

Voice of Grace

We are called to proclaim the Word and celebrate the sacraments. We gather in Christian community for nurture and support. We are sent out in service to others.

A Monthly Newsletter

December 2010/January 2011

Grace Courtyard and Columbarium Completion Celebration



On November 21, Grace Lutheran Church celebrated the completion of the courtyard and columbarium building project, which began in 2005. The congregation and visitors celebrated with prayer and thanksgiving and honored all of those who

have contributed time, talents and resources to the project. Singing and, of course, refreshments added to the celebration.

Additional photos commemorating the event will be found on page 3.

Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.



Adult Forum & Sunday School 9:15 a.m.

The Adoration of the Magi

Gentile da Fabriano, 1423

Compiled by Susan Reid

This exquisite and fanciful depiction of the Magi's journey to Bethlehem was created by Gentile da Fabriano as the altarpiece in a private chapel in the church of Santa Trinita in Florence. It now hangs in the Uffizi. Da Fabriano was a leader in the relatively short-lived International Gothic Style, which

manifests, such as in the miniature illustrations from the *Très Riches Heures of the Duc de Berry* by the Limbourg brothers. (See the September 2008 issue of *Voice of Grace*.)

The painting's visual content is lively, colorful, full of movement, differing greatly from the Gothic and the

Renaissance depictions of Epiphany scenes. There is a sense of celebration and pageantry in da Fabriano's *Adoration*. The many scenes, characters, and general sense of movement are organized by three lunettes that frame the top of the painting. Rather than trying to take in the entire painting as one unified picture, the painting should be read as if it were telling a story, beginning at the top left corner (difficult to see in this small reproduction), where the three Magi, meeting at the sea, notice the star they feel compelled to follow. If we trace their course among the sloping hills and cultivated fields we can see how they march into Jerusalem under the frame of the central arch



followed the Medieval period and preceded the Renaissance. The International Gothic Style in painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts spread widely over western Europe between c.1375 and c.1425. The style was characterized by aristocratic, courtly elegance, as opposed to a more military orientation of the earlier feudal society. The new virtues, civility, outward grace, beauty in clothing, and refined manners are captured by da Fabriano; this gay and elegant parade almost overwhelms the theologically central figures of Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus.

The realistic details da Fabriano achieved were precursors of the Renaissance ideal of representing reality in accurate depiction of facial expressions, objects, proportion, and perspective. Gentile's paintings also feature richly patterned surfaces and people with soft, full faces and dreamy expressions. His lyrical atmosphere, elegant refinement, and attention to detail in rendering landscapes, animals, and costume typify the International Gothic Style, originally developed in French and Burgundian courts. It is used especially in illuminated

(lunette), while in the lunette on the right we can see them departing. In the middle distance the direction of their journey changes, proceeding towards us. Suddenly a mass of people appears from a deep ravine flanked up by a precipitous rock and a fence. Now we can discern the faces too, and observe the smallest details on garments, arms, and harnesses. Then, the crowd, which includes an assortment of ornately dressed noblemen, their servants, exotic animals, and even a shepherd or two, stops at the right-hand corner of the foreground, having reached its destination. Only here does the youngest Magi's page remove his master's spurs; having sunk to one knee, the second Magi is on the point of offering his gift, whereas the oldest, who has already presented his, is kneeling and kissing the infant Jesus' foot. The elegant handmaids of the Virgin take delight in the lovely sight. They watch as powerful, wealthy, bejeweled men pay homage to this sweet infant, born in a cave, who has already moved the heavens and inspired angel song. Meanwhile, representatives of the entire world wait in awe to worship this miraculous child, the King of all kings.

Courtyard and Columbarium Celebration Photos



Pastor Coe, Council President Jim Espenson and Project Coordinator Al Smith prepare to cut the ribbon for the courtyard.



Pastor Coe, followed by acolytes Jacob and Alex Brown, offers prayer.



The King of Christmas wreaths, Neil Potthoff, meets his match. (Seen here happily ordering his Christmas poinsettia from Taylor Mills)



Rose Dunlap dishes out "goodies" while brother, Theo, supervises.



