

Grace Lutheran Church & Grace Christian School Monthly Newsletter
DECEMBER 2024 Volume 17, Issue 12



Hello December

Our Mission: Sharing the love of Jesus with all peoples. Providing opportunities and resources to bring people into a responsible relationship with Jesus and His Church.

December

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December 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Traditional 8:00am Contemporary 10:30Am Lahu 1pm	2	3	4 Advent Worship Service @7pm	5	6	7 Men's Bible Study 7am Gals of Grace @9am
8 Traditional 8:00am Contemporary 10:30Am Lahu 1PM	9	10 LWML Meeting @1pm Altar Guild Meeting @6pm	11 Christmas Musical @1pm & @6:30pm	12 Christmas Musical @6:30pm	13	14 Men's Bible Study 7am
15 Traditional 8:00am Contemporary 10:30Am Lahu 1pm	16	17 Governance Board Meeting @6:30pm	18 Advent Worship Service @7pm	19	20 GCS Noon Dismissal	21 Men's Bible Study 7am
22 Traditional 8:00am Contemporary 10:30Am Lahu @1pm	23 Christmas Break	24 Christmas Eve Candle Light Service @6pm	25 Christmas Day	26	27 Bunco Night @6pm	28 Men's Bible Study 7am
29 Traditional 8:00am Contemporary 10:30Am Lahu @1pm	30 Christmas Break	31				

Christians in Public Affairs: Right Hand Kingdom and Left Hand Kingdom

In the last newsletter, I wrote an article called “Should Christians Support Israel in the Arab-Israeli Conflict?” Afterward, I realized there was an opportunity for clarification, which I would like to address in this month’s article.

One of the points I aimed to make in the last article could be rephrased as follows: there is no spiritual or Right Hand Kingdom justification for supporting the political actions of the Left Hand Kingdom, such as those of Israel or America. The Right Hand Kingdom refers to the Kingdom God rules through the Church, while the Left Hand Kingdom refers to the “secular world”—a realm God indeed rules, though His orchestration of it remains hidden from us. Therefore, we should generally avoid using Right Hand Kingdom principles to justify Left Hand Kingdom actions.

This is not to say there are no valid reasons to support certain political actions. There are many good Left Hand Kingdom reasons. As Christians, we should carefully evaluate what seems just and reasonable based on the political situation and the knowledge available in the secular world. For instance, I am truly grateful that General MacArthur led the landing at Incheon on September 15, 1950. From my perspective, this was the right action, and I am thankful for it—but I say this as a Korean American, not as a Christian. Such are Left Hand Kingdom considerations.

I understand why people might feel “called by God” to go to war “in His name.” However, we must be cautious about such declarations. Geopolitical justice is extraordinarily complex. Conflicts often result in innocent civilians—though not innocent in God’s eyes, but by earthly standards—suffering, as well as individual Christ-followers caught in the turmoil. My point in emphasizing “if you can discern who they are” was to highlight the plight of these individuals rather than focus on the actions of nations or political leaders. From this perspective, war is a tragic and complex reality, affecting believers and innocent civilians on both sides.

Furthermore, there are often multiple layers of reasons behind a government’s decision to go to war, many of which are not revealed through official narratives or media reports. For example, political analyst John Mearsheimer argues that Israel may wish for the U.S. to destroy Iran’s nuclear weapons—a goal that extends beyond simple self-defense. How can we claim to discern God’s will in such complex geopolitical situations when His rule over the Left Hand Kingdom is hidden?

War is brutal, complicated, and perpetuates evil. Until Christ returns, such conflicts will persist. Political decisions, including decisions to go to war, are necessary but are often made by earthly states rather than by citizens of the Kingdom of Christ. Remember that Christ instructed Peter to put away his sword. As citizens of the Left Hand Kingdom, we are called to use our best judgment, guided by our knowledge and discernment, to seek God’s will individually through our votes and democratic processes.

God remains hidden in political matters within the Left Hand Kingdom. For this reason, we should generally avoid using Right Hand Kingdom principles to justify Left Hand Kingdom actions. Instead, we can fulfill our civil duties in open democratic societies while keeping calm, preaching the Gospel, and joining the saints before us in praying, “*Come, Lord Jesus.*”

Nov.13 2024
Rev. David Jung



XYZ CHRISTMAS LUNCH

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8TH
FOLLOWING THE SECOND
SERVICE

GIFT EXCHANGE: GIFTS CAN BE
“WHITE ELEPHANT” OR
PURCHASED - PLEASE OBSERVE
A \$5.00 LIMIT IF PURCHASED

LUNCH WILL BE HAM, YAMS,
RICE, VEGGIES, AND A YUMMY
DESSERT!

