



GRACE NOTES

The Newsletter of Grace Church • PO Box 1559 • Buena Vista, CO 81211
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Merry Christmas

Persons, places, vistas we have seen



DECEMBER 2016

From Our Pastors



Rev. Cummings writes about two important events in December



Rev. Tran. reminds us of the beginning of the church year.

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Ministry Reports

Merry Christmas!



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Peggy Finkowski reports on the last Council meeting and



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Brenda Nesbitt reports on the December Outreach project.



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A Song of Christmas by Thomas Dudley Smith

A song was sung at Christmas

To wake the midnight sky.

A savior's birth and peace on earth

A praise to God on high.

The Angels sang at Christmas

With the host above

And still we sing the newborn king

His glory and his love.

Cummings Commentary

We remember two world changing events in December. The first is Pearl Harbor Day. It is still fresh in our collective memories. We are separated from that awful day by just seven decades. Many of our parents and grandparents fought to defend America and free the world from totalitarianism. We have heard their stories. We have read the history books. We have experienced firsthand the many effects of a world at war: the nuclear bomb, the Cold War, a more militarized world, to name a few.

The second historic event we remember in December is the birth of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace sent to reconcile the

world to its Creator. Followers of Christ have a profound personal attachment to our celebration of his birth. Though historically distant by twenty-one centuries, the meaning of Christ's birth is embedded in our hearts and is at the center of our life experience. We have celebrated Christmas for nearly all the time since Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection.

Which of these two events will have the greater, longer lasting impact on the world from this point forward? Will there still be an America 2,000 years from now to remember Pearl Harbor? Will there still be a

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Which has had the greater impact in your life? Is it the global conflict that destroyed over 60 million lives or is it the birth of Christ who has transformed billions of lives including yours and mine? Where we show up on Christmas Eve will in part reveal our answer to these questions.

Catherine's Column



Happy New Year!

The Church calendar marks the beginning of a new year on the first Sunday of Advent. The season of Advent, which leads up to Christmas, is a time of preparation and anticipation. As the birth of Christ approaches, the faithful are called to wake up and keep watch. The words of John the Baptist resonate throughout the season: "Prepare the way!"

Christmas, the Feast of the Incarnation, begins on Christmas Eve and lasts for twelve days. The twelve days of Christmas invite Christians to celebrate God's saving love. The Word becomes flesh and dwells among us, bringing grace and truth into the world. The great mystery of the Incarnation reminds the faithful that we ourselves are called to make Christ present in the world by living lives that bring glory to God. Christmas ends January 6th on the Feast of the Epiphany. This feast day begins the season of Epiphany by recalling the story of the three wise men visiting the Christ child. Throughout the season, events in Jesus' life such as his baptism and the

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Church Council Report

By Peggy Finkowski, Chairman



Looking back over the year at Grace Church, we have had another busy year. At the October annual meeting we reported on the vitality of our small groups. Talk to other people at Grace, and ask them how small group participation has

impacted them. A small group can be a study group or a service project. I invite you to join a group at Grace because it is the participation in these groups that strengthens the church & the participant.

Love is all around at Grace Church. Each Sunday morning, dedicated people from our worship committee prepare the altar for our communion. Greeters, readers, sound people, parish hall hosts, and chalice bearers have been scheduled and are in place ready to serve. We appreciate the time and effort all our volunteers give to Grace Church. We also appreciate the leadership of our pastors, Don Cummings and Catherine Tran. They inspire us each week with their messages. We appreciate the dedicated work of our staff Annette Dickinson, Ed Butler and Judy Epperson. Thank you, Thank you!

Love is also sent out to the community from Grace Church via our Outreach projects. Thank you for your commitment to your pledges so that we may support those projects.

Our elected **Council** members are: Jeff Deardorff, Judy Edmunds, Junia Fitzgerald, Celso Harper, Nancy Rem, Danny Simpson, Carol Slater and Bob Yinger. Going off the council at the end of the year will be Jeff Deardorff, Judy Edmunds and Danny Simpson. I appreciate every ones contributions this year while I was chair of the council. New members on the council in 2017 will be Evelyn Baker, Martha Bauman and Kurt Miller.

December Outreach Project

By Brenda Nesbitt

In Alamosa County, the estimated average wage for a renter is \$8.23 an hour. In order to afford the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment at this wage, a renter must work 1.5 full time jobs. In addition to being physically demanding, this amount of work is often impossible to find due to the local unemployment rate of more than 10%. Given that roughly 18% of people in the Valley live in poverty and less than one in every four residents have any medical insurance, a significant proportion of the Valley's population lives at high risk for homelessness. Considering the harsh weather conditions and the vulnerable housing situation of La Puente's service area, our ability to provide emergency shelter is often truly a matter of life and death.

They welcome families, migrant farm workers, and other individuals in need to use our services; each guest is allowed to stay for up to one month as they work to get back on their feet. The Shelter has 45 beds that are split into a women's area, a men's area, and family accommodations. There are two public showers available for the use of any community members in need.

In addition to providing food, shelter, and a safe environment, the Shelter also addresses needs by connecting guests with community resources and by aiding them in identifying options and setting realistic goals.

