



THE CARILLON

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Grace Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

A New Church Year Begins....

The Church Year begins with Advent (from Latin *adventus*, which means “coming into”), a four-week period of preparation before the celebration of Christ’s birth on Christmas. The story of Jesus during Advent is the story of **hope coming into the world**. When the time was just right, God sent God’s Son, Jesus, into the world. The Advent season teaches us to prepare to receive Jesus, the hope for the world. In Advent we wait for our coming King.

From Christmas until January 5th, we will be in the Christmas season (think the 12 days of Christmas), and then Epiphany and the Sundays after until Lent.

The Revised Common Lectionary, a three-year cycle of scripture readings, has us beginning Year B, which means almost all of our gospel readings will be coming from Mark and John.

Advent Practices and Traditions

The color of Advent is blue, which symbolizes anticipation and hope in our coming King. Violet is also used during Advent as a symbol of our repentance in preparation for our coming King.

It has become common to use an Advent wreath to mark the season. This wreath has four candles – one for each week in Advent. As these candles are lit each week, our anticipation mounts as we look forward to Jesus’ coming.

Christmas Worship on December 24:

Online Service: available on Facebook and YouTube the afternoon of Christmas Eve.

Parking Lot Service:

6:00 pm -- singing traditional Christmas hymns with accompaniment

6:30 pm – abbreviated worship service

Bring your blankets, quilts, and face coverings with you in the car, and dress accordingly, as there may be a time or two when you may want to step out of your car.

The service will include:

- Singing Christmas hymns in the half hour leading up to the service, accompanied by Mary Knellwolf
- Luminaries and lights
- Hearing the Christmas story
- Lighting candles and singing “Silent Night”
- Communion

All activities in keeping with recommended COVID-19 practices. (Please be sure to bring your masks and hand sanitizer.)



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If we have to cancel due to weather, our back-up dates will be at the same time on December 25, or if needed, December 27. You will be able to call the church at 776-4462 for a weather update.

From the Keyboard of Pastor Kate



Beloved in Christ,

Can you believe it? Advent is here! We are in the month-long season of waiting and preparation that leads up to Christmas. In the best of years, it can be really tempting to jump right into the joy and celebration. It's weird enough that in our culture we go from a day of giving thanks on a Thursday to the "great day of acquisition" that is "Black Friday" (though now it's not uncommon to see signs of Christmas creeping into stores before Halloween!)

This year the temptation to make the hyper-speed jump to the great day of celebration seems greater than usual. I was reminded in a recent conversation with a friend that, in some ways, it feels like we're still in the season of Lent, since most churches did not gather for Holy Week and Easter because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we haven't had "regular" worship since March. We're *still* in the process of waiting, and we're tired: emotionally, mentally, spiritually. We just want this all to be over. We long to go about our usual busy-ness and to spend time and celebrate the important occasions with the ones we love. We may be tempted to try and push December 24/25 into being here before its time.

Advent has its own rhythm. It's a time for simplifying and slowing things down. It's about pondering the coming of Christ long ago, his presence with us now and the meaning of *this* Christmas, and his promised return at the end of time. It's taking a deep breath and considering our need for God's presence in our lives, and reflecting upon the things that are getting in the way of our relationship with God and with one another. It's not about presents, but *being present*, being immersed in the "wonder of his love."

Perhaps here is the hidden gift of the pandemic. We who are people addicted to busy-ness and a fast-paced life, who are use to immediate service and habitual multi-tasking – perhaps we are being aided to let go of some of the craziness and secular trappings and simplify our plate. Perhaps we're being given a beautiful opportunity to dwell a little longer and go a little deeper into thanksgiving. Perhaps we're being given more time to consider our blessings and share our abundance with our neighbor. Whatever it is, know that you are not wondering, waiting, longing and dwelling alone, nor are you doing it in vain. We are church together, even when we're not together in person, and best of all, Christ is Immanuel, God with Us, and Christ is with **you**. The peace of Christ dwell in you richly this Advent season.

