

This Week at Grace
Sunday, December 17, 2006
The Third Sunday in Advent

INTRODUCTION

The arrival is fast approaching; the light from the Advent wreath is growing. How shall we prepare for God's coming among us? With joy! With resolute action! With prayer and thanksgiving! The Lord is near.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God,
and open our ears to the preaching of John,
that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance;
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST READING *Zephaniah 3:14–20*

The prophet Zephaniah's message is mostly one of judgment for sin. This reading, however, which comes from the conclusion of the book, pictures the new people of God (3:12-13). Judgment has brought repentance and salvation, and now is the time of celebration.

- ¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!
- ¹⁵ The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.
- ¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.
- ¹⁷ The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing
¹⁸ as on a day of festival.
I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.
¹⁹ I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.
²⁰ At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the LORD.

PSALM *Isaiah 12:2–6*

In your midst is the Holy One of Israel. (Isa. 12:6)

² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not | be afraid,
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might, and has become | my
salvation.
³ **With joy you | will draw water
from the wells | of salvation. R**
⁴ And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call | on God's name;
make known the deeds of the LORD among the nations; proclaim that this
name | is exalted.
⁵ **Sing praises to the LORD, who has done | gloriously;
let this be known in | all the earth.**
⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy, O | royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy | One of Israel. **R**

SECOND READING *Philippians 4:4–7*

The theme of joy sounded in the first reading continues in Paul's confident words to the Philippians. Although he writes from prison, Paul finds hope in the assurance that hearts and minds are guarded securely by the peace of God.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds

in Christ Jesus.

GOSPEL *Luke 3:7-18*

Before he begins his account of Jesus' ministry, Luke describes the work of John the Baptist, who proclaimed the good news in startling images. Radical generosity and faithfulness in vocation are among the fruits of repentance John identifies.

⁷ John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" ⁸ Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" ¹¹ In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" ¹³ He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

THIS WEEK AT GRACE

TODAY: 8:30a and 11:00a Worship Services
 9:30a Coffee Fellowship
 9:45a Sunday School/Education Hour
 2:00p Girl Scout Meeting
 2:15p 7th-12th gr. Good Samaritan Sunday

MONDAY: 11:00a Funeral Service for Dorothy Wangen
 7:30p Cantori Rehearsal

TUESDAY: 9:00a Staff Meeting
 9:30a Ladies Bible Study
 11:00a Pastor's Text Study
 NO 3-D Meeting

6:30p Altar Guild Christmas Party

WEDNESDAY: 9:00a Sewing Day
5:00p Chew-n-Chat
5:30p Cherub/Chancel Choir Rehearsals
6:30p 7th, 8th, and 9th gr. Confirmation Classes
6:30p Sr. High Bible Study
7:00p Bells of Praise
7:30p Adult Choir

THURSDAY: 6:00a Early Morning Bible Study
2:30p Sr. Tower Friendship Group
NO Evening Bible Study

FRIDAY: *Church Office Closes at Noon*
1:30p ThorneCrest Bible Study
NO 4th-6th gr. Youth Room

NEXT SUNDAY: *Christmas Eve*
8:30a 4th Sunday of Advent Worship Service
9:30a Coffee Fellowship
NO Sunday School / Education Hour
3:00p Worship with Holy Communion
5:00p Worship with Holy Communion
11:00p Worship with Holy Communion

MONDAY: *Christmas Day*
10:00a Worship with Holy Communion

MISSIONARY FOR A DAY: [Dec. 17: Given by Pastor Milt & Delores Ost.] [Dec. 17: Sunday School] [Dec. 17-18: In memory of Julian and John Hopperstad and Marilyn Brandt given by Mildred Hopperstad.] [Dec. 19: In honor of Marie Gilbertson's 80th birthday given by Larry & Lanae Thorstad, Marcus and Jeff.] [Dec. 20: GLCW] [Dec. 20: In honor of Alice Lageson on her birthday given by her family.].

