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AMAZING GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH



DECEMBER 2016

I Will Be With You Always

By Pastor Chris Becker

These are some of the final words Jesus spoke to those earlier disciples. They had staked their whole life on him. They had left everything – family, jobs, and security to follow this teacher around Galilee and into the heart of the religious and political world of their time. Now they were faced with the reality that he was saying goodbye to them. “Will we ever see you again?” “Where are you going?” “Why do you have to leave us?” I am sure these questions were part of their conversation with Jesus.

Saying goodbye has always been hard for me. It is hard to leave people, co-workers, a common vision, and a whole lot of hope filled dreams. When one has been in one place for a while, there is history.

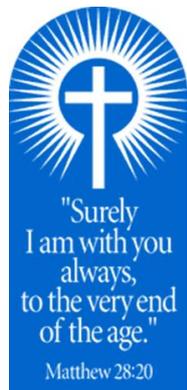
I have baptized those who are now adults, and I have watched them grow into strong men and women. I have walked alongside those who were middle aged at the time I came, and now they have entered into the twilight of their lives. I have learned from them and am in awe of how much of their lives they were willing to share with me. I have welcomed many people over these past 19 plus years, and sadly have said goodbye to others who have moved away or left because they no longer agreed with the community.

I was able to walk with over 50 couples and witnessed their marriage promises, and I have grieved with others who could no longer hold onto those promises.

I rejoiced every Sunday over the witness of this community as they expressed their faith through music and song, from cellos to brass, guitars, drums to flute, saxophone, piano and a bit of organ, voices young and old all being raised to the God who gathered us in. The power in the voices of each and every one of you has lifted my faith and given me the strength to carry on.

When I came here the call committee and church council said they did not want to be an insulated church. They said that they wanted to reach beyond the walls of the church. I have joked, that maybe what the call committee intended was to have the pastor go out and bring in more members. Instead, we as a community found ways to go out and be the church, to do justice and love mercy, to be the witness of Jesus in the world.

The church leadership has been and will continue to work for the good of the congregation. A call committee has been defined and a transition team has been meeting to go through the process of changing pastoral leadership. It is encouraging to see how dedicated and faith-filled these people are in their service to the church of Jesus Christ.



This will be my final newsletter article, but it will not be my final memory. Instead the stories I will remember, and the stories I will tell others, will be about a resilient, faith filled people who never stopped loving Jesus.

In the end all of us only have that promise which Jesus spoke to his earlier disciples, "I will be with you always."

A Roman Catholic nun who served our local hospital in Chicago told me, "Chris, you do not bring God into that hospital room or take God with you when you leave. God has always been there." This is the truth we each must trust. Soon we will hear the name Immanuel – God with us. Let us each live our lives as witness to that truth.

In Christ,
Pastor Chris Becker

Worship and Music Ministry Notes

Advent

Submitted by Louise Lentz, Worship & Music Team Chair

The sanctuary has been transformed. The sweeping drape and star calls attention to the light of Christmas. It provides a focal point for our waiting and contemplation during the Advent season. The Advent wreath and its light reminds us that Jesus came to save us from our sin. Advent gives us all the opportunity to stop, think and prepare for the true meaning of Christmas. It is so easy to slip into the business and busyness of the Christmas season and not to take the time to think, feel and pray about what the birth of Jesus means to each of us. The greatest gift we can give to others is the message of God's love, peace and grace which comes through the birth of His Son.

Each time a candle is lit in the Advent wreath let us take time to notice the brilliance, the warmth and peace of the flame as a symbol of God's love for us. Let us pray with thanksgiving that we will carry the true meaning of Christmas to others when we give gifts, light up our trees and mail our cards.



Jonathan Rundman is coming back to Amazing Grace on Sunday, January 8, 10:30 Worship Service

Submitted by Louise Lentz, Worship & Music Team Chair

Jonathan Rundman joined us last April to lead a worship service. Because his music is inspirational and uplifting, we have invited him to lead us again at the 10:30 service on January 8. This is a service you don't want to miss. Jonathan is a third-generation church musician, and loves to provide music and song-leadership for church conventions, Synod assemblies, youth gatherings, colleges, seminaries, continuing education events, retreats, and for congregations on Sunday mornings. He has been writing songs and performing across the country since he was 18 years old. Mark the date on your calendar now.



December Worship

Sunday, December 4

8:00 and 10:30 am Advent Worship with Holy Communion

Sunday, December 11

8:00 and 10:30 am Christmas Choral Worship with Holy Communion

Sunday, December 18

8:00 am Advent Worship with Holy Communion

10:30 am Worship with Sunday School Christmas Program and Holy Communion

Saturday, December 24

3:30 pm Musical Christmas Preludes

4:00 pm Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion

9:30 pm Musical Christmas Preludes

10:00 pm Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion

Sunday, December 25

10:30 am Worship with Holy Communion



You are invited to come early on Christmas Eve!

