



December 13, 2018

Greetings friends,

I've had the privilege for the last several weeks, to work with our Sunday school kids on their Christmas program. What a delight each one of our precious children is! They are engaged and eager to do their very best each week and just make me smile with their overall sweetness. Erma has written an absolutely charming program for them again this year. She knows "her" kids and does a wonderful of giving each a chance to participate in a meaningful way. Our Sunday school teachers also do a great job of helping to make this special event happen. The play is "An Old Fashioned Christmas" and follows a grandmother enjoying a Christmas visit with her grandchildren who come from different backgrounds (city and country) but bond over participation in the Nativity story at church on Christmas Eve. Please plan to join us for this special presentation on Sunday at 11 a.m.

This Week at Grace – Pastor Jonathan's message this week, "Tis the Season for; Hope" is inspired by two passages, Philippians 4:4-7 and Luke 3:7-18. We're lighting the first three candles on the Advent Wreath with Brett, Laila and Gabby Tesdall doing the honors. The Chancel Choir will sing *Away in the Manger*, featuring Claudia Pauk on the flute. *Greeters this week are Gene & Erma Schaeffer. Those serving as ushers include Rick & Grace Welke, Jim & Shelley Hassebrock. Terry Gustason is our liturgist.* Worship begins at 9:15 with a delicious biscuit and gravy brunch served immediately after the worship service. At 11 a.m., our Sunday school children and youth will present "An Old Fashioned Christmas" program in the sanctuary.

A special offering will be asked this Sunday for those who would like to directly support Bethany Life residents during the holidays. Every year Bethany Life provides a Christmas gift for each resident on Christmas morning. This year, they are asking for help to make it happen. Look for a designated basket to give to this concern on December 16th.

This Sunday we will have our December Sunday Brunch following the worship service. On the menu this month is *biscuits and gravy* and our mission focus is Jerry Spencer's ministry education. He is currently working two jobs (Story City police officer and minister at the Hubbard and Ellsworth churches) as he also takes classes. Any prayer, monetary and emotional support we can offer him in these challenging days would be very much appreciated.

You're invited to "An Old Fashioned Christmas," the 2018 Sunday school Christmas program! It will be presented THIS Sunday, December 16th at 11:00 a.m. in the sanctuary. We're blessed with wonderful children and youth in this congregation. Please come support them with your presence as they share the story of Christ's birth.

Following the 5:00 Christmas Eve service, Pastor Jonathan invites those who are without family plans to join him for a pot-luck supper at the parsonage. Please make a note on the attendance pad if you plan to attend so he can make sure to have enough chairs, etc.

Thank you to everyone who has turned in their pledge card! If you haven't yet turned in your purple pledge card for 2019, please do so at your earliest convenience. Extra cards can be found on the usher's table in the narthex. You may place it in the offering plate or drop it by the office, or mail it in. We look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you!

A reminder that any articles or reports that you'd like to have included in the January newsletter are due in the church office by Thursday, December 20th.

Living Faithfully: The United Methodist Church and Human Sexuality is a little book that, in just four short chapters—leads us through a discussion of the issues at the core of our church's current struggle. What is the conflict about? What do people on either "side" have to say? In February a special general conference will receive—and perhaps act on—a report from *The Commission on A Way Forward*. This commission was tasked with finding a way for the United Methodist Church to continue its ministry while our people remained in connection with one another. I feel it is my responsibility to lead the congregation into some kind of understanding of the issues involved. We will be discussing this book in the adult Sunday school class beginning January 13. I would also like to make another time available: perhaps Sunday evenings, Tuesday evenings, or Wednesday before choir practice. Please indicate your preference on the attendance pad. The office is purchasing a number of books to get us started.

Many of us may not know what this is all about. Some of us may already have strong opinions (and this discussion is not meant to change anyone's mind). Quite a few of us have been affected either within our families or extended circle of friends. Let's take some time to talk. —Jonathan

Jonathan will cover the material three times each week beginning January 13th.

Sunday mornings during the Sunday school hour (10:30-11:30)

Wednesday afternoons from 5:30-6:30

Thursday evenings at 7:00-8:00

It is a 4 to 5 week class. The Wednesday and Thursday sessions will meet in the Chapel. Participants may come to whichever session that suits their schedule each week. The Living Faithfully books are available on a table in the narthex. A \$10 gift would be appreciated, but is not required.

St. Petri Lutheran Church has invited the community to a brief Blue Christmas/Longest Night service on Friday, December 21, at 7 pm. Everyone is invited to attend, but the service is designed for those who grieve or find the Advent/Christmas season a time of sorrow or pain. Participants can slow down, be still, and know that God is God. These services can be a time of refuge. Pastor Jonathan will be attending.

The Story City EDC is hosting a Trivia Night on January 18th at 7:00pm (doors open at 6:00) at the Story City Community Center. We'd like to get a team or two together to represent Grace Church. Team size is 8 players and tables are limited, so we'll want to get registered soon. Let Jonathan know if you'd like to participate – there is a table fee of \$12.50 per person.

As you pray this week, please remember these friends and hold each up in special prayer: Renee Menz (Dale & Lynn Henricks daughter); Sara Dappen; Velda Frette; George Sellers; Pat Skowronski; Sally Donald (Judy A's sister); Joan Cooney; Lois Johnson; Garry Gerjets; Clarence (friend of George Sellers); Jackie Royer (Sharla's friend); Cooper Leeman; Taylor family in Africa

News You Can Use

Sunday, December 16 – Third Sunday of Advent

9:15 AM Worship – Chancel Choir

10:15 AM Brunch – Biscuits & Gravy, Jerry Spencer education support

11:00 AM “Old Fashioned Christmas” Sunday school program

Monday, December 17

5:30 PM Finance

6:30 PM Council

Wednesday, December 19

7:00 PM Choir

Thursday, December 20

January articles and reports due in the office for the newsletter

Friday, December 21

7:00 PM Longest Night/Blue Christmas at St. Petri

Sunday, December 23 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

9:15 AM Worship

10:15 AM Brunch – Coffee Fellowship

Monday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

5:00 PM Candle Light Worship

6:00 PM Potluck supper at the Parsonage

Please “like” our Facebook page, [@storycitygrace](#) and receive regular updates on “what’s happening” at Grace Church! Our website, www.grace-umc.com is full of information and pictures about the life and activities of our Grace Church family. Please check it out!

**Faithfully,
Cathy**

Poinsettias for Remembrance



Let’s fill the sanctuary with beautiful poinsettia flowers for the Advent Season. You are invited to bring in a poinsettia plant beginning Sunday, DECEMBER 9th for the remainder of the holiday season. Story City Floral & Garden is selling the plants for \$20 and will deliver them to the church if you ask them. *We will not be placing orders through the church office.* If you’d prefer, you may bring a poinsettia of your own. If you want to pay tribute to loved ones either as a memorial for those who have passed or in honor for those who are still with us, simply fill out this form and drop it in the offering plate on Sunday, December 9th or 16th or you may deliver it to the church office. **NOTE: Do NOT include money with this form. If ordering your plant through the local florist, please call (515)733-2760 and deal with them directly.**

My name _____

In honor/memory of
