

December Newsletter

2016

Grace Notes
Grace United Methodist Church
193 Union Street, Bangor, ME 04401



A new Bible Study with Pastor Gretchen begins on Thursdays at 10am. We will read the book called "Strength You Need" by Robert J. Morgan.

This book covers the 12 great strength passages of the bible.

Thursday Bible Study at 1:30pm with Pastor Gretchen will continue.

We will be studying the Sunday Scripture readings for each Sunday in Advent.



As gifts were brought to the Christ child so we bring what gifts we can to

Grace Church to be used for the Christmas Stockings for the needy.

Hard Candy, Cough Drops, Hot Chocolate, and Lip Balm are all needed.

Please bring to office.

Glenda McNally and her crew of volunteer elves will gladly receive your gifts and pack them in the Christmas Stockings!

Thank you to all who have contributed!



Advent will be here before you know it so that means that Pastor Richard is busy picking special music for Us to sing on Sunday, December 11th, the 3rd Sunday in Advent! Come and Join the Advent Choir!! All voices needed!! Practice every Sunday @ 9am thru 12/11.

Come



Christmas Caroling will be held on December 8th

(Bad Weather date Dec. 15th) at 6:30pm.

Please wear warm clothing as we will be outside much of the time.

We will end by 8pm.

Come and help us make the season a little brighter for folks.

Christmas Services

- Saturday Night, 12/24, is our Christmas Eve Service which features the reading of Christmas Scriptures, candlelight and the singing of many traditional Christmas Carols. Service will begin at 7pm.
- Sunday, 12/25, is our Christmas Day service. Service will begin at 10am.

Please bring your neighbors, your family and your friends to these worship services!

Christmas Offering Envelopes are available in the parlor, the entry way and at the top of the stairs as you go into the sanctuary. Please consider an extra offering this Christmas.

Important Calendar Dates!

- 12/4 Communion during Sunday 10am Worship Service
- 12/8 Christmas Caroling 6:30pm
- 12/11 Sunday 10am Worship Service & Shelter Meal
- 12/16 Stockings delivered to Shaw House.
- 12/17 Community Luncheon & Stockings
- 12/18 Sunday 10am Worship Service & Deadline for Christmas Poinsettias Order
- 12/24 Christmas Eve 7pm Worship Service
- 12/25 Christmas Day 10am Worship Service

December Birthdays

- 12/4 Thomas Knott
- 12/9 Glenda McNally
- 12/10 Melanie Woodward
- 12/20 Annie Dudley
- 12/25 Jane Weston
- 12/28 Jessica Gallant

Good News!

A gentleman from a church far from Grace called us after serving at the Community Luncheon. He told Pastor Gretchen that during the night he had a dream and that God had laid something on his heart. He went on to say that he felt called to more for the Saving Grace Food Ministry. He wanted to make a large donation but wanted direction on what would best serve our needs. Mike and Lynn had a discussion about this and decided to ask if it was possible for this man to donate some canned soup. It is too expensive for us to purchase from Good Shepherd Food Bank and we need it all winter long to feed the cold and hungry who appear at our door. Not only did this man purchase soup he also purchased pounds and pounds of Maine Potatoes for us! He then shipped it all to us in a matter of days! We now have a food pantry full of ready to fix or ready to go meals for the homeless and those who struggle to make ends meet! God is working among us and is blessing our ministries!! Thank you to this dear, kind man!!

The Thrift Shop has surpassed its budget and has NEVER had such a fruitful year!! We have more customers who comment on how nice the shop is, more quality donations than ever before, and each time we have to say good bye to a volunteer another appears ready to help!! God is so good to us as we try and meet the needs of many!

The Christmas Fair and Luncheon was a huge success! Evelyn's baskets are almost completely sold out! The Grant Memorial Youth Group who attended and donated the luncheon meal served in many capacities! They acted as cashiers, prepared and served the meal, sold candy and cookies. They also donated MOST of the candy and cookies that were sold at the Fair. We were completely overwhelmed with their generous hearts!! They continue to be committed to helping out at the Community Luncheon and may very well bring the whole meal sometime in the year 2017. We pray God shower them each with many blessings for all they have done to help GUMC! More than \$2500.00 was earned!!

The next news item is both Good and Sad. Darlene Shortt has been appointed as a part time minister for the Ellingswood Corner UMC in Winterport. This appointment is effective immediately.

She will no longer serve as CLM here at Grace and we will miss her generous heart more than words can possible convey. We will hold her in prayer as she begins her important ministry and will cover her in love each and every time our paths meet!! Thank you for all you've done here at Grace dear, sweet Darlene!!!!

