



# GraceNet

Knoxville, TN

February 2021

## Follow the Yellow Brick Road

I remember as a child watching the Wizard of Oz. My clearest recollection of that first viewing is how frightened I was of that Wicked Witch of the West. But Dorothy was brave, and she had the Good Witch of the North watching over her. Her companions the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion were all helpless but loveable figures. And who could forget the little people – the Munchkins! All the help they can give is to say: Follow the Yellow Brick Road.

There are all kinds of spiritual metaphors in this film. The key one in my opinion has to do with the yellow brick road. In the Bible the earliest believers in Jesus, besides being called “Christians,” were also called “People of the Way.” [See Acts 22:4 and Acts 24:14] And Jesus said this in His Sermon on the Mount: *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it.”* [Matthew 7:13-14]

The Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion were all powerless and deathly afraid of that Satan-like character the Wicked Witch of the West. But the Good Witch, the Holy Spirit exemplar, was there to guide them along the way that led to Oz. Jesus said: *“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life and no one comes to the Father except through me.”* [John 14:6] Jesus built the road to the Father and Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith [Hebrews 12:2] and to believe in Him is to be on that road.

We are flooded with people telling us that this is the way to go. “You will be happy if you go this way – my way” they say. It seems to me that the so-called great people in our world, the influential, the rich, and the famous would all lead you away from the Way. In the book of Proverbs, a verse that is repeated several times says: *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end leads to death.”* Faith and trust in Jesus is the proverbial Yellow Brick Road and there is no other.

This is also true in our Christian lives. We are faced with numerous options and decisions in life. Temptations abound. They lure you to step off of the way and to ignore God’s Word. Maybe you might take the road named: “Get Rich At All Costs.” Or maybe you take the road of, “I Will be Happy If I Have This Affair.” Or maybe you take that shortcut named, “Lies Make Life Easier.”

There are so many roads, so many paths that can take you away from Jesus. If you believe in Him follow the path that He has paved. Read the map He has given us (the Word of God – the Bible). It will lead you away from the dead ends, the circular paths that lead nowhere, and the broad paths that lead to your destruction.

“The Lord longs to be gracious to you; He rises to show you compassion,” declares the prophet Isaiah. *“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’”* [Isaiah 30:18a, 21]

Let us rejoice that there is a real yellow brick road and the Lord has opened up our eyes to see it and hear His voice and follow its way!



~ Pastor Rich

## LWML News

**O**ur Mites are already adding up to big bucks! We collected just over \$300 in December and another \$230 in January to start the New Year. These coins and dollars go to the 2019-21 National Mission Grant goal of \$2 million. One ministry waiting for funds is the LCMS Deaconess Ministry. This project helps to train women to go into foreign countries and help many women of the world who struggle. Deaconesses collaborate with nurses, teachers, and Pastors to meet the needs of these families and extend the church's reach into the lives of God's people with the love of Jesus.

Thank you for your mite contributions. LWML Mite Sunday is the first Sunday of every month at Grace.



## Life Is a Gift



*Announcing the birth of...*

***Ava Simone Abraham***

*Born: November 23, 2020*

*Proud Parents:  
Keith and Jessica Abraham*

## *Drive-Thru Communion at Grace*

*Sunday, February 14*

*1:00—2:00 p.m.*



## Grace Prayer Team Welcomes Requests



**T**he Grace Prayer Team is constantly at work! If you have a prayer request that you would like prayed over by the Grace Prayer Team, we welcome your requests. Please contact **Kristin McGee** at [kdmcgee08@gmail.com](mailto:kdmcgee08@gmail.com) (865-384-9834) or **Ev Brown** ([evbrown@gmail.com](mailto:evbrown@gmail.com) (865-870-5603)). The request will then be passed on to the team. We continue to welcome Prayer Team members as well. If you are interested in praying for the needs submitted by our church family, please contact Kristin or Ev with your interest.

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Articles for GraceNet are due by the **1st of each month** for the following month's edition.

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*If you have a special event you would like to have publicized in GraceNet, please submit the information to*

*Debbie Booher by the 1st of each month for publication in the following month's newsletter.*

## The Wise Men Speak to Us

**D**ear friends,

The month of January and half of February is called the Epiphany Season. Are you aware that January 6 is a very important date? Well, it is Epiphany Day, the twelfth day after Christmas, often called the “Gentile Christmas” for on this day we celebrate the Wise Men coming to Bethlehem and worshiping the Child Jesus and giving Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And so this season emphasizes missions, evangelism and witnessing.

Just who were these Wise Men? How many were there? Where did they come from? What kind of star was it that guided them? To all these questions we have to answer, “We don’t know exactly.” These Wise Men who mysteriously appear on the horizon and worship the Christ child; and then just as mysteriously they vanish beyond the horizon never to be heard from again—have something to say to us. What is it that they feel that they must speak to us?