The women in the congregation did their utmost to provide festive and delicious refreshments for the celebration.

Thank You, George Knight

by Walter Jaskiewicz

I stepped off the bus with a heavy heart. Usually this was one of the most exciting parts of my week, going to my college biology class.

That class was the start of a whole new life for me. I'd been ill during high school and only earned my diploma later in night school. Finally I'd enrolled at Medgar Evers College, a brand-new school opened by New York's City University system. The college was so new it didn't have a campus. My biology class took place at a church in Brooklyn, a 45-minute bus ride from my parents' house in Bay Ridge. I loved that class.

Except today I was coming to drop out for a while. The day before, my father had died. He'd been a janitor at a big building in midtown Manhattan. He'd fallen from a ledge at work and broken his leg. Three weeks later he'd suffered a fatal embolism. My mom wasn't doing well either. She was struggling to recover from an operation. I'd already missed yesterday's class and I was coming to tell the professor I wasn't sure when I'd return.

I approached the church, a beautiful Gothic sanctuary more than 100 years old with a soaring bell tower, Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian. A warm September sun shone down. "Good morning," said a voice. Startled, I looked up to see a familiar face. A tall man with thinning blond hair in khaki pants and a blue collared shirt stood at the church door polishing the glass. I'd seen this man most days I came to class. I assumed he was a janitor like my father. He was always cleaning something or sweeping the walkway. He wore funny, old-fashioned glasses. He was friendly, always said hello to me.

"Didn't see you yesterday," he said. Before I could reply to him my eyes filled with tears. "I know. My father died yesterday," I choked. The man's face clouded with concern. "I'm very sorry," he said. "Can I do anything for you?"

Suddenly the prospect of going to class and explaining about my father all over again filled me with dread. "Would you mind telling my professor what I just told you? She needs to know why I won't be in class."

"Of course," the man said. "Come back soon." I thanked

him and walked quickly to the bus stop.

Things only got worse. My mother's condition deteriorated, and I realized that without my father's income I couldn't take care of her and go to school at the same time. I'd gotten a job at a coffee shop but it didn't pay much. I figured I wasn't meant to get a college education.

On the morning I decided to drop out altogether I left the coffee shop and walked home. I was tired—my coffee shop shift had begun at 4:00 a.m.—and depressed. I collapsed onto the sofa and fell asleep. Hours later I awoke with a splitting headache. For a moment I wondered what was wrong with me. Then the strangest thing happened.

Despite the eruption in my head I felt a sudden urge to stand up. The urge became a command to leave the house and board the bus toward Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian. Still directed by this mysterious force, I got off the bus, walked to the church and sat on the steps outside. My class had long since ended for the day. The church appeared closed.

Minutes later the church door opened and I shrank back. White light poured from the door. I shielded my eyes and saw, silhouetted, a familiar figure. It was the man I'd often seen at the church, the one I assumed was a janitor. The moment I saw him my headache vanished. The man stepped toward me.

"I didn't see you coming to

class today," he said, smiling.

"I—I didn't go to class," I replied. The man stared at me. Something about his gaze caused me to blurt, "I'm dropping out of school. I can't afford it. I want to go but I can't."

The man nodded. "How much money do you need?" he asked. "Eighty dollars a week," I said.

"You just got yourself a working scholarship for three hundred and thirty-two dollars a month." He extended a hand for me to shake. I looked at him.

The man laughed. "I'm sorry, I haven't introduced myself. I'm George Knight, the pastor here. I need someone to answer



Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, NY

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the phone and vacuum after Sunday services. You start Sunday.”

My expression grew even more dumbfounded. “Get some rest,” George said. “I’ll see you Sunday.”

I did see George that Sunday. And for many years after. My friendship with him only confirmed the miraculous events of that providential day. The same week I began work at Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian my mother passed away. George attended the funeral and asked if I’d like to live in a spare room in the church’s rectory. I said yes and in the following years George helped me finish school, even doing my vacuuming whenever I got too overloaded with homework.

