

HAPPENINGS AROUND GRACE

WELCA IS COLLECTING WINTER ITEMS FOR LOCAL CHILDREN!

The WELCA (women of Grace) are calling on everyone to help collect winter HATS, GLOVES, AND MITTENS for local students. Please make sure to donate brand NEW items. Deadline for these donations is January 21, 2024.

January 22, 2024 we will be distributing the new budget for the 2024 year.

February 5, 2024 is our **Annual Congregational Meeting** immediately following the 10:15am worship service.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Thank you to all those who helped prepare the sanctuary for Christmas and we are blessed to host all who participated in our worship services.



CHRISTMAS EVE DECEMBER 24, 2023



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

11 East Dawes Avenue, Somers Point, NJ 08244

Church Office: 609-927-3082 **Food Pantry:** 609-927-9982

Website: www.gracelutheranspnj.org

E-mail: office@gracelutheranspnj.comcastbiz.net

Rev. Althea Albright, Pastor ☩ Scott J. Breiner, Music Director
Corinne Rhodes, Administrative Assistant
Alison Toth, Social Media Consultant

We welcome you to worship here at Grace!

*Note that all text written in **bold** is for congregation participation.
Our hymn songs are found in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship
red hymnal found in the pews.*



WELCOME TO GRACE'S FAMILY OF FAITH

We welcome you this day as we prepare our hearts and minds for a new year ahead. We hope you feel comfortable in this place, and we hope you come again soon. Everyone may join us whether you are a member, friend, neighbor, or just plain curious how we worship here.

We are all human. We are not perfect and we are each unique. You are welcome whether you like to sing or worship in silence. You are welcome whether you are struggling with your faith or love the God of your understanding with all your heart. All are welcome in this place. We believe God is present with us as we come together to worship especially on this holy night when we celebrate Jesus' birth.

*For where two or three are gathered in my name I am there among them.
Matthew 18:20*

Pastor Althea also invites you to contact her if you would like to receive prayer or information about our faith, worship style, or our church. **Please sign our Visitor Book located in the lobby** (Narthex area) before you leave tonight. Pastor Althea would love to be in touch with you.

No matter what your head and heart may be thinking and feeling this holiday season, we, here at Grace, wish you a very **Merry Christmas and Happy and Healthy New Year!**



ALL ARE WELCOME TO WORSHIP WITH US HERE AT GRACE!

Regular Sunday Worship times:

8:00 AM Spoken Worship
(casual, no music)

(Location: Lounge near Church Office)

8:45 AM Adult Sunday School
(discussion forum)

(Location: Conference Room near Church Office)

**10:15 AM Traditional Worship
with choir**

(Location: Main Sanctuary)

**PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL STAFF WILL BE
ON VACATION 12/25—12/30/2023, and 1/1/2024.**

During this time Pastor Althea will be available
for emergencies only at 484-345-0399.

Pastor will return to the office on January 3, 2024 at 10:00am.

First Sunday of Christmas

Sunday, December 31, 2023

Worship will be in person and livestreaming online at
10:15am ONLY

We will have a service of *Lessons and Carols*.



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

The poinsettias in the sanctuary are available for purchase after the service at 9:00pm for \$10 each.

We thank all those serving in worship today:

Reader 7:00 pm: Alex Piskun

Reader 9:00 pm: Ruth Bowden

Altar Guild: Brenda Traa, Clare Brick, and Ruth Traa

Ushering Team: John Staples, Jim Foreman, Karl Suckiel, and Stephen Gring

WELCOME TO ALL VISITORS!

If you are a visitor please fill out a VISITOR CARD in the pews if you are new to our church. Pastor Althea would love to meet you and get in touch with you.



SPONSORSHIPS:

Our flowers, candles, bulletins and wine sponsor is: Michelle Zelig

Flowers and Bulletins are dedicated, "In memory of our loving mother and grandmom, Martha June Becker. Her memory is a blessing." from Michele, Rick, Brooke, Bryce, and Camryn.

Candles are dedicated in memory of Charles and Margaret Gogel.

