

DECEMBER 2023
Volume 4, Issue 11

Amazing Grace

Grace Church of Hanover, 55 Albright Drive

In 1901 Peter P. Bilhorn wrote Make Way for the King. Verse three is: "Make way for the King! Let your armor Be gleaming and burnished with prayer, beneath the bright folds of His banner, the love, and devotion declare. With ardor and zeal unabated, by word and by action proclaim this truth to the people around you. That Jesus is coming again. Make way, the king is coming. In hymnody, we sing about the climax of our faith. For many Christians, it is the emphasis of Jesus' coming, his great arrival of which N.T. Wright says "Where we will all be called up heralded to receive him" Of course God's people have been singing about the great arrival of God's Kingdom, where God would finally appear in the fullness of His glory and bring the faithful under his reign, for thousands of years. Psalms—91, and 95 -99, are considered the Enthronement works of the Psalter because they focus on the culminating reign of God in the fullness of His kingdom. Ps. 95:6-7: "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care."

Advent is a time in the church when we center on the expectant return of Christ. Advent means "coming" and while we prepare our hearts for a journey to celebrate the Emmanuel "God with us" we look emphatically to Christ's return. The season of Advent begins Dec. 3,

2023, and for four weeks we in the church will focus on the triumphal return of our Savior while also remembering and reflecting on that first Christmas over 2000 years ago. As Christians, there is no better time to share the Gospel. Atheists and pagans alike all agree that this time of year more people are open to hearing of the Gospel message than any other time of year. There is something magical about it and dare we take advantage of the opportunity for evangelism to the open hearts what harvest would that yield? I believe it is too important to ignore. As your pastor, my primary role is to equip you, "the church" to share the message of Jesus Christ so that the world may know and receive the name of Jesus as Lord and Savior.

One step to accomplishing this is by separating the truth from the feelings, reality from the fantasy, and history from Hollywood. What do we know about what happened that first Christmas morning? The series I believe God has called me to preach over Advent is centered on a book written by Lee Strobel called The Case For Christmas. Too often, this time of year we can get caught up in the emotional and nuanced celebration that "feels like" Christmas and we can allow ourselves to forget that this is a real event in real-time in real history, we cling to the romantic and greeting card narratives, but these are not a foundation of belief. We celebrate and give praise to God not from our emotional connection to a season but an actual time and place in history where the event of the birth of Christ took place. We will deal with the question "Can we trust the Gospel's portrayal of the Birth of the Messiah?" Are they reliable in their telling? How can knowing that we can trust the Bible and its authors because of evidence and reason help us to declare the Christmas Story with genuine excitement and authenticity? It's exciting folks! It is a great opportunity to invite your friends or those questioning the things of Christianity. Make Way for the King!

In Service of Christ,



Rev. Todd Christine

Inside This Issue

A Message from the Pastor 1

Birthday's & Events 2

Theology Matters 3-4

Youth and 4

Council and Missions 6



Upcoming Event



PLEASE JOIN US FOR AN

Open House

SATURDAY DECEMBER 2ND
4PM TO 7PM

Grace Church of Hanover

55 ALBRIGHT DRIVE, HANOVER PA 17331
717-637-3100

INDOOR NATIVITY WALK
BAKED GOODS AND COOKIE SALE
FREE COOKIE AND DRINK
OPEN KITCHEN
TRAIN DISPLAY
LIVE MUSIC
PRAYER TABLE
LIGHTING OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE

12-1 Nico DeSantis
12-2 Macy Miller
12-3 Olivia Kuntz
Trevor Kuntz
12-4 Shirley Yingling
12-6 Ronald Yingling
12-12 Zack Arnold
12-13 John Dehoff
12-15 Paul Hnatkowicz
Shirley Masenheimer
Andrew Myers
12-19 Wayne Frock
12-21 Michelle Sullivan
12-22 Karen Ward
12-23 Caryl Hollinger
12-25 Stephanie Parker
12-26 Cathy Ferree
Robert Masenheimer
12-28 Dennis Blum
12-30 Lisa Lalbeharry



The Chancel Choir will present our Christmas Cantata: "Born a Savior, Born a King" by John Purifoy, at the 11:00 service on Sunday, December 17. Combining new music with traditional music with traditional hymns, "Born a Savior, Born a King" is a the dramatic yelling of prophecy fulfilled.