Warmly,
Pr. Kate

Pastor Kate's Office Hours

During most weeks Pastor Kate will be available to connect at the office on Tuesday afternoons, and Wednesday and Thursdays between 9:00 AM-noon and from 1:00-4:00 PM. Other times are also possible, but in all cases it is recommended to call first or make an appointment to insure that she is available and in the office, as she may have other appointments or working across the street. You can leave a message at the church. Otherwise she can also be reached on her cell phone (608/732-9688) or by email at Pastor.GraceDar@gmail.com.

Message from Bishop Joy About the Emergency Order



Today, Public Health for Madison and Dane County issued Emergency order #10, related to the pandemic. The order begins with a summary of what we know- cases of COVID are rising sharply. Due to the sharp increase new mandates are being ordered. Among these new restrictions is the mandate that no gatherings are to be held indoors; outdoor gatherings are to be limited to 10 persons. The current mask requirement is also in effect. Religious entities are excluded from the order only for the purposes of gathering for worship. They are not excluded for other purposes like staff or council meetings, education meetings, etc. You can read the whole order here: <https://publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus/forward-dane/current-order>

Now certainly this is an order specific to only one part of our synod, however it is a topic that is of central concern to all of us. I have been in many conversations in the last two weeks with rostered ministers and laity alike from around the synod who are seeking direction about what to do regarding returning to in person worship, staying online through the end of the year, etc. Some have wanted a clear message from me as Bishop. Others felt like a clear message from me could complicate what they were already doing and put them in a further quandary.

Then, one rostered leader put me on the spot and asked me, “Well, what is your preference?” I do have a clear preference in all of this. I prefer that our congregations refrain from in person worship. It is the safest thing to do to protect one another. We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves. Right now, we can love one another best by staying away from each other. We can love another by giving up things for the sake of the other. These past 8 months have been long. Many of us have not been in our church buildings at all. We miss each other and the community that we share. Some of us do not have the ability and/or the desire to hook up to virtual worship. Anxiety, grief, and loss are very prevalent, and we grow weary when we don’t know when this will end. However, right now we are being called to love our neighbors, stay the path and stay home. In Galatians chapter 5 Paul writes:

¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. ¹⁴For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹

It's that simple ... and it's that complicated. My prayers are with you as we are church together in these difficult days,

Bishop Joy

Bishop Joy Mortensen-Wiebe

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, ELCA

WHAT MATTERS - [Stay Connected To Synod Happenings, News, & Events!](#) Grow in your faith and leadership! Stay connected to exciting events and stories of our faith in action in our synod! To sign up for synod news, please email Assistant to the Bishop for Synodical Life, Deacon Vicki Hanrahan at vickih@scsw-elca.org to be added to “What Matters.”



IN OUR PRAYERS:

We remember those with upcoming medical procedures and recovering from illness, accidents, procedures, or in special need of prayer,

- Taylor Evenstad recovering from burns received in a farm tractor fire
- those who are currently suffering from COVID-19, or those who are caring for someone who is
- essential workers in our communities and those on the front line of the pandemic,
- those suffering from isolation, loneliness, depression, anxiety, addiction, and mental illness,
- the Sugar Creek Bible Camp community, that they continue to be open to the Holy Spirit, that God would guide and empower their work, including summer Bible camp

We remember those who are mourning the loss of loved ones, especially:

- the family of Evelyn Williams who passed away November 3 and whose funeral was held November 9
- the family of Linda Martin (sister-in-law of Val Thompson)who passed away from the complications of COVID-19
- the family of Gary Garrison (step-father of Diane Bredeson) who passed away at his home November 13 and whose funeral was held on November 18
- Kate Brattlie, daughter of Barb Schilling, recovering from surgery

We give thanks to God and celebrate:

- The past month's volunteers who served at Grace including members of the music, worship, care, Sunday school, and technology teams and to all the volunteers who helped to decorate the church for the harvest and the Christmas seasons.
- to Main Furniture and Home, Jalaine Ruesegger, Sheila Carrington, and Vernon Johnson for the lovely love seats in the education/nursery room off the narthex.



Prayer Ventures

Inserted in this newsletter is a flyer called "Prayer Ventures" for December. This monthly flyer lists daily petitions as guides for prayer for the global, social and outreach ministries of the ELCA, as well as for the needs and circumstances of our neighbors, communities and world.



