



GRACE UNITED
METHODIST
CHURCH
PO BOX 67
624 ELM AVE.
STORY CITY, IA 50248

Contact Information

**Pastor Jonathan
Cooney Ph.D.**
jonathan.cooney07
@gmail.com

Shannon Koppes
Administrative
Assistant
office@grace-umc.com
515-733-4712

www.grace-umc.com

"Like" us on
Facebook—Story City
Grace

Office Hours:
Monday — Friday
8:30 AM – 12:30 PM

The Visitor is a
monthly publication of
Grace UMC, Story City.
If you would like to add,
change or remove your
name from our mailing
or e-mailing list

*correct your address

*submit news to be
published in
The Visitor...

Mail us the information

Grace UMC;
624 Elm Ave.
P.O. Box 67
OR call us

(515) 733-4712

OR email us:

office@grace-umc.com

The Grace Church Visitor

VOL. 75 NO. 6

DECEMBER 2023

THE MEANING OF Advent

**FOUR CANDLES
REPRESENT HOPE**
(PROPHETS WHO PREDICTED
THE COMING OF JESUS),
FAITH (THE JOURNEY OF
JOSEPH AND MARY), **JOY**
(THE SHEPHERDS CANDLE),
PEACE (THE ANGELS
CANDLE)



**CANDLES REPRESENT
JESUS AS THE LIGHT
OF THE WORLD**

**ADVENT COMES FROM THE LATIN
WORD ADVENTUS MEANING
"COMING". ADVENT IS A TIME WE
ANTICIPATE THE COMING OF CHRIST.**

**THE CIRCULAR
WREATH REMINDS US
OF GOD'S UNENDING
LOVE. IT IS MADE
OUT OF EVERGREEN
LEAVES TO
REPRESENT THE HOPE
OF ETERNAL LIFE.**

What's Inside

- Page 2 – December Birthdays, December Lectionary, From Our Pastor**
Page 3 – G.R.A.C.E. Teams, Office Hours, Condolences, Christmas Eve Service, Volunteers,
Page 4 – Prayers, Gifts, Presence, Witness, Service, Mission Brunch, Thank you!
Page 5 – Youth Update, Christmas Program Rehearsals, Charge Conf. Harvest Home
Page 6 – UWF News, Children's Program, Family Christmas in Story City
Page 7 – UMCOR, Thank you, Scholarships, Angel Tree, Poinsettias
Page 8 – Pictures of Grace
Page 9 – Unofficial Council Minutes
Page 10 – December Calendar of Events

Grace = God's Riches At Christ's Expense

December Birthdays

Korbin Doise	12/1
Melissa Brown	12/6
Brent Larson	12/7
Hubert Bickelhaupt	12/10
Linda Larson	12/10
Karen Gookin	12/11
Reagan Flaspohler	12/12
Camille Hubert	12/16
Kurt Carlson	12/20
Sullivan Hermanson	12/26
Dan Webster	12/26
Joan Barrett	12/27
Shannon Koppes	12/27
Dale Henricks	12/28
Tony Blue	12/30

If we're missing a birthday please accept our apologies and let us know so we can update our records!



December Lectionary

December 3

Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19;
1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

December 10

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13;
2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

December 17

Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-11; Psalm 126;
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 24

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55;
Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14;
Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

December 31

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7;
Luke 2:22-40

From Our Pastor

Beloveds,

Recently I spent some time with my wife, Becky, and some family and friends making the rounds of various antique, arts and crafts, and holiday-themed bazaars. I stumbled across a quote that seems to be popular this year: "I want a Christmas that whispers Jesus." I've been chewing on this some and I'm not sure yet what it means. It is from a work by Anne Voskamp. See what you think (*italics are mine*). Be forewarned: you might see this again this Advent and Christmas season!

"So, we kinda don't want a Christmas that we have to produce or perform or perfect—

we want a Christmas that holds us—
that revives us, remakes us.