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS our members and friends known to have been hospitalized this past week: Janet Ayers, Robert Linde, Elizabeth (Betty) Nelson, Milt Ost (Rochester), and Dayna Saltou (St. Paul).

PLEASE REMEMBER those needing the continuing prayers of our congregation: Ella Anderson (granddaughter of Dan & Bonnie Anderson), Janice Anderson, Marlene Bergeson, Larry Bergo, Kathy Diaz, Mark Fisher (father of Lynn Stadheim), Theresa Gamble, Dan Hagen, Tara Hanson, April Hustoft, Marlys Jahnke, Julie Keran (daughter of LuVerne & Jeanie Godtland), Vern Nasby, DeAnna Nelson, LeMoyne Oakland, Marian Odson, Lissa Parrish, Dayna Saltou, Joyce Schreiber, Sally Skrlin, LaVon Stewart, Sally

Witham (mother of Greg Witham), and Eleanor Wolfe.

IN YOUR PRAYERS, also remember Jeff & Brenda Wieland and family upon the death of Jeff's grandmother, Carolyn Schroeder; and the family of Dorothy Wangen who passed away last week. Dorothy's funeral will be held here tomorrow, 11:00a.

WE NEED YOUR HELP! We believe there are many times when we are unaware that someone is in the hospital. This can happen for a number of reasons. You don't want to bother the pastors. You enter through emergency or urgent care. You think your name is being placed on the list we have access to and it does not get on the list for some reason. It is our desire to provide pastoral care to all who are hospitalized for whatever reason. Please help us by letting us know you are in the hospital or will be hospitalized. Thank you for your help! -- Pastors John and Todd

REFRESHMENTS BETWEEN SERVICES are being served this morning by Dyllan Engebretson and his mom, Paula.

REMINDER – TODAY IS GOOD SAM SUNDAY

Youth and adults interested in visiting the Good Samaritan Center are to meet at the church by 2:15p. We will return to the church and enjoy a spaghetti dinner and a time of fellowship. All ages are encouraged to participate.

HARMONY JUNCTION BARBERSHOP CHORUS will hold their annual Christmas Concert today at the following Albert Lea churches: First Lutheran Church at 3:00p, and St. Theodore Catholic Church at 7:00p. A free-will offering will be taken at each concert with the proceeds donated to the Loaves and Fishes program to provide meals to those who gather weekly to share a meal with others in need of a hot meal.

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO *THE LUTHERAN*

If you are not currently receiving *The Lutheran* magazine and wish to sign up for 2007, please stop in the church office before Jan. 1st and we can place you on the subscription list. The cost for the year is \$7.95. (All current subscribers should have recently received a notice in the mail regarding details of renewal.)

CARING AND SHARING NEWS: There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex today for anyone who would like to volunteer to be a monthly co-chair for Caring and Sharing. This is for a one-month commitment to help with Caring and Sharing events. The month you choose, and the duties will be to call for helpers for any events that will be held in that month (funerals, weddings, anniversaries, luncheons, etc.). Also, you will need to call for cakes/desserts to be donated for those as needed. Anyone who would like to be placed on a cake/dessert donation list as a standby or as extra help "as needed" along with their regular month to be called, please stop at the table and sign up for that as well. Thank you for caring.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR ADULT FORUM today as we explore the significance of prayer in our lives. As we observe the season of Advent we need to be mindful of the

preparatory nature of the season. Prayer is central to our preparation. We will talk about praying in Advent, the significance of prayer as disciples of Jesus, and other prayer topics. We will also invite people to share about their own prayer life. Come and join us!

ALTAR GUILD CHRISTMAS POTLUCK: Tuesday, Dec. 19th, 6:30p

The December Altar Guild Meeting and Christmas Potluck will be held that evening in the Fireside Room. Altar Guild members and their guests are welcome. Please bring a dish to pass and your own table service. Dessert and beverages will be provided. Sign up for monthly duties will be done along with installation of the 2007 Officers. We look forward to seeing you.