Attention all parents: You child is welcome to join our Music Ministry. The Cherub Choir, led by Miss Cindy, is open to all children ages 3 - 10, and the Teen Praise Band, led by Mister Larry, is for youth ages 11 - 17. Both groups meet on Sunday mornings from 9:40 until 10:00.

Theology Matters: by Rev. Matt Sichel

It's Advent, and it soon will be Christmas. We've come to the time of year when we celebrate the entrance of God into our space and time. The Christian faith makes a stunning claim: the God of the whole universe becomes flesh and blood, enters time as a mortal human being, and lives with us. This claim makes Christianity unique among all the world's religions, in that God humbles himself to the grime and the grit of humanity in order that human beings might be raised back up to God. What fallen humans could not do, God does for us.

St. John's Gospel does not include the traditional birth stories which we love to read this time of year. Instead, John offers a more theological vision:

“In the beginning was the Word
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.

The Word was with God in the beginning.

Everything came into being through the Word,

and without the Word, nothing came
into being.
The Word became flesh
and made his home among us.
We have seen his glory,
glory like that of a father's only son,
full of grace and truth.” – John 1:1-3a
& 14, CEB

But, beyond these very poetic and theological words, we have the straight-up human side of the story. This is what makes it unique. God became flesh, a very specific and particular flesh: an ancient near eastern Jewish man, born to a poor and humble family. God came to everyone, and yet he entered the world through the faith of *one* people, *one* family, *one* woman. God's special people, Israel, would bring God's salvation to the entire world. This brings us to Article 3 of the Apostles' Creed.

Article 3: “I believe in . . . Jesus Christ. . . who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary;”

At Christmas, we celebrate the miracle called *incarnation*, or the idea of God becoming or entering human flesh. Mary, a common, young, Jewish woman, impregnated by God's Holy Spirit, humbles herself and allows God to use her in a miraculous way. In a dirty, nasty space in the village of Bethlehem, in a very normal and natural human process, she gave birth to a baby boy. It was just like eve-

ry other birth since Eve received the curse of pain in childbirth. I am sure there was blood and anguish, but there was also joy and laughter, as her little baby boy burst onto the scene, and she celebrated like every mother does.

Her song, which in Latin is called the *Magnificat*, is in St. Luke's Gospel. It is a song of amazing and intense praise for God's choice of her to bear the baby who would save the world. Notice the joy of her words:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
For He has regarded the lowly state of His maid-servant;
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me
blessed.
For He who is mighty has done great things for
me,
And holy is His name. – Luke 1:46b-49, NKJV

Though we know that Jesus was born, in a very natural way, to a human woman, it is important to remember that Jesus did not *begin* at Bethlehem. This is a common misconception of many people. We understand that the Son is *eternal* with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This is what John's Gospel is capturing when he says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” The Son is *eternally* God and a Person of the Godhead.

This was one of the largest struggles of the early church in understanding who Jesus was and is. As I mentioned last month, this heresy (false teaching), that Jesus somehow had a beginning, is called Arianism. It still plagues the Christian church today in Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses (and others). It is important for us to preach and teach the truth of our faith. The *eternal* Son has entered our space in Jesus of Nazareth.

As Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of John 1 puts it, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood,” or as the Christian songwriter, Michael Card puts it,

“Eternity
stepped into
time, so we
could under-
stand.

He spoke the
incarnation and
then so was born
the Son.

His final word

and then so was
born the Son.

His final word
was Jesus, He
needed no other
one.