"We want a Christmas that whispers Jesus."

"A Christmas that whispers that miracles still happen, and no matter what happens,
hope happens.
Even now.

"A Christmas that whispers:

No matter what feels beyond fixing,
One came from beyond the walls of this world
because His heart is fixed on you,
smitten with you, completely for you,
and you are loved far beyond your wildest hopes and deepest needs,
and His arms will carry you far beyond the arms that any of your problems can reach.

"A Christmas that whispers to all your unspoken broken:
Don't give up—because He came down.

"You get the Christmas you've always wanted and dreamed of—

because you get Jesus—
and He wants you and loves you more than you could ever dream."

Your Servant for Christ's Sake,
Jonathan

Don't Stop Me If You've Heard This One Dept.

A pastor got this note accompanying a box of Christmas goodies, addressed to him and his wife:

"Dear Pastor, knowing that you do not eat sweets, I am sending the candy to your wife—and
nuts to you."

G.R.A.C.E Team "E"

With only four teams, G.R.A.C.E. Teams share the month of December to give us balance the rest of the year. During the month of December each of our four G.R.A.C.E. Teams will be responsible for one Sunday. Team E will provide ushers on Dec. 3rd. Team C will take Dec. 10th and Team G will cover Dec. 17th. Team M will cover the 24th. Teams C and M will both cover the 31st.

Office Hours

The office will be closed on December 25 and 26 for the Christmas holidays. Shannon will be out of the office on December 8 and 12 as well this month.

Condolences

Our sympathies go out to the family of Darwin Johnson. Darwin passed away on October 28 and his services were held at St. Petri on November 3 and a lunch followed at Grace.

Christmas Eve Service



You are invited to join us for our traditional **Candlelight Worship service at 5:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve**. We'll add the Christ Candle as we light all the candles on our Advent wreath. We'll listen to scripture, sing beloved Christmas hymns, listen as the choir shares their beautiful Christmas music, and receive Pastor Jonathan's Christmas message. At the close of the service, we'll each light a candle as we sing "Silent Night" in thanks for all the wonderful blessings we enjoy because of Jesus, God's own son.

December Volunteers

Sunday, December 3

Liturgist:	Becky Barclay
Tech:	Kurt Carlson
Ushers:	Rasmussen Family
Advent Candle:	Mike and Patsy Jensen

Sunday, December 10

Liturgist:	Dave Doolittle
Tech:	Louis Reeder
Ushers:	Jim and Shelley Hassebrock David and Mary Loupee
Advent Candle:	Jacob and Krystle Ness

Sunday, December 17

Liturgist:	Angie Schnurstein
Tech:	Kurt Carlson
Ushers:	Cheryl Semler, Marvin and Pauline Kokemiller
Advent Candle:	Alex and Claire Flaspohler
Brunch:	Serve: Gini Michel Clean Up: Ness Family 1 ½ Gal. Milk: Angie Schnurstein 1 Gal. OJ: Lorio Lounsberry 1 Gal. OJ: Gini Michel

Sunday, December 24 (morning service)

Liturgist:	Kurt Carlson
Tech:	Nate Warwick
Ushers:	Gini and Caleb Michel
Advent Candle:	Jonathan and Becky Cooney

Sunday, December 24 (candlelight service)

Liturgist:	Del Johnston
Tech:	Kate Feil
Ushers:	Eric and Luccas Hart
Advent Candle:	Jonathan and Catherine Cooney

Sunday, December 31

Liturgist:	Virginia Swenson
Tech:	Savannah or Craig Jensen
Ushers:	Mike and Patsy Jensen



Our Prayers

Dorothy Carbaugh; Donyel Caruth—sister Tawnya has cancer; Cathy Hermanson—Cancer; Mindy Kardell—traveling overseas; Loretta Parker; Claudia Pauk—thankful her hands are improving; Paula Sampson—Cancer; David Skaar—stroke; The Taylors;

Our Gifts

Offering Nov. 5—Nov. 26:
\$21,775.00

Our Presence

Attendance Nov. 5—Nov. 26
Worship: 328 Total/ 82 Avg.

