

The Grapevine

NEWSLETTER OF GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, NALC

Our Mission: "Sharing God's Love Through Grace"

JANUARY 2024



ISAIAH 60:1, NRSV

Have a Happy and Blessed New Year!

Grace Lutheran Church



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Worship: Sundays 8:00 and 10:30a.m.

Our Staff

Pastor:	Tom Jacobson 740-242-2192
Office Manager:	Beth Gilgien 740-398-4502
Accompanist:	Sue Ellen Simmons 740-605-1530
Choir Director:	Diane Christensen 740-215-2396
Handbell Choir:	Becky Winegardner 740-467-3164
Men of Grace:	John Ulmer 740-281-7672
Church Council President:	Carl Lahman 614-329-8639
Council Vice President:	Matt Sheridan 740-405-6873
Council Secretary:	Diane Christensen 740-215-2396
Director of Inreach:	Linda Keaser 740-403-4197
Director of Outreach:	Vicki Jones 740-403-7311
Director of Upreach:	Casey Sigler 740-279-5405
Financial Secretary:	Jackie Combs 740-246-4751
Treasurer:	Rick Rockwell 740-624-2241
Bd of Women President:	Cherl Haggengjos 740-342-2276
Safety/Security Team:	Jim Lewis 740-503-0476
Sacristan:	Meg O'Reilly 740-644-3504
Facilities:	

Please call the church office with regard to any of the following:
*Hospitalizations; Baptisms; Confirmation; Weddings;
First Communion; Spiritual Counseling; Prayer Concerns*

Why Does Your Church Baptize Babies?

People were bringing little children to [Jesus] in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Mark 10:13-14 NRSV



Note: A colleague and friend of mine, Clifton Hanson, who now serves as a Lutheran Air Force chaplain in England, wrote this fine article a few years ago, explaining why Lutherans baptize infants and young children. I enjoyed it and thought you might as well. With his permission, I provide it here with a few slight edits. Next month, I will begin a series of newsletter articles about the Ten Commandments, which will last until the end of this calendar year. – Pr. Tom Jacobson

Many of us have been in that conversation: a Baptist or Pentecostal or non-denominational friend asks you, "So why does your church baptize infants? You know that's not in the Bible, right?" We're immediately on the defensive, trying to explain our faith, feeling very judged and very judgmental, too! To understand our own tradition and to help others understand it, we need to follow two easy steps: 1) Use the Bible. Lutherans have a wonderful theological tradition, but we often forget to talk about its biblical basis; 2) Repeat step one. We actually don't need to go outside the Bible to talk about this. We just have to let the Bible tell its story.

The practice of adult-only baptism draws a line and claims that under a certain age you don't really need Jesus (or that Jesus covers you without your knowledge)—you're innocent by virtue of ignorance and therefore Jesus' forgiveness and healing aren't necessary—not yet, anyway. When you become aware of your own sin, any coverage you might have had from Jesus or your own innocent ignorance lapses and you need to go and consciously get yourself saved. This is what's commonly referred to as the "age of accountability." This division-by-age is a concept utterly foreign to the Bible.

In the Bible, from the first time God spoke to Abraham, God's work and promise weren't age dependent. Abraham was circumcised as an old man, but Israelite boys after him were marked with the sign of God's promise at eight days old. John the Baptist was already preaching Christ in his mother's womb (see Luke 1:44). When God became flesh, he came as a newborn baby. This is why the command of Jesus to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them..." is so broad—"all nations" is about as inclusive a group as there is, and last I checked, most nations include babies.

God's work could not operate otherwise, because sin, death, and the devil do not discriminate based on age—Pharaoh ordered Israelite babies murdered; Herod sent out his soldiers to kill infant boys in order to protect his throne; you, I'm sure, can think of a dozen more examples of little ones being victimized or treated as expendable—the powers of evil do not discriminate in dealing death, so our Lord does not put up walls when giving his promise. Infancy is no barrier to God's work. So, it's no surprise that Jesus is indignant when the disciples try to keep the little ones from him.