Grace Christian School Musical

Will be presented on Wednesday, December 11th and Thursday, December 12th

Where: Grace Lutheran Church sanctuary

See the information found in this newsletter for further details.



COFFEE BAR

Every Sunday morning between worship services. Coffee, hot cocoa and tea and a cold beverage. Plus, there is always a treat of cookies or assorted goodies to enjoy. Spend time with old and new friends.

WHERE: Multi-purpose Room located on the church courtyard.

*If the weather is comfortable there will also be seating outside on the courtyard.

Special Note: the beverages are also available before the early worship service between 7:30-8:00 AM



Bunco

Held on the 4th Friday of every month.

You are invited to enjoy a great meal and fun.

WHEN: Friday, December 27th

TIME: 6-8PM

WHERE: Fellowship Hall

COST: \$8 per person – includes the meal and the prizes awarded at the end of the evening for the many different winners. First Bunco, Most Wins, Most Losses, Most Bunco's, etc.



5th Sunday ONE SERVICE- December 29th

10AM Service for the entire family of Grace Lutheran Church, friends and family. What a wonderful time to gather around the Word and Sacrament.

5th Sunday POTLUCK

WHEN: December 29th immediately following the one service.

Eating around 11:30 AM in the Fellowship Hall

Bring a food item to feed at least 12.

"Help, what kind of food item can I bring?": meat dish, salad, pasta, vegetable, fruit- you choose.

Bread and beverages will be provided. PLUS- we will be celebrating birthdays from October, November and December. Birthday Cake and ice cream will be provided.

Invite your friends, family and neighbors to church and a great potluck meal! You can drop off your food item in the kitchen prior to the 10AM worship service.

Coffee Bar is not hosted on the 5th Sunday's



ADVENT worship services and meals will be held mid-week in December.

WHEN: December 4th and December 18th at 7PM.

Prior to the Advent worship there will be a "potluck" style meal from 5:45-6:45PM

Need 2-3 "families" to sign up to provide the meal. It could be soup or pizza. Beverage, bread and dessert will be provided by the FFF Budget.

A Sign-up sheet to provide a meal is located on the Narthex on the FFF bulletin board.



LWML Mites

GRACE MITES GIVEN IN OCTOBER-----\$ 335.00 which includes special donations on LWML Sunday--Thank you for all mites and prayers and extra helpers.

Please check bulletin boards for detailed information---flyer with a few pictures----about Mission Grant # 5 which helps the Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit in San Francisco. The preschool has a "Help U Grow" (HUG) program started in 2018. The grant supports close contacts with parents, students and congregation through educational support, meals, and fellowship even after the student has left the preschool program. The goal is for \$ 9,600.00 to continue the mission.



A Christmas Musical Presented By Grace Christian School

Wednesday, December 11th

@1:00pm & 6:30pm

Thursday, December 12th

@6:30pm



Sacred Ordinary Days

A Gentle Advent, A Holy Christmas: Ideas to Celebrate the Seasons

"If there is one thing I am learning in a visceral way, it is that quiet, holiness, wonder, prayer, these epic ways of being to which we are, startlingly, called are built not in great, single acts of solitary freedom, but in the tussle and pull of every small moment. To pray, it's a breath by breath thing. To wonder, it's stopping to watch the glimmer, for an instant. To become quiet, is a turning of the heart in every little space offered in the music of life. These great joys, they grow in every small moment we have. So I am trying to keep a gentle Advent, a kindly one. Not one where I live (as I often do) in awareness of all that I haven't done, but in actual engagement with the grace that is arriving this season. It is damnably hard sometimes to remember that the point of Advent is not to prove my love, but to receive God's, that the discipline required is more the opening of my heart than the proving of my strength."

-Sarah Clarkson

"Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire."

-Gustav Mahler

The hush of Advent. It's my favorite time of year. While the world around us hustles and bustles, reveling in consumerism and excess, I strive to walk a different way, I try to be quiet and content. I try to wait. Living in the tension of Advent is important I think. It is good for our souls. It is counter cultural to slow down in December, but it IS possible. To make room, make space, make time, to quiet the noise in all the little moments we can offers us a chance to open our hearts to God's love. What would that look like in your life?