WORSHIP

Sunday worship services at Grace will be **online only** during November and December due to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus. Services can be accessed on our BRAND NEW Facebook page at

<https://www.facebook.com/GraceLutheran.Darlington>, or on YouTube by the following day (see our website, your email in-box, or search Grace Lutheran, Darlington, WI on YouTube for details).

Thanksgiving For All Saints (from the November service)

O God of the pilgrim's way, we give thanks for those in generations past who have been examples for us of God's love at work in the world. As we pray, we know that we are surrounded by this great, rejoicing cloud of witnesses. Yet even as we name these holy ancestors, we thank God for others whose names we never knew or have forgotten, who showed us the meaning of life in Christ.

Ronald Hexom
John Schulte
Adam Blaser
Lilas Saalsaa

Shirley Johnson
Clarion Wick
Charlie Ludwig
Neil Considine

Garry Garison
Catherine McEnroe
Evelyn Williams

Holy God, we honor these, loved ones in faith and members of our family. We, too, seek to do your will: guide us. We, too, desire to be your servants: strengthen us. We, too, long to know you clearly: teach us. And in time, bring us to our eternal home of peace and joy.

Amen.

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Music Requests – Mary Knellwolf is taking requests for songs and hymns to be played before and after online worship services. Requests can be submitted via Facebook or email to Mary Knellwolf (mlknellwolf@gmail.com) or by calling the church office and leaving a message.



Offerings: In thanksgiving to God, offerings for the maintenance and mission of this church and God's greater mission in this community and world, offerings may be mailed to church (1302 Clay Street, Darlington) or can be placed under the office door.



Poinsettia: This year Grace is still decorating with the gift of poinsettia donations for our online worship space. Orders are due December 16 and will be delivered December 19.

CONGREGATIONAL and COMMUNITY CARE TEAM

Care Team: We are looking for people to participate in meaningful ways that connect our church to each other and to the wonderful community of Darlington. Currently activities are being organized and carried out with minimal to no physical gathering. Support and encourage others and likely receive support and encouragement yourself? Some recent activities were to send Thanksgiving cards to shut-ins and Veterans Day decorations at the Manor. If interested contact Jalaine Ruegsegger at 608/432-0301.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE



Pictures of Grace: We're looking for pictures of the people of Grace: shots of smiling faces and faith and ministry in action wherever you are: at home, in the community, and at church! Please send your pictures to Pastor Kate and/or the church office email. We'd like to use these for newsletters and outreach. Don't be shy! Help us spread the word!

Anniversary and Birthdates: Please send us your anniversary and birthdates. Just the month and day, the year is not needed. We would like to list them in the newsletter each month, so we can celebrate with you!

Christmas Caroling for the shut-ins is being organized with safe practices in place at this time. If you would be interested in participating please leave a message at the church.



Prayer-ers sought? Are you someone who is committed to a faithful prayer life and believes in the power of prayer? Are you trustworthy and committed to respecting others' desire for confidentiality? We are looking for people who would be interested in serving on a prayer team/prayer chain for communal and personal concerns. Contact Pastor Kate for information.

Christmas Donations: Grace is going to deliver boxes to our homebound members. If you would like to donate items to help fill the boxes, here is a list of suggested items: Christmas candy, mints, nuts, hot chocolate packets, fruit, mint cookies, chocolates, and cookies. Cookies must be from a licensed kitchen, nothing homemade. Any suggestions and donations are greatly appreciated. Thank you for helping us make this special time of the year more memorable for our homebound members. DEADLINE is Sunday, December 20. Items can be placed on the counter in the fellowship area.

COMMUNITY CARE

The Community Thanksgiving Meal, hosted by the United Methodist Church on Thanksgiving Day, was a big success. They served over 200 drive-thru and carry-out meals. Thank you to all who helped with donations of food, money, and hands. Grace Lutheran donated \$150.00 to help with any expenses.



Christmas Blessings is a community program organized by Holy Rosary Catholic Church to provide Christmas gifts or members of families going through hard times. The people of Grace sponsored 22 families. Thank you for caring!



