

December 22, 2024

4th Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 22



Love

"Because of his boundless love, Jesus became what we are that he might make us to be what he is."

Irenaeus

## 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](http://www.gracelutheranspnj.org)

**E-mail:** [office@gracelutheranspnj.comcastbiz.net](mailto:office@gracelutheranspnj.comcastbiz.net)

Interim Pastor † Wendolyn Trozzo, 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.*

## GATHERING



**Welcome to this year's Christmas pageant, "Once Upon a Manger".** This year, our congregation will bring the story of the birth of Jesus to life! Each participant will get a surprise role in our play by grabbing a paper bag located in the narthex, which contains the name of your role, small costume item, a small prop, and a simple line to recite. Make sure to **keep your role a secret** until you are told to put them on! Once the program begins, watch for the storyteller/helper to let you know when it's time to do your part. Until then, sit back, relax, and enjoy the show!

**WELCOME  
PRELUDE**

*Hey Moon*

Rev. Wendolyn Trozzo  
by Sidewalk Prophets

*Please stand as you are able.*

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, alive in the world, reviving creation, arriving soon. **Amen.**

**Today, as we confess our sin, we recognize how easily we overlook the gifts God gives, and we accept the sad truth that our limitations often create the conditions for sin.**

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Let us pray.

**God, we want a faith that feels like more than words, but we lack your power to embody goodness. We hear your call to serve others yet feel too worn out to set the table. We hunger to taste justice but fear the burning spice of the meal. We want our place at your table but resist sitting beside a stranger. We have lost our appetites for the fullness of your grace. Forgive us and restore us with the healing wholeness of your presence.**

My friends, God knows you are imperfect, but God did not invite you here today for what you have done or how you behaved. God loves you. God always cared much more for you than for your shortcomings. God forgives you all your sins.

Now repeat after me.

We accept God's forgiveness. **We accept God's forgiveness.**

We take our place in God's purpose. **We take our place in God's purpose.**

Amen. Amen.

## OPENING HYMN

*All Earth Is Hopeful*

WOV #629

## GREETING

Greetings to you in the name of the triune God, the one whose word always accomplishes: The Shaper of life, the Savior of Humanity, the Spirit of Renewal.

## LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH (*The Trozzo family*)



1. When twi - light leaves the even - ing sky and night re - veals the  
2. When bit - ter days and bar - ren ground sap strength and pow - er and  
3. When rough ter - rain makes prog - ress hard, God lev - els what's in the



stars, the far ho - ri - zon hope of God comes sing - ing to our hearts.  
voice, ten - a - cious faith will hold us fast; God's hope will say, re - joice!  
way; a ten - der jus - tice will car - ry us, and care will not de - lay.

### Refrain



Your love is more than words, O God, a flame you kin - dle, a seed you sow, a



rose that blooms in the snow, and we will mag - ni - fy your love.

Each of our Advent candles represents God's generous goodness, the advent of Jesus, God's greatest gift, the Spirit's fluttering flicker of joy. As we light each candle, we recognize the gifts God has given us this week.

Together we pray:

*As we light the candle for hope:*  
 God, we reach for unreasonable hope;  
**and you prepare an incomparable future.**

*As we light the candle for peace:*  
 God, we breathe in your peaceful refuge,  
**for you have made a place where we can safely rest.**

*As we light the candle for joy:*  
 Joy ebbs and flows each day, holy God.  
**so we pray to you in honesty.**

*As we light the candle for today, love:*  
 Your love grows unseen, holy God;  
**we prepare for you every day.**



### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION/PRAYER OF THE DAY**

As the warmth of God's presence fills this place, we pray that the Spirit will illuminate our lives through the words we hear, the songs we sing, and the pathways of prayer engraved on our hearts.

