

# The Scroll



Much, but not all, of what I write this month was shared during worship on November 15<sup>th</sup>. You are not crazy if you think you have heard some of these thoughts before but I ask that you do read the entire article to ensure you receive the full intended update.

We have paused our plan to offer an in-person worship option. All of the other conditions previously laid out had been met, we were just waiting for heat. While we were waiting, we ran into the caveat of a local COVID outbreak. Polk County has some of the highest virus activity in the state right now. Once that activity subsides, we will move forward with offering the in-person worship option. I want the congregation to know how seriously your elected Church Council takes this and all other decisions that come before it. The Council has faithfully met monthly with offering in-person worship as a standing agenda item. Month after month we discuss the situation in depth. We reflect on our mission to share God's Word. We talk about the fact that Jesus taught us to love one another. We worry about the fact that we can be losing connection with some of our members. We know some people aren't hearing God's Word through our church. All these things and more are considered every month. There is no instruction manual for making the decisions that come before the Council. I hope all members take that into account as we navigate this time and you express your gratitude to those willing to serve on the Council.

Speaking of those willing to serve, I also ask that you express gratitude and offer prayers to the members of our Call Committee. These folks accepted a tough job that has been made much tougher due to the pandemic. We have activity happening right now that is very exciting. We anxiously wait to see how the Holy Spirit stirs us in the coming weeks.

Christmas is rapidly approaching. I'm sure many in our congregation are wondering about Christmas Eve. No matter where we are at with an in-person option for worship by then, we will not be able to have 250-300 sitting shoulder to shoulder singing hymns. Knowing that, we are working on a plan to broadcast a service online and on GVTV at 4:30 pm on Christmas Eve. The service will consist of new readings and teaching that will be mixed with hymns from a previous Candlelight Service. More details to come.

I know it may seem like I ask you for a lot but I am going to ask for just a little more. I ask that you consider the wonderful things that continue to happen at our church.

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The Grace Lutheran Church Council will meet in regular session on Wednesday December 9th at 7:00 PM. All meetings are open to members of Grace unless otherwise stated.



**TITHES &  
OFFERINGS**

**November 1st:**

Attendance~ 7  
Offering~\$ 1,050.00

**November 8th:**

Attendance~ 7  
Offering~\$2,005.00

**November 15th:**

Attendance~ 7  
Offering~ \$1,590.00

**November 22nd:**

Attendance~ 8  
Offering~\$1,340.00

"I was  
**sick** and  
**you visited**  
**me . . .**"

—Matthew 25:36 NKJV

As deacons we are committed to making pastoral visits to the sick and dying. If someone were to call with a prayer request you may ask them if they wish a visit and give them our information.

We thought the congregation should be aware of this commitment with it being addressed in a bulletin from time to time and same with the scroll.

\*Mary Bratrud~~ 218-521-0793  
(daytime)

218-687-2150 (nighttime)

\*Gary Walter~~ 218-687-3074

\*Gene Haugom~~218-563-3292



**NALCW Meeting:  
See you in April**

**Hope Circle:** December 17th, 2:00 PM at the church

**Rebecca Circle:** December 17th, 6:30 PM at the church

**Mission Circle: will not meet in December**



*O Come*  
Let Us Adore Him



### Giving Options

Not only can you give through your offering envelope on Sunday morning, but our church offers other options to receive your offering:

**Automatic Giving** – You can set up monthly or weekly automatic deductions from your bank account. Contact the church office (218-687-4035) for a form to complete.

**Online Giving** – There are several links throughout our website ([www.gracechurcherskine.org](http://www.gracechurcherskine.org)) that will allow you to give a one-time or regular donation from your bank account, credit card, or debit card.

**Mobile Giving** – You can utilize your mobile device and scan the following code –



### **Benevolence Ideas**

Our church has several special funds to meet needs that can't be met through our General Fund. Currently, these special funds are: Building Improvements, Grace Youth Group, Joy Ride Fund, Oil Candle, Sunday School Improvements/Supplies, Sunday School Outreach, Video Ministry, Vacation Bible School, Worship Hearing Aids, 'Men of Courage' Men's Group, and Shoebox Funds. In addition, our church houses the Grace Food Shelf and we ask for donations on their behalf as well as for the After School Backpack Program. Finally, our church is a part of the Grace Cemetery Association and we ask for donations on their behalf for the maintenance of the Synod, Pioneer, and Fairview Cemeteries in rural Erskine. Please contact Jim Ferden if you have any questions.

### October 2020 Financial Summary

Congregational Offering to the General Fund - \$13,643.00

#### Expenses:

Administrative - \$5,653.97

Education - \$382.50

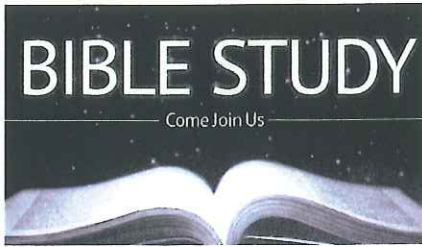
Mission Outreach - \$700.00

Pastoral - \$1,365.40

Worship - \$547.91

Total Expenses - \$8,649.78





Whether new to the Bible or a seasoned reader, Bible Study Fellowship explores Scripture together verse by verse, as God's Truth, to be studied, savored and lived out. We believe God's Word speaks across cultures, denominations, and generations to every one of our 400,000+ members around the world. Join us right here at Grace Church for an Afternoon Women's BSF class every Tuesday at 3:00 pm. Go to [bsfinternational.org](http://bsfinternational.org) to register for our Genesis study or call Mary Bratrud @ 218-521-0793 for more information.