Our Witness

We appreciate our November liturgists: Kurt Carlson, Dave Doolittle, Lauren Crawford and Gail Remis

Thank you to our tech team who ran the power point in October: Louis Reeder, Nate Warwick, Riker Warwick and Chris or Kate Feil

Our Service

Thank you to everyone who came to help clean up the church grounds during fall clean up days.

Thank you to everyone who helped decorate the church for Christmas on Sunday, November 26. The church looks beautiful.

Thank you to everyone who delivered meals on wheels during the month of November: Gini Michel, Mindy Kardell, Mary Loupee, Jane Jackson, Fred Larson, Mike and Patsy Jensen, Gail and Carlos Remis, Gloria Sampson, Erma Schaeffer, Kevin and Candi Holm, Louis and Tep Reeder, and Hubert and Raejean Bickelhaupt

Mission Brunch

On Sunday, November 19, we had our monthly mission brunch. They served 63 people. They raised \$823.50 that will be given to Loaves and Fishes. Thank you for your generous contributions for our mission. We hope you join us next month on December 17. Money raised will go to support the Taylor Family next month.

Thank you!

Becky and Jonathan would like to thank everyone for their gracious support of our wedding, honeymoon, and wonderful reception on October 29. We know there are too many names to list—and many we may never know—but special thanks goes to Cathy, Sharla, Patsy and all the folk who contributed to a terrific day.

Thank you!

Grace church is blessed with an abundance of willing workers for any activity whether they are asked or not. Thank you to all of you cheerfully helping in the many ways hosting the delightful wedding celebration for Pastor Jonathan and Becky.

Cathy and Patsy

Thank you!

Many thanks to my Grace Church friends for the cards, calls, FaceBook messages, and texts. Each and every one brightens my day and helps keep me positive. Thankfully, my 'bad' days are fewer, but I do get them. Happily, they are usually interspersed with 'good and great' days. It would be fabulous to predict in advance when the challenge days are going to hit. But, so far, it's always a surprise. Hmmm, I may need to rethink my fondness for surprises....

Anyway, thanks again and may your days be filled with surprises of the happy variety!

With love, Cathy



Youth Update

We have a lot going on in the youth right now! Compass is seeing roughly the same numbers as usual (12-15) and Axis has been seeing a more consistent 2-4. I started writing my own lessons for Compass because I feel like they pay attention more when it comes from me and the Lord and not a different content source.

I am trying to work with Conner Freerks, the youth director from Immanuel to get a retreat set up in January where the theme will be relentless. Friday night Conner will talk about how God relentlessly pursues us, and Saturday morning I will talk about how we can return the favor and relentlessly pursue him back.

We had our community youth worship night on Wednesday, November 15. A night where we partnered with Harvest E-free and Immanuel to bring the youth in our community together to understand that even though we go to different churches, we worship the same God. We had about 50 to 60 kids plus 10 to 15 adults. We are looking to try and do it again with neighboring communities in the spring!

Finally, I want to announce that I am resigning from my position as the Youth and Families ministries director effective December 31 of this year. I have the opportunity to intern at Riverside Lutheran Bible Camp as a communications intern in order to graduate from college. There is a lot of outreaches to this job that takes place on Wednesdays and Sundays which means it is near impossible for me to stay with my position. I have enjoyed working here for the last year and a half and it is with the heaviest of hearts that I have to make this announcement. I am praying for the hiring process for the church and just ask for some prayers about what is next for me. As of now I am interning at Riverside, spending one more summer with them, and then seeing what is to come for me!

Thank you all for the continuous support of this ministry and the continuous support of me as well.