They would say, “The only reason our story is told in your Bible is to let you know we found Him. If we had not found Him nothing would be said about us. That’s because nothing else really matters. Our first word to you would be—be sure you find Him as your Savior, Friend and King. When you know His saving love, His forgiveness, a new lease on life, and a new hope for a better life to come—then you have everything. “Jesus” is the name above all names, the Wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, our only Savior. Make sure you find Him as we did.”

The Magi would add: “Don’t let any obstacle bar your way to Christ. We traveled far to find Him. We endured

much inconvenience and hardship. We were often tempted to give up our search. But we didn’t let anything turn us aside. Are you people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century willing to do the same? Or have you grown so soft that you will let any inconvenience keep you from Christ? Don’t look for excuses that keep you from worship and service to Him. Remember, without Him nothing else really matters. He says to you, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God...”

“And know this, we only had a star to go by. You have the wondrous stars of God’s Word and Holy Sacraments to lead you to Christ and experience His glory. Let the star of God’s Word guide you everyday. Let the star of your Baptism ever regenerate you. Let the star of the Lord’s Supper be your constant assurance of His pardon and peace and presence.”

And the Wise Men would add: “Don’t worship Him with empty hands. Express your worship in gifts and service.

If you refuse your sacrificial gifts and service, you are really saying, ‘Dear Lord, in spite of all I say about You, this is what I really think of You.’ If you have found in Him your Savior and King, as we did, you will know He is worthy of the very best we can give. ‘Bring the whole tithe into My house, says the Lord Almighty.’”

“Our last word with you is to share the Gospel with others and thus help keep the Christmas celebration going. Do your part as we did ours to help spread the Good News until He comes again in glory.”

The word “Epiphany” means “appearance,” let Jesus appear anew to you in this new year of grace.

~ Love, Pastor Stephen Skov



**P**astor Rich and Pastor Danny are back with Season 2 of their *Wednesday Wanderings*. This season’s theme is “The Miracles of Jesus,” and will continue through Lent. The last episode of this series will be on March 17. You can view each episode on Grace’s YouTube channel, Facebook page, or at [visitgrace.org](http://visitgrace.org). Please join them for these weekly sessions.





2/1	Daren Daenzer	2/16	Bill Drake
2/1	Wyatt Keeton	2/16	Clay Schmidt
2/1	Rich Neubauer	2/17	Emily Klemmer
2/1	Molly Payne	2/17	Dave Larson
2/1	Richard Sturk	2/17	John Rowlands
2/2	Jane Chaney	2/18	Sondra Dayton
2/2	Erin Colbert	2/18	Gwen Erpenbach
2/3	Marjorie Jergesen	2/18	David Kessler
2/4	Dustin Knoernschild	2/18	Piper Wolfe
2/5	Alan Bush	2/19	Daniel Bueckman
2/5	Cheryl Herbold	2/19	Jay Meyers
2/5	Jackson Lappin	2/20	Rebekah Jones
2/6	Gail Kurtz	2/20	Ted Murphy
2/6	Gary Schneider	2/20	Kathy Riggs
2/6	Brigitte Stapel	2/20	Spencer Roisler
2/6	Catherine Strobel	2/21	Zoe Harter
2/8	Kaison Reed	2/21	Jennifer Pettiford
2/8	Linda Sturk	2/21	Anna Thompson
2/9	Helen Horlbeck	2/21	Jacob Wilson
2/9	Trent Howe	2/22	Luke Frizzell
2/10	Larry Albers	2/22	Ruth Kabela
2/10	Parker Bevins	2/23	Isaiah Baserman
2/10	Gina Oster	2/23	Todd Stock
2/11	Evelyn Abraham	2/24	Kathy Bohlken
2/11	Abigail Payne	2/24	Pat Kopp
2/12	Colin Campbell	2/25	Eileen Miller
2/13	Kristin Kennedy	2/25	Sarah Roth
2/13	Joel Roettger	2/25	Scott Scraggs
2/14	Troy Howe	2/27	Nancy Lamberth
2/14	Clay Mings	2/27	Dylan Martin
2/14	Robert Schmid	2/27	Lois Robinson
2/15	LaWanda Duenckel	2/28	Nathan Curtis
2/15	Anna Krempasky	2/28	Claire McCay
2/15	Kemper Smith	2/29	Max Haase

2/4	Paul & Tiffany Hoppe
2/4	Gary & Kitty Pruet
2/7	Paul & Frieda Guthrie
2/11	Jack & Kristin McGee
2/11	Courtney & Kirby Reed
2/14	Linda & John Hulst
2/15	Randy & Heather Hatfield
2/18	Robert & Erin Colbert
2/18	Scott & Nancy Surprenant
2/20	Keith & Jessica Abraham
2/20	Rich & Carol Neubauer
2/23	Elmer & Geri Croushore
2/25	Adam & Rhonda Brown
2/27	Hank & Mia Jones
2/27	Tom & Stephanie Schoenfelder
2/28	Rob & Susan Dusky

*"Always show kindness and love to others.  
Your words might be filling the empty  
places in someone's heart."*

~ Mandy Hale

## Bible Quiz

What was the name of Moses' wife?