If you have a Good News item to share send it to graceunitedmc193@yahoo.com

The Power of Prayer

Psalm 107:28-30 *"Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven."*

Ask: **Matthew 7:7** *"Ask, and it will be given to you seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."*

Matthew 21:22 *And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."*

John 14:13-14 *Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it*

Pray in Faith: **Mark 9:29** *And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."*

Acts 9:40 *But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.*

James 5:14-16 *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

Always & With Thanksgiving:

Ephesians 6:18 *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,*

Philippians 4:6-7 *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Giving Back to God Pledge Sheet for Grace UMC 2016

Have you been blessed by the ministry at Grace UMC? Have you seen God at work changing lives and offering love and hope to others here on the corner of Clinton and Union Streets? Do you want to give back to God in thanks for all blessings you have received through the work done at Grace UMC? Please be in prayer about how God is calling you to give of your time, talent, service, treasure. Giving back to God is our spiritual act of worship. The following scriptures will help lead you in your decision about financial giving: 2 Corinthians 9:7, Malachi 3:10, Proverbs 11:24, Luke 6:38, Mark 12:41-44, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, Proverbs 3:9, Luke 21:1-4, Matthew 6:21, Deuteronomy 16:17, Philippians 4:19.

Our budget for missions, programs, salaries, and operation is dependent on what we can plan on for income to meet our needs. That income is from what each of you feel God is asking you to give to support Grace Church through your tithes and offerings. God calls each of us to make a commitment to following after Him and to keep growing in our giving of ourselves and our resources. A tithe is giving back 10% of your income to God's work (A pledge is a written promise of what you plan to give to God through the ministries of Grace UMC. Written pledges help us to plan on what we will be able to afford to do.) In addition to our personal gifts we plan several fundraisers throughout the year.

Please complete this commitment sheet and mail it to the office, Grace United Methodist Church, 193 Union Street, Bangor ME 04401)

Name _____
Address _____

Check how you would be willing to give back to God through your time and service: -
__prayer and/or Bible Study group worship assistant, __helping with fellowship time, __music, __prayer meeting/chain __sending cards, calling, visiting members. __helping with the food ministry __ helping with/planning fundraisers, __planning/helping with outreach events/projects, __helping with maintenance around the church, ___ donating food, items for the shop, items for outreach projects__ leading a small group or Sunday School __ serving with a community ministry or project__ prayer walks in the neighborhood, __other. Describe:

Indicate how you would like to give back to God with your financial gift below:

Out of love and gratitude for all of God's blessings I/we offer our "Thank You, God" for 2017

Names _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Email _____

My/our "Thank You, God" with a total pledge of \$ _____ for 2017. I/We will give this pledge by offerings given monthly \$_____, or weekly \$_____, or one-time \$_____.

I would like to be contacted about giving electronically _____ (please fill out and return this form so that we can include it in our planning) .

May God bless you for your giving!

Hoping, Watching, Waiting

Advent Series Week One

By Pastor Gretchen Casey

(Psalm 122, Isaiah 2:1-5, Romans 13:11-14, Matthew 24:36-44)

What are we hoping for; what are we watching for; what are we waiting for today? We all have seasons of hoping, watching and waiting. Last weekend, as I was heading out to join the team here at Grace to serve the community meal, I got a call from my sister telling me that our mother was in an ambulance on her way to EMMC. It was totally unexpected. We were not prepared for this sudden news; and we were thrust into a time of hoping, watching and waiting as we spent the morning in the ER with her, and then as she was admitted to the Critical Care Unit. Hoping and praying that she would be okay; watching for signs of improvement or more trouble; and waiting for the results of countless tests. In a sense, all of life's situations-good and bad-are times of hoping, watching and waiting. Something will come *next*. Sometimes the situations are unexpected and we are caught unprepared. Sometimes we can anticipate what will come next and we can get ready for it: having a child, going to school and getting a job; getting married. We know these things are coming. It would be foolish not to prepare for them.

Our scriptures from Isaiah, the Psalms, Romans and Matthew all point to seasons of hoping, watching and waiting for God's people long ago and for us now. Today's Old Testament readings are full of God's promises of peace and justice for the world. And Isaiah chapter 9 reveals that the fulfillment of peace and justice will be accomplished through the coming of a Savior from King David's royal line. God revealed through Isaiah that this Savior will shatter the darkness and be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. This promise was fulfilled through the birth of God's Son Jesus- The Son of Man. The New Testament readings from Matthew and Romans tell us that Jesus did not come just once, but that He will come again. This is a promise from God that we can count on. No one except the Father in Heaven knows when but we can trust it will happen. Therefore we must stay alert, and be ready. We must hope, watch and wait for Jesus to come again. It would be foolish not to.