The day after Thanksgiving as some families pull out their Christmas decorations, my family wipes our house clean. We declutter, deep clean, preparing our space as we prepare our hearts, making Him room. We enter Advent slowly and in darkness. The first night of Advent we gather together before bed. We turn out the lights, we light one candle, we begin at the beginning, and we read those beautiful words in John:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was LIFE, and the LIFE was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:1-5)

And each night of Advent we gather in the darkness, each night lighting one more candle, and we hear a little more of the beautiful old story. As our nights gradually get lighter (to an all out fire hazard by December 24) our hearts and minds get illuminated too. Light is dawning!

And oh how we hunger for Christmas! We try to fast in small ways during Advent. Sometimes choosing to abstain from sugar, sometimes baking sweets and cookies but only to give to others, sometimes eating simple home cooked meals of soup and bread. Trying to wait, in the small ways we can, to celebrate Him, to feast when it is time to feast and fast when it is time to fast. And the yearning of Advent makes the celebration of Christmas all the more meaningful.

We slowly decorate our home, bringing one or two things out at a time. Savoring the change those things bring to our home. A tree! Lights! And we spend time making everything for our tree from scratch. Popcorn and paper chains, dried orange slices and paper snowflakes, each gets placed on the tree as they get completed and our home grows more beautiful as we near Christmas.

We celebrate two saints days in Advent that are little feast days in the midst of the waiting. They are both eagerly anticipated in our home. On December 5 we put our stockings up and we read about St. Nicholas. We talk about how secret acts of generosity marked this good man's life. On December 6 we celebrate the life of St Nicholas by opening surprise gifts we have put in each other's stockings. On December 12 we spend our day baking special saffron buns called Lussekatter. And early on the morning of December 13 our daughters dress up in white dresses, put on red sashes, make coffee, and one girl (they take turns every year) puts on a special crown of candles and leads her sisters in bringing breakfast in bed to us parents. We sit in bed together and have a breakfast picnic! That day we read about St Lucia and her courage to travel far past her comfort zone to follow God's call to bring food and hope to those who needed it.

These are such fun traditions but they are important too. They remind us of our part in the grand story God is writing and as we imitate saints of old we practice being more like Jesus.

And then on December 24 we move from quiet Advent into boisterous Christmas as we celebrate with much joy the birthday of our Lord. We celebrate all 12 days of Christmas, opening gifts each day, eating special foods and spending time together. Celebrating fully our God who loves us enough to send His Son to redeem us out of darkness into light!

The Church, in all her wisdom, has given us not just Christmas but also Advent to help us understand the birth of Christ. Jesus's birth at Christmas is the turning point of history. The incarnation of Jesus, God in flesh, changes everything. But Advent reveals our need. We need a savior, we need God to take on flesh because our flesh is too weak. Our darkness overwhelms us. Without Jesus we are lost. The yearning and fasting and struggle of Advent is relieved by Christmas. Christmas is better understood when you've let yourself experience Advent.

So this Advent, feel the tension. Sit in the darkness. Find a way to fast or practice waiting in a way that is meaningful to you. Don't rush into Christmas but instead wait for it. And when Christmas comes, rejoice with your whole heart!

Emmanuel, God is with us. He came for us, He comes for us, and He will come again. Alleluia!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Elizabeth Davis

Growing In Grace Preschool

December 2024

The children are excited that the Christmas season is finally here! We have been focusing on baby Jesus and his birth, as well as the importance of giving.

The two- and three-year-old classes will be hosting a Christmas Open House on Tuesday, December 10th at 4:00 pm. This will give parents a chance to see their child's Christmas artwork that will be on display and to do a holiday craft with their child.

The four/five-year-old class will be performing in the Grace Christmas play on Wednesday, December 11th at 1:00 p.m. The kids have been working very hard for this special performance!

We will be closed for winter break from December 23rd - January 3rd.

We will also be celebrating some December birthdays:

Riley R. 12/21

Jack T. 12/23

Paige K. 12/10

Charlotte B. 12/28

Teacher Katherine 12/5

Teacher Demonica 12/10

Merry Christmas To All!