Mitten Tree: The mitten tree is located in the church lobby for the collection of mittens, hats, scarves, gloves and socks. Collected items will be donated to the schools to provide for students' needs. Collections will continue until mid-January.

Salvation Army Bell Ringing: Grace Lutheran is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, December 11-12 with shifts on Friday from 3:00-5:00 PM and 5:00-7:00 PM, and on Saturday from 10:00 AM until noon and noon-2:00 PM at each of three Darlington locations. Sign up in the church lobby or call the church and leave a message and we'll help you out. CoVid-19 practices in place (masks and gloves).



Lafayette Manor Thank You – a note from the Manor

Thank You

Thank you donors!! Lafayette Manor staff are humbled by the community involvement we have had throughout the pandemic. Though visitors and volunteers are not able to come into the building, they have found creative ways to bring joy and encouragement to the residents AND to the staff. This week, a generous donation of treats for bingo and "coffee clutch" have fulfilled our needs through the rest of the year! Thank you!!

The Lafayette County Food Pantry is currently accepting donations. Particular needs right now are canned vegetables (especially French-cut green beans, yams or sweet potatoes), holiday meal items such as: stuffing mix, canned gravy, items for green bean casserole, family-friendly soups (such as tomato, chicken noodle; NO CREAM OF MUSHROOM), toilet paper always needed! Hamburger Helper, peanut butter, non-sugared cereals such as Chex, Cheerios, corn flakes etc.

Donations can be dropped off at Grace in the shopping cart located near the fellowship area.

The pantry is also in need of volunteers. If you are under the age of 70, able-bodied, have no underlying health conditions, and are not going home to someone with any, please contact Amanda or Liz at the pantry number (608/776-3500).



Toilet Paper Tree: During the month of December we are constructing a "toilet paper tree" to donate to the Food Pantry. It will be made of rolls of toilet paper with some colorful vegetable and soup cans (red and green) for decorations. All will be donated to the Food Pantry at the end of December. Two boxes have been provided in the church narthex for your donations. Let's construct a large tree!!

Darlington Community Blood Drive will be held at the American Legion on Wednesday December 30 from 12:30-05:30 PM. Appointments are preferred (call 800/733-2767)





DISCIPILESHIP

Sunday School for Pre-K through fourth grade began on Sunday, November 15 at 9:00 AM **currently via Zoom only** and will be meeting weekly. Parents should look in their email for more information or contact coordinator and teacher Hannah Badertscher at 608/432-0945

Confirmation Classes with Junior Youth (5th-8th grades)

Contact Pastor Kate if you missed the updates from announcements. Our first gathering has been rescheduled and will be held **currently via zoom only** from 3:00-4:45 PM on December 9 & 16. A link will be emailed to your student, so be sure Pastor Kate has the correct one for your youth.

NEW - Senior High Youth Group (9th-12 grades) Contact Pastor Kate for details. Our first gathering is planned **via zoom** in early December. Please text, call or email your email address to Pastor Kate for the invitation. The intent is to connect on Wednesdays monthly. Additional activities planned by the group will take place as the group determines (such as opportunities for service).

Women of Grace Are you interested in starting up a women's group for Bible study (via zoom, internet or phone). Contact Pastor Kate

Adult and Family—In this newsletter there is a listing of available resources that may be of interest to adults and family .

Taking Faith Home will be a weekly addition for the Sunday bulletin for household use for all ages. Attached in this newsletter are the directions for this resource.

RESOURCES IN THE NARTHEX



Christ in Our Home

(Available also by delivery to your home if needed.)

Christ in Our Home is a quarterly devotional resource that encourages readers to live out their faith daily. Each reflective reading is accompanied by a daily scripture reference and prayer for the day that follows the Revised Common Lectionary.

These booklets are available in regular or large print editions in the narthex and we will deliver to our homebound. Contact the church office.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN THE NARTHEX (continued)

OUR HOPE AND EXPECTATION: DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2020-2021 by Paul Hoffman (Contributor) ...