Christians around the world are entering into a special time of hoping, watching and waiting: we are now in the season of Advent. The word Advent comes from the Latin word for "coming." At this time of year we often hear the phrase "Christmas is coming!" Christmas- the celebration of Christ's birth is indeed

coming. Christmas is not just a day, but a season, that begins at the birth of Christ and lasts until the arrival of the Wiseman on January 6th (the 12 days of Christmas). But Advent is not only a time of hoping, watching and waiting for Jesus' birthday celebration to arrive, for a day of gift giving and spending time with family and friends... it is also a time to reflect on what God's promise of salvation for all people of all times means. It is a time to reflect on the meaning of God's promise to the Jews of a coming Messiah and Savior so long ago, a time to reflect on what the coming of Jesus born in a stable meant for all people of all time, and what God's promise of the Risen Savior's return in final victory means for us today. Advent is a time of hoping, watching and waiting. It is a time of reflection on what God has done and what He is yet to do. And it is a time of living in joyful celebration, anticipation and obedience to God's Word as we wait. Living out advent this way is difficult for most of us. Each year passes so quickly and there is so much to be done to get ready for Jesus' birthday celebration on Christmas Day. The streets and stores are crowded, we are busy with shopping, wrapping, baking and extra activities. Often we become stressed, overtired and irritable and we neglect God; the very God we are waiting on. Add to this picture a world that is hurting, struggling and broken; the bad news never seems to end.

If we are not careful, the things of this world can prevent us from preparing for the coming of Jesus. When this world threatens our hope and peace, may we remember that when Jesus was born to Mary His name was called Emmanuel- which means **God with us**. We have Emmanuel to help us stay focused on the coming of our Savior. Preparation for Christ's return requires active and eager waiting. Today's readings reveal how we are to wait for Jesus' coming, not only during the church season of advent, but at all times. Isaiah issues an invitation: **"Come, let's go up to the house of Jacob's God so that He may teach us His ways and we may walk in God's paths."** (Isaiah 2:3) We are to eagerly enter into worship and study of God's Word. We are to *come* to God. Psalm 122 speaks of rejoicing in worship and praying for peace and good. Romans calls us to wake up from our sleep because the night is almost over, the day is near. When someone is sleeping soundly we often say that they are "dead to the world." They have no idea what is happening around them. Are we so caught up in this world that we are spiritually asleep, "dead to God?" Unable to see or understand how God is working in and around us in the world? Unable to notice the signs of Christ's return? We must wake up. **We must see and get rid of any actions we are engaged in that are against God and return to a life of obedience to God's Word. It is through these**

actions and attitudes that we are able to stay awake, to be ready and prepare for Christ's return.

May our weary world rejoice! Jesus, God incarnate- God in the flesh-came to earth long ago to be Emmanuel, God with us. This is our hope. He lived and died so that one day the busyness, trials and suffering of this world may end; Jesus will come again: one day we will have justice and peace, healing and joy; and the victory over sin and death. This advent season may we eagerly prepare ourselves for Christ's return: may we worship, learn, praise, pray and obey God in all we do. In this way let us hope, watch and wait for Jesus to come again. Let us walk in the light of the Lord and bear the light of Christ so that others may follow and have hope.

This advent season may we join together in preparing for Christ to come- as a baby in the manger, and as the King of Kings in final victory. May we join together in prayer, Bible Study, worship and service to prepare our hearts for Jesus to enter in. Check the announcements for the many opportunities Grace UMC has for preparing our hearts for the coming Savior. And may we invite others to join us so all may know of God's love.

Blessings to all during the seasons of Advent and Christmas.

In Christ,

Pastor Gretchen

If you are 65 or over and would like to request Christmas Carolers to come to your door please fill out the form below. We will do our best to get to all requests on December 8th between 6:45pm and 8pm. Our bad weather date is December 15th. Send this to Church Office before the 12/7

Please sing at my door!

Name: _____

Physical Address: _____

Mary's Dream

I had a dream, Joseph.

I don't understand it, but I think it was about a birthday celebration for our son.

The people in my dream had been preparing for about six weeks.

They had decorated the house and bought new clothes.

They'd gone shopping many times and bought many elaborate gifts.

It was peculiar, though, because the presents weren't for our son.

They wrapped them in beautiful paper and stacked them under a tree.

Yes, a tree, Joseph, right inside their homes! They'd decorated the tree with sparkling ornaments.

There was a figure like an angel on the top of the tree.

Everyone was laughing and happy.

They gave the gifts to each other, Joseph, not to our son.

I don't think they even knew him.

They never mentioned his name.

I had the strangest feeling that, if our Jesus had gone to this celebration he would have been intruding.

How sad for someone not to be wanted at his own birthday party!

I'm glad it was only a dream. How terrible Joseph, if it had been real!