A REMINDER TO EVERYONE that year-end gifts to the church need to be received here and/or postmarked no later than Dec. 31st. Your gifts in support of our ministry are very much appreciated.

10th gr. CONFIRMATION STUDENTS AND PARENTS: Confirmation pictures are now available and may be picked up in the Education Office.

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES will be held on Dec. 24th or 31st. (Classes will resume on Jan. 7th.)

NO CONFIRMATION CLASSES will be held on Wednesdays, Dec. 27th or Jan. 3rd. (Classes will resume again on Jan. 10th.)

NEW OFFERING ENVELOPE SYSTEM BEGINS IN JANUARY

Earlier this year the Church Council approved a change to a new offering envelope system recommended by the Stewardship Ministry Team. Each month, Augsburg Fortress Publishing will mail envelopes for the following month to each household in the congregation. This will eliminate the need to distribute offering envelope sets during the month of December in the church narthex. You have now received your envelopes for the month of January in the mail. (The Love Offering envelope found in your mailing is for the purpose of special designated gifts beyond your regular giving.)

REGISTER NOW for summer camp at Good Earth Village! Go online at www.GoodEarthVillage.org and register for an exciting time at camp. All registrations with deposit postmarked or e-mailed by Jan. 1 will receive the 2006 rate – a \$45 savings for weeklong programs! Register today!

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE who participated in the Salvation Army Angel Tree. You provided 130 gifts to needy children in Albert Lea! Thank you!

MINNEAPOLIS MISSION PROJECT: 7th-12th grade youth are encouraged to sign up for a weekend of giving. Urban Immersion is a program sponsored by the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches that connects groups with volunteer agencies in need of helpers. They work with over 100 agencies that help and support those in need. We will be working with places like the Dorothy Day Center, Feed My Starving Children, and the Salvation Army by doing a number of jobs that may include serving food, painting, or

helping in a daycare setting. We have spaces reserved to bring youth up to Minneapolis to stay in their facilities the weekend of Jan. 19th-21st. Cost of the event is \$40.00 and includes transportation, food, and stay. Please sign up for this great opportunity on the bulletin board located outside of Denae's office.

HAITI COLLECTION UPDATE:

We are so grateful for those of you who are saving empty pill bottles. They are used for many things such as various specimen containers, dispensation of medicine, salve, and medications. **Please remember that only see-through containers received through the pharmacies are requested. The labels also need to be totally removed or they cannot use them.** (However, if you are donating medications that are still inside, please leave the information of the label intact except for name and prescription numbers.) Medicine can be outdated, but not longer ago than 2005. This is also true for non-prescription medications.

COLLEGE STUDENTS: Good Earth Village is seeking summer staff! If you enjoy sharing your faith and spending time with God's children of all ages, GEV just might be the place for you! More information and applications can be found by going to www.GoodEarthVillage.org.

NOMINATIONS ARE BEING ACCEPTED for individuals interested in serving a three-year term on the Good Earth Village Board of Directors. Skills and experience identified as current areas of need on the Board include individuals with financial development, marketing/public relations and/or legal background. For information, contact Dave Herder, Exec. Director at (507) 346-2494 or Dave@GoodEarthVillage.org.

GIVING AT GRACE:

The Property and Finance Ministry appreciates your generous support. Your faithful stewardship is essential for us to continue to support our ministries at Grace.

	Sunday, Dec. 10th	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Giving	\$ 9,993.00	\$ 470,224.00
Budgeted Need	\$ 9,803.00	\$ 480,347.00
Quarters for World Hunger	\$ 49.25	\$ 2,501.75
Stones, Rocks, Boulders Fund	\$ 12.00	

Attendance Last Sunday - 422; Last Year - 433

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
Albert Lea, Minnesota

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
December 17, 2006