

# GRACE TO YOU

*Proclaim, Build, and Serve*



## 2010 Congregation Meeting (Pastor's Perspective) and Thank You!!!

I am so encouraged by Grace and how you all have responded to our mission and our needs! On November 21, we held our semi-annual congregational meeting to approve the 2011 budget for the church. I know – budget approval sounds almost as exciting as watching paint dry, but Grace Lutheran Church's response to our "Reflect Grace" campaign really has been exciting – and the work of good people and God's Spirit!

As most of you are aware, we have struggled with deficit spending for 4 out of the past 5 years. We will likely finish a bit in "the red" in 2010 as well (although we never know – I will not underestimate the generosity and faithfulness of this congregation!). This put us in a rather tight financial position. Cash "reserves" (money saved over previous years and from previous investments) have dwindled and cannot be used to cover deficits any longer. Many in the congregation were convinced that we were at a point where we would need to reduce our benevolent giving, reduce our staff, or both for 2011.

But Grace has responded in a tremendous fashion. By holding a tight rein on our expenses (no staff increases in salary, paring our program budget to a bare minimum, and taking advantage of current low interest rates by refinancing our mortgage) we are able to hold our expenses (operating and mortgage combined) to a projected level of \$524,000 for 2011.

And Grace members have prayed about their giving and responded with generosity. As of 11/21 we had received 78 pledges (50% of giving families) totaling \$426,000. In addition, assuming those members who did NOT pledge give the same amount in 2011 as they did in 2010, we anticipate an additional \$133,000 in non-pledge giving, rental income, non-envelope giving, interest income, and mortgage payments from the Turning Point property. Total estimated income for 2011 is projected to be \$558,000 – enough to meet and maybe even exceed our anticipated 2011 expenses.

What great news! Of course this is all still an estimate – it will always be so in the church, but it means that the congregation felt confident in its ability to meet the proposed budget for 2011 and that budget was approved – without cuts to staff or benevolence. **Wow! Thank you!**

And – what I am MOST excited about is this: Now, I believe we, as a congregation, can move beyond our anxiety about budget issues and begin to devote more of our energy and excitement into discerning a vision for what God has planned for Grace Lutheran Church and then taking steps to move toward fulfilling that vision. And that IS exciting.

In (approximately) the last year, Grace Lutheran Church has received **30 new members!** We regularly see visitors on Sunday mornings. Taking a very informal poll of some of our newer members on what they like about Grace, I think it comes down to a spirit of friendliness and compassion that reflects Grace's faith in God and love for one another. It is fantastic to be a part of such a lovely and loving congregation. Let's share the good news of what God has done for us! Thank you for your faith and – well – grace.

Pastor Rich

### ***Grace's schedule of special services and celebrations for Christmas:***

Dec. 15 - WOW Children, Caroling for seniors at the Forest Ave. apartments, 5:30pm

Dec. 19 - Children & Youth Christmas Program 10am Service

Dec. 24 - Children's Christmas Eve, 4 pm; Christmas Eve Carols/Eucharist, 10 pm Services

Dec. 25 - Christmas Day — No Service

Dec. 26 - Christmas Season Service – **10 am only**



### **Grace Lutheran Church of Glen Ellyn**

493 Forest Avenue at Pennsylvania  
Glen Ellyn, Illinois 60137

Return Service Requested

West Conference - Metropolitan Chicago Synod - ELCA

Weeks of December 19 & 26, 2010  
Fourth Sunday of Advent & First Sunday after Christmas  
1085410- 24

Non-Profit Organization  
U. S. Postage Paid  
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137  
Permit #104

## Cool Night Makes for Hungry Chili Crowd!

A cold and windy evening brought early arrivals to Grace's annual Chili Supper on Nov. 26. The supper was held as part of the Glen Ellyn Holiday Walk. Many people came early and a second wave arrived following the annual tree lighting at 6pm. Throughout the evening, diners were entertained by the Dogz, a group of high schoolers who have played together as a community service band for over six years. Shoppers also had the opportunity to browse hand made crafts from Latin America that were brought by Tree of Life Imports.

This year's proceeds (just under \$2,000) went to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal, Food Pantry and GE Walk-In Ministries. The remaining chili was sold on Sunday by our youth group to save toward their mission trips in 2011. Thank you to all Grace members who supported the supper by coming to eat. Many thanks also to all of the following volunteers:

**Food Supplies:** Bonnie Paganis

**Publicity:** Jean Jeske

**Cooks:** Jake Jacobson, Mark Danly, Charlie Ortmann, Tim Derrico, Jay Malo, Tim Loftus, Bob Lewis

**Set up:** the Collins family, Jon Ciero, Howard Bruning, Hannah LoGalbo, Leigh McMillan, Eva Holzapfel and her sister Adelle and nephew Zachary, Mark Hamilton, Marc Asselmeier, Jonnae Benzel

**Shift Workers:** Bill and Mark Murdoch, Pr. Rich, Alyssa and Dawn Likeness, Ken and Joan Frank, the Hufnagle family, Corinne Loftus, the Miller and Bolanos families with Amanda and Joe, Sharon Rokosh, Josh, Becca and Krista Lawrence, Jan Hutzler, Bob and Beth Huizenga, Dorothy Stein, Fred Warnke and Carol Bacchus and the Ciero family. Special thanks to Paula Ortmann and Jon and Cathy Milleville who volunteered to work but were turned away due to abundant and efficient workers (who knew??)