December Birthdays

Grace Christian School Students/Staff:

Kaylee : Dec 4

Jayden : Dec 8

Halen : Dec 14

Lexie : Dec 23

Audrey : Dec 30



December Newsletter, Grace Christian School

Dear Friends,

It's Christmas! For me, that means as much Christmas music as I can get! It seems each song brings me right back to a memory of Christmas past...

Silver Bells? That song definitely reminds me of the long car trips to the city as a little girl to spend Christmas with my grandparents. I would give anything to make that trip again. Those holidays in Brooklyn were the best moments! I just hope I can be the half the grandmother that mine was!

It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year? I am sure this is my mom's most favorite Christmas album ever. It wasn't the start of the Christmas season until Andy Williams was placed on the turntable. His voice brings me right back to assembling our artificial tree with all the color coded branches and those marathon cookie baking days with mom.

Mary, Did You Know? My aunt's choir in New York was going to sing this one at church. She asked my mom if she knew, "Mary Dijano" and of course, my mom didn't. Once she realized it was a song title and not a person, they had such a laugh. I cannot sing it to this day without chuckling!

I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas? This song took on new meaning when I moved to California. It would instantly remind me of home. Aron's parents would play Bing Crosby's album on Christmas Day and we would all sing along. Later, Haleigh performed the song in the musical White Christmas in Ohio and Aron and I were blessed to go see her and visit some beautiful spots in the area.

Hallelujah? Each Christmas our Praise Team would sing this song. I loved singing it alongside Sue Schroeder. She really loved this one and I remember looking out and seeing her whole wonderful family up in front singing it with us. I miss singing with Sue. Those were fun days!

Silent Night? This hymn brings back memories of so many Christmas Eve candlelight services growing up in New York and then here in California with my own family. Every time I sing it and feel the warmth of the flame I am overwhelmed with a sense of peace and security. The message hits home. After all the hustle and bustle, I am reminded to rest in His loving care. He is here! He is with me! He loved me so much that He came to save me! Christ the Savior is born!

The list could go on and on. What is the soundtrack of your Christmas memories? Isn't it funny how music can transport us right back to a certain time and place? Music has a way of burrowing deep into our souls. For over 35 years Grace Christian has celebrated Christmas with a musical. The stories might not always stick with me, but the songs always do. I hope and pray that the lyrics of hope and joy and God's love and saving grace will live in our students' hearts and minds for all of the days of their lives.

Merry Christmas and may God continue to bless us in the New Year and always!

Blessings,
Joanne Cook



Grace Christian School | 2024-2025 CALENDAR



AUGUST '24						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

13 Ice Cream Social
15 1st Day of School
20 Back to School Night

(12)

JANUARY '25						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

1-10 Christmas Break – No School
20 M.L. King Day – No School
31 Noon Dismissal – Family Day

(14)

SEPTEMBER '24						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

2 Labor Day – No School
13 Grandparents Day

(20)

FEBRUARY '25						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

14 Staff Development – No School
17 Presidents' Day – No School
28 End of 2nd Trimester

(19)

OCTOBER '24						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

14 Columbus Day – No School
23 Picture Day
31 End of 1st Trimester

(22)

MARCH '25						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

3 Teacher Prep Day – No School
4-5 Noon Dismissal – Conferences

(20)

NOVEMBER '24						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

1 Teacher Prep Day – No School
6-8 Noon Dismissal – Conferences
11 Veterans Day – No School
22 Pie Extravaganza
25-29 Thanksgiving Break – No School

11 Easter Celebration
Noon Dismissal
14-21 Spring Break – No School

(16)

DECEMBER '24						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

11-12 Christmas Musical
20 Noon Dismissal
23-31 Christmas Break – No School

(15)

MAY '25						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

8 Spring Musical
26 Memorial Day – No School
29 8th Grade Graduation
30 End of 3rd Trimester
30 Last day of school

(20)



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Please Remember in Prayer Those who are Serving in Our Military:

**E Holm, M Merritt, T Bertel,
S Ficken, T Henneman, T Hurley, K Hurley**

Please help keep this section updated. If you know members or relatives of members currently serving in the military, please contact the office (559) 734-7694 . Thank you!

Visit Our Website:

Church: gracevisalia.org

School: gracechristianvisalia.org

Email us!

info@gracevisalia.org

Listen to The Lutheran Hour:

Sundays @ 7a.m. on KMJ AM 580