Other Christians also claim that because no babies were baptized in the book of Acts, we have no command from God

to do so now. There are three reasons that this is a bit misleading and, finally, simply untrue.

First, the book of Acts in the New Testament recounts a very brief period of church history and tells only a handful of baptism stories. To claim that we can't baptize babies because there's no specific story about it in the Bible is just an argument from silence. No Swedes or Norwegians or Germans were baptized in the Bible either, and yet, here you all are.

Second, the criteria for baptism are set out clearly at the beginning of the book, and kiddos are included: "Get up and be baptized, every one of you...this promise is for you and your children..." (Acts 2:38-39). Peter, who speaks this sentence, seems to be assuming, as the Old Testament does, that children were just as much a part of God's people as adults. So, even if we have no stories of specific babies being baptized in Acts, the book itself includes the children of Christians as eligible to receive the promises given in baptism.

Third, we actually do have some stories of children being baptized in Acts; there are three instances where an entire "house" is baptized. In the world of Acts, a "house" included all members of the family and their children, and all household slaves and their children. The most remarkable thing about these stories is that the only people who demonstrate faith in them are the heads of the households—they have faith and are baptized, but the rest of the members of the household (some of whom are presumably children) are baptized with nothing said about their belief or lack thereof. They are simply baptized—washed in a promise that they could not ask for, but which they receive because God only gives his promises to those who need them so badly they could never ask for them.

That brings us to the final point: the go-to argument for those who baptize only adults is that a baby or young child is unable to choose Jesus for themselves (and therefore unable to choose to be baptized). So, even if God has always included infants in his work, he can't include them in this. And even if Acts says stuff about whole families being baptized and about baptism being for "children," it couldn't possibly mean babies. Why? Because babies can't choose anything.

For these Christians, baptism is something the believer does to demonstrate their faith, but a baby can't demonstrate much of anything...except displeasure and adorableness. But, again, this doesn't follow Scripture. The Bible never talks about baptism as something that I do for God or anyone else. And it never talks about baptism as a mere demonstration of something else that happened already. Every single time the Bible talks about baptism, it is said to be God's work—a work that he does to bind a person to Jesus in his death and resurrection. Humans receive baptism passively, the same way a baby boy receives circumcision—we sit back and take it, not necessarily by our own choice! In fact, Paul even compares baptism to circumcision in Colossians 2:11-12.

Elsewhere, he says that baptism is being "buried with Christ" (Romans 6:1-6), and that it is a "washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5-8). Peter says that "baptism now saves you" (1 Peter 3:21). Ephesians 5:26 says that Jesus has cleansed us by the "washing of water with the word," so that the word of God's promise comes to us in the waters of baptism and speaks—preaches even! These are all rather strong statements about the power of God working in the waters of baptism. They certainly give the impression that the baptism God gives is much more wonderful than a mere "outward sign."

That's what it comes down to in the end: baptism is not something that I do; at least the Bible says it's not. Baptism is something that God does to me. So, for a Lutheran, baptism is not a sign of my faith; it is God giving me his promise in and through a thing (water), the same as he gives his promise to me in and through the mouth of a preacher, and in and through bread and wine. Baptism isn't made good by my commitment; it's made good by God's promise. So, instead of using baptism like a flag that I wave to show which team I'm cheering for, I use baptism like a hat rack, and I hang my faith on it, because God made me a promise there, and when God makes a promise, I can count on it.

Baptizing a baby is about proclaiming God's promise to someone who can do nothing to earn that promise (in this way all baptisms, whether given to babies or octogenarians, are really infant baptisms). So we don't baptize a baby because it's just so darn cute, and we don't do it as "fire insurance"; we do it because our little ones also need a promise from God to hang onto. They need something to which they can cling all the days of their life—something to which their parents and pastors can point and to which they can return when they've gone wayward for a time. They need something that can hold them through whatever life may throw their way. This is what God gives in baptism. It's not my work. It's not magic. It's a promise for you and for your children. Amen.