Our Hope and Expectation explores the Advent season and celebrates the joy of the twelve days of Christmas and the day of Epiphany. It includes daily devotions based on year B scripture readings (in the Revised Common Lectionary) for Sundays and festival days between the first Sunday of Advent (November 29, 2020) and Epiphany (January 6, 2021). In addition to devotions, the book offers household blessings and prayers to enrich your preparations and celebrations.

You can still purchase this as an eBook at the following locations: [Amazon Kindle](#), [Apple Books](#), [Barnes & Noble Nook](#), [Google Play Books](#), [Kobo Reader](#), and [Overdrive](#).



LIVING LUTHERAN

(Free copies of back issues are available in the narthex of the LIVING LUTHERAN. May they encourage you in this time of church-at-home and remind you of our connection to one another.)



Living Lutheran signifies this church's living, daring confidence in God's grace. The magazine features:

- Stories and commentary from the 3.5 million members and 9,300 congregations.
- Resources to help you deepen your faith.
- Monthly reflections from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton.
- Coverage of religious news, events and social issues.

As a partner in God's mission, *Living Lutheran* shares with the ELCA's diverse membership the stories of God's people living their faith.

GATHER

(Free copies of back issues are available in the narthex of the GATHER. May they encourage you in this time of church-at-home and remind you of our connection to one another.)

This magazine of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America guides you as you live and experience your faith every day. With the special offer for new subscribers, you can **get a whole year of *Gather* (10 issues) for just \$9.95** — that's \$10 or half off the regular subscription rate! Digital access is free to print.

In addition to a regular Bible study, the magazine offers a mix of faith-in-life articles, theological reflections, devotions and stories that speak to the hearts and souls of progressive Christian women. *Gather* connects Christian women of all ages with like-minded others who are committed to growing in faith and building the kingdom of God—next door and across the globe.



RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN THE NARTHEX (continued)



SPARK FAMILY

(Grace subscribes to receive this quarterly publication for families with children pre-school to fourth grade.)

Spark Family is the newest Spark resource designed to help families fit faith into everyday life!

Spark Family is a quarterly subscription. Each issue comes alive with colorful images from the award-winning [Spark Story Bible](#) and engaging activities for the whole family! With 48 pages of activities, Spark Family is a great resource to keep in the car, carry along as you run errands throughout the day, or leave on the kitchen table for conversation starters during dinner.

Unlike other children's devotionals, each issue of **Spark Family** is based on seasons and themes from the Bible. It's filled with quick and easy ways to fit faith into everyday life. Because it's not dated, you can choose to follow the chapters sequentially or skip around. It's perfect for kids in preschool - grade 4.

Spark Family features:

Cut-out prayers - Playful ways to encourage family members to pray together!

Make Time for More Fun! - Faith activities that fit your family's busy schedules.

Bible Factoids - Trivia to help build biblical literacy for all ages.

And more!

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

PRAYER VENTURES

— DECEMBER 2020 —

These petitions are offered as guides to prayer for the global, social and outreach ministries of the ELCA, as well as for the needs and circumstances of our neighbors, communities and world. Thank you for your continued prayers for the life and mission of this church.

- 24 Remember and give thanks for the people in your life who taught you the nativity story and recounted the promise God made to us and fulfilled through Jesus Christ.
- 25 *Christmas Day* Give praise and thanks for God's boundless love, mercy and grace, revealed to the world and all humanity through the light of Jesus Christ – son of God, son of humanity; our source of truth, salvation, new life and wholeness.
- 26 *Beginning of Kwanzaa* Kwanzaa is a weeklong celebration of African culture and traditions that stresses family, community and shared principles. Give thanks for the rich and meaningful traditions, celebrations and practices of our African American siblings and the global African community.
- 27 Pray for the Spirit to help us understand and have faith in Jesus as the son of God, born to walk among us, live through our daily struggles and needs, teach us God's ways and word, and restore our relationships with God, one another and creation.
- 28 Pray that we will carry forward the story and significance of Jesus and their implications for our daily actions, relationships and decisions as loved and reclaimed children of God. Ask the Spirit to guide us in responding to God's call to proclaim the gospel, make peace, work for justice, propagate hope and serve our neighbors in need – without partiality, foot-dragging, embarrassment or expectation of reward or credit.
- 29 Let our prayers, creation and all living things give glory and honor to God, our creator, sustainer, guiding light and redeemer.
- 30 Pray that the light, celebration and blessings of community we experience as followers of Christ will continue far beyond the Christmas holidays and permeate our daily lives as we participate in God's life-giving work and witness in the world.
- 31 *New Year's Eve* A new year can offer hope and enthusiasm for starting anew, or it can bring fear and despair stirred by our human weaknesses and failures. Ask God to help us achieve our new endeavors and resolutions and regroup ourselves in God's grace, forgiveness and newness when we fall short of our expectations and goals. Ask the Spirit to help us encourage, assist and surround with grace people who stumble or whose confidence is unsteady.

