



January 2024

# Grace Connections

Lutheran Church  
Champaign, Illinois

## The Gift of Presence

As I write this, I have just returned from a week away during the Christmas break, which I spent at my parents' house in St. Louis. It has long been my family's tradition to spend the Christmas week together, but lately, I have come to realize that what I most value about this tradition is the opportunity simply to spend time in each other's presence. One of the silver linings of the COVID pandemic was that we began a weekly family Zoom on Sunday evenings that we have kept up ever since. So, thanks to modern technology, I have talked to my parents and my sisters and seen them on my computer screen every week for over 3 ½ years! But as wonderful as that is (and it is wonderful), there is still no substitute for being together in the same room, spending time – even mundane time – in each other's presence.

This newsletter will be hitting your e-mail in-boxes late on the 12th day of Christmas, and while it is still Christmas, I want to make the connection between this belated personal awareness of mine and what it seems to me God is up to in the incarnation. Before Jesus' birth, God was connected to God's people through representatives like Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others. Through Moses, God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. Through Elijah God called God's people back to faithfulness, and then, after being conquered and exiled, God promised through other prophets a new beginning.

With Jesus, though, something fundamentally different has happened. In him God has shown up for an in-person visit. Yet even though his original disciples experienced his presence firsthand, witnessed his teaching and healing, and his death and resurrection, it was not until after his ascension, not until the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and their early experience together as the community of the church, that they finally came to appreciate how God had become so directly and personally present in their lives and in the life of the world.

In this respect, we are really no different from the first disciples. While they had Jesus with them "in the flesh," they did not appreciate God's presence with them in him. Only later, gathered in his name, reminding each other of the good news of God's love and forgiveness, and remembering Jesus' promise to be with them always, did it finally sink in. And when it sank in, they couldn't help but share that presence and promise of God with others. We have that same privilege of spending time in each other's company each week here at Grace and in so doing experiencing the gift of God's presence among us through word and sacrament, and through our mutual care and concern for one another in the body of Christ. Thanks be to God for such a gift!

+ Pastor Repp

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# God Connections

Faith, Worship, Music, Study, Prayer

## Greening of Grace

Stay after church on **January 8** to help take down the Christmas decorations. Thanks to all our volunteers who have helped so far!



## This Sunday's Scripture Readings

**Baptism of our Lord, January 7:** *Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11*

Our re-creation in baptism is an image of the Genesis creation, where the Spirit of God moved over the waters. Both Mark's gospel and the story in Acts make clear the Spirit's movement distinguishes Jesus' baptism from John's. The Spirit has come upon us as upon Jesus and the Ephesians, calling us God's beloved children and setting us on Jesus' mission to re-create the world in the image of God's vision of justice and peace.

# World Connections

Service, Advocacy, Ecumenism, Learning

## Piece Makers Quilting Group

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church would like to invite you to our Piece Makers quilting group, which meets weekly at GSLC on Tuesday from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.

We are currently making quilts and book bags for Lutheran World Relief. We'd love for you to join us in this mission opportunity, a practical application of the ELCA's God's Work, Our Hands. Expertise in sewing or quilting is not necessary! We need volunteers to cut, press and tie quilts together. There are now several quilt tops that are "fit to be tied."

The group has set aside two dates to gather in the GSLC fellowship hall to accomplish these important tasks:

**Tuesday, January 16** from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. and  
**Sunday, February 11** from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Please consider joining us on the dates above and/or any other Tuesday! You are free to stay as long as you are available.