(From Pr. Clifton Hanson, formerly of Faith Lutheran Church, Isanti, Minnesota)

Blessed New Year as we cling to faith in God's promises for us in Jesus Christ!

Thomas E. Jacobson

Pr. Tom Jacobson

Worship In January

Sundays 8:00 and 10:30am
Holy Communion Celebrated Every Sunday

Sunday, Jan. 7- Baptism of Our Lord

Genesis 1:1-5 Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7 Mark 1:4-11

Sunday, Jan. 14 - Epiphany 2

1 Samuel 3:1-20 Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
1 Corinthians 6:12-20 John 1:43-51

Sunday, Jan. 21 - Epiphany 3

Jonah 3:1-5, 10 Psalm 62:5-12
1 Corinthians 7:29-31 Mark 1:14-20

Sunday, Jan. 28 - Epiphany 4

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 Psalm 111
1 Corinthians 8:1-13 Mark 1:21-28



November's Vital Signs

Average Worship Attendance - 125
8:00am - 38 10:30am - 87

Church Council Meeting Minutes

December 18, 2023

Present: Pastor Tom Jacobson, Paul Moentmann (President), Matt Sheridan (Vice President), Carl Lahman (Secretary), Vicki Jones (Outreach Coordinator)
Absent: Casey Sigler (Upreach Coordinator), Rick Rockwell (Treasurer), Linda Keaser (Inreach Coordinator)

1. **Opening Devotion/Prayer:** Pastor Tom
2. **Call to Order:** President Paul Moentmann
3. **Pastor's Report**
 - Funeral for church member: Gregg Thomas, Newcomer Funeral Home, Grove City, December 15
 - Worship:
 - Midweek Advent evening prayer going well
 - One more left of the season
 - Meeting in St. John's Hall, better for smaller group
 - Easter is early this year (March 31); for that reason, time after Epiphany is shorter than usual, and Lent will arrive soon
 - During the four "green Sundays" after Epiphany, switch to using the Setting 5 "Bread of Life" liturgy from WOV?
 - Have resumed children's messages on some Sundays when choir isn't singing
 - Pr. Theresa will be doing some of these
 - Confirmation class continues to go well
 - Community Christmas caroling was cancelled this year because of illness and COVID lockdown at Altercare
 - Starting with February 2024, will be writing monthly newsletter articles on the Ten Commandments
 - "My Fifty-Two Favorite Hymns" devotional articles have begun and are available on my blog, usually one per

- week: <https://theelectronicconventicle.weebly.com/>
- Three have been completed
 - Continuing shut in and hospital visitation with Tom Rodgers
 - Will be preparing for Lenten "March Madness Hymn Bracket"
 - New member transfer request: Cindy Wilson
 - A motion was made by Matt and seconded by Vicki to approve the transfer of Cindy Wilson. Motion passed.
4. **Inreach Ministry** – Linda Keaser (Inreach Coordinator)
 - No report
 5. **Outreach Ministry** – Vicki Jones (Outreach Coordinator)
 - Luann Cooperrider, from the Perry Housing Coalition, installed a "Blessing Box" near the front of the church this past week.
 - Council will be looking into all the things that need to be done to start this new ministry such as items to put in the blessing box, restocking and advertising.
 - Thank you, Luann, for starting this ministry!
 - Current enrollment for LifeWise in Thornville is 144. District wide there are 334 kids!
 - Will be talking soon with the program director to see how Grace can help LifeWise to make this an even better ministry.
 - Last month a suggestion was made that we send out postcards to members from GLC that we may not have seen at church recently, introducing Pastor Tom and Pastor Theresa (& family) and inviting them to join us for a service. Beth and Pastor Tom helped create the postcard, which recently went out in the mail.
 - Thornville Food Pantry served 39 families at Thanksgiving time. Turkeys (along with other foods) were handed out to the families. Hams will be handed out to the families for Christmas.

