

This Week at Grace
Sunday, December 23, 2007
The Fourth Sunday in Advent

*Worship on Sunday is a Service of Lessons and Carols called
"Prophets and Angels."*

Music by Aaron David Miller, Texts by Herbert F. Brokering



INTRODUCTION

Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. The gospel is Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of the one named Emmanuel, God-with-us. During these final days of Advent we pray, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," a beloved hymn based on ancient prayers appointed for the seven days preceding Christmas. On this final Sunday in Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of the one born to save us from the power of sin and death.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 7:10–16

An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking refuge in Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign of Immanuel that is the only source of true safety: God is with us!

¹⁰Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. ¹²But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. ¹³Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

PSALM: Psalm 80:1–7, 17–19

Let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved. (Ps. 80:7)

¹Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph ¹like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- ¹on the cherubim.

²**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, ¹and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and ¹come to help us.**

³Restore ¹us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹shall be saved.

⁴**O LORD ¹God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your ¹people pray? R**

⁵You have fed them with the ¹bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of ¹tears to drink.

⁶**You have made us the derision ¹of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh ¹us to scorn.**

⁷Restore us, O ¹God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹shall be saved.

¹⁷**Let your hand be upon the one at ¹your right hand,
the one you have made so strong ¹for yourself.**

¹⁸And so will we never turn a- ¹way from you;
give us life, that we may call up- ¹on your name.

¹⁹**Restore us, O LORD ¹God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹shall be saved. R**

SECOND READING: Romans 1:1–7

Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter's opening he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God's gospel. The gospel's content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL: Matthew 1:18–25

Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, "God is with us." ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

THIS WEEK AT GRACE

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

MONDAY: *Christmas Eve*
Church Offices Close at Noon
NO Bone Builders Group
3:00p Worship with Holy Communion
5:00p Worship with Holy Communion
11:00p Worship with Holy Communion

TUESDAY: *Christmas Day*
Church Offices and Building Closed
10:00a Worship with Holy Communion

WEDNESDAY: *Church Offices and Building Closed*
NO Choir Rehearsals
NO Confirmation Classes or Sr. High Bible Study

THURSDAY: 6:00a Early Morning Bible Study
NO Bone Builders Group

FRIDAY: 1:30p ThorneCrest Bible Study

NEXT SUNDAY: 8:30a and 11:00a Worship Services
 9:30a Coffee Fellowship
 NO Sunday School / Education Hour
 2:00-5:00p Reception honoring Pastor John & Lori Henriksen

MISSIONARY FOR A DAY: [Dec. 20: In memory of Leon Lageson given by Alice Lageson.]
[Dec. 23: Given by Pastor Milt & Delores Ost.] [Dec. 23: Sunday School] [Dec. 24: Given by Babe & Lois Brandt.] [Dec. 25: Given by Pastor Todd Walsh.] [Dec. 26: GLCW].

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS our members and friends known to have been hospitalized this past week: Avis Ordalen, and Paul Ostrem.

GREETERS for our worship services are Steve Vogt, Mary Tuohy, and Rich & Ann Oliphant at 8:30; and Hazel Spiering, Randy & Lynn Stay, and Gloria Uglund at 11:00.

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL will be held today or next Sunday. Classes resume again on Jan. 6th.

PLEASE REMEMBER those needing the continuing prayers of our congregation: Janice Anderson, Elizabeth Baker, Larry Bergo, Paula Burkart (niece of John & Beth Ruud), Kathy Diaz, Lyle Dickson, Miff Eglund, Ray & Janet Ewing, Theresa Gamble, Jeanie Godtland, Jan Guse, Tara Hanson, Edna Herfendal, Mildred Hopperstad, April Hustoft, Norman Johnson, Glenn McDaniel, Ethel McGill, Vern Nasby, Dave & Kelli Nelson, LeMoyne Oakland, Lissa Parrish, Mike Ranney, Jackson Schrock (grandson of Vince & Corrine Tims), Gloria Seberson, LaVon Stewart, Carter Tappe, Naomi Tatarek (daughter of LuVerne & Jeanie Godtland), Paige Thompson (great-niece of Judy Anderson), Leland Wadding, Sally Witham (mother of Greg Witham), and Eleanor Wolfe.