- A. Miriam
- B. Jochebed
- C. Zipporah
- D. Leah



Answer: C (See Exodus 2:21)

## February Scripture of the Month

*And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.*

1 John 4:16, NIV

## February Children's Curriculum Themes

In an attempt to connect the adults and children of Grace just a bit more, I will be letting people know the theme and verse of the week in our children's Sunday school classes. I would love it if the adults would join in memorizing or at least talking about it to the children as they see each other in the halls. Listed below are the themes and scripture for February.

~ Frieda Guthrie

DATE	THEME	VERSE
February 7	Jesus cares for us.	<i>Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)</i>
February 14	We turn to Jesus when we are afraid.	<i>Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)</i>
February 21	Jesus forgives us.	<i>If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins. (1 John 1:9)</i>
February 28	We have faith in Jesus.	<i>He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. (Titus 3:5)</i>



## Operation Christmas Child

Thank you to all those who support Operation Christmas Child (OCC)! I know 2020 didn't go as anyone had planned, and with OCC, it was no different. Their worldwide goal was to collect 11,000,000 boxes. Although they were short of that goal, your prayers and donations helped 9,113,853 shoebox gifts to be donated! Do you know what that means? That means that 9,113,853 children were able to be introduced to the love of God!! Many of these areas were hard to reach, never before reached, or were delivered to areas where Christians are openly persecuted and persecuted. These boxes allowed Samaritan's Purse volunteers and staff to safely enter these areas and share the Gospel. Testimonies of children who receive a box always echo each other. They constantly say that through a box, they now see that they are worthy of love both by God and others around the world! We see a simple box, but each box is so much more! It is life changing! It is changing eternity for these children!

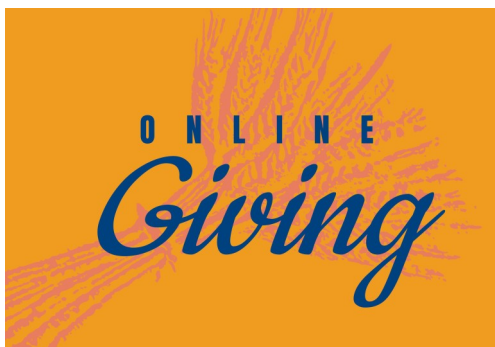


Since COVID so rudely interrupted this year, we are revamping our "20 in 20" campaign for 2021. Boxes can be donated year round, there are updates on how to pay, and we are ready to help with any questions you may have about this ministry. Don't feel like packing a shoebox? We will gladly accept donations for any items you would like to donate towards a box. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact Frieda Guthrie at [childrens-min@visitgrace.org](mailto:childrens-min@visitgrace.org) or Paul Guthrie at [pgvint3@gmail.com](mailto:pgvint3@gmail.com)

~ Blessings,  
Paul and Frieda Guthrie

## Update to Online Giving

**E**ffective **FEBRUARY 15, 2021**, Grace will be converting to a new online giving platform. Those who wish to continue or begin to give online will need to re-enter their checking or credit/debit card information on the Grace website at [www.visitgrace.org](http://www.visitgrace.org) **ON OR AFTER FEBRUARY 15**.



## Heroic St. Valentine

**W**e probably think of romance when Valentine's Day comes. That's fine, but there's more to the story than that.

St. Valentine was a Christian priest and martyr who lived about A.D. 270. The Roman emperor at the time was Claudius II. Claudius had been a successful general. He would not allow his soldiers to marry, because he wanted to make sure they could go to battle quickly. He thought family ties would make the men reluctant to leave home. Because Valentine promoted marriage and family life, he was jailed and later convicted of going against the orders of the emperor. He was martyred on February 14, the day we remember him and our loved ones.

While he was in jail, the jailer's daughter befriended him. He wrote her a letter of appreciation and signed it "Your Valentine." The tradition of exchanging valentines grew out of that heartfelt gesture.



## HealthLine

**P**lease note that everything written in this column will be backed by research, various studies, and facts. There will be no personal opinions.

~ Sheila Wittke



## Salt Gargle Fights Colds—and COVID-19

**R**esearchers at the University of Edinburgh say that gargling with sea salt water could reduce the symptoms of a cold. It could also possibly fight COVID-19. When healthy adults with colds gargled and cleared their noses with salt water, 93 percent said it reduced their symptoms. They had shorter colds, were less likely to pass it to their families, and were less likely to use pharmaceuticals. Sea salt may boost cells' antiviral defenses that are triggered by a cold. The researchers believe sea salt gargling could also help people who have mild COVID-19 symptoms.