- Backpack Ministry
 - With the high cost of food, council was wondering if donations are keeping up with the needs of our local school students. Paul mentioned that at Fairfield, they are able to buy food at a fraction of what we normally pay for food.
 - Council suggested we talk with the coordinators of the backpack ministry to see what challenges they may be having and possible courses of action.
6. **Upreach Ministry** – Casey Sigler (Upreach Coordinator)
- Continue to need Acolytes, Greeters, Lectors and Communion Assistants.
 - Thank you to all who helped decorate for Advent.
 - Youth
 - Winter Hike at Old Man's Cave will be Saturday Jan 20th
 - Super Bowl Bake Sale will be held Sunday Feb 11th
 - A spaghetti dinner will be planned for the near future to help purchase a new Nativity Scene for outside the church.
7. **Treasurer's Report** – Rick Rockwell (Treasurer)
- No report
8. **Facilities Report** – Carl Lahman (Facilities Coordinator)
- No report
9. **Old Business**
- None
10. **New Business**
- Lions Cub Club
 - The Lions of Thornville are in the process of creating a Cub Club (12 and under) in Thornville and has asked Grace if they can use the Fellowship Hall to

hold their meetings on the 4th Tuesday of each month, starting January 23rd.

- Council approved.

11. **Special Thank You**

- Council thanked Paul Moentmann for serving the last four years as Council President with a gift card and cake. Thanks, Paul, for your leadership!

12. Adjourn - Lord's Prayer

- Next Meeting – January 9, 2024, 7pm

Respectively submitted, Carl Lahman (council secretary)



"My Fifty-Two Favorite Hymns"

For this coming year, Pr. Tom will be providing a weekly devotional reflection on his list of fifty-two of his favorite hymns, one for each week of the year, which will be posted on his blog. The hymns chosen correspond roughly to the unfolding church calendar. Hymns provide us with a window into the time and circumstances in which they were written, but they also help us in our own life of prayer as they express the faith of the Church with grace and beauty. The first, second, and third posts are live on his blog. You can access these weekly reflections at the following link, which will also be provided in the weekly email reminder about worship for the coming Sunday: <https://theelectronicconventicle.weebly.com>

Week 1: "Prepare the Royal Highway"

Week 2: "Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending"

Week 3: "My Heart Is Filled with Wonder"



From Martin Luther's Small Catechism The Lord's Prayer



The Third Petition

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

What does this mean?

The good and gracious will of God is done indeed without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it will also be done among us.

How is this done?

God's will is done when he hinders and destroys every evil design and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature that would keep us from hallowing his name and prevent the coming of his kingdom.

And God's will is done when he strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in his Word and in faith to the end of our earthly lives. This is his good and gracious will.



"Phishing" Scams - In our sinful world, there is unfortunately no shortage of people who seek to deceive and take advantage of others. Churches and their leaders are often targets of such scams. Often, such scammers will send emails to church members pretending to be the pastor and then asking for money or gift cards. If you receive one of these emails or other communications, ignore them. Pastor Tom or other NALC church leaders will never contact you in such a manner. If you do receive such an email, please let the church office know.



WOMEN OF THE NALC
Grace Lutheran Church, Thornville, OH

On Saturday, Dec. 2, the Women held an event called "Christmas Circle Up" to bring the two circles together. During this gathering they had a short business meeting, a program "You are the Apple of HIS Eye" (Zechariah 2:8), lunch, and prepared Christmas baskets for homebound members. It was an enjoyable event with more events planned in 2024!



Thornville Community Aid...

Christmas Giving Tree

Thank You!

Thank You!!

Thank You!!!

...We feel so very fortunate to live in this wonderful, caring Thornville Community and are incredibly grateful for the support of so many!