Eventually I graduated, married, landed a stable career and had a wonderful daughter who grew up to become a social worker. What would have happened if I’d never met George, never returned to his church and discovered he was so much more than the janitor?

Well, God doesn’t think in what-ifs. George Knight was my rescuing angel. I thank him in my heart each and every day.

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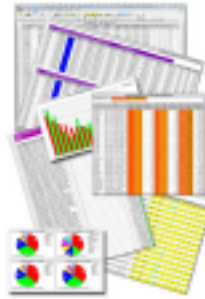
Bible Trivia

1. What do the letters INRI that are often shown above Christ on the cross stand for?
2. Who was the governor of Syria when Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to register for the census?
3. Of what kind of wood was Noah’s ark made? For extra credit, what kind of wood did the King James Version of the Bible say the ark was made?
4. How old was Moses when he died?
5. When the prophet Samuel was first called by the Lord, who did he think was calling him?



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Recap of Church Council Meeting November 9, 2010



Sharon Dembro reported to council on the proposals by the design review committee for improvements to the church over the next 10 years.

Council approved \$250.00 to be sent to the synod for October synod support payment.

Discussion as to how we spend earmarked funds and the need for clarification on this subject.

Fellowship announced that the Christmas party will be held at the church this year on Sunday, December 12. At 5:00 p.m. there will be tree decoration followed by the party at 6:00 p.m.

Council approved gifting the church car to our secretary, Crissy.

Budget process was discussed and Roberta announced that Joel Peterson and Lucy Hladecek will served on the budget committee with her.

Pastor Coe distributed a job description for a columbarium coordinator and will seek volunteers for the position.

Funding for the balance due on the columbarium construction was approved.

Great Response from Grace

Konrad Schwencke reports that, during the four weeks between the annual Wave drive and November 11, he picked up a total of 433 lbs of food from Grace Lutheran and delivered it to the community food bank.

A representative from the food bank indicated that the congregation of Grace was “making a real impact” on the amount of food available for the hungry in Jefferson County.



(1) INRI is an abbreviation of the Latin for “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.”
(2) Quirinius was governor of Syria. See Luke 2:2
(3) See Genesis 6:14. The New Revised Standard Version states that the ark was made of “cypress wood.” The King James Version states that it was made of “gopher wood.”
(4) Moses was 120 years old when he died. See Deuteronomy 34:7.
(5) When the Lord was calling to Samuel, Samuel thought it was really Eli. See 1 Samuel 3:1-14.



From Our Pastor: *"In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan..."*

Verse 1-ELW 294

It's DARK! It's COLD! The wind is HOWLING! The power is OUT! The phrase from the above hymn (one of my Christmas favorites) describes tonight perfectly. Recently, I have been reading through the prayers and Bible readings for Advent and Christmas. These read-

ings are outstanding and remind me of why I like this season so much, in spite of the weather.

In the Prayers of the Day for Advent we ask God to "stir up our hearts," "stir up our wills," and "stir up his power." I think of God with a big (I mean *really big*) wooden mixing spoon reaching down into our congregation and into our hearts and lives and stirring us up. Perhaps even scraping the bottom of our hearts where things are kind of crusty and hard, from the times our heart has been "*burned*" in life. God stirs up our hearts, they come alive, they even ache with the realization of how much God loves us and how we much we anticipate his return. In this season, we watch for God's light in the darkness. When its dark, when the power is out like tonight, the world seems small and closed in. We feel alone. We want to call our neighbors and make sure there is someone out there. We wait for the light to return – so we will be able to see our neighbors, get our bearings and see the path ahead. The light of Christ, which comes into our darkness, does just that for our lives. Christ's light helps us see our neighbors in new ways and get our bearings; it lights the path for our lives.