ACOLYTES are Chris Stahl and Ashley Gilbertson at 8:30; and Dyllan Engebretson and Haley Lau at 11:00.

FLOWERS FOR OUR SERVICES today are from the memorial service for Marlys Jahnke held this past week. Please continue to remember her family in your prayers.

REFRESHMENTS BETWEEN SERVICES are served by Karli Kriewall and parents, Todd & Ann.

SPECIAL THANKS to Jerry Dahl who is serving as van driver this morning. Our church van picks up riders every Sunday for the 11:00 worship service. If you or anyone you know is interested in riding the van, please call the church office to be added to the pick-up schedule.

DO YOU WANT TO HEAR a little more about Pastor Todd and Jerry Bizjak's Holy Land pilgrimage in November? We will have an extra Adult Forum today to see the final images from the trip and share more information. Everyone is welcome and we will take more time in this session to field questions.

“PREPARE THE ROYAL HIGHWAY; the King of Kings is near!” Be sure to pick up one of the Advent coin collectors from our ushers. Proceeds will go to the Martin Luther Fund from which help is given to needy families in our congregation. Turn them in with the offering as you fill them, or at the end of Advent. Let’s see what we can raise by Christmas! (If you would like to contribute without using the folder, please simply make an offering to the church and mark it for the Martin Luther Fund.) Thank you for your generous support at this special time.

PLAN TO JOIN US for Pastor John & Lori’s Farewell Open House on Sunday, Dec. 30th, from 2:00-5:00p in the Fellowship Hall. Everyone is welcome to attend to express appreciation for their ministry among us. Your presence is your gift.

NO CONFIRMATION CLASSES will be held on Dec. 26th or Jan. 2nd due to Christmas Break. Classes resume again on Wednesday, Jan. 9th.

GLCW BOARD (Grace Lutheran Church Women) would like to invite all women interested in identifying goals for 2008 to join them from 6:30-7:30 on Jan. 3rd in the Fireside Room for brainstorming and discussion. The regular Board Meeting will begin at 7:30p. This is a new practice which we hope will give more women a voice in our church activities.

THANK YOU to everyone who supported the Salvation Army Angel Tree! All 150 angels took their flight and the needy children of Albert Lea thank you for your generosity!

JANUARY ADULT FORUM: More Stories of Love and Faith from Mayberry

Gary Schindler is back with another Bible Study based on episodes (parables) from The Andy Griffith Show. Join Gary as we watch episodes of the show and discuss issues of importance to Lutherans.

January 6 Three Wishes for Opie: Superstition and Coincidence
13 Barney and Thelma Lou, Phfft: Relationships
20 Rafe Hollister Sings: Prejudice

February 3 Barney and the Cave Rescue: Friendship

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW! The **Annual Meeting of Grace Lutheran Church** is scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 27th. The Education Ministry Team and students in the 9th grade will again be serving a wonderful lasagna dinner prior to the meeting which begins at 1:00p. Plan now to join us!

DON’T THROW THOSE STAMPS AWAY! We have found a new use for them.

Vi Kycek, 1215 Highview Trl., Albert Lea, collects them for veterans. They are used to purchase wheel chairs and other equipment. She also collects all kinds of cards and delivers them to agencies that can use them. You can deliver directly to her or place your items in the Stewardship Box in the narthex.

JUNIOR HIGH SKI TRIP will be held Jan. 20-21. Cost is \$60 and more information is posted on the youth bulletin board where you can sign up.

SENIOR HIGH SKI TRIP is set for Mar. 7-9 in Biwabik. Cost is yet to be determined and chaperones are needed. Please check the youth bulletin board where you can sign up.

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. 16th	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Giving	\$ 15,524.00	\$ 496,118.00
Budgeted Need	\$ 10,096.00	\$ 504,800.00
Quarters for World Hunger	\$ 47.00	\$ 2,828.00
Stones, Rocks, Boulders Fund	237.00	

Attendance Last Sunday - 434; Last Year - 406

**GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
Albert Lea, Minnesota
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
December 23, 2007**