Sincerely yours,
Joel Chambers

Christmas Program Rehearsals

Rehearsals for the Christmas program continue. Rehearsals will be in the fellowship hall following the children's sermon. Below is the schedule for which kids will rehearse each week.

December 3—All children and teachers

December 10—All children and teachers

December 17—Christmas program during church service at 9:15 a.m.

Charge Conference

Charge Conference was held at Collegiate United Methodist in Ames on November 5. Five members from Grace attended, Jonathan Cooney, Patsy Jensen, Gloria Sampson, Krystal Ness and Becky Barclay. Patsy Jensen was secretary for our church that afternoon. All of our reports were approved. Virginia Swenson was named as the lay member to annual conference in 2024.

Harvest Home



Thank you for your generous donations of food for Harvest Home. We were able to deliver over 1000 pounds of food to the Loaves and Fishes food panty. With the \$823.50 that was raised through the quarter tube and mission brunch, Loaves and Fishes will be able to help many families this holiday season.

New Copier Policy

To help with the cost of copier supplies, the trustees have decided to implement a policy that if you make copies for personal use, you will be charged a fee of 15 cents per side.

Joy to the world

UWF News

On Wednesday, November 8, 16 members of United Women of Faith met in the Fellowship Hall at 1:30. Patsy opened the meeting by reading James, chapter two, verse 26. She asked we remember in prayer those in our circle and church who are struggling and going through difficult times. We sang Bind Us Together and recited the Purpose.

Erma presented our World Thank Offering as the Mission Moment. We all have different ways of giving and in doing so show we have much to be thankful for. We are grateful for God's blessing.

Sharla gave the Treasurer's report. We have a balance of \$3,547.46.

Terry read the Secretary's report.

Claudia had sign up sheets for the 2024 program book. We could sign up for Mission Moment, Program and Hostess. Patsy had sign up sheets for the senior citizen lunches to be served in December. She also asked for volunteers to serve on the nominations committee.

Sharla said we had \$2,000 for our end of year giving. On motion by Gloria, seconded we will give \$400 to Taylor family, and \$200 each to Angel Tree, Loaves and Fishes, RS Middle School food bank, Families Forward, YSS, Access, Good Neighbor and Women at the Well.

Midwest Missions is now in Jefferson. Gloria gave us an update/ideas on Mission Outreach. The greeting cards we send out from our circle and through church were discussed.

Pastor Jonathan then installed the 2024 officers. Patsy Jensen: President; Claudia Pauk: Vice-President; Tep Reeder: Secretary and Sharla Mander: Treasurer. He reminded us serving is a community thing.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, December 13. We will meet at the church with two dozen cookies or candy. After we "pack" about treat containers we will deliver to our shut-in and church friends.

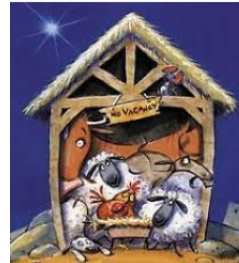
Raejean was our hostess.

Submitted by Terry Gustason



UWF Officers: Sharla Mander—treasurer,
Tep Reeder—Secretary,
Claudia Pauk—Vice President,
Patsy Jensen—President

Children's Program



"While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for the in the inn."

The Unfriendly Beasts is a charming, humorous story of the manger animals who must share their crowded stable with Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus. When word reaches the stable that the animals must make room for humans, the animals protest.

December 17th the children will perform "The Unfriendly Beasts" during the 9:15 church service. Please join us as we celebrate the birth of Christ from the manger animals perspective.

