an ecumenical pre-Lenten retreat.

### Financial Report:

No Report



## **Ministry Team Reports**

### Stewardship & Finance

No report.

### Worship

Toni Borchardt reported that we will be decorating the church for Christmas after worship on November 20<sup>th</sup>. We will need help from the congregation. Christmas Eve candlelight worship service will be at 8:00 p.m. Christmas morning there will be a small prayer, scripture, and communion service with just Pastor Katie at 9:00 a.m.

### Christian Education

The Sunday School Christmas program will be Sunday, December 18, during the sermon.

### Outreach & Social Ministry

No report. The position is still open.

### Property

The spot on the carpet in the Gathering Area was cleaned again, no charge. Thanks to Jeff Nemitz for arranging a maintenance agreement with Hohler. Every six months the boilers are checked. The circulator pumps are fixed. There was a loose wire from the thermostat to the boiler. The gas smell is gone coming from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Larry has been putting bleach in the drains.

### Old Business

Pastor Katie reported that a summary page for the revised Constitution will be sent out with the 2023 proposed budget.

### New Business

President Dave Bodi reported that Kuns Family Medicine wants to gift to our church the small triangle where the gravel is. Pastor Katie moved and Jim Floro seconded to decline their generous offer to gift the property because we see no value at this time. Motion passed. Pastor Katie got a text from Shannon at the coffee shop. "Christmas in the Village" will be December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Rhonda Rice came up with a craft idea and asked that members of the congregation make cookies to hand out that night.

### Correspondence

None

Chris Bohn moved and Pastor Katie seconded to adjourn. Motion Passed. The next meeting will be Tuesday, December 13, in the Gathering Area.

Council closed with celebrating Holy Communion.

## **FROM THE STEWARDSHIP-FINANCE COMMITTEE: A TAX-SMART WAY FOR CHARITABLE GIVING**

### **Ways to give to Grace and not pay taxes?**

With a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD), you may be able to satisfy your traditional IRA's Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), lower your taxable income, and maximize your impact on a charitable organization, such as Grace Lutheran Church.

If you are 72 or older, you must take an RMD on your traditional IRA. Typically, you must pay taxes on all traditional IRA withdrawals, including RMDs. But if you are over 70.5, your entire withdrawal will directly and fully be gifted to a charitable organization as a QCD, and your taxable income will be lowered by the full amount.

### **What is a Qualified Charitable Distribution?**

A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is one of the most tax-efficient ways for mature donors to make charitable gifts. Also known as an IRA charitable rollover gift, a QCD is a direct transfer of funds from a traditional IRA account to a qualified charity. Typically, you can realize tax benefits either by increasing your itemized deductions — an option most individuals do not use — or by decreasing your taxable income, which is how QCDs work. With a QCD, you can lower your taxable income by as much as \$100,000 per year.

### **Who can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution?**

Anyone 70.5 years of age or older can give up to \$100,000 as a tax-free gift, in the form of a QCD, from their traditional IRA account. Even though the SECURE Act raised the required minimum distribution (RMD) age to 72, the QCD age remains at 70.5, so QCDs can be used for charitable giving even before RMDs begin. QCDs are only available to IRA owners and IRA beneficiaries who are 70.5 or older and, for this rule, you must be at least 70.5 on the date of transfer.

### **What is the best time of year to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution?**

Statistically, most people do their giving at holiday time or before the end of the calendar year. It's best to do QCDs early in the year before any RMDs are taken. If the RMD is taken before the QCD, that RMD income can't be offset by a QCD done later in the year. The tax rules state that the first dollars withdrawn from a traditional IRA, in a year where an RMD is due, will first go to satisfy the RMD. This is known as the "first dollars out rule," and that's what makes the QCD timing essential.

**CONSULT YOUR FINANCIAL ADVISOR FOR MORE DETAILS AND TO SEE IF A QCD WOULD BENEFIT BOTH YOU AND GRACE.**



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

# Evangelism

*The simple act of sharing the good news of God's love in Jesus.*

## Welcome the Children

Let the little children come to me..." Matthew 19:14

Steve and Maria both remembered going to Sunday School as children, but their families had never been involved so neither of them had any experience of "church" beyond grade school. Now as adults, their good friends, Will and Shari, who were very involved in their church, were asking Steve and Maria if they would like to come check it out some time.

Steve and Maria were hesitant. They had no idea what church was even like, their children were three and five, and they were too embarrassed to ask Will and Shari more about it. After about six months of low-pressure invitations, Steve got curious. He knew he had driven past the church but couldn't remember the name, so he found it on his mapping app, and then was able to find the church's website. He immediately saw a headline: "New Here? What to Expect." Not only did the page describe what worship was like, there was a link to an online worship service so they could get a feel for it at home, and there was an entire section about children in worship and other opportunities for families including at home faith activities. There was even an online form they could fill out to request a free children's Bible! They discovered that young children with their typical noises were welcome in church, but a staffed nursery for their three-year-old was available if they preferred. They saw photos of children at smaller tables and chairs with fruit, doughnuts, and juice while adults visited over coffee. He noted that activity bags for children to borrow during worship would be located at the left sanctuary door and there was always a time just for children during the worship.

After watching a worship service online with Maria, Steve called Will and said they would like to visit the church. Will wondered why he hadn't thought of it before, but thought it might help if Steve and Maria followed him to church so they would know where to park and then show them around the building before worship began.

Steve and Maria said that first Sunday couldn't have gone better. Because they had viewed an online worship service, they were better able to let their children know what to expect. Will and Shari had taken time to show them around (including location of the restrooms and nursery if needed), introduced them to other friends, and sat with them in worship. The pastor had warmly welcomed them, and someone else called them later that week to invite their five-year-old to Sunday School and to drop off one of those colorful children's Bible if they wanted. Their children even asked when they could go back to that place with the long benches and all the smiling people!

# GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

203 S. Washington Street  
Castalia, OH 44824

## **GRACE GROWS DISCIPLES.**

**Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we WORSHIP the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, WITNESS to God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, WELCOME all into our community of faith.**

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You can e-mail Pastor Suggitt at: [Pastorkms@gmail.com](mailto:Pastorkms@gmail.com)

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