According to The Lancet Microbe journal, researchers at Yale found that the Rhinovirus, the most common cause of common colds, can prevent the flu virus from infecting you by jumpstarting your body's antiviral defenses. The researchers discovered that during winter months when both cold and flue viruses were active, if the common cold virus was present in patients with respiratory infections, the flu virus was not present. The researchers are now studying whether the cold virus can protect against COVID-19.

## At the Same Time . . .

**W**e all want to do better. I am tired of the sin that is always at hand in things I do and say, not just in secret thoughts. I need a new beginning.

As we recently experienced, the turn of a page on a calendar that brings a new year is not really a new beginning. The same stubborn pounds cling to my body in the same places. The same prejudices and errors in judgment will continue to haunt me. I can try to change, but I slip back into old ways, powerless to change. I always have.

We Christians do have a reality that makes each day, even each moment new. Martin Luther is famous for expressing it in a compact form. We are simultaneously terrible sinners deserving of nothing but rejection and condemnation, and forgiven sinners who are God's children and heirs of eternal life, and who are dear to Him. Luther gave it in Latin, which was almost his first language. It is, "*Simul justus et peccator.*" That is, "*Simultaneously a saint and a sinner.*" Each moment is new because we live in God's forgiveness, even though we daily sin much and deserve only His wrath.

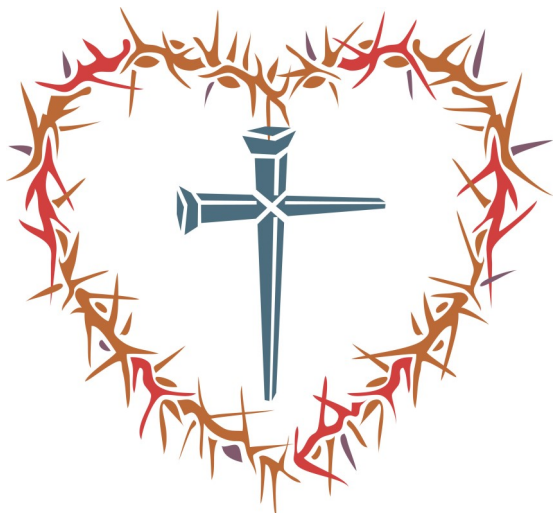
It is not as if we look on this as a license to sin without penalty. We deeply regret the sin that is continually around us and we sorrow over it before God. But, we also fully trust His promises of forgiveness and rejoice in that as an accomplished reality giving us a new beginning.

It is not as if one day we will break through and conquer our sinning. We have a corrupted will that is not what God intended. In this life we will never attain the holiness we wish to have.

In much of American Christianity people are viewed as either sinners or Christians. Despair is not far away because there is a lot of emphasis on our performance as fulfillment of God's law. Further, not much help is held out from God. You must get your life together before you can really be acceptable to God. If this is not taught to us, we easily imagine it on our own and we internalize it. Imagine the newness of hope that comes if both/and replaced either/or. Yes, we are not what we should be. We are what we should not be. But, in Christ, you have been pronounced "not guilty," "justified before God by grace through faith."

"Justification by grace through faith" is another phrase we Lutheran Christians hear often, maybe without always taking it to heart fully. It comes from a courtroom scene in which God is the judge. We are the defendant. Jesus is our defense attorney. Though everyone knows you and I are guilty, Jesus takes our sentence upon Himself and the Judge declares us "Not Guilty!" Once you have been before the judge and declared "Not Guilty!" no one can further accuse you. Each moment is a new beginning.

~ Rev. Phil Bohlken



## Our Lenten Focus

**L**ent, the church-year season that begins on Ash Wednesday, is a time of penitence and spiritual renewal. Some people give up a luxury or vice during Lent as a form of self-denial; others undertake a project that benefits others.

The point isn't to denigrate ourselves or to see how much we can do without. Instead, Lent helps us reflect on Jesus' death. As Timothy Keller writes in *The Reason for God*: "The Christian Gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet I am so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me. This leads to deep humility and deep confidence at the same time. It undermines both swaggering and sniveling. I cannot feel superior to anyone, and yet I have nothing to prove to anyone. I do not think more of myself nor less of myself. Instead, I think of myself less."



# ASH WEDNESDAY

February 17, 2021

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Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. (Traditional) and  
9:30 a.m. (Blended)/11:00 a.m. (Contemporary)  
Wednesday Worship: 6:30 p.m. (Blended)  
Sunday School & Bible Classes @ 9:30 a.m./11:00 a.m.*

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

TO:



*“Connect ~ Grow ~ Serve”*