**Clean Up Crew:** Sia Paganis and her friends, Mr. Mojo, Dick and Arlene Schneible, Barbara and Mark Sudds, and all of the late shift workers!

**Morning, Afternoon and Night Shift:** Carol Asselmeier, Ginny Stein, Kathy Schaffnit

Please forgive us if we missed someone. Every hand was helpful!



**Above Left:** Pastor Rich introduces the Dogz.

**Above Right:** Some of the Grace Youth join in serving the hungry crowd.

**Bottom:** The crowd rocked all night long. A good time was had by all!




**Grace Events**

<b>Week of December 19th</b>		
Sun	8 & 10am	Worship Services (Children's Christmas Program at 10am)
	8:30am	Parish Nurse
	9:00am	Sunday School, Choir Rehearsal
Mon	7:00pm	Council Meeting
Tue	10-12:30pm	Sr. Center Book Club (Fellowship)
Wed	7:15am	Bible Study
	6-7:30pm	No Confirmation class
Thur		
Fri		<b>Office Closed</b>
	4:00pm	Family Christmas Eve Eucharist with Living Nativity Story
	10:00pm	Celebratory Christmas Eve Eucharist with Grace Choir
Sat		No worship service today
<b>Week of December 26th</b>		
Sun	10:00am	Christmas Service - Lessons & Carols
	9:00am	No Sunday School
Mon		
Tue		
Wed	7:15am	Bible Study
	6-7:30pm	No Confirmation Class
Thur		
Fri		<b>Office Closed</b>
Sat		

**Building Usage**

Sunday	5:00-6:00pm	SA Group (basement)
Mon-Fri	9:00-1:00pm	Senior Service Center
Tue-Thur-Fri	9:00-3:00pm	Glen Ellyn Food Pantry
Monday	5:30-8:30pm	Highland Dancers (gym)
Saturday	6:15-7:45pm	Sunflowers Dancers (gym)



**Current Prayer Requests**


Dick McAuliffe, Jim Sladek, Jean Derrico, Mike Pertle, Ardena Klenk for healing and strength; In celebration of Bill Podgorny's 90th birthday; Georgia Mohr (grandmother of Joe Murawski), Les Berta (Jeff Berta's father), Jake Carney (friend of Rodger Plant) for comfort in grief.

Date	Attendance		Offering	
	8am	10am	Regular	Capt.Campgn
11/21	20	151	4076	0000
11/28	20	105	8736	3450

**Social Committee Corner**

**Mark your calendars!**

Come to a Christmas Concert



The choir "**One Voice**" a non-denominational inter-faith choir will present their Christmas concert for the community here at **Grace on Sunday December 12** at 3pm. Come enjoy the beautiful sounds of Christmas. Reception to follow.

**Office Hours for the Holiday**

December

20	9:30-noon
21	9:30-noon
22	9:30-noon
23	9:30-noon
24	Closed
27	9:30-noon
28	9:30-noon
29	9:30-noon
30	9:30-noon
31	Closed

**SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS NEEDED!**

We are looking for individuals who would be willing to help "team" teach the 5th and 6th grade Sunday school class. Sunday school meets from 9-9:45 am on the Youth floor. If you would be interested in teaching this class, please contact Brenda Ciero.

**Can You Help, The Property Committee?**

The Property Committee is looking to borrow a multi-purpose tool like a Rockwell Sonic Crafter or a Fein Multi-master to finish a small job in Patti's office. If you have one and would like to help out for a few minutes or let us use it please contact Tim Loftus at 630-858-6168.



## Faith and Friendship Christmas Lunch

All are welcome at our annual

**Christmas Faith and Friendship Lunch  
on Wednesday, December 15  
at 12:00 noon**



We will join in an Advent prayer service in the Sanctuary before lunch and then have **fun!** with our White Elephant gift exchange.

**No need to bring a gift.** Just bring yourself and a festive spirit.

## Grace Lutheran Church of Glen Ellyn

West Conference - Metropolitan Chicago Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

493 Forest Avenue at Pennsylvania  
Glen Ellyn, Illinois 60137

Office: 630-469-1555

Fax: 630-469-1561

[www.graceglenellyn.org](http://www.graceglenellyn.org)

Richard Likeness, Pastor

Patti Lewis, Church Coordinator

Barbara Sudds, Business, Facilities & Youth Coordinator

Brenda Ciero, Children's Coordinator

Cathy Milleville, Parish Nurse

Carole LoGalbo, Parish Counselor

Gail Salvatori, Director of Music & Creative Arts Ministries

### Church office hours

M-Thur. 9:30am– 4:00pm

Friday

9:30-noon

## The Brightest Star



Xavier, upon hearing that God was coming to his area of the sky was all a twinkle. But once he arrived at the gathering place, Xavier's twinkle turned dull. All the other stars got there before him.