### COUNCIL NEWS, continued

We continue to have many active ministries. Our Education Committee continues to maintain connections with our young ones. Our church building is receiving upgrades for us to enjoy when we again meet for worship on a large scale. We have again been blessed with an anonymous gift that will support the work of our church. Wonderful things are happening at Grace!

Finally, here is my last request. We all miss so much of what we had in terms of human interaction and the ability to move about freely to conduct our daily business. The fact that we have missed so many things for so long along with an unrelenting barrage of bad news can make us act out of sorts. If you have a negative interaction with someone, I ask that you remember God's gift of Grace and share that gift freely.

~Jason Carlson

Direct Your  
**THRIVENT**  
**CHOICE DOLLARS**   
today!

Thanks to everyone who has designated our church to receive your Thrivent Choice Program Dollars in 2020. If you have not designated your Thrivent Choice Dollars yet for 2020, please do so before the end of the year by contacting your local Thrivent Financial Representative.

Unless the donation is specifically designated by you, your Thrivent Choice Dollars go into the church's general fund to help meet monthly operating expenses. If you wish to designate your Thrivent Choice Dollars to a specific fund, you will need to contact your local Thrivent Financial representative to find out the exact amount and then contact Church

Treasurer, Jim Ferden





Merry Christmas!

Christmas Blessings!

Our Advent season will start without us seeing each other across the aisle but we can see each other in our prayers for each other and in our giving to those outside of the family as we gather to celebrate our Saviors birth. Our Grace WNALC met in November and we were able to give generously even in these times from our offerings and 10% of our \$50.00 fund. The amount we had available to give was \$4,256.75. WOW! Of that, we gave to Win-E-Mac Giving Tree, Win-E-Mac

Backpack program, Grace Food Shelf, Salvation Army, Northland Rescue Mission, Compassion International, Ronald McDonald house of Fargo, Children's Miracle Network, Detroit Lakes Crisis Center, Detroit Lakes Boys and Girls Club. And we had \$556 left for something that comes up later. What a blessing to others! We hope the love of Christ will be felt.

Our Hunter Meatball Supper went very well in its new format—drive up. \$2,138 was taken in before expenses. Becky Lindseth and her crew do such a wonderful job of—start to finish—advertising, organizing, cooking, clean-up. She and everybody that helped are such a blessing! Donations from Ness Café—dinner trays, Lyla Moteberg—dessert trays, Dave & Becky—disposable silverware and desserts from many of you helped keep expenses down and gave us the food we love. THANK YOU to all of you who took some home to share and enjoy.

We are going to join the WNALC in their 2020-2021 MISSION BANK PARTNERS this year. Below, you will find a label you can put on your own bottle and add money as you decide to and next spring when we come back to meeting, we will collect these and also at a Sunday service in church. Money from this project, done in many NALC churches, will go to The Great Commission and The Disaster Relief Fund. Some of you will remember Stuff the Tonka Truck that went to the Disaster Relief Fund. All can participate. I look forward to a fun time when we collect these next spring and send them with to the annual meeting.

Our next meeting will be April 22, 2021.

Have a Blessed Merry Christmas!

**2021 WNALC**  
**Mission Bank Partner**

## Christmas Bible Quiz

Test your knowledge on the story of the birth of Jesus Christ.

1.) What does Jesus' other name, "Emmanuel", mean?

- Son of God
- God with us
- He who is God
- Anointed One

2.) When Joseph first discovered that Mary was pregnant, he:

- Rejoiced
- Beat her
- Tore his robe
- No longer wished to marry her

3.) Why did Joseph and Mary go to the city of David?

- To visit Joseph's parents
- To celebrate their wedding
- To seek the prophet Simeon
- To pay taxes

4.) In what city was Jesus born?

- Bethlehem
- Cyprus
- Nazareth
- Galilee

5.) Why were Mary and Joseph unable to stay in an inn?

- They didn't have enough money
- All the inns were closed
- The innkeeper hated them
- There was no room for them

6.) With what did Mary wrap newborn Jesus?

- Joseph's cape
- Swaddling
- A blanket
- A scarf

7.) After Jesus was born, where did Mary lay Him?

- She held him
- In a pile of hay
- In a feeding trough
- On the ground

8.) What was the shepherds' initial reaction to the angel who visited them?

- They were upset
- They were excited
- They were angry
- They were afraid

9.) What did the angel tell the shepherds?

- All of this
- To not be afraid
- How to recognize the newborn Savior
- The location of the newborn Savior

10.) Who visited Joseph, Mary, and Jesus on the night He was born?

- Shepherds, wise men, and all those dwelling in Bethlehem
- Shepherds and wise men
- Shepherds
- Wise men

11.) The wise men traveled \_\_\_\_\_ to Jerusalem.