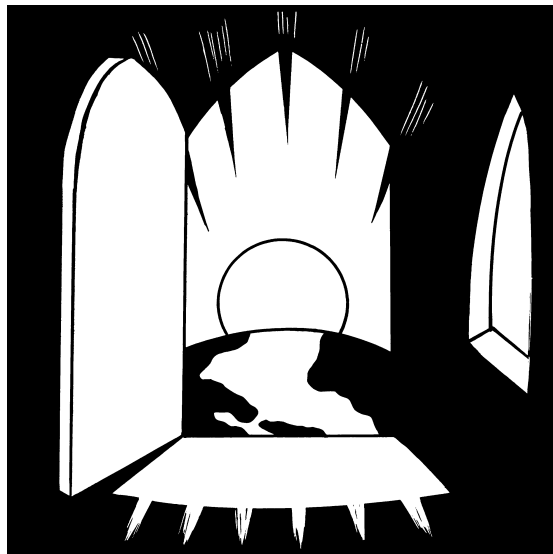
For questions about this mission or the Piece Makers group in general, please contact Jodi Davis ([jodidavisillini@yahoo.com](mailto:jodidavisillini@yahoo.com), 217-840-5078) or Lois McConomy ([mcconomy.lois@gmail.com](mailto:mcconomy.lois@gmail.com), 217-899-1985).

## GLC Food Pantry Monthly Update

The Food Pantry needs empty egg cartons and plastic bags. If you have some at home, please bring them to the church and place them in the plastic trunk near the front doors. Thank you!

Here are the numbers for the latest two food pantries:

- December 21: 70 families / 290 individuals
- January 4: 100 families / 357 individuals



# Community Connections

*Fellowship, Fun, Congregation News, Intercessory Prayer*

## Budget Forum and Congregational Meeting

We will hold our annual congregational meeting on **January 28** at 10:45 a.m. to approve our 2024 budget. There will be a budget forum at 10:45 a.m. on **Sunday, January 7**, in the Hoffmeister Room to help prepare for this vote.

## Parish Life Committee Stamping Session

On **Monday, January 8**, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., we will meet in the narthex to stamp birthday and anniversary cards with Meg Loven to be mailed to members of the congregation in coming months. No prior experience is necessary. It's an enjoyable time of small group fellowship while doing a craft activity. All supplies are provided! Plan to come and explore your creative side!

## Stitch and Craft

Stitch and Craft will be meeting at 7 p.m. on **January 12 and 26** in the narthex to make our projects. You may work on whatever project you want. We also make hats for cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, and baby blankets for babies born to our congregation. If you are having a baby, please tell the office when you know you are pregnant so we will have time to knit or crochet a blanket.

## Faith Circle

Faith Circle meets on the third Tuesday evening of the month at 7 p.m. in the narthex. All are welcome. We begin the evening with refreshments (coffee and snacks provided by the hostess) and fellowship. The lesson leader presents the Bible study, beginning at approximately 7:30 p.m.

For our **January 16** meeting, Leanne Wichus is our hostess, and Jo Fleming is our lesson leader. Plan to attend and invite a friend!

Can't attend in person? Join us using the GLC's regular Zoom meeting link.

## Help Reduce Our Water Bill

Please check the faucets whenever you use a sink at Grace. Some have been found to dripping, or even running. The last water bill for Grace was higher than expected. Help conserve water, and help reduce or costs at Grace. Thanks from the Property Committee.

## Updates from the Property Committee

After Walter Snowden resigned as the custodian at Grace in December, we need volunteers to keep Grace clean while we search for a replacement. Currently, Bruce Winter is doing much of this work, including deep cleaning the bathrooms—thank you, Bruce! But we need more volunteers to spread out the workload. Common spaces, including restrooms, the kitchenette, and the sanctuary, need to be cleaned on a regular basis. Please email the office if you are able to volunteer.

## Treasurer's Report for December 2023

Monthly Report	CURRENT MONTH	YEAR-TO-DATE
INCOME	\$46,364.70	\$282,731.25
EXPENSES	\$26,925.72	\$272,159.19
NET	<b>\$19,438.98</b>	<b>\$10,572.06</b>

December income far exceeded previous monthly giving in 2023. Some large donations were made to the General Fund that helped us make up our deficit this year. Also, our efforts to reduce our spending helped very much. December expenses were a just bit higher this month.

We ended 2023 with a surplus of \$10,572.06.

Out of the last six years we have had deficits five times, and last year our deficit was -\$40,413.60. So this was quite a remarkable turnaround year for Grace.