This resource may be copied and shared among members and friends of the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Contact info@elca.org for additional information. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8763 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4101. Telephone: 800-638-3522, ext. 2458.

- 1 *World AIDS Day* Pray for compassion, understanding and healing for individuals, families and communities worldwide that are living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. Give thanks for the dedicated service and skill of doctors, pastors, public officials, health care educators, care providers and researchers who treat the infected, bring hope to the discouraged and weary, and respond to the disease's spiritual, physical, emotional and social impacts.
- 2 The Spirit is at work in times of anticipation and yearning, reminding us of God's promises and activity, helping us stay calm and patient, and redirecting our attention from ourselves to our neighbors in need – nearby and around the world.
- 3 Give thanks for the new ELCA social message "Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy." Pray that it will help us understand how government is a gift from God but can also be abused and misused. Ask the Spirit to guide us as we prayerfully reflect on how we can view civic engagement as Lutherans.
- 4 What do you anticipate and watch for during this season of Advent? Pray for what you yearn and hope for, and give thanks that God is faithful to God's promises, especially through the gift of life to the world through Jesus Christ.
- 5 As we are immersed in the joy, festivities and busyness of Advent and Christmas, pause to pray for our global neighbors who have suffered through devastating natural disasters and need our support, generosity and assistance. Pray particularly for the many nations that have experienced drought and for those impacted by the earthquake in Turkey and Greece, Typhoon Goni hitting the Philippines and multiple hurricanes impacting Mexico, the Caribbean region and the United States.

Prayer Ventures (continued)