- Westward
- Eastward
- Northward
- Southward

*Continued on Page 8*

## Is it Important to Know Jesus' Family Tree at Christmas?



*Establishing Jesus' family tree confirms the prophecy that Jesus would be a direct descendent of Bible patriarchs and heroes and, therefore, the long-awaited Messiah. The gospels, which list Jesus' family line, were written by two scholarly men: Matthew and Luke.*

Matthew and Luke provided different genealogies for Christ in their gospels — does that matter? Today, Christians think less about the past and more about eternity to come, so is Christ's family tree important to our celebration of his birth?

If these learned men did not fully agree about Jesus' lineage, how does this impact our view of other facts surrounding the birth of our Savior, such as the virgin birth?

### *Prophecies of Christmas*

While Easter is the most important day in the Christian calendar, Christmas is a time to give gifts in recognition of the ultimate gift, given to the world freely by God through his Son — salvation for all who believe in

Jesus as their Savior.

If the Bible is true, then Christmas was not established around a fairy tale. Christians are commemorating a historical event, even though the date was not recorded; unsurprising, since most poor people could not read or write.

Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds were certainly poor. The record of Jesus' birth comes from fulfilled prophecies; future facts already written down, including:

Christ would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).

He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

He would be descended from King David (Jeremiah 23:5; Isaiah 11:1).

The fulfillment of these detailed prophecies contributes to a believer's confidence that Jesus was indeed *the* Son of God.

The second and third of this trio of prophecies are easy to believe and to prove, but the first is a different matter.

### *Trusting the Prophets*

“The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

“Without the virgin birth, there would be no salvation for sinners. Jesus Christ would be a sinful human being. If the virgin birth did not occur, then the Bible is not true and cannot be trusted. In short, it is an essential

part of salvation and of Scripture.”

If Mary was not a virgin, Christmas as “Christ's Mass” is nothing but a fanciful story. Of all the statements in the Bible, Mary's virginity is one of the most difficult for readers to accept and believe.

Yet, if more mainstream particulars can be corroborated, Christians can trust the prophets and, by association, the Bible as a whole.

Among the many biblical prophecies regarding the long-awaited Messiah are references to his family tree. The Savior would emerge from “the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Stephen J. Cole puts it this way: “It makes sense, if your money and future security are at stake, to have some good reasons to trust the person giving you advice. [...] It makes even more sense to be sure about the credentials of one to whom you entrust your eternal destiny as your Savior from God's judgment.”

Establishing Jesus' family tree confirms the prophecy that Jesus would be a direct descendent of Bible patriarchs and heroes. The gospels, which list Jesus' family line, were written by two scholarly men: One who gave up a wealthy and privileged lifestyle as a tax collector to follow Christ; the other a Gentile who had nothing to lose and no ethnic case to prove.

*Continued on Page 13*

**CHRISTMAS QUIZ, con't.**

**12.) How many wise men brought gifts to Jesus?**

- None
- The Bible never says
- 3
- 2

**13.) Who diligently asked the wise men about baby Jesus?**

- King Pilate
- King Herod
- King Elias
- King David

**14.) Why did this man (Question 13) want to lean more about Jesus' whereabouts?**

- He wanted to worship Jesus
- He wanted Jesus to heal him
- He wanted to ask Jesus to be the heir to his throne
- He wanted to kill Jesus

**15.) What guided the wise men to find Jesus?**

- An angel
- A star
- Their dreams
- A dove

**16.) What gift did the wise men NOT give Jesus?**

- Silver
- Myrrh
- Gold
- Frankincense

**17.) What was Jesus' approximate age when the wise men presented Him with gifts?**

- less than 2 years old
- 12 years old
- 6 years old
- 10 years old

**18.) Why did Jesus' family flee Bethlehem?**

- The Gentiles hated Joseph
- God would destroy it
- They couldn't pay all of their taxes
- The king of Jerusalem wanted to kill Him

**19.) To where did Jesus' family flee from Bethlehem?**

- Nazareth
- Greece
- Samaria
- Egypt

**20.) When they returned, where did Jesus and His family dwell?**

- Nazareth
- Greece
- Samaria
- Egypt

**CHRISTMAS QUIZ ANSWERS**

1. (Matthew 1:23) God with us
2. (Matthew 1:18-20) No longer wished to marry her
3. (Luke 2:4-5) To pay taxes
4. (Luke 2:4-7) Bethlehem
5. (Luke 2:7) There was no room for them
6. (Luke 2:7) Swaddling
7. (Luke 2:7) In a feeding trough
8. (Luke 2:9) They were afraid
9. (Luke 2:10-12) All of this
10. (Luke 2:15-16) Shepherds
11. (Matthew 2:1) Westward
12. The Bible never says
13. (Matthew 2:7) King Herod
14. (Matthew 2:16) He wanted to kill Jesus
15. (Matthew 2:9) A star
16. (Matthew 2:11) Silver
17. (Matthew 2:16) less than 2 years old
18. (Matthew 2:12-13) The king of Jerusalem wanted to kill Him
19. (Matthew 2:12-15) Egypt
20. (Matthew 2:23) Nazareth