I love these prayers and images of Christmas. I am thrilled and moved by Christmas music, but I also have to confess that . . . I really like presents. I like receiving presents and I like giving presents. Oh, presents are fun! Think of the present that God gives us this Christmas. Wow, it's a really big present, in a really small package. God gives us His Son. God gives us a baby who is really a king—a child, who is really God – God, who is really human. It seems as if I am continually trying to unwrap this amazing present. But what can I give to God in return. What can I possibly shop for or bring to God that God might desire. I mean, after all, what do you get for the God who has everything? Here is the best answer I have ever heard to that question. It comes from verse 3 of the same hymn ELW 294 with which this article began.

"What can I give him, poor that I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb. If I were a wise man, I would do my part. Yet, what I can I give Him—give my heart."

This Advent and Christmas season, may God stir up your heart, bring you light in the darkness, grant you the vision to see the amazing gifts he has for you and bless you beyond your wildest imagination. May we all, once again, or for the first time, give Him our hearts.

Merry Christmas and...

*God Bless,
 Pastor Coe*

From Our President: "Sharing God's Gift"



It seems that when we begin to think of Christmas our thoughts and attitudes begin to change. We begin to feel a sense of excitement and wonder. Perhaps at this time of year we reflect on our childhood and we want to relive those days in our memory. We tend to think of our family and look forward to getting together with them during this time. It seems that we become closer to our loved ones and friends more so during these times.

Dianne and I have a tradition that we started a number of years ago. We go to Seattle for a two-night stay in early December. This is a time when the city seems so festive, so full of life and joy. We will go to a play at the 5th Avenue Theater which is always a wonderful evening, and we will enjoy good meals at nice restaurants.

I love to people-watch while we are downtown. I'm usually sitting on a bench while Dianne does her shopping, so that gives me an opportunity to watch all of the busy shoppers. I tend to see more smiles during this time of year and there is a sense of peace on their faces. It makes me wonder if this sense of peace will last beyond this time of year for most of these folks.

We at Grace have such a wonderful way of sharing that sense of peace in our tradition of Advent: soup suppers and Holden Evening Prayer. This is a most wonderful time and an excellent opportunity to invite those people we know who are unchurched or have not been to church in a long time. The service is warm, inviting, and peaceful. The music is soft and soothing. And what more can I say about the soup except "we're Lutherans – of course it's good!"

I also look forward to our Grace Christmas party. This is another opportunity to invite friends. There is always an abundance of food and desserts to share and the White Elephant is always a fun time. We have some great evangelism opportunities during this time of year, so take advantage of it and think of someone you would like to invite!

Pastor Coe has established some very beautiful services, such as the service of healing that would be another opportunity to invite those who may be hurting or in need of healing prayer. Sometimes during this time of year it becomes more difficult for some and this service would be a wonderful way to share God's peace with them.