Family Christmas in Story City

The holiday season is the perfect time to make magical memories with your family! We have a fun event planned in Story City on December 16th that offers an array of magical holiday experiences that capture the essence of the festive spirit of the holiday season. For more information on this fun event go to:

[Family Christmas In Story City](#)

UMCOR



As the humanitarian relief and development arm of The United Methodist Church, the **United Methodist Committee on Relief – UMCOR** – assists United Methodists and churches to become involved globally in direct ministry to persons in need. UMCOR comes alongside those who suffer from natural or human-caused disasters – famine, hurricane, war, flood, fire or other events—to alleviate suffering and serve as a source of help and hope for the vulnerable. UMCOR provides relief, response and long-term recovery grants when events overwhelm a community's ability to recover on their own. UMCOR also provides technical support and training for partners to address emerging and ongoing issues related to disaster relief, recovery, and long-term health and development.

To learn more about how to support UMCOR go to <https://umcmmission.org/umcor/>

Thank you!

Grace United Methodist Congregation,

Thank you for your 2023 Angel Gift donation from the October brunch! This year the program is helping 80 kids from 33 families have a Merry Christmas!

Thank you,
Alyssa Loots

Scholarships

The Iowa Methodist Foundation is offering over 100 scholarship for the 2024-2025 school year! Some scholarships are specifically for Methodist colleges, and many are open to anyone. Check out our website <https://iumf.org/scholarships/> to read the criteria and apply! Applications are accepted December 1—March 1 annually. With over \$250,000 to award this year, we want to help the student in your life graduate with less debt!

2023 Angel Tree



Slips of Christmas wishes were picked up by members of the congregation on November 12th. Soon local children in need will be receiving special gifts on Christmas morning. Please remember to wrap your gifts and attach the wish slip to the package so it is delivered to the intended child. **All gifts are due at Immanuel Church by Wednesday morning, December 6th.** Thank you for helping to make a child's Christmas wishes come true!

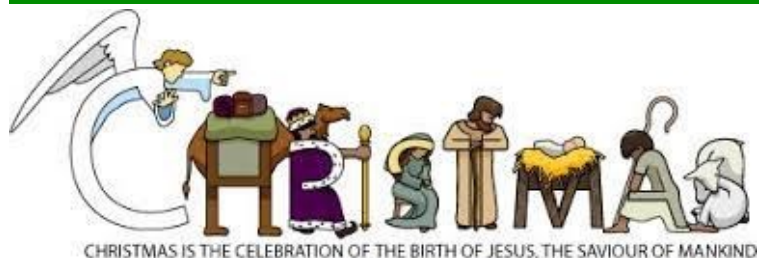
Poinsettias



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 10th for the remainder of the holiday season. You may bring a poinsettia of your own from where ever you choose. 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 by Sunday, December 10th, or you may deliver it to the church office.

My name _____

In honor/memory of



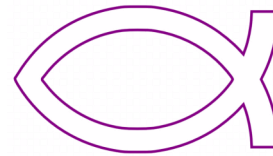
CHRISTMAS IS THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS, THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND



Decorating the Church



The **Chrismon Tree**, used by many congregations instead of the secular Christmas tree and placed in the sanctuary, is decorated with various monograms and emblems standing for Christ and the story of salvation. Our "Christ monograms" include various crosses, the butterfly (for resurrection), the anchor (for hope), and the fish (*ichthus* in Greek=first letters of Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior).



Grace UMC Council

Unofficial Minutes from November 27, 2023 Meeting

Present: Gloria Sampson (Chair, Missions), Becky Barclay (Finance), Jim Hassebrock (Trustees), Louis Reeder (Trustees), Pastor Jonathan, Cheryl Semler (Worship), Krystle Ness (SPRC), Claudia Pauk (Lay Leader)

Jonathan offered prayer and Gloria opened the meeting.

Cheryl/Becky Moved the November minutes be accepted as written. Motion carried.