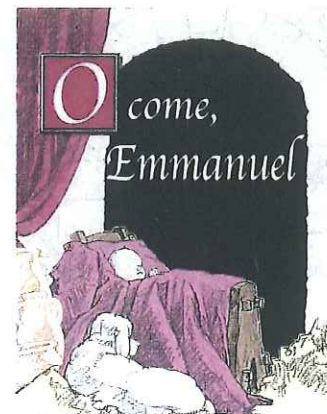


**GRACE COUNCIL MEMBERS**

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Yvonne Halvorson	Secretary	687-5190
Dorothy Sandberg	Financial Secretary	687-3575
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Gary Walter	Deacon	687-3074
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Wade Farrell	Trustee	563-2216
Ryan Breitbach	Trustee	687-2215
Dean Bernard	Trustee	687-2105
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Sarah Strom	Education	687-3488
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Mary Bratrud	687-2150	Chairperson
Austin Tadman	280-8266	Vice-Chairman
Nick Walk	637-2219	Sec'y / Council Rep
Gary Walter	687-3074	
Brady Lee	289-5587	
Mavis Haugom	563-3292	
Rhonda Breitbach	687-2215	

**LECTIONARY READINGS FOR DECEMBER****December 6th~Second Sunday of Advent**

First Reading - Isaiah 40:1-11  
 Psalm - Psalm 85:1-13  
 Second Reading - 2 Peter 3:8-14  
 Gospel - Mark 1:1-8

**December 13th~Third Sunday of Advent**

First Reading - Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11  
 Psalm - Psalm 126:1-6  
 Second Reading - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
 Gospel - John 1:6-8, 19-28

**December 20th~Fourth Sunday of Advent**

First Reading - 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16  
 Psalm - Psalm 89:1-5, 19-29  
 Second Reading - Romans 16:25-27  
 Gospel - Luke 1:26-38

**December 27 First Sunday After Christmas**

First Reading - Isaiah 61:10-62:3  
 Psalm - Psalm 111:1-10  
 Second Reading - Galatians 4:4-7  
 Gospel - Luke 2:22-40



### *4 Profound Lessons from the Wise Men on Seeking Christmas Joy*

Is it worth it?

Christmas takes a lot out of us—the frenzied activity and financial strain, rushed trips, travel arrangements, credit card receipts, extra calories, jangled nerves.

Why does Christmas leave so many people exhausted and often depressed?

If that's what Christmas does to you, perhaps something's missing from your festivities.

There's an emptiness in our culture that cries out for the joy of Christmas but seems incapable of receiving it. Somehow the bows, mistletoe, sugar cookies, and jingle bells no longer satisfy the heart.

There isn't anything wrong with the original Christmas message, of course. The "good tidings of great joy" are as special now as then. The story of the Christ child—God-made man—is fully capable of satisfying the deepest needs of the human heart.

The problem is the human heart itself. Perhaps we can understand it better by looking at those curious characters in the

Christmas story—the Wise Men.

#### **#1: Don't Count on Affluence**

The first thing we notice about them is their wealth. They appeared to have all the possessions one could imagine. While we don't know if they were really kings, we do know they were wealthy enough to embark on long international trips, gain access to powerful rulers, and to bestow expensive presents. They are pictured on Christmas cards dressed in regal, royal garments, a caravan of camels in tow.

Yet despite their riches, they were still searching for something money couldn't buy. Think of it. They were willing to leave their comfortable lifestyles and affluent palaces with well-watered gardens by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to trek across a vast, barren desert in search of something that would fill the inner cravings of their souls.

Nothing has changed.

Many people work all their lives to develop a comfortable lifestyle only to find it strangely empty. Novelist Kathe Koja spoke of a "deep hole in the heart that cries for radiance."

During an interview, she said, "Our entire consumer culture is predicated on the belief that if you stuff enough things down that hole, you can finally satisfy it into silence. But this has never been the case."

Lots of people give and receive hundreds of dollars' worth of gifts during Christmas, only to be depressed on December 26.

As one old Puritan put it, "The

world is fading, not filling."

#### **#2: Don't Count on Family Ties**

The Magi descended from powerful families, but that didn't satisfy them. Many experts believe the Magi were the descendants of the Babylonian wise men of biblical times, the people today known as the Kurds.

We first read of them in Daniel 2. The Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, had a disturbing dream which none of his wise men—or Magi—could interpret. In a fit of wrath, Nebuchadnezzar ordered them all slain. But a young Hebrew prophet named Daniel intervened. God revealed to him the dream, and he explained it to the king. Daniel 2:48 says that Nebuchadnezzar "promoted Daniel and . . . made him . . . chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon."

It was undoubtedly Daniel's influence that planted the seeds of Messianic hope within the Magi. The Old Testament is full of predictions of His coming, and the Magi apparently knew some of those promises. They began looking for a Hebrew Messiah, the coming "King of the Jews." Not having the full Hebrew Scriptures, the Magi looked for Him in the only place they knew—in the heavens, for they were astronomers. Rumors and yearnings for a coming King were passed from generation to generation until finally, hundreds of years later, they saw His star in the east and came to worship Him.

These men had a rich background,

*Continued on Page 11*

**WISE MEN, continued**

and their lineage gave them a high place in society. But it meant little to them. They needed the King of the Jews.

Perhaps you're proud of your background, of your family history and genealogy. Maybe you were raised in a Christian home. Perhaps you grew up in church. Or maybe you're proud of what you've achieved and of the name you've made for yourself.

It's important to be thankful for our heritage and blessings; however, heritage and history don't satisfy the heart, and the name we make for ourselves will one day be forgotten. But those who find Jesus have eternal hope springing up in their hearts. Nothing compares to that.