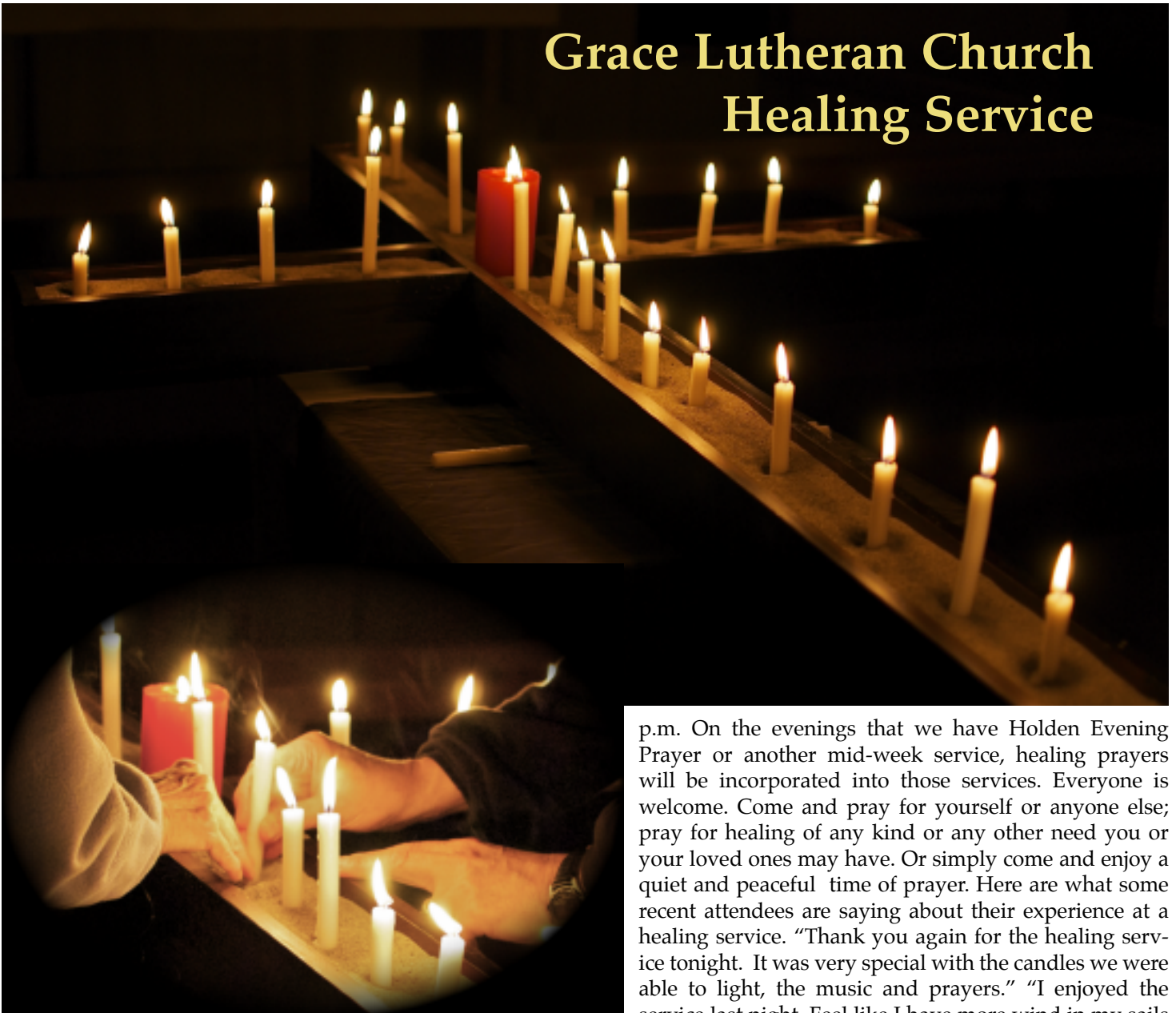
As we enjoy this season, let us remember those who may not know the whole measure of God's love that only Jesus Christ can bring. We can share our food, our excitement and, most important, our love for Jesus that can give them true peace.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NRSV)

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one can boast.

Janet Lapina

Grace Lutheran Church Healing Service



Grace Lutheran is offering healing services twice a month. Healing prayers are offered immediately after worship on the first Sunday of the month. Additionally, an evening healing service is offered on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:00

p.m. On the evenings that we have Holden Evening Prayer or another mid-week service, healing prayers will be incorporated into those services. Everyone is welcome. Come and pray for yourself or anyone else; pray for healing of any kind or any other need you or your loved ones may have. Or simply come and enjoy a quiet and peaceful time of prayer. Here are what some recent attendees are saying about their experience at a healing service. "Thank you again for the healing service tonight. It was very special with the candles we were able to light, the music and prayers." "I enjoyed the service last night. Feel like I have more wind in my sails to take on another day! The quiet time was much appreciated and the prayers." We hope you can join us at these services.

Church Council

President: Jim Espenson
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Vice President: Roberta Byemers

Secretary: Linda Cooley

Ministers:

Resources (Treasurer): Roger Mills

Facilities: Dave Peterson

Worship/Music: David Gaenicke

Stewardship: Mark Dembro

Evangelism: Joan Bender

Education & Youth: Kathy Gibson

Community Concerns & Social Ministry: Bob Threlkeld

Congregational Concerns & Fellowship: Floyd Thompson

Youth Representative: Brian Snelgrove

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Choir Director: June Mills

Sunday School Superintendent: Linda Wolff

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