

*This Week at Grace*  
*Sunday, December 24, 2006*  
*The Fourth Sunday in Advent*

**INTRODUCTION**

*We come to the threshold of the celebration. The time is right; the place, Bethlehem of Judah, is identified; Mary's song announces the great things God is doing. A new day is being birthed into existence, and we are meant to be a part of it. These final few days of preparation lead to the darkness of Christmas Eve and the dawn of the festival of our Lord's nativity, where the mystery unfolds again.*

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come.  
With your abundant grace and might,  
free us from the sin that binds us,  
that we may receive you in joy and serve you always,  
for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. Amen.

**FIRST READING** *Micah 5:2–5a*

*Many years before the time of Micah, God promised David that his dynasty would last forever. Although prophets such as Micah warned that judgment would come from unfaithfulness, Micah foresees a restoration beyond that judgment.*

- <sup>2</sup> But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
    who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
    from you shall come forth for me  
    one who is to rule in Israel,  
    whose origin is from of old,  
    from ancient days.
- <sup>3</sup> Therefore he shall give them up until the time  
    when she who is in labor has brought forth;  
    then the rest of his kindred shall return  
    to the people of Israel.
- <sup>4</sup> And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,  
    in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.  
    And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great  
    to the ends of the earth;
- <sup>5</sup> and he shall be the one of peace.

**PSALM** *Luke 1:46b–55*

*You, Lord, have lifted up the lowly. (Luke 1:52)*

<sup>46b</sup>My soul proclaims the greatness | of the Lord,  
<sup>47</sup>my spirit rejoices in | God my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup>**for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your | lowly servant.**  
**From this day all generations will | call me blessed:**  
<sup>49</sup>you, the Almighty, have done great | things for me  
and holy | is your name.  
<sup>50</sup>**You have mercy on | those who fear you,**  
**from generation to | generation. R**  
<sup>51</sup>You have shown strength | with your arm  
and scattered the proud in | their conceit,  
<sup>52</sup>**casting down the mighty | from their thrones**  
**and lifting | up the lowly.**  
<sup>53</sup>You have filled the hungry | with good things  
and sent the rich | away empty.  
<sup>54</sup>**You have come to the aid of your | servant Israel,**  
**to remember the prom- | ise of mercy,**  
<sup>55</sup>the promise made | to our forebears,  
to Abraham and his chil- | dren forever. **R**

**SECOND READING** *Hebrews 10:5–10*

*The author of Hebrews uses the image of religious sacrifice to convey the significance of Christ's coming. Through obedient acceptance of God's will, Christ allows his own body to become the greatest sacrifice of all, one through which we are made a holy people.*

<sup>5</sup> Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,  
"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,  
but a body you have prepared for me;  
<sup>6</sup> in burnt offerings and sin offerings  
you have taken no pleasure.  
<sup>7</sup> Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God'  
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me)."  
<sup>8</sup> When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and  
offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law),  
<sup>9</sup> then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to  
establish the second. <sup>10</sup> And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the  
offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

**GOSPEL**     *Luke 1:39–45 [46–55]*

*Luke presents Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, as women who are filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. We hear Elizabeth's inspired greeting and Mary's song of praise: God is among the lowly and the hungry.*

<sup>39</sup> In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, <sup>40</sup> where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup> and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup> And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup> For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said,  
"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup> for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
<sup>50</sup> His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
<sup>52</sup> He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
<sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.  
<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
<sup>55</sup> according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

**THIS WEEK AT GRACE**

**TODAY:**

***Christmas Eve***

8:30a Service of Readings and Carols  
NO 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

**TUESDAY:** *Church Offices Closed*

**THURSDAY:** 6:00a Early Morning Bible Study  
1:00p Widower's Support Group  
NO Evening Bible Study

**FRIDAY:** *Church Offices Close at Noon*  
1:30p ThorneCrest Bible Study

**NEXT SUNDAY:** 8:30a and 11:00 Worship Services  
9:30a Coffee Fellowship  
NO Sunday School / Education Hour

**MISSIONARY FOR A DAY:** [Dec. 20: In memory of Leon Lageson given by Alice Lageson.] [Dec. 24: Given by Pastor Milt & Delores Ost.] [Dec. 23-24: Given by Dale & Dorothy Baldwin in memory of their parents.] [Dec. 24: Sunday School] [Dec. 24-25: In memory of Dick C. Hanson and Adrienne Hanson given by their families.] [Dec. 27: GLCW] [Dec. 28: In memory of Irma Moen and Marliss Sward given by Connie Hoyne.].

**REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS** our members and friends known to have been hospitalized this past week: Milt Ost (St. Mary's, Rochester).

**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 Gail & Jerry Rasmussen and family upon the recent death of Gail's mother, Dorothy Evenson.

**GREETERS FOR OUR SERVICE** this morning are Chuck & Shari VanWey, and Jerry & Gerry Vogt.

**ACOLYTES** are Alex Schultz and Mason Tuohy.

**FLOWERS TODAY** are from the funeral of Dorothy Wangen held here this past week. Please remember her family and loved ones in prayer.

**BOOK CLUB** will not meet in the month of January. The next meeting will be held Mon., Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>, at the home of Jill Hagen and will focus on the books Dinner With the Perfect

Stranger by David Gregory, and Ultimate Gift by Jim Stovall.

**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

### **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. 1<sup>st</sup> 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.)

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

### **10<sup>th</sup> gr. CONFIRMATION STUDENTS AND PARENTS:**

Confirmation pictures are now available and may be picked up in the Office.

**NO SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES** will be held today or Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>. (Classes will resume on Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>.)

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

### **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](http://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!

**EDUCATION DIRECTOR ON LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

The Personnel Committee has granted a 30-day leave of absence for personal reasons to our Education Director, Jill Hagen, at her request. The time period is from Jan. 2 through Jan. 31, 2007. All of Jill’s duties will be covered by a variety of volunteers and other program staff. Thank you for your support during this time.

**MINNEAPOLIS MISSION PROJECT:** 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> 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. 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>. 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.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

Dear members of Grace Lutheran, the year has gone too fast again. What a wonderful year we have had at Grace Lutheran. On behalf of the Church Council, we would like to wish you and your family a happy and joyous Christmas season. Keep the Lord in your heart and God bless you for the New Year.

Yours in Christ,  
Jerry A. Dahl, Grace Lutheran President

**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.

	<b>Sunday, Dec. 17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b><u>Year to Date</u></b>
General Fund Giving	\$ 10,312.00	\$ 480,536.00
Budgeted Need	\$ 9,803.00	\$ 490,150.00
Quarters for World Hunger	\$ 101.00	\$ 2,602.75
Stones, Rocks, Boulders Fund	\$ 202.00	

Attendance Last Sunday - 406; Last Year - 424