**#3: Don't Count on Influence**

The Magi were also powerful, influential men. Matthew 2 says their presence in Jerusalem deeply troubled King Herod and all the city. Their questions created panic in the palace. From that, we can safely assume they were accustomed to visiting with kings and dignitaries. They didn't mind causing a stir. They were a respected group of leaders whose lifted eyebrow or ominous question could upset an entire nation. But they were still hungry of heart.

The great Israeli statesman Abba Eban wrote in his autobiography about a conversation he once had with Edmund Hillary, the first man to climb Mount Everest. Eban asked Hillary what exactly he felt when he reached the peak.

Hillary replied that the first sentiment was one of ecstatic accomplishment. But then there came a sense of desolation. What was there now left to do?

Jack Higgins, the renowned novelist, said that the one thing he learned at the high point in his career that he wished he had known as a small boy is this:

"When you get to the top, there's nothing there."

People need the Lord. It isn't power and influence we need—it's Christ Himself. It's a personal relationship with that Babe in the Manger.

**#4: Don't Count on Faith Traditions**

Finally, the Magi were religious men. They were, in fact, religious leaders. We call them "Wise Men" because they possessed the secrets of the mystery religions of the Orient, secrets handed down from the times of Daniel. Men and women throughout the eastern empires came to them, seeking answers to the questions of life.

But despite their piety and religion, these men had hollow hearts and empty souls.

And so they left home on their unexplainable mission, tramping through the desert, traveling for up to two years, trekking over "field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star."

*O star of wonder, star of light,  
Star with royal beauty bright,  
Westward leading, still proceeding,*

*Guide us to thy perfect light.*

They came to Christ.

Their journey ended in Bethlehem where they found at last the real Christmas. Where wealth, heritage, power, and religion failed, there they found the Prince of Peace.

"And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh." (Matthew 2:11)

In Dorothy Sayers' play, *The Man Born to Be King*, one of the wise men says, "Fear is our daily companion—fear of want, fear of war, fear of cruel death and still more cruel life. But all this we could bear if we knew that we did not suffer in vain. If we knew that God was beside us in the struggle, sharing the miseries of His own world."

Do you feel that way? With all your affluence, family, influence, or traditions, are you still weary of heart this Christmas? Are you caught up in the boxes and bows, but somehow missing the Baby? The Magi of two thousand years ago were willing to leave everything behind if only they might find Him who had been born a King.

Are you willing to leave everything to find and follow Christ? To take Him into your heart and home?

Then I have good tidings of great joy! Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

*Continued on Page 12*

**WISE MEN, continued**

Do you already know Christ? Then be a star this Christmas. Just as the mysterious light of the East guided the Wise Men to Christ, we can guide others to the manger. We can invite them to Christmas services where the gospel is presented. We can bestow gifts of Christian literature and music. We can share Jesus by love, lip, and literature, being "children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life" (Philippians 2:15-16, NIV).



**REMINDER** – Please save your grocery receipts from Groceries Plus in Erskine and Jered's Grocery in McIntosh. Both stores are donating 1 percent of the total purchases to the youth group. There is a container for the receipts at the church in the hallway by the coat racks.



- \* Becki Haugen
- \* Don Lundin
- \* Gloria Staehnke
- \* Sonja Kilberg
- \* Michael Jenson
- \* Elaine Austin
- \* Mark Thompson
- \* Grace Call Committee

Let this be your mission this Christmas. And let Christ be your Guide.

*content from Dr. David Jeremiah*



\* Type [gracechurcherskine.org](http://gracechurcherskine.org) into your computer browser. You will see the YouTube recording front and center on the page. Click the Play button in the center of the picture to view the video. You will also find a link to our church Facebook page on the right side of the screen.

\* Garden Valley Channel 30 will broadcast replays of our service on Mondays at 10:00 am, Wednesdays at 7:00 pm and on Saturdays at 9:00 am.



The 'Women of Grace' young women's Bible Study are meeting via Zoom. If you're interested in joining, contact Rhonda Breitbach at 687-2215.

**JESUS' FAMILY TREE, con't.**

He followed Jesus because he *believed* on the basis of what he *learned*. One might imagine a doctor dismissing claims of a virgin pregnancy, but something convinced him. Christ's family tree might have played a part.

*Two Trees, One Messiah*

A skeptic might argue that, since Matthew's and Luke's genealogies differ, we must throw out Jesus' family tree as evidence of his divinity, thus undermining the reliability of biblical prophecy in every respect.

Possible answers to the problem exist, the most plausible of which is that Matthew traces Joseph's family tree and Luke traces Mary's. Cole alludes to other possible answers but admits "we can't know for sure which solution is correct."

Dr. Doug Bookman offers a plausible solution: The two gospels might have differed because one was concerned with "Christ's legal descent," or his legal right to be King, while the other describes "the physical genealogy of Jesus." Matthew leaves out some names, and Luke might be following "another branch."

"While Matthew focuses on Jesus being the Messiah and King of Israel by **tracing His genealogy** back through David to Abraham, Luke has a different purpose. He wants to show that Jesus is the unique Son of Man and Son of God, Savior of all people."

One reason Bible scholars trust Jewish genealogical records is that Jews, "especially [...] families who were in the Davidic line," were excellent record keepers "since the Old Testament prophesied that Messiah would be born of the house of David." Matthew was a Jew.