*A variety of Christmas music will be played in the Sanctuary 30 minutes before each service.
Come early and enjoy listening as you prepare yourself for worshipping the newborn king!*



Can you hear me now?

Submitted by Louise Lentz, Worship & Music Team Chair

We have been working diligently to improve the sound in the Sanctuary. Our actions range from purchasing new microphones to strategically placing speakers. We strive to have worship experiences that are meaningful, relevant, Spirit-filled, and grounded in God's word, and that requires some attention to technical details. One of those details is making sure that all can clearly hear the service.

We are looking for feedback from you to determine if our sound has improved. Have you noticed a difference in being able to hear the pastors, choirs, and other speakers? Watch for a brief survey on the blue sheet to capture your immediate thoughts on the quality of our sound.

Christian Education Ministry

Invitation

Submitted by Linda Becker, Sunday School Coordinator

Come and see "The Grinch Who Found Christmas," the Children's Christmas program celebrating the birth of Jesus on December 18, 2016 at the 10:30 service. Sunday School children will bring the rhymes to life in word and song, and the youngest will bless us all from the manger stall.

Parents please make every effort to bring children to Sunday School all the Sundays of December. These are our main practice sessions. Final dress rehearsal will be Saturday, December 17 at 9:30 a.m.

Invite family and friends to attend the program at 10:30, followed by Christmas feast, feast, feast . . . cookies and juice and a taste of love and joy. Each family should bring a plate of their favorite cookies to share. We promise your heart will grow two sizes after this program!!



HELP NEEDED!!!

Submitted by Linda Becker, Sunday School Coordinator

Rotation teachers are needed for the new year. Please check the sign up chart on the Sunday School board in the narthex. Opportunities are open for all sessions, beginning January 8 and ending May 7. Teachers prepare one lesson and teach it 3 times to each of the age level groups. Lesson plans are prepared by Spark online teaching resources. Support and training are available to get you going. Newcomers are welcome, even if you have never taught before. It is a rewarding experience to share your faith with children.

January 8, 15, and 22	Banquet with Simon	Luke 7: 36 – 50
February 5, 12, and 19	Mary and Martha	Luke 10: 38 – 42
March 5, 12, and 19	Prodigal Son	Luke 15: 11 – 32
March 26, April 2, 9	Doubting Thomas	John 20: 24 – 29
April 23, 30, May 7	The Lord is My Shepherd	Psalms 23

3 teachers needed for each rotation. You can sign up for more than one session.

Youth and Family Ministry

Welcome Tim Marburger!

Submitted by Heather Tautges, Business Management Co-Chair

We are thrilled to welcome Tim Marburger as our new Children and Youth Minister. Tim has worked with Youth for more than 35 years, and he brings an incredible amount of experience and passion to our community. Tim's education includes a Bachelor's degree in Music Performance and a Master's degree in Theology and Counseling, and we are blessed to have his gifts on the AGLC staff.

Evangelism and Stewardship

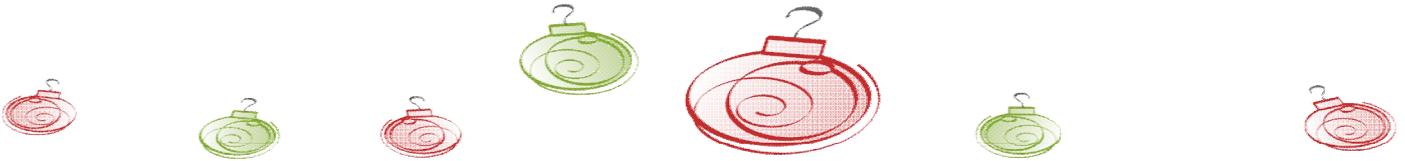
Missions Updates

Neighbors, Inc.

Submitted by Lisa Barnhart

A great way to help Neighbors during the Christmas season is donating an item to the Love Your Neighbor holiday program. Please check out the Neighbors giving tree for ideas of needed items.

The holidays are a particularly busy time for the food shelf. Items currently needed are: Stuffing, Gravy, Broth, Pie Filling, Hygiene Items (especially shampoo, feminine products and toilet paper).