- 6 Pray that the Spirit will give us a measure of John the Baptist's boldness, commitment, humility and resolve as we share the good news of Jesus Christ and the promise of God's love and mercy with everyone we encounter or approach throughout our baptismal journey.
- 7 Give thanks for caregivers, staff and nurses in senior communities, nursing homes, rehabilitation hospitals, and memory-care and assisted-living facilities. Ask God to grant them strength, wisdom, skill and a spirit of hope and joy as they go about their difficult and often tiring work.
- 8 Pray for patience, caution and concern for our neighbor during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic; pray that the Spirit and our siblings in Christ will help us cope with and adjust to the implications of the pandemic for this season in which we are accustomed to gathering in person for meals, celebrations, worship, family gatherings and community events.
- 9 Pray that God will help us lead lives of holiness, godliness, peace and active engagement with the world as disciples of Christ who wait patiently for the day of the Lord.
- 10 This has been, and continues to be, a very difficult year of coping with and recovering from natural disasters across our country and around the world. Pray that the presence and hope of God will be evident where there is despair, grief and uncertainty over how to begin rebuilding and healing. Pray that neighbors, communities and nations will work together to provide assistance, resources and relief workers where the needs are most critical.
- 11 Ask for God's forgiveness and take to heart God's word of love, peace, healing and guidance that restores our faith and spirit as children of God.
- 12 Give thanks for the church traditions that remind us of God's actions throughout history and inspire our faith, generosity and commitment to serve our neighbors in need. Pray that we will carry these meaningful traditions forward and create new rites and traditions that inspire and strengthen all generations in today's changing contexts.
- 13 Pray that we might passionately witness to the light of Jesus Christ and boldly invite others to believe and to be baptized into the body of Christ and the community of all believers.
- 14 ELCA Good Gifts provide an opportunity for you to support the ministries and programs – domestic and global – that mean the most to you and the people you love. Give thanks that our church believes God is calling us into the world together and that, through our generosity and love, we can make a difference.
- 15 What do our gifts mean, and what impact do they have? Pray for thoughtfulness when we buy gifts, for awareness of who we include and exclude, and for mindfulness of how the money we spend during this time of thanksgiving might fulfill God's loving, merciful and generous promises.
- 16 *Los Posadas* This traditional celebration, popular in Mexico and observed by some ELCA congregations, uses lighted paths and processions to follow Mary and Joseph's journey through Bethlehem in search of lodging. Pray that our recollection of Mary and Joseph's experience might prompt us to welcome strangers, immigrants and neighbors in need.
- 17 "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Pray that we will support and encourage each other in these good works and disciplines that keep our spirits, minds and bodies healthy and whole.
- 18 Pray that, in anticipation of Christmas, we will invite others into the joy of our meals, celebrations, community events and faith. Pray that the Spirit will move us to reach out with acts of love, hope, inclusion and good news to people who are alone, incarcerated or homeless.
- 19 "The Lord has done great things for us." Rejoice, laugh and shout with joy!
- 20 Pray that we will be receptive to angels and divine beings sent by God to guide us and bring us good news, as the angel Gabriel did to Mary and Elizabeth. Pray that we will hear God's assurance that "nothing will be impossible with God" and that our response will echo Mary's: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."
- 21 *Winter solstice* On this day with the least amount of daylight, observed as the beginning of winter, pray that we will be drawn to the eternal light of Christ born into the world – a gift for all people and all generations that illuminates God's redemptive love for us and God's desire and intent for how we might live together.
- 22 Remember in prayer the approximately 26 million refugees, immigrants and asylum-seekers around the world and at our borders, awaiting entry into safe, welcoming countries and communities so that they can rebuild their lives without threats of conflict, persecution, violence or economic crisis. Pray for their safety, that their spiritual, physical and emotional needs will be met, that they will find caring advocates, and that their faith and hope will be strengthened and sustained by siblings in Christ and our faith communities.
- 23 With prayerful sighs of relief and expressions of gratitude, give thanks for God's covenant to grant humankind love, forgiveness, new life and redemption through the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Taking Faith Home

This resource for promoting Christian faith formation in the life of a congregation can be used for home devotions, Bible study groups, and other small group settings, including congregational boards and committees.

It significantly deepens daily and lifelong faith formation.

Suggested use for the various parts of Taking Faith Home:

Weekly Theme: This gives the theme for the week based on the Bible passages used for each particular Sunday in the church year. Reflect on this as you use other parts of Taking Faith Home.

Daily Bible Readings: Find a preferred time of day to read and meditate on these Bible passages. Having a dependable routine increases the likelihood of using these daily readings. Reflect on what words or images come to mind as you read these passages.

Hymn of the Week: This provides a suggested hymn that complements the weekly theme and scripture readings. See the www.milestonesministry.org website under the toolbox/guides tab for a complete listing of text and music authors.

Weekly Milestones: This allows for a moment to share or think about recent mountain highs and/or valley lows in your life.

The diagram illustrates the layout of the 'Taking Faith Home' resource. It features a central page with two columns of text. On the left side, four blue arrows point to the 'Weekly Theme', 'Daily Bible Readings', 'Hymn of the Week', and 'Prayer and Praise' sections. On the right side, four blue arrows point to the 'Communion', 'Devotions', 'Scripture', and 'Prayer and Praise' sections. A blue arrow at the top points to the 'Weekly Milestones' section. The central page includes the title 'taking faith home' and the date 'NOVEMBER 24, 2020'.



Taking Faith Home

You will be amazed at how people will move from knowing they should use Taking Faith Home to being excited when they do.

Scripture Verse for this Week: This text matches the weekly theme and provides a devotional anchor to your daily faith formation. Consider memorizing this verse each week.

A Prayer for the Week: Use this prayer with the Scripture for the week, the daily readings or any other part of Taking Faith Home.

Mealtime Prayer: Offering a prayer at mealtime is a foundational faith practice that blesses our daily faith formation with a spirit of thanksgiving and praise.