Wine is dedicated in memory of Thomas Stewart.

Our Music Sponsor is: Brenda Traa,
"In honor of our anniversary on December 26th."

Christmas Eve Worship with Holy Communion and Candle Lighting

Congregation responses are in **bold print**.

S = service music in front section of red hymnal

GATHERING

WELCOME

Rev. Althea Albright

PRELUDE

Greensleeves

by Richard Purvis

Please stand as you are able.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Let us come together in this holy place to feel the warmth of God's presence. **We are here to worship our Creator and listen for the Spirit.**

We are called to trust in our Creator and Redeemer. God calls us to listen for the voice of the Spirit speaking to us in our lives.

We find ourselves weary and broken. Only You, Almighty God, can heal us and refresh us. Only You can open our hearts and minds.

Remember our Lord, created us and loves us just as we are. Let us worship together as we celebrate the coming of the Messiah. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, the Word made flesh, our life and our salvation. **Amen.**

Trusting the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior,
let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God of Love, we confess that we have turned away from you. We have not trusted your promises to hear us when we pray. We have doubts that you are by our side. We let worry and fear consume us. We do not always treat our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may know your deep love for us, and glorify your holy name in all that we say and do. Amen.

People of God, hear the good news: We are children of God and heirs of God's promises through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In † Jesus we are forgiven and redeemed. Sing with joy, for all the ends of the earth shall know the salvation of God. **Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN *O Come, All Ye Faithful* **ELW # 283**
(RED HYMNAL BOOK)

GREETING The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

KYRIE **S page 147**
(FRONT OF RED HYMNAL BOOK)

HYMN OF PRAISE *Glory to God in the Highest* **S p. 148**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Almighty God, **you made this holy night shine with the brightness of your Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and on the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

Please be seated.

SENDING

SENDING PRAYER

Let us pray. Dearest Lord Jesus, in this time of holy worship you have refreshed us with your holy Word. We find hope and joy again because of God's love come down in Jesus. Send us forth now as witnesses of the Good News of your birth, that we also may be light for the world, in the name of Jesus, our Messiah. **Amen.**

Please extinguish your candles at this time.

BLESSING

May Almighty God bless you and keep you, may † Jesus grant you comfort and grace, and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts, now and forever. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* **ELW # 270**

Please be seated for the postlude. Take this time to listen to the music and contemplate the Christmas Message.

POSTLUDE *Noël for Flute Stops* by Louis Claude D'Aquin

DISMISSAL

Go and tell everyone that the Messiah is born! Merry Christmas!
Thanks be to God! Merry Christmas!

We are glad for your presence tonight.

We hope you come again soon!

CELEBRATION OF THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

The prologue to the Gospel of John describes Jesus as the Word of God made flesh, the one who reveals God to be "full of grace and truth."

GOSPEL READING: John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

HYMN *Silent Night* Text: Joseph Mohr; tr. John F. Young **ELW #281**

- 1 Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.
- 2 Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing, alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!
- 3 Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from your holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. ³You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING: Titus 2:11-14

The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.

¹¹The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹²training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds. The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Please stand as you are able.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke the 2nd chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-20

God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

Again, after supper, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

God of all time, as we celebrate Jesus' birth in this Christmas meal, we pray for the gift of your spirit to be among us in our gathering, among your people, and throughout the world.

May all glory and praise, honor, power, and might be to you, our God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Your Word, O God, is revealed in a manger, and you are with us in this bread and wine. Come meet Christ in this meal. **Amen.**

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION *Lamb of God* **S p. 154**

COMMUNION MUSIC *A Rose E'er Blooming* by Evelyn Larter
Flute: Andrew Ehrhardt

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God our redeemer, **you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