December Giving Trees - Spirit of Giving

Submitted by Barb Malamen

Lyngblomsten is one of the local missions supported by Amazing Grace. We are a covenant congregation with Lyngblomsten. Our most visible connection with Lyngblomsten is through the program, *The Gathering*. Through their Spirit of Giving campaign gifts are collected so that all residents at Lyngblomsten will have a present at Christmas time. Monetary donations and gift cards are requested. Check out the Lyngblomsten Giving Tree in the narthex. Donations can be turned in at the office. Contact person is Barb Malamen 651-454-1858.





ELCA World Hunger
Submitted by Zella Vandervort

Nearly 800 million people – 1 in 9 people in our world today – are hungry. As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we are called to respond. Working with our neighbors in the United States and in nearly 60 countries around the world, we start by listening and learning how we can accompany them to help break the cycle of hunger and poverty – for good. From water wells to animal husbandry, microloans to health clinics, your gifts to ELCA World Hunger support innovative solutions that get at the root causes of hunger. And they don't stop there. We engage Lutherans in advocacy and hunger education to act and speak in ways that can make a difference.

Fair Trade Chocolate and More

Wednesday, November 23rd thru Sunday, January 1st.
The World Hunger Table will be in the Narthex between services for the annual Fair Trade Chocolate and Coffee sale. We will also be selling various other gift items. We have some wonderful items to tempt you. Zella Vandervort at mnhomebug@gmail.com or 651-769-7864.



Fellowship Events

Faithful Readers.....so many books!

Submitted By Barb Malamen

The group does not meet in December. Share a favorite book with a friend. We will begin the new year with a new list of books to read and discuss. The group meets the third Sunday of the month at 6:30pm at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Cafe on Promenade in Eagan. All are welcome! Contact person is Barb Malamen 651-454-1858. Let's all read together, faithfully.

- January 15 At the Water's Edge by Sara Gruen
Madeline Hyde goes with her husband Ellis to hunt the famous Loch Ness monster. Maddie begins to see that nothing is as it first appears and that life is full of surprising possibilities.
- February 19 Sinner and the Sea by Rebecca Kanner
A fictional story of Noah's wife using Biblical narrative and Jewish mythology.
- March 19 All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr
Europe during WWII. The stories of a blind French girl and a German orphan boy with a talent for fixing radios are told and interwoven and show how against all odds, people try to be good to one another.





Women's Christmas Brunch

Saturday, December 10th
10:00—12:30 pm

We'll soon be busy with preparations for the Christmas season. It can get hectic! Take time out to recharge yourself and gather for good food, conversation, and carols at the annual Women's Christmas Brunch. The date is December 10 from 10:00 am – 12:30 pm. There will be an ornament exchange and gifts will be collected for Neighbors Inc. A \$5 donation will be collected to help cover expenses with the surplus gifted to Neighbors Inc. Watch for a sign-up sheet. If you're willing to help with food and/or preparations for the brunch or have questions, please contact Barb Malamen at 651-454-1858.

10th Annual Senior Holiday Brunch

Sunday, December 4th

12 noon at the Pool and Yacht Club

Includes: Buffet, Coffee or Tea, Tax, and Gratuity
\$22 payable in advance

Make checks out to Pool and Yacht Club and give to Barb Henke or leave in a marked envelope in the church office, by **Sunday, Nov. 27**. Additional purchases made that day are payable then.

Contact: Barb Henke at 651-457-1939

Council Corner

Message from the Council

Submitted by James Jeyachandran, Council President

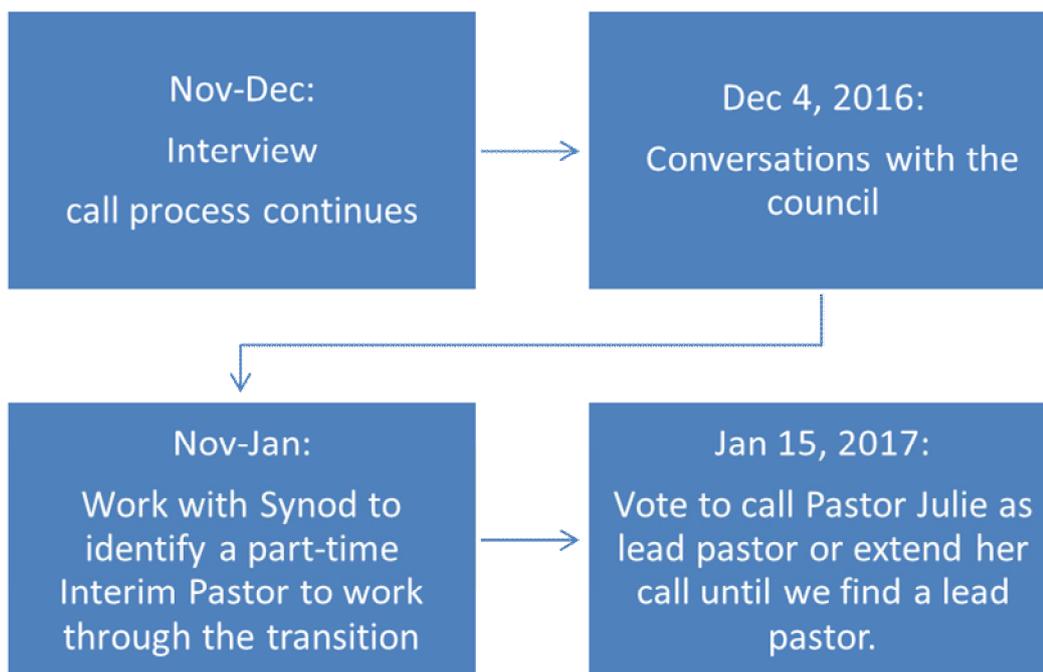
The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ... (Psalm 23)