Hoping to show God how much brighter his shine became, Xavier squeezed and squished, pushed and shoved himself closer and closer to where God stood. But it still wasn't close enough. "I know someday I'm going to do something great for God but how unless I get God to notice me," he said to himself.

It's now or never, he thought. Xavier jumped up, twirled as fast as he could and squeezed out every bit of shine he could muster. But in doing so, Xavier knocked others out of his way, causing some to fall. One star even ended up with a broken tip. The older stars glared at Xavier while the younger ones laughed at him. "Ha! Xavier thinks he's going to do something great, huh Xavier?" "Not showing off like that you're not," said another star. Humiliated, Xavier left as fast as he could.

"I know I'm going to do something great for God, I know it. After all, my name means bright star. But how can I get God to see it? I've done all I can think of to get God to notice me," he said. Suddenly a group of Northern stars came by and Xavier couldn't resist. Taking in a deep breath, Xavier let out the brightest shine he could. The Northern stars stopped and looked. Xavier, seeing that they stopped, proudly smiled. Then, one by one, the Northern stars let out their shine; a shine so bright that Xavier had to cover his eyes. Humiliated again, Xavier hid himself behind a moon and cried, "Maybe I wasn't created to do something great for God after all."

"But maybe you were," a voice from behind said. Xavier turned around and saw God there. "But God, I've tried showing you how brightly I can shine and it never worked out." God brought Xavier closer to him. "All of my stars were created for a special purpose. But you, young Xavier kept trying to shine on your own. And if you could shine brightly on your own, then you wouldn't need me."

"It doesn't matter God; I don't shine too brightly anyway," he said. "Not on your own you don't. Now, shine for me." Xavier turned up his shine and he shined brighter than ever before. Every star in the sky took notice. "Wow!" Xavier shouted.

"You see my young star, on your own you can shine. But if you were the brightest all the time, you wouldn't need me to help you. But with my help, you can shine brighter than you ever thought possible. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, God. I understand now," answered Xavier. "Good because it is your time to do something great for me. There is a manger in Bethlehem that I need the brightest star to shine down on so the shepherds in the fields can see it and the wise men can follow it. Think you can do that?" Xavier answered, "Sure God, I know now that with your help I can do anything."

*And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was (Matthew 2:9 NLT).*

**Sandra Stein – penny thoughts**



A few weeks ago I gathered with some colleagues from other ELCA churches in the area for a time of worship, fellowship and discussion. We started talking a bit about Christmas. One colleague expressed his frustration with the expectations that people bring at Christmas time: how hard it is to share a meaningful word of God's love in a time when people are bombarded by social events and sickly-sweet nostalgia-laden music, television, sentiments, etc. There is truth in what he says, of course. For me personally, I am annually disgusted by the Lexus ads – this year's saying, "Let's be honest, no one ever wished for a smaller holiday gift." As my Norwegian Grandpa used to say, "Uff-Da." (A quick culture lesson for those of you who are not Norwegian: "Uff-Da" might also be spoken after you step in something soft and smelly while in the barn milking the cows. You get the idea...)

Now, my apologies if you love those commercials – it's just that they press my buttons, and like my pastoral colleague, remind me of the often over-blown expectations that people bring at Christmas.

On the other hand, another colleague expressed his love for this season – schmaltz and all. There is of course truth in what he says as well! The carols, beautiful lights and decorated lamp posts, store windows, etc. The bell-ringers in front of stores – giving of their time and energy to selflessly reach out and try to help others. Children are excited about Santa. Families gather to share time together and traditions. For our family, Christmas often brings some of our best memories of times together. We laugh about the year (at seminary) when we were the only family left on campus at Christmas and how we set the oven on fire (thankfully we had a fire extinguisher!) Try to find someplace open in Dubuque, Iowa on December 25 to buy oven cleaner... And of course, that's just one of many fond memories.

The real core message of Christmas is so incredibly beautiful that sometimes we forget. But, let's try not to forget it: God came to be with us. God came to be one of us. Not born to a wealthy merchant or Roman emperor or even a wise rabbi. God came in the messiness and chaos of a human birth -- born to a peasant couple in a time of great stress and chaos and human need. A scary time to be vulnerable. Yet that's when and how God came to be born as a human baby.

And the faith of his mama must have been incredible. "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High..." And she said, "Yes" to that angel. And she became pregnant. A young woman – maybe 13 or 14 years old. Not married. In a time and place where an unmarried pregnant woman would be at great risk – socially and physically. Mary said, "Yes" to that angel of God.

At Christmas, what I hope we can remember in this incredible story are the words and promises that Jesus shared with his disciples AFTER his resurrection. "Peace be with you." "Do not be afraid." "I am with you always." God still comes to be present with us. To my mind, this is the beauty of the incarnation – the beauty of Christmas. God still comes as a human being to be present with us. And in us. "For where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name – there I am – in the midst of them." Celebrate Christmas this year – not in memory of what happened 2,000 years ago – but in joyful celebration of what happens right now, again and again. Christ is born in humble ways in our world. And we need not be afraid. For God is with us. Always. Merry Christmas!

**Pastor Rich**