Yet, even though Luke was a Gentile, he (like Matthew) required the ability to think in a linear, organized fashion — Luke as a physician and Matthew as a tax collector. Record-keeping was essential to both men's professions.

And if they were lying, to what end? Matthew would have heard Jesus warn "they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake" (Luke 21:12).

Christians did not prosper for their faith in any earthly sense. Luke and Matthew conducted independent research and independently reached the conclusion that Jesus is Savior. We know for sure that Jesus is "the only candidate for Messiah" and "the only qualified Savior of the human race."

In spite of the genealogical differences, both Matthew and Luke emphasize two important facts which are essential to the Christian faith: Joseph was not Christ's biological father, and Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to the Son of God.

While these details seem obvious to today's Christian audience, they inspired awe and hope for Jews longing for the Messiah to come.

*A Christmas Conviction*

Christians celebrate the hope symbolized by Christmas: If we can trust that God kept his promise with the birth of Christ, we can also believe in the promise of eternity with our King when Jesus returns. Israel had placed their hope of salvation in God's prophesied Savior.

His birth was pivotal for all people of every nation — heredity no longer mattered. Thanks to the gospel, genuine believers worldwide can claim a place in Jesus' family. Jesus pointed to all of his followers and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers" (Mark 3:34).

The names within Luke's and Matthew's genealogies are less important to Christians today than the *faith* demonstrated by Old Testament forefathers, and then by Christ's disciples.

Likewise, the testimony of each believer today — their legacy of faith — is a gift, which comes from Immanuel himself, and that is worth celebrating each December 25.

*Candice Lucey Contributing Writer*

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH  
COUNCIL MEETING

Nov 11, 2020

7:00 P.M.

*'Serving all people by sharing  
God's Word and Gift of Grace'*

**Present:** President Jason Carlson, Nick Walk, Hollie Stewart, Yvonne Halvorson, Gene Haugom, Lori Hole, Gary Walters, Jim Ferden, Mary Bratrud, Ryan Breitbach, and visitor Ashley Gagner

**Call to Order:** President Jason called the meeting to order.

**Devotions:** Jason chose devotions from Romans 13 in honor of Veterans Day.

**Approve Agenda:** Motion to approve the agenda with an amended order by Gary. Seconded by Gene. Motion carried.

**Secretary's Report:** Gene moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by Lori. Motion carried.

**Financial Secretary's Report:** Yvonne moved to approve. Seconded by Ryan. Motion carried. (Report on file).

**Treasurer's Report:**

Cash Flow Report

- Undesignated funds available to be used for October's General Fund expenses totaled \$19,243.38. This amount exceeded the month's General Fund expenses totaling \$8,649.78.

- Congregational giving to the General Fund was \$13,643. The monthly budget goal is \$17,957.40.

- Noteworthy Other Giving –
  - Miscellaneous – Majority consists of refund of credit balance of \$934.75 from Otter Tail Power for parsonage and anonymous gift of \$3,053.84.
  - Oil Leases – Due to timing, only one payment was received this month.
  - Some of the noteworthy expenses this month included:
    - Administration – Office Expenses/Copier/Lease: Two payments due to timing.
    - Parsonage Electricity – No bill this month due to credit balance.
    - Education – Miscellaneous – Purchased Bibles for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders.

Budget Report

- We ended the month at approximately 41% or \$89,000 under budget.

All of the major budgeted expense categories ended under budget for the month.

History of Regular Giving to the General Fund Report

- October's giving was up for the third month in a row!
- It is the highest giving so far in 2020!
- This was the fifth highest giving for an October in 10 years.

However, this was the lowest

However, this was the lowest giving year to date since 2011.

History of the General Fund Balance

- Highest balance ever!!
- Balance continues to increase due to decreased monthly expenses.

Account Balances Report

- Building Fund - Reflects donations made during the month and the monthly expense for the separate elevator phone line.
- HS Scholarship Fund – Reflects a donation.
- Oil Fund – Bldg Upkeep reflects a portion of this month's oil/gas revenue.
- Oil Fund – Church Emergencies reflects a portion of this month's oil/gas revenue.
- Oil Fund - Missions reflects a portion of this month's oil/gas revenue.

SS Offering Outreach Fund - Reflects the monthly donation of \$38 to Compassion International as well as a donation of \$50 for Xmas gifts to Compassion children. The youth group reimbursed the Sunday School for that donation.

Brovold Investment Valuation Report

- The ending balance decreased approximately \$2,000 from the previous month.

This is the lowest balance since April 2020.

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**GRACE COUNCIL, continued**Gunderson Investment Valuation Report

- The ending balance increased \$600 over last month.

It is the highest balance ever!

Other Information

- Ashley Gagner from Ameriprise is visiting the Council meeting tonight to discuss the Brovold account and answer questions from the Council.

It is that time again for myself and the Trustees to get together to work out the budget for next year. We will be doing that sometime before the next Council meeting in order to have it ready for discussion at the December meeting. If you have any thoughts with regard to next year's budget, please share them with myself or the Trustees so we can consider them when developing next year's budget.

Ashley Gagner of Ameripride presented investment information. Much of the investment decisions depends upon our projected needs.

Background of Brovold gift

Alvin originally worked with Reagan as his broker, who has since retired. Ashley has taken over this account.