Spoke flesh and blood, so
he could bleed and make
a way divine, and so was
born the baby who would
die to make it mine."

Because, in the end, our salvation was what God had in mind all along. It had to be a human being, and at the same time, it had to be God. Sin had infected human beings so that human beings could not save themselves. But, at the same time, if only God could save us, he could not do so as God. He had to become a human being to do it.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus (c325-390) was the Archbishop of Constantinople and one of the great theologians of the church. His explanation has become the standard of the church, "For that which Jesus has not taken up, He has not healed; but that which is united to divine nature is also saved." In other words, if all of humanity fell, then God in Christ had to become fully human. But at the same time, it must be fully God who saves, because only God has the power to do it. Just as God inhabited the entire universe when He created it, so also must He inhabit humanity fully when saving it.

This is why Christmas is meaningless without Good Friday. This year, when you consider the magic and beauty of Jesus born in a stable, with the simple parentage of Mary and Joseph, remember that it is not just any beautiful little baby boy. This is God the Son who "emptied himself, took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross" (Philippians 2:7-8, NLT). The baby in Bethlehem is the Lamb on Calvary, is the risen Lord on Easter, and the exalted King of Kings in the end.

Love to you all in Christ,



Path Youth

- 12/2 Christmas Open House
- 12/10 Christmas Caroling
 - o Start time and
finer details to come
 - o Will be having lunch together after church (around 12:30pm)
 - o Will start our caroling journey after lunch
 - o Our goal is to carol and deliver care packages to all shut-ins (Grace Church and First Church)
- 12/12 Path meeting/Forged at Grace @ 6pm-8pm



Thank you all for your prayers and cards during my recent hospitalization and the time preceding it. I feel so much better, and I know God was with me. I saw him in your smiles and hugs.

~ Elaine Wilson



Thank you for the prayers, cards & delicious meals that we received since my accident. It was very much appreciated.

~Ethel Caudill

Members of Grace Church of Hanover. Thank you for your donation! We could not do what we do without people like you.

~The Safe Home Staff

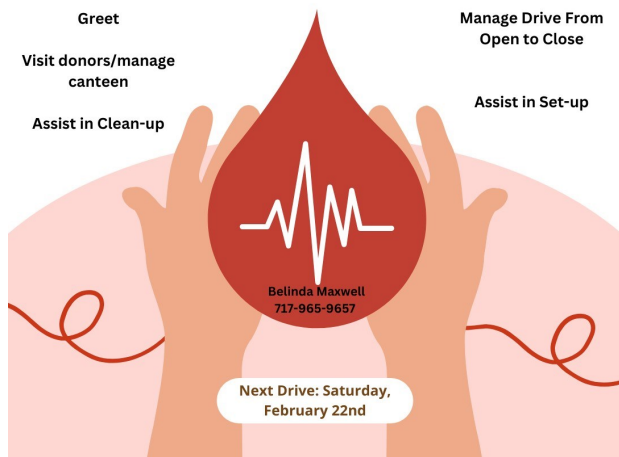
CONNECTING WITH COUNCIL

Chair: Linda Mixer

Members: Denny Blum, Pastor Todd Christine, Karen Coons, Ed Davis, Amanda Myers, Amber Myers, Brian Jenkins, Jim Winbourne, Anna Mae Terry

On Tuesday, November 21st, our church had our first annual conference as a Global Methodist Church. If you would like a copy of packet, please contact the church office.

BLOOD DRIVE TEAM MEMBERS NEEDED



PAL (Provide-A-Lunch) Dates 2023

Friday, December 29th

Saturday, December 30th

Ruth's Harvest Dates for 2023

Thursday, December 14h

Grace Church Grocery Card Fundraiser

Available at the Hospitality Desk



Are you looking for a gift idea for a loved one? Consider purchasing a Giant Grocery gift card. We have several different increments for purchase. Proceeds will benefit our campus improvement fund.