Finance: Becky reported an account is being setup with "Donor Box" to enable electronic giving by scanning a QR code for mission breakfasts or coffee hour. A separate account is setup with the bank for these donations, there is no monthly fee or contract. Upon donation a small fee will be charged and the donor can either chose to cover the fee on top of their donation or the fee will be deducted from the donation. The conference reached out to all member churches in regards to connectional apportionment gifting, asking if other congregations would like to make an additional apportionment payment to make up for other conference churches that were unable to pay their apportionments in entirety. The committee voted to make an additional \$1200 apportionment payment to the conference.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Jonathan reported the church conference was held on November 5 at Collegiate in Ames. There are copies of the leadership report and budgets available in the narthex. Full packets are available if desired; check with the office. Two changes were made after the packets were printed, but in time to be voted on at the conference. Lay leader will be Dave Dolittle and Virginia Swenson will attend annual conference. Joel Chambers (youth leader) has resigned his position effective at the end of December. There will be a youth committee meeting at Grace church on December 10 at 11:30 am.

Committee Reports: Ministry Area

Worship: Cheryl reported satisfaction with the All Saints service on November 5. The committee decided to purchase a new, smaller tree that would not obstruct the new monitor and are satisfied with the result. Worship chose to use their budget to cover the cost of the tree. December 3 will be communion. On Christmas Eve there will be two services, the morning worship at 9:15 am and a special Christmas Eve service at 5:30 pm. Pianos will be tuned in January.

Missions: Gloria reported: The mission brunch raised \$823.50 on November 19th for Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry. The check and an additional 100 pounds of food were delivered before Thanksgiving. There are 5 church members going to Midwest Missions on Thursday, November 30 to volunteer their time. They will deliver the 4 finished mats from Grace church.

UWF: Gloria reported the December brunch will benefit the Taylor Family. The second week of December the members will be doing their cookie exchange and visits to shut-in friends. The members have been working the senior luncheons at the community center.

Committee Reports: Administrative Area

SPRC: Krystle reported staff appreciation on November 12 went well; staff were presented with cinnamon rolls and card thanking them for their service. Next meeting will be in January.

Leadership: Jonathan reported the leadership reports for 2024 are available in the narthex.

Trustees: Annual parsonage inspection was completed and identified a rotten window frame that will be replaced by the end of the year using funds allocated for parsonage maintenance. The lighting project in the sanctuary is mostly done, waiting on re-ordered bulbs and light fixtures to finish. Due to changes in implementation, there was additional funds left that will be used to replace lighting in the narthex and choir room. Cleanup days took place on November 10 & 11; leaves were raked and removed and pews were vacuumed throughout the sanctuary. A new monitor bracket was purchased and will be installed with the front monitor to allow it to pivot to help cut down on glare from the windows. The committee is looking into handicap accessibility buttons on the North and West entrances.

Unfinished Business: December 8 & 12 Shannon will be out of the office. The church office will be closed on December 25 & 26. The Girl Scouts troop will be meeting at the church on December 9th for a party. The Boy Scouts troop will be meeting and staying overnight at the church on December 15.

Gloria adjourned meeting at 7:15.

Next meeting will be **Monday, January 22 at 6:30 pm.**

Respectfully submitted, Krystle Ness, SPRC



December 2023



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 9:15 Worship 10:15 Fellowship 10:30 Sunday School 4:00 Axis	4	5	6 5:00 Children's Bells 6:00 Compass 7:00 Choir 8:00 Bells	7	8 Shannon Out of Office	9 9:30—12:00 Loaves and Fishes 1:00—4:30 Girl Scouts
10 9:15 Worship 10:15 Fellowship 10:30 Sunday School 11:30 Youth Council 4:00 Axis	11 5:30 Worship Committee	12 Shannon Out of Office	13 1:30 UWF 6:00 Compass	14	15 5:30 Friday—Noon Saturday Boy Scout Lock In	16
17 8:15 Missions 9:15 Worship 10:15 Mission Brunch 10:30 Sunday School 4:00 Axis	18	19	20 6:00 Compass 7:00 Choir 8:00 Bells	21	22	23
24 9:15 Worship 5:00 Candlelight Service	25 Office Closed	26 Office Closed	27	28	29	30
31 9:15 Worship 10:15 Fellowship						