This month Grace Church is collecting

CHILDREN'S SOCKS

to help La Puente with its needs. Donations can be placed in the green outreach box in the Parish Hall through December 31. All donations will be taken to La Puente in Alamosa in January.

Catherine's Column

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Transfiguration are told in the scripture readings, the voice of God proclaiming, "This is my beloved son!" The season of Epiphany is about proclaiming the gift of the Incarnation to the world.

The seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany make up the Incarnational cycle in the Church calendar. These seasons help us to be aware of God's presence with us and how we are called to respond. We prepare for the coming of God's saving love in the world, celebrate it, and proclaim the Good News to the world. May you be blessed as you reflect on the presence of the incarnate Christ in your life.

Catherine

Birthdays & Anniversaries**Birthdays**

12/7 Evelyn Baker

12/8 Olivia Powell

12/8 Micah Rem

12/19 Millie Cochran

12/27 Junia Fitzgerald

12/29 Bob Cochran

12/31 Barbara O'Donnell

Anniversaries

12/16 Peter & Mary Lee

Don's Column

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church to celebrate the birth of Jesus? Which has had the greater impact in your life? Is it the global conflict that destroyed over 60 million lives or is it the birth of Christ who has transformed billions of lives including yours and mine? Where we show up on Christmas Eve will in part reveal our answer to these questions.

Both events have spawned their own symbols, traditions and meanings, World War II is just seven decades in our past. The birth of Christ happened 2000 years ago.

See you in church,

Don

TRANSITIONS

Please remember Ed and Margaret Butler in your prayers. Ed fell on December 3 and broke his leg.

Celso Harper asks for prayers for his sister who is recovering from a stroke.

Pray for the people who are victims of the fires in Tennessee.

Pray for the search and rescue workers who risk their lives to find people who get lost in the mountains.

Please pray for our country as we prepare for a change in our government leaders.

Remember to pray for world peace.

Looking ahead to 2017 we will have a year of transition. One change for the Outreach budget will be designated giving. If you want to donate money to a specific charity, remember to write your check out to that specific charity.

At our annual meeting in October, our Methodist District Superintendent, Margaret Gillikin, challenged us to love our neighbor. She specifically offered for us to think about how we might feed our neighbor. Please consider how we might share God's love with our neighbors in BV. Thank you.

Peggy Finkowski – Council Chair

Coffee Hour

Just a word about coffee hour. There has been a decline in the people willing to sign up for coffee hour and I think it might be due to a misunderstanding about what coffee hour is. It does not have to be a potluck dinner or a full breakfast, just a light snack that we can enjoy while we visit with our friends.

Certainly, if you like to cook and want to fix a big breakfast, then by all means do it. But for the ones who are busy and would like to do something, muffins, rolls, donuts, or anything that is light would be fine.

We need people to sign up to bring treats so that coffee hour can continue as I know we all enjoy the fellowship time after church when we can visit and get to know people better.

Thanks for you continued participation.

Judy Epperson, Congregational Life Chair

ADVENT 3rd week Pink Candle. The Rose candle is often called Mary's Candle. It is also call the Shepherds Candle when they were visited by angels. It is also marks the middle of Advent when we turn from reflection and contemplation to joy and love.

CRISMONS Chrismons are Christmas decorations with Christian symbols on them. They help Christians to remember that Christmas is the celebration of Jesus's birthday. They are often used on Christmas Trees in Churches and Christians homes. A chrismon is a Christian symbol representing Jesus Christ. The term chrismon comes from the Latin phrase "Christi monogramma", meaning "monogram of Christ". The use of chrismon symbols date back to 1st Century. They were painted on walls of catacombs, tombs, churches and art. They are like the crosses we display today. It was linking Christians together.

JESSE TREE The Jesse Tree are a very old Christmas Tradition and first started in medieval times. They are used to help tell the story of the Bible from creation to the Christmas Story. The Jesse tree helps us connect the custom of decorating Christmas trees to the events leading to Jesus' birth. The Jesse tree is named from Isaiah 11:1. We adorn a Jesse tree with ornaments (we use the Crimsons at Grace) that represent the people, prophecies, and events leading up to the birth of Jesus. The ornaments of the Jesse tree tell the story of God in the Old Testament, connecting the Advent season with the faithfulness of God across four thousand years of history

Advent Brunch a Success!

A great time was had by all who attended the annual Grace Ladies Advent Brunch. The meal, catered by Variations was delicious. District Superintendent, Margaret Gilikin gave an excellent talk on the theme, A Recipe for Christmas.

Entertainment was provided by the Grace Ladies Choir, Sherry Thomas, Mary Lee, Judy Epperson and Junia Fitzgerald. The decorations were made by the ladies of Grace under the supervision of Maryanne Freed and Dorothy Miller, who co-chaired the event.

Many thanks to Maryanne and Dorothy for a job well done.

Annual Grace Advent Brunch



Lots of good food, good fun, and fellowship at the Ladies brunch.

Grace Notes is a publication of Grace Church in Buena Vista, Colorado

Grace is an Episcopal-United Methodist Ecumenical Fellowship where people of all Christian faith traditions are finding a spiritual home.

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