Dear Friends in Christ, Greetings!

I want to thank all of you who have turned in giving pledges for the year 2017. The visibility into potential giving will enable us to present a more realistic budget and identify any financial gaps to achieve our strategic goals so that we can address them well in advance.

There will be a congregational vote on January 15, 2017. If the call committee recommends Pastor Julie Wright and the council confirms the recommendation, the congregation will vote to call her as our next lead pastor. Otherwise the vote will be to amend her term call to 40 hours per week until we find & install a lead pastor.

The Church council is also working with the Synod to find an interim part-time pastor. This is a temporary position to guide us during this time of transition. Here is the timeline with some tentative dates.



We will look into other staffing requirements once the lead pastor is installed and the transition is complete. Thank you for your continued prayers and if you have any questions or suggestions please reach out to me at james.jeyachandran@gmail.com (651 341 5317) or anyone on the council.

Thank You!

Business Management Ministry

AGLC Financial Summary through October 2016

Prepared by Tim Sanborn, Treasurer

2016 Year-to-Date Actual numbers:

INCOME	\$315,831	90.1% of budgeted	\$34,669 under budget
EXPENSES	\$332,608	93.5% of budgeted	\$23,161 under budget (favorable)
NET INCOME	-\$16,777		

((we were expecting to have a Net Income of -\$5,269 at this point in our budget, a variance of 11,508))

2016 projected: Income \$386,241 Expense \$397,426 Net Income **-\$11,185**

Although there are still some negative numbers above, AGLC is moving in the right direction due to the generous and timely giving of many. We received two examples of this generosity in October: the first being the forgiveness of a very large Note Payable, and the other being an abundant outpouring of general offering gifts from many! There is still a projected, but now manageable, Net Income deficit, but we will attempt to close it through continued watchfulness over our expenses PLUS a continued call for giving as we are able.

Please note: The numbers presented above are in reference to AGLC’s Ordinary Income and Expenses. AGLC will undoubtedly show a positive Net Income at the end of 2016 due in large part to the forgiveness of the Note Payable which is recorded as Other Income.

Reforming and Transforming

Submitted by Pastor Julie Wright

2017 will be the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation and the 10th anniversary since the unification of Peace Lutheran and Royal Redeemer Lutheran – the unification that created the AMAZING community of Amazing Grace. We find ourselves, yet again, at the intersection of another period of transformation.

“Who are you?” said the Caterpillar...

“I -- I hardly know, Sir, just at present,” Alice replied rather shyly,

“at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.”

-Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*



Change Ahead

We have a lot of change heading our way:

- Pastor Chris Becker is preparing to retire at the end of this month.
- We welcome Tim Marburger this month to our staff as Children & Youth Minister. Tim brings 30+ years of experience working with children, youth and families!
- New members were welcomed into our community on November 20th.
- Even our neighborhood is changing as new homes are being built practically overnight.
- And we have a 5-year Strategic Plan in place to guide our work.

Whew! You may be wondering – *what's next?*

The church has, from its inception, been a place where we honor tradition and welcome fresh new ideas. This takes on importance each time we welcome a visitor or a new member – when we learn about the passions, skills and gifts that God has provided them and ask them to consider how they will be involved in the life of the church. We are a church that celebrates the past and looks to what God is creating anew this day and in the future. All of this transition may be a little overwhelming at times.