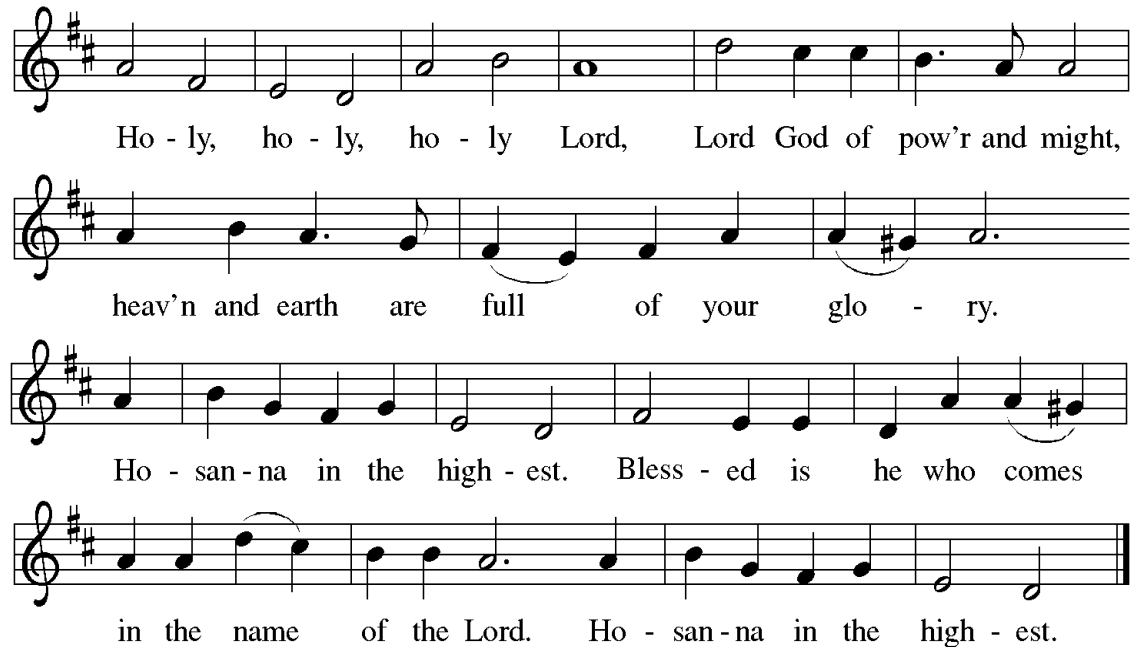
Please stand as you are able.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory, that, beholding the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

S p. 153



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,
 heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.
 Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes
 in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Holy God, you have filled all of creation with light and life. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. You are faithful to your people in every age and sent the gift of your Son, Jesus, so that we may not die, but live because of your grace and love.

On the night before Jesus would face suffering and death he sat with his disciples, gave thanks, broke bread, and said: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
 and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Please be seated.

SERMON

Rev. Althea Albright

HYMN 7:00 PM

Away in a Manger

ELW # 277

CHOIR ANTHEM 9:00 PM

Lulay, Thou Little Tiny Child

arr. by Eleanor Whitsett & Tom Scott

Please stand as you are able.

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Please be seated.

OFFERING

We are thankful for however you are able to support our ministry at Grace. Offering may be received in person, through the mail, church office, or Simply Giving online. Please call the church office if you need assistance with Simply Giving, or have any questions or concerns.

OFFERTORY 7:00 PM *Lo, How A Rose* by Jean Paquet
9:00 PM *Tell Us, Shepherd Maids* arr.by Mary E. Caldwell

Please stand as you are able.

PRESENTATION OF GIFTS *What Child Is This* **ELW # 296**
VERSE 3 ONLY

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray. God of abundance, receive and bless these gifts we have offered. Join our hearts with the song of the angels, and gather us at your table of celebration. Strengthen us to share with all the world the abundance of your grace upon grace, poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Amen.

Please be seated.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Pastor: Joining our voices with the song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *Brief silence.*

Response to each prayer: God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Pastor: Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace. **Amen.**

HOLY COMMUNION

EVERYONE IS INVITED to come down the center aisle at the direction of the ushers. If you are unable to come to the altar, you may remain seated and the pastor will bring you communion after everyone has come forward. Children are welcome to come for a blessing.

Grape juice and gluten free wafers are available.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

S p. 152