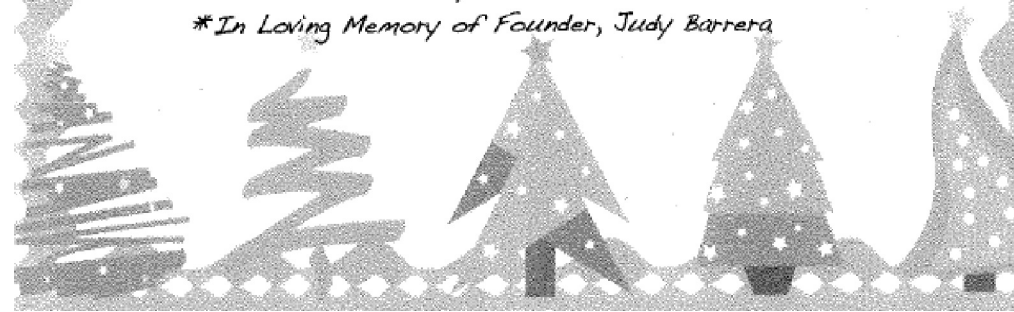
... Because of your Caring Spirit, more than 100 children, 50 families and seniors will celebrate a Merry Christmas in 2023!!

Thank you so much for your donations of hats, scarves, gloves & socks to help the kids again this year. We appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Heartfelt Thanks,
Beth

Thornville Community Aid Elves...

**In Loving Memory of Founder, Judy Barrera*



"Blessing Box"

Take what you need, leave what you can

Have you seen our Blessing Box?

It is located off the parking lot, in the yard near our church sign.

What is the purpose of a Blessing Box?

A Blessing Box is a "Little Free Pantry", which provides items to local residents when they need them.

What items go in a Blessing Box?

These are the items most commonly donated and used to stock the Blessing Box:

- △ Canned food with ring-pulls.
- △ Socks.
- △ Mittens.
- △ Crackers.
- △ Toilet paper.
- △ Non-perishable foods.
- △ Bottled water.



Why are Blessing Boxes important?

Many communities have Blessing Boxes, Parking Lot Pantries, or similar efforts to offer easy access to foods and other items for people in need, which helps improve food security. Such boxes also are convenient places for people to donate food and other items.

Special thanks to Luann Cooperrider and the Perry Housing Coalition for installing and filling our Blessing Box.



HAPPY NEW YOU!

Changing the calendar each January is a reminder that God makes all things new.

Directions: Use the clues and the calendar code to complete 2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV.

JANUARY 2024						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
	God	night	word	in	love	Jesus
7	therefore	speak	give	light	Christ	a
14	saw	beginning	anyone	waters	help	is
21	he	again	through	earth	made	while
28	new	if	and	creation		

- The second Monday _ _ _ _ _
- The last Monday _ _
- The 16th _ _ _ _ _
- One day before the 20th _ _
- The day before the first Friday _ _
- The last weekday of the second week _ _ _ _ _
- The day after the 20th _ _
- The day after 18th _ _
- The first day of the second weekend _
- The last Sunday _ _ _
- The last day of the month _ _ _ _ _

Answers: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

Grace Lutheran Church
Thornville, Ohio

Purpose

To invite All to discover, live and share God's gift of new life through Jesus Christ.

Mission Statement

Sharing God's Love through Grace.

Vision

We Are A Community Developing Faithful Followers Of Jesus By Experiencing God's Grace Through Friendship, Spiritual Growth and Service.

Core Values

1. That the Gospel calls us to unconditional regard for all people.
2. That Prayer is necessary for our relationship with God, one another, and the world.
3. That Scripture provides the foundation for our lives of faith.
4. That the authority for our ministry is founded in Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, which is the Body of Christ on earth. An elected Parish Council provides administrative authority; our called pastor(s) provides the spiritual authority of the Office of Word and Sacrament Ministry.
5. That each member is uniquely gifted by God for ministry and is expected to mature in discipleship of Jesus Christ.
6. That any ministry based on our Purpose, Mission, Vision and Core Values is valid for our congregation, and may, at any time, evolve or end.

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