A Blessing to Give: Receive this blessing as a gift of the faith community to you and extend these words to loved ones in your life. By doing so you experience how you are blessed to be a blessing to others. An option would be to mark the sign of the cross on the forehead as you offer the blessing.

The Four Key Faith Practices:

Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions are the Four Key Faith Practices that are the foundation to any other faith practice the church uses to nurture the Christian faith.

Caring Conversations: These conversation starters provide meaningful reflection on biblical texts and our daily lives. They help you bond with others on the journey of faith. They also help you in the important task of talking about the Christian faith.

Devotions: Being devoted to God's word serves as a foundation for practicing the presence of God and blessing you with faith, hope, and love. Having a special time of day to do devotions increases the regularity of this important practice in your life.

Service: Christ tells us to serve others. By living the faith in love, we learn the value and joy of the Christian faith. Serving others reminds us of the breadth of the Kingdom of God and that our faith is personal but not private. Faith motivates us to serve the world in love.

Rituals and Traditions: Symbolic actions grounded in the Christian tradition throughout the year provide a beautiful and holistic way of experiencing the grace of God. As you practice rituals and traditions, regularly use ones that fill you with peace, passion, meaning, and hope.



Do you want to dig deeper into Taking Faith Home as a vital tool for lifelong faith formation for all ages?

- Explore our website under the Taking Faith Home tab and get more ideas.
- Enter into an affordable short-term coaching relationship with Debbie Streicher or David Anderson to help your congregation implement a number of faith formation strategies.

Please share your stories at: info@milestonesministry.org

Taking Faith Home (continued)

The 2020 Advent Challenge: Three Easy Steps

This year our congregation will be using Taking Faith Home to support our 2020 Advent Challenge

The challenge during this Advent season is to use *Taking Faith Home* each week to do three easy faith formation practices in your home to celebrate Advent.

If you have Advent wreaths or candles in your home, use them as a centerpiece to gather around during Advent.

The image shows a sample page from the 'Taking Faith Home' booklet. The page is divided into two columns. The left column is titled 'MOUNTAIN HIGH AND/OR VALLEY LOW' and contains a section for sharing stories. The right column is titled 'SCRIPTURE' and contains a section for reading and reflecting on a verse. A large black arrow labeled '1' points to the right column. Two smaller black arrows labeled '2' and '3' point to the left column, with '2' pointing to the 'Scripture' section and '3' pointing to the 'Pray & Bless' section.

Do these Three Easy Steps in Less Than 10 Minutes!

1. Share a Mountain High and/or Valley Low
2. Read Scripture
3. Pray & Bless

Do this in your home during the four weeks of Advent. If you live alone, connect with someone online or with a phone call. First share a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life with each other; then read the scripture verse of the week; and finally say the prayer for the week and bless each other. It's that easy!

The 2020 Advent Challenge Wrap-Up

After Christmas, the congregation will meet together online or face-to-face to share stories about what happened during Advent in your home and report on how we did.

Our prize? Well, you will have to wait and see!





Grace Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.
1302 Clay St • Darlington, WI 53530
Return Service Requested



Mission Statement

We are Grace people. Jesus Christ sends us out to:

- + Feed the hungry
- + Welcome every child
- + Seek out the stranger
- + Give thanks to God in all things
- + Follow the way of the cross

Church phone: 608.776.4462
Church email: GraceDar@centurytel.net
Facebook.com/[GraceLutheran.Darlington](https://www.facebook.com/GraceLutheran.Darlington)
Pastor's email: Pastor.GraceDar@gmail.com
Pastor's phone: 608.732.9688

Upcoming Schedule:

December 9 & 16

3:00-4:45 PM Confirmation Class

December 9

Council Meeting

December 24

6:00 PM Singing Christmas Hymns

6:30 PM Christmas Eve Service
In Parking Lot

Inside

Pg

- 1 | New Church Year Begins
- 2 | From the Keyboard of Pastor Kate
- 3 | Synod Letter
- 4 | Prayers
- 5 | Worship News
- 6 | Congregational & Community
- 8 | Discipleship & Resources

Newsletter Deadline

Items need to be submitted for January
Carillon by December 21.