

This Week at Grace
Sunday, December 31, 2006
The First Sunday after Christmas

INTRODUCTION

During Christmastide, our attention is drawn to the holy family: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. We, too, are God's children and part of a holy family, set apart through the baptismal waters in which we have been washed. As we end one year and begin another, we ask how God's likeness in Christ may become more visible in us, God's new offspring.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Shine into our hearts the light of your wisdom, O God,
and open our minds to the knowledge of your word,
that in all things we may think and act according to your good will
and may live continually in the light of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST READING *1 Samuel 2:18–20, 26*

Like Mary and Joseph in the gospel text, Hannah and Elkanah were faithful parents. At the time of their annual pilgrimage to visit their son, the high priest blesses them with a prayer for more children in return for the dedication of Samuel.

¹⁸ Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹ His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. ²⁰ Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the LORD repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the LORD"; and then they would return to their home.

²⁶ Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with the people.

PSALM *Psalm 148*

The splendor of the LORD is over earth and heaven. (Ps. 148:13)

¹Hallelujah! Praise the LORD | from the heavens;
praise God | in the heights.

²**Praise the LORD, | all you angels;**

sing praise, all you | hosts of heaven.

³Praise the LORD, | sun and moon;
sing praise, all you | shining stars.

⁴**Praise the LORD, heav- | en of heavens,**
and you waters a- | bove the heavens.

⁵Let them praise the name | of the LORD,
who commanded, and they | were created,

⁶**who made them stand fast forev- | er and ever,**
giving them a law which shall not | pass away. R

⁷Praise the LORD | from the earth,
you sea monsters | and all deeps;

⁸**fire and hail, | snow and fog,**
tempestuous wind, do- | ing God's will;

⁹mountains | and all hills,
fruit trees | and all cedars;

¹⁰**wild beasts | and all cattle,**
creeping things and | flying birds;

¹¹sovereigns of the earth | and all peoples,
princes and all rulers | of the world;

¹²**young | men and maidens,**
old and | young together. R

¹³Let them praise the name | of the LORD,
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over | earth and heaven.

¹⁴**The LORD has raised up strength for the people and praise for all | faithful servants,**
the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD. | Hallelujah!

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SECOND READING *Colossians 3:12–17*

Just as newly baptized Christians in the early church were clothed with white robes upon arising from the baptismal waters, so we who have received God's gift of life in Jesus Christ are clothed with those qualities that reflect the Lord's presence.

¹² As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

GOSPEL *Luke 2:41–52*

Jesus grew up in a family who went to the Passover festival each year. Their faithful adherence to the law provided a healthy environment for the young Jesus to grow into spiritual maturity.

⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. ⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." ⁴⁹ He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them. ⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

THIS WEEK AT GRACE

TODAY:	8:30a	and 11:00a	Worship Services
	9:30a		Coffee Fellowship
	NO		Sunday School/Education Hour
MONDAY:			<i>New Year's Day</i> <i>Church Offices and Building Closed</i>
TUESDAY:	9:30a		Ladies Bible Study
	11:00a		Pastor's Text Study
	11:30a		Freeborn County Ministerium
	7:00p		Long-Term Planning Committee
WEDNESDAY:	9:00a		Staff Meeting
	9:00a		Sewing Day
	5:30p		Cherub/Chancel Choir Rehearsals
	NO		Confirmation Classes
	6:30p		Bells of Praise
	7:30p		Adult Choir
THURSDAY:	6:00a		Early Morning Bible Study

9:00a BERC Pastor's Meeting
6:30p GLCW Board Meeting
7:00p Evening Bible Study

FRIDAY: 1:30p ThorneCrest Bible Study
3:30p 4th-6th gr. Youth Room

NEXT SUNDAY: 8:30a and 11:00 Worship Services
9:30a Coffee Fellowship
9:45a Sunday School / Education Hour
12:00p Peer Ministry Meeting
2:00p Girl Scout Meeting

MISSIONARY FOR A DAY: [Dec. 31: Given by Pastor Milt & Delores Ost.] [Dec. 31: Sunday School] [Jan. 3: GLCW].

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS our members and friends known to have been hospitalized this past week: (no one reported).

FLOWERS TODAY are from the funeral of Dorothy M. Evenson, mother of Gail Rasmussen. Please remember her family and loved ones in prayer.

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, 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.

GREETERS FOR OUR SERVICE this morning are Greg & Jeanette Beamer, and Steve & JoAnn Bracker at 8:30; and Randy & Lynn Stay, Steve Thompson, and Gloria Ugland at 11:00.

ACOLYTES are Alex Schultz and Mason Tuohy at 8:30; and McKinzey Christian and Brianna Meyer at 11:00.

LESSON READERS are Harlan Bang at 8:30; and Jerry Bizjak at 11:00.

REFRESHMENTS BETWEEN SERVICES are being served today by Ashley Gilbertson and her parents, Mel & Dawn.

ADULT FORUM IN JANUARY: How Do You Read the Bible?

If we can recite any verse of the Bible it would probably be John 3:16. Well, when you're done with this Adult Forum series, you'll be able to recite the whole Bible. Guaranteed, money back. Not really, but you will learn a few more Bible verses. And you will get a

practical overview of the Bible that will help you in your own Bible reading or Bible study. Pastor Todd will lead a 3-week series to overview the Bible so that you can find your way around and get a sense of the whole story in the Old and New Testaments. After that will be a 2-week series asking the question, "Who Wrote the Bible?" These forums will focus on some of the amazing story of how the Bible came to us in the form we have it today and how that helps us hear what the Bible is saying to us. These adult forums are BYOB – Bring Your Own Bible... beginning Sunday, Jan. 7th, at 9:45a in the Fireside Room.

BOOK CLUB will not meet in the month of January. The next meeting will be held Mon., Feb. 5th, 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.

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 this week 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. 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 Office.

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES will be held today. (Classes will resume on Jan. 7th.)
NO CONFIRMATION CLASSES will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 3rd. (Classes will resume 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. 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.)

EDUCATION DIRECTOR ON LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Personnel Committee has granted a 30-day leave of absence for personal reasons to 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.

GRACE SENIORS: Wednesday, Jan. 10th, 2:00p

Grace Seniors will meet that day in the Fireside Room to hear Dave Claussen, owner of Double D Elk Farms who will speak of the significance of elk and the growth of these

farms. We think this will be a very interesting subject so please come out and bring a friend with you! *(There will also be a sign up sheet for our Valentine's Party to be held Feb. 14th at Noon. To attend, reservations are necessary by Feb. 11th.)*

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.

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. 24th	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Giving	\$ 19,143.00	\$ 499,679.00
Budgeted Need	\$ 9,803.00	\$ 499,953.00
Quarters for World Hunger	\$ 51.00	\$ 2,653.75
Stones, Rocks, Boulders Fund	\$ 7.00	

Attendance Last Sunday - 198; Christmas - 1,121

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
Albert Lea, Minnesota

FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS
December 31, 2006