Interest rates have decreased since the onset of this account. Prior to 2014, our account was primarily invested in oil and gas. After 2014, the oil prices dumped due to OPEC and overseas behaviors.

Where we are today

Why move from Wells Fargo to Ameripride? Ashley left Wells Fargo due to corporate control issues that she was not comfortable with. Wells Fargo had a great deal of employee turnover.

Ameripride's culture had a veteran staff. Ashley felt that this too was a good sign of stability and a positive for joining Ameripride.

Information Folder (on file)

Page 1 reference. Equities can be stocks and/or bonds. Right side represents the fixed income side. This represents investment with less risk giving a consistent return. Ashley recommends that we try to get to a 50/50 split representing stocks and fixed return bonds. Alvin's goal was for us to use the growth amount and not the principal. He did not set his wishes into stone and we do have some options if we needed it, but we want to stay as true to his plan as possible. NUVEEN page 2.25 percent is the current interest, but due to their investment plan they are paying 5%. They are investing in a collection of tax free mutual funds. NUVEEN looks for bonds that aren't necessarily the bonds that are considered pristine (most costly), but they are looking for a medium road type of bond that has a solid return guaranteed. Mutual fund chart page Shows the bond side of things and that we are receiving a dividend of about 5%. Currently we are earning about 3 ½ % on the Brovold investment. It's important that we are socially responsible with our investments.

It's important that we are socially responsible with our investments. This means we want to be sure that the investments we make are in line with our commitment to serving our Lord. AMAZON is an investment to keep that fits into a socially responsible investment.

Ashley is very open to questions e-mail, cell, telephone and that information can be obtained from Jim. We thank Ashley for making the time to address the Council and answer questions.

Jim noted that we have received two generous gifts and how very thankful we are as a congregation.

It is budget time and Jim plans to meet with the Trustees. He will work on a new budget to be presented to the Council next month. The budget will require a decision to be made regarding maintenance vs cleaning and the dollar amounts needed.

Nick made motion to approve. Gary seconded. Motion carried.

**Pastor Report**

Jason reported that he had just talked with Pastor Mike. Things are going well for Pastor. Currently, Pastor Mike is satisfied and willing to continue to serve in his current capacity for us. We recognize the incredible gift he is to us.

**Committee Reports:**

Stewardship: Lori reported: They did not meet. Please let them know if there is something you want them to do.

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**GRACE COUNCIL, continued**  
Love offerings have been coming in.

Education: (Ann reported via e-mail)

- The Education Committee has decided to continue with virtual Sunday School through the rest of 2020. We will revisit the timeline for opening up for in person Sunday School in the new year.

- We are up to 10 students signed up for Confirmation classes. We have had at least 8 students Zooming in each Sunday for lessons. New Bibles were ordered for our Confirmation students and our third graders, and these will be made available for pick up at the church soon.

- Operation Christmas Child shoebox materials are available to pick up in the church library. Packed boxes are due back by Friday, November 20 and Ann will get them delivered.

The committee would like to purchase the following material as a family Christmas project. Dough Holy Night | Family Christmas Experience.

- o This is a fun "at home" family baking project complete with video, songs, and the Christmas story added in through the steps of the recipe. Families just start the video and follow along. \$95 gives us a church license to share with all of our members, and some additional materials to print/email to families to go along with this project.

We are working on a virtual

Christmas program. We will contact families and get their picture/video permission form signed.

They will get assigned a part to read/record at home, send their video to Ann, and then she will put them together. This could be shared just with our Sunday School families, to our Facebook page, or possibly during church.

Youth Group No report or events due to Covid 19

NALCW Meeting tomorrow with the officer meeting early. Group 8 serving

Disbursements of funds to charity will be discussed

Hunters supper—Becki Lindseth will be at the meeting tomorrow to report. We are very grateful for her leadership. \$2,133.86 gross was taken in. They served 170 meals in 90 minutes.

No "80" year old awards will be given because there aren't any members in that category

Officer election will be held

New books will be worked on

Bible studies will be a week early on the 19<sup>th</sup> due to Thanksgiving with Mission Circle on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

NALCW is asking the Council for and suggestions for their charitable fund designations.

Trustees: Didn't meet tonight. Jason talked to Ryan S about the heating. We are well pleased with the job so far. Ryan was held up a bit waiting for the electrician. We are not completely up and running, but progressing. Ryan thought the Narthex floor heat was electric, but later found

out it was not. Therefore, he had to add an exchange mechanism to make sure that no water gets mixed in. This additional equipment will be a change order for approximately \$1,500. Every change has been discussed ahead of time. There is a required lock for the elevator that is currently unlocked due to the heating project. Gary will talk to Ryan to make sure this is locked as soon as possible upon work completion in that area.

The door project is going forward and Jason thought it had been ordered.

Water heater has been leaking and a new one has been ordered.

Gene reported that the refrigerator in the parsonage is dead. It is running, but not cooling and is now shut off. We will need to get a new one ordered as soon as possible.

Deacons: Didn't meet tonight. Jason asked about Advent plans. Some ideas are to have a pre-recorded Advent Candle Lighting done by volunteer families and some readings that would go with this each week. This could be posted via Facebook/e-mail.

Tree decorating? Volunteers needed.