Here's what I know for sure will NOT change:

- √ Amazing Grace remains a place where we connect with God, study scripture and sing of God's enduring faithfulness.
- √ We are a faith community that connects with each other, visits the sick, and cares for the home-bound.
- √ The gospel of Jesus Christ continues to be proclaimed in preaching, in music, and with our voices, hands and feet.
- √ We continue to be formed in faith through education, service and engagement with the world.
- √ With your help, visitors will be welcomed with open arms.
- √ We will continue to do as Jesus instructed: to feed the hungry, visit those who are sick or in crisis, work for justice and care for creation.

The good work that we do, together with God, will go on for generations to come.

Here's how we ALL can participate right now:

- As the Council and Call Committee continue their deliberation regarding pastoral transition, reach out to these leaders for conversation. Encourage them in their efforts and keep them and all staff in prayer.
- **Join us for worship on December 11** (8:00 am and 10:30 am services) when we will have a *liturgy of letting go* for Pastor Chris Becker. This beautiful liturgy formalizes the ways in which we will relinquish him from the role of pastor and at the same time, bless him in the next phase of his life. This liturgy recognizes all the ways Pastor Chris has cared for this community and allows him to leave those tasks in the capable hands of the church.

- Let me know how I can support you in this season of change.

This is a season of celebration, and of letting go, as together we move forward – in wide-eyed wonder – as God leads us into the next season of our life together. It is the season of Advent, when the light of Christ comes into the world bit by bit until the whole world is illumined in God’s light and love and possibility. Join me as together we ride the wave of change, leaning into the discomfort, as we discover what God is up to in our midst. For this journey with you, I am grateful.

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”
– Colossians 2:6-7

December Birthdays

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 6 Merri Guggisberg | 22 Todd Hoven |
| 10 Elizabeth Anderson | Blytha Talalla |
| 11 Chris Kinney | 26 Jakob Linscheid |
| Louis Morgan | 28 Norm Beckman |
| 16 Annie Morgan | Kevin Hanson |
| 17 Pam Nelson | 30 Kris Holson |
| 19 Cyndi Berg | 31 Jim Feely |
| 21 Patti Plash | |



Anniversaries

- 1 Don and Laurel Oseth
- 6 James and Cathy Jeyachandran
- 10 Russ and Lisa Barnhart
- 11 Norm and Arvie Beckman
- 18 Paul and Judy Rhein
- 28 Paul and Carol Portz
- 29 Bob and Pam Nelson
- Ras and Gloria Rasmussen

If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office so that we can add it to the list.

Prayer Chain



Prayer Concerns can be called in to Mary Garfield at 651-457-7536.

DEADLINE

Just a reminder that annual reports are due on December 15th!



Pastoral Care—Focused Outreach

Servant Ministry Coordinator:

Pastor Chris Becker

- Meal Coordinator: Lynda Bartlette
- Ride Coordinator: Norm Beckman
- Respite Care Coordinator: Judy Thompson
- Funeral Support Coordinator: Barb Malamen
- Personal Prayer Coordinator for Worship: Judy Thompson
- Hands and Feet Ministry Coordinator: Pastor Chris Becker

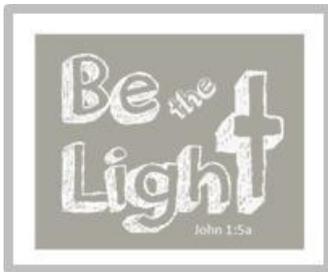
Please call the office if you know of someone who is in need of a ride, meal, prayers, etc. so that we can put them in contact with the appropriate person.

Merry Christmas

AMAZING GRACE

LUTHERAN CHURCH

7160 South Robert Trail
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55077
Phone: 651-455-0093
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Amazing Grace Lutheran
Church
Joining God at Work in the



Website:

www.aglcigh.org

Staff:

Pastor—Pastor Chris Becker:
cbecker@aglcigh.org

Associate Pastor—Pastor Julie Wright:
jwright@aglcigh.org

Administrator—Angy Thelemann:
athelemann@aglcigh.org

Youth and Young Adult Coordinator—
Tim Marburger: tmarburger@aglcigh.org

Finance/Office Assistant—
Trudy Johnson: tjohnson@aglcigh.org

Building Supervisor—
Norm Goetzke: ngoetzke@aglcigh.org

Worship Musician: Brad Pipal
Sanctuary Choir Director: Susan Young
Joyful Noise Choir Director: Angy Thelemann

Sunday School Coordinator—
Linda Becker: lbecker@aglcigh.org

Vacation Bible School Coordinator—
Amanda Vesta: avesta@aglcigh.org
Dre Noble: dnoble@aglcigh.org

Main Office Hours:

(Typically)
Monday: Working Offsite
Tuesday—Friday: 9:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

Deadlines:

The newsletter article deadline
is always on the 15th of the month. Bulletin
announcements or additions are due on
Wednesdays.