**We pray: Jesus, you shape the world around us, even when you remain just out of sight. As we listen today, help us prepare our lives for you with loving anticipation. Amen.**

Your love grows unseen, holy God; **we prepare for you every day.**  
 God, illuminate us. **Illuminate us.**

**PEACE** The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

## **GREET YOUR NEIGHBOR**

*Take a brief moment to share the peace by greeting someone sitting near you. Verbal greetings are appropriate if you are not comfortable shaking hands or touching. Find out what carols people love!*

*Please be seated.*

### **First Reading: Micah: 5:2-5a**

*The prophet Micah, having pronounced judgment upon Judah, speaks of a future shepherd-king who, like David, will come from the small town of Bethlehem. (Ephrathah refers to the area around Bethlehem.) This king will restore Israel and bring peace. New Testament writers understood this passage to be referring to Jesus.*

<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>5a</sup> and he shall be the one of peace.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

*Please stand as you are able.*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



The Holy Gospel according to Luke the 1st chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

### GOSPEL: Luke 1:39-55

<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.”

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

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

*Sing of Mary, Pure and Lowly*

WOV #634

*Please be seated.*

## **“Once Upon a Manger: A Paper Bag Pageant”**

### **INVITATION TO OFFERING**

God, we have turned to you today for a bit of quiet, a sliver of sabbath,  
 a small moment to set down what we carry as we consider your word.

**And into this minute of rest, you send your prophet with an axe for  
 the root of the tree, and kindling for the burning fire.**

Your call to action is surprising, and we are not always ready.

**Yet we know we must help build the road where your people travel  
 toward justice.**

*Our offering is received.*

### **OFFERING**

**OFFERTORY**

*Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel*

by Flor Peeters

*Please stand as you are able.*

**PRESENTATION OF GIFTS** *Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful*

WOV #35

### **OFFERING PRAYER**

Together we pray.

Holy Spirit, please bless these small gifts we give. **You set the table with  
 plenty of love.**

Prepare room in your home **for my neighbor and me.**

Prepare a place in your vision **for my neighbor and me.**

Prepare a seat at your table **for my neighbor and me.**

Holy Spirit, you have blessed these gifts we give. **You set the table with plenty of love.**

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

P: As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence. *Brief silence.*

*At the end of each prayer petition when the worship assistant or pastor says, "Lord, in your mercy," please respond with "receive our prayer."*

P: Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## **HOLY COMMUNION**

### **GREAT THANKSGIVING**

God is with you. **And also with you.**

Offer your hearts to God. **We do, because we know God cares for us.**

We give thanks to God. **God always deserves our thanks and praise.**

God, yours was the first thought; before any human lived or knew your name, you whispered, and creation built itself around your words. Before your ancient people knew the depth of your love, you promised them goodness, and led them to freedom. **Your love grows unseen.**

Before the world knew your face, your own child was born in a quiet stable. **Your love blooms in the dark.**

Before we knew the depth of your love, your child died, crucified, and you forgave, and new life grew in the grave. **Your love echoes in the silence.**

Once you made Mary agelessly blessed. Once you turned turncoat disciples into the family of the forgiven. You wrote the words for their hope, and they sang the song of joy. What you have done for them you have also done for us. So we give you praise.



## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

On a night of betrayal, Jesus pulled close friends closer to eat with them one last time. Jesus taught them, Jesus served them, Jesus took bread and said, This is my body, given for you, so you can eat it whenever you are hungry and every time you are hungry you can know my love.

Then Jesus took a cup filled with wine, and said, My forgiveness is more than words. This is my blood, poured out for you, so you can drink it to know that I forgive every sin.

This is the body of Jesus, the blood of Jesus.

Jesus, we remember you died. **We remember.**

We remember God's love sparked life in your dead body. **We remember.**

We remember you shall return to empty every grave. **We remember.**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

And we remember these gifts as we pray the way Jesus taught us.

**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

God feeds us with tender mercy. Come to the table.