Food Shelf: Gene reported. (Report filed) They are actively looking for a freezer. Currently have about 2,500 lbs. of food in the church garage. They will be scaling back a bit in food purchases. They won't be getting the

*Continued on Page 17*



**GRACE COUNCIL, continued**

large truck loads in December as they have plenty on hand. Hoping to receive currency in place of food for the food drives. The food is appreciated, but they can get a lot more "bang for their buck" by using money donations and purchasing from food shelf providers. They get a much better price than donators get straight retail. Grants received to date have been great, but this money runs out at the end of the month. There may be some possibilities of additional grants being offered. The Food Shelf would like us to encourage people to come for the food. This is entirely private and there is no judgment toward anyone. We all need help in our lives from time to time. As a Council, we want Gene to let us know if there are specific needs regarding anything we could help with. We have some undesignated funds we can use. The NALCW also will have some funds available and would welcome Gene's input on behalf of the Food Shelf.

Call Committee: Mary reported-Pastor Tsena will not be able to come for the original stay due to an injury. Rather than Nov 16<sup>th</sup> his stay will begin on Nov 19<sup>th</sup> through the 23rd. Pastor Mike will still do the introduction on Sunday. Council will need to reset the date they had planned to meet with him originally. We will ask the Tuesday Men's Bible study and the Monday Morning Bible study groups to meet him. They will perhaps want to change their regular meeting date to fit

They will perhaps want to change their regular meeting date to fit into Pastor Tsena's new schedule. Before Pastor Tsena leaves Ann is going to meet him over Zoom with the Confirmation class. If time permits, we'll try to have someone give Pastor Tsena a bit of a tour around the area. Perhaps a visit to the Rydell Refuge. Nick will post the revised schedule on Facebook for the visit.

**Old Business:**

Worship in the Sanctuary: Nick found a Christmas Eve worship that we could use for Christmas Eve via Facebook/YouTube if necessary. We have many options that may be possible. We will revisit reopening at the next Council meeting. Jason reported. He is committed to be able to have the option available to have sanctuary worship. We have a plan in place, the question is more about when it can be implemented. We seem to be looking at the end of Nov/beginning of Dec. The positivity rate for Covid 19 has had a substantial increase. This is an incredibly difficult situation and will need to be monitored very closely.

Audio/Video for the Sanctuary: We want to thank Nick for his "over the top" commitment to help. GV expects the new equipment to arrive in Dec. In the meantime, Nick has been doing an incredible job!

**New Business:**

Gift: \$35,000 gift has been received. We are so incredibly thankful and we are so humbled

by this generosity. It is truly overwhelming. The Council got to see some use suggestions by the donator, and we are thankful for this guidance. Some possible projects in 2021 are: church painting, sidewalk repair, convert all lighting to LED, add more lighting downstairs.

Motion to accept the gift and the suggested uses made by Gary, seconded by Hollie. It is with thanks and praise that this motion is carried.

Discussion with Ashley Gagner from Ameriprise: \*(notes under the Treasurers report)

Approve Lesly Tradewell as Backpack Program Coordinator (giving her authority to sign checks for this account and for Kim Mahlen to act as co-signer):

Motion to approve by Yvonne, seconded by Lori. Motion carried.

**Announcements**

Next council meeting is December 9 at 7:00 p.m.

**Adjourn****The Lord's Prayer**

Respectfully submitted,

*Yvonne Salverson*

# DECEMBER 2020

## Grace Lutheran Church

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 8am-MBS 3pm-BSF 8pm-AA mtg.	2 7pm-Rebroadcast	3	4	5 9:00am- Rebroadcast
6 10:30am- Worship w/Holy Communion	7 9:30am-LBS 10am- Worship Re- broadcast	8 8am-MBS 3pm-BSF 8pm-AA mtg.	9 7pm-Rebroadcast 7:30pm Committees 8pm-Council mtg.	10 10am-2pm-Food Shelf is open 2pm-NALCW	11	12 9:00am- Rebroadcast
13 10:30am- Worship w/Holy Communion	14 9:30am-LBS 10am- Worship Re- broadcast	15 8am-MBS 3pm-BSF 8pm-AA mtg.	16 7pm-Rebroadcast	17 10am-2pm-Food Shelf is open 2pm-Hope Circle 6:30pm-Rebecca Circle	18	19 9:00am- Rebroadcast
20 10:30am- Worship	21 9:30am-LBS 10am- Worship Re- broadcast	22 8am-MBS 3pm-BSF 8pm-AA mtg.	23 7pm-Rebroadcast	24 4:30pm-Service aired on local chan- nel 30 <b>CHRISTMAS</b>		26 9:00am- Rebroadcast
27 10:30am- Worship	28 9:30am-LBS 10am- Worship Re- broadcast	29 8am-MBS 3pm-BSF 8pm-AA mtg.	30 7pm-Rebroadcast	31		

**\*CIRCLES\***

Hope at the church  
Rebecca at the church  
Mission no meeting

**Ushers :**

**Communion Assistants:**

Altar Flowers:  
Mission Circle

Altar Guild:  
Maxine Walter

R= Reader  
V=Video

A=Acolyte  
DECEMBER 6th:

R~  
V~  
A~  
DECEMBER 13th:

R~  
V~  
A~  
DECEMBER 20th:

R~  
V~  
A~  
DECEMBER 27th:

R~  
V~  
A~