THANK YOU to all who have contributed to Grace this year. As always, if you have any questions, please let me know.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debbie Peterson, Treasurer

## Grace Meeting Zoom Link

See your email for the Grace Meeting Zoom link.

## Web Pages and Access

See your email for the list of webpages and how to access them.

## Prayer Requests

We have two formal ways of praying for one another at Grace. One is in the Sunday morning worship service, where we pray for people by name in the Prayers of Intercession. They will also be listed in the emailed and printed versions of GraceNotes, but not in the web version.

Please send prayer requests for the Sunday-morning prayers to Alex at [office@glccu.org](mailto:office@glccu.org).

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## Worship Support

	January 7	January 14	January 21	January 28
<b>Assisting Minister</b>	Helen Repp	Claire Vail	Helen Repp	Claire Vail
<b>Reader</b>	Tina Fehrenbacher	Rodney Marshall		
<b>Deacons</b>	Tina Fehrenbacher			
<b>Greeters</b>	Carolyn Pater and Elizabeth Mazurak	Jeff and Tina Fehrenbacher	Brian and Amy Nicely	
<b>Ushers</b>	Dave and Carol Larson	Bruce and Alicia Winter	Grigorescu and Thackeray families	Jeff and Tina Fehrenbacher
<b>Video Technician</b>	Michael Miller	Kevin Vail	Dave Brown	Jim Anderson
<b>Coffee Hour</b>				Mary Jo Erickson and Gail Hug
<b>Flowers</b>	Christmas plants	Grace Schoedel and Gloria Rainer	Russell Dankert	JoEllen DeVilbiss
<b>Dedication</b>		In memory of our mothers Ruth Grace Cool and Florence Louise Evans, who were both born on January 12, 1908	Honoring the memory of Jane	To the Glory of God



# January 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>31</b> Grace Office Closed Office Closed 9:30am Worship ( Hybrid)- In Person & Live Stream 10:45am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA	<b>1</b> Grace Office Closed <b>New Year's Day</b> 6:30pm Wood Carving Group	<b>2</b> 4:30pm Executive Committee	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> 10:00am Food Pantry	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b> 9:30am Worship ( Hybrid)- In Person & Live Stream 10:45am Adult Sunday School 10:45am Budget Forum 10:45am Greening of Grace 12:00pm Women's AA	<b>8</b> 10:00am Food for Seniors 11:00am Parish Life Stamping Event 6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting 6:30pm Wood Carving Group 7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	<b>9</b> 6:00am Food for Seniors 6:30pm Sweet Adelines 7:00pm Council	<b>10</b> 1:30pm Worship and Music Committee Meeting 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>11</b> 10:00am Food Pantry 6:00pm Community Choices	<b>12</b> 12:00pm Stitch and Craft	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> <i>Grace Food Pantry Sunday</i> 9:30am Worship ( Hybrid)- In Person & Live Stream 10:45am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA	<b>15</b> 6:00pm Property Committee 6:30pm Wood Carving Group 7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	<b>16</b> 6:30pm Sweet Adelines 7:00pm Faith Circle	<b>17</b> 7:00am Food Pantry Truck Delivery 10:00am Comrades of Art 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>18</b> 10:00am Food Pantry 6:00pm Parish Life Committee	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Newsletter Copy Deadline
<b>21</b> 9:30am Worship ( Hybrid)- In Person & Live Stream 10:45am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA	<b>22</b> 10:00am Food for Seniors 6:30pm Wood Carving Group 7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	<b>23</b> 6:00am Food for Seniors 6:30pm Sweet Adelines	<b>24</b> 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>25</b> 10:00am Food Pantry	<b>26</b> 12:00pm Stitch and Craft	<b>27</b> 10:00am Setup for guitar service
<b>28</b> <i>World Hunger Sunday</i> 9:30am Worship ( Hybrid)- In Person & Live Stream 10:45am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA	<b>29</b> 6:30pm Wood Carving Group 7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	<b>30</b> 6:30pm Sweet Adelines	<b>31</b> 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>1</b> 10:00am Food Pantry	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>