## COMMUNION HYMN

*Lamb of God*

WOV #39

## DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*EVERYONE IS INVITED to receive Holy Communion. The ushers will invite worshippers forward to fill the altar railings. Once you have received the wafer and the red wine/white grape juice, place your empty cup in the tray and return to your pew. As places open up, worshippers will fill them in so that communion is a continuous process. If you do not wish to receive communion, or are worshipping with children who have not had First Communion, we welcome you to come forward for a blessing; as you kneel*

*at the railing, cross your arms over your chest to show your preference to the pastor.*

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

God, what you have planned for us unfolds slowly.  
**Your love is often unrecognizable, unappreciated, gentle and unnoticed.**  
 But in this place, we have noticed what others do not see.  
**We have tasted your unspoken goodness.**  
**And we will magnify your love. Amen.**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Please stand as you are able.*

## **SENDING**

### **BLESSING**

Where is the care in this world? Where is the faith we were promised? Where is the hope we desired, when peace moves into our homes, and joy is a constant presence, and justice is for everyone?

**God, this world waits to know that your love is more than words.**

People of God, you have already shared the advent of God's goodness. You carry the blessing of God - God, the First Whisper; Jesus, the Living Promise; Spirit, the Peaker of Hearts. Now go into this world expecting God's justice and nurturing God's peace.

**God, we will magnify your love. Thanks be to you! Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN** *The Angel Gabriel From Heaven Came* WOV #632

*Please be seated. Enjoy the postlude music.  
 and meditate on how God spoke to your heart today.*

**POSTLUDE** *Gabriel's Message* by Paul Manz

**DISMISSAL** Go in peace. Encourage one another in Christ.  
**Thanks be to God.**

*We are glad for your presence today.  
We hope you come again soon!*

**We thank all those serving in worship today:**

**Worship Assistant:** Jim Ehrhardt

**The flowers sponsor this week is:** Ingeborg Carlson, in memory of Abraham Svindland, with love from his children & grandchildren, The Carlsons, Fetters, & Svindland Families

**The candles and wine sponsor this week is:** Carol Gallagher, in memory of her sister, Debbie.

**The bulletins sponsor this week is:** Roberta Blumenthal

**Food Pantry is currently in need of the following items:**  
Coffee, spaghetti sauce, mayonnaise, shampoo and conditioner.

**WELCA is collecting donations of hats, mittens, and gloves** for children in need this winter. Your donations are greatly appreciated and may be placed in the designated basket in the narthex.

## **CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SCHEDULE:**

**7:00 PM** Christmas Eve Candlelight Service  
(Parents may bring children's favorite blanket for Pastor's special children's sermon.)

**9:00 PM** Christmas Eve Candlelight Service  
with Choir

This service will be live-streamed.

# HAPPENINGS AROUND GRACE THIS WEEK

## December 22, 2024-December 29, 2024

### 4th Sunday of Advent 12/22/24

8:00AM Spoken Worship

8:45AM Adult Forum

10:15AM Traditional Worship

#### **Grab Bag Pageant**

4:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous

### MONDAY 12/23/24

9:00AM-11:30AM Food Pantry

7:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous

### TUESDAY 12/24/24

#### **Office Closed**

6:30PM Narcotics Anonymous

7:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous

**7:00PM Candlelight Service w/  
children's sermon**

**9:00 Candlelight Service w/Choir**

### WEDNESDAY 12/25/24

*Merry Christmas!*

#### **Office Closed**

6:00PM AA Book Study

7:00PM Narcotics Anonymous

### THURSDAY 12/26/24

#### **Office Closed**

12:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous

7:00PM Al-Anon

### FRIDAY 12/27/24

10:30AM Grace Stitchers

7:30PM Alcoholics Anonymous

### SATURDAY 12/28/24

*No events.*

### 1st Sunday of Christmas 12/29/24

**NO 8:00AM WORSHIP OR  
ADULT FORUM**

10:15AM Service of carols with  
special sermon souvenir

4:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous



### **SHORE DINER**

Present this bulletin on a Sunday  
and Shore Diner will donate 20% to Grace  
Lutheran Church. Present this on  
any other day, and we will donate 10%.

Shore Diner  
6710 Tilton Road  
Egg Harbor Township, NJ 08234  
609-641-3669