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December 2023
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**GRACE COVENANT
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

1655 Peel Avenue
Orlando, FL 32806
Phone: 407.898.6571
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www.grace.to

To:

**Have You
Pledged Yet?**



Respite care for parents
with special needs children.

December 2

To volunteer contact

Lori Lampman

**Christmas
on the
Front Lawn
Friday, December 8
4—6pm**

Everyone is invited
to join in the fun!

Hot Cocoa, Cookies, Crafts,
Games and a visit with Santa!
See you on the front lawn!

Grace Notes

Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church

December 2023

The Pastor's Page

Advent is here, leading us weekly into the glorious mystery of the Incarnation: God in human flesh. Many religious traditions have stories of gods coming to earth as humans, or humans attaining some divine status. But the idea of God entering humanity as a vulnerable newborn is, as far as I know, unique to the Christian faith. God felt like what it was to be human in all its joy and pain, in all its wonder and its mundanity. What a wonderful God we worship and serve!

This intimacy between the human and the divine shapes our worship in a special way

Looking Forward

December

- 2 Buddy Break
- 2 Communion
- 8 Christmas on the
Front Lawn 4-6pm
- 8 UCF Community Choir
Concert, 7pm, Sanctuary
- 17 Christmas Cantata
- 20 Service of the
Longest Night 6pm
- 24 Lessons and Carols
8:45am, 10:45am, 6pm
- 25 Christmas Day
- 31 One Service, 10:30am
Sunday Funday

January

- 1 New Year's Day
- 28 Annual Congregational
Meeting

Continued page 2

during Advent. Traditionally, we mark the Sundays with the familiar and comfortable feelings that the coming of the Christ child promises: hope, peace, joy and love. These are more than simple feelings, of course--we do them a disservice if we sentimentalize them. But this year, I thought we might examine some different Sunday "watchwords" during Advent. And this is shaped by the idea that Advent is also a time of anticipating the return of our Lord at the end of the age. This aspect of Advent is usually confined to week 1, but this year we will remain with it.



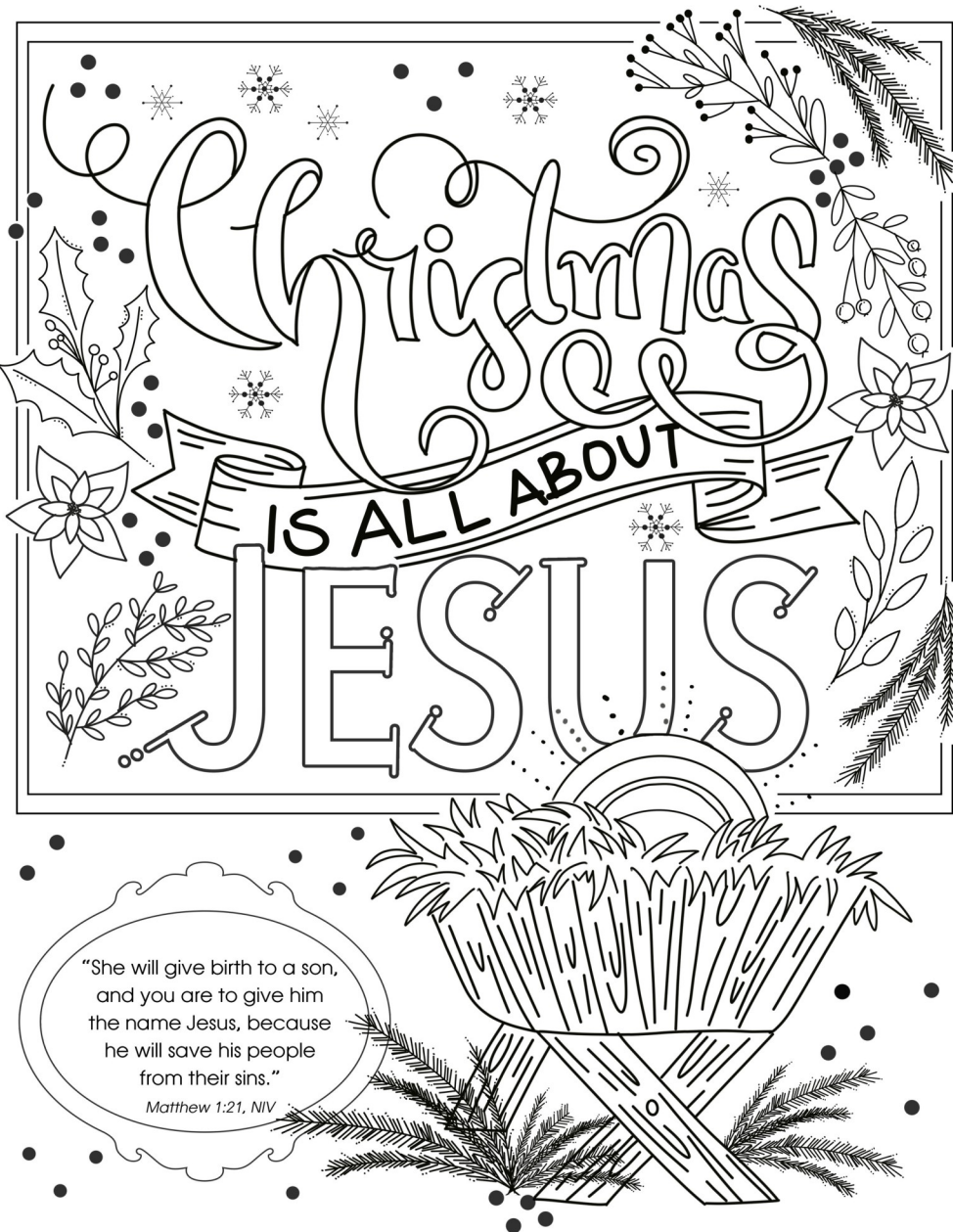
Instead of the four traditional words of Advent, then, we will explore some of what I am calling "Advent Actions" from our assigned scripture lessons. In week 1, we look to Mark 13, where the action is to ***"keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back."*** In week 2, we seek the counsel of 2 Peter, which exhorts us to ***"strive to be found by him at peace."*** In week 3, the inspiration from 1 Thessalonians to ***"hold fast to what is good" will carry us.*** And in week 4, which is also Christmas Eve, we will follow the command of Psalm 96 to ***"declare his glory among the nations."***

As we take this side road towards Bethlehem this year, we have some special events for you to keep in mind. On Sunday, December 10, Bells

Happy Birthday Happy Anniversary

Please contact the church office for a copy of this list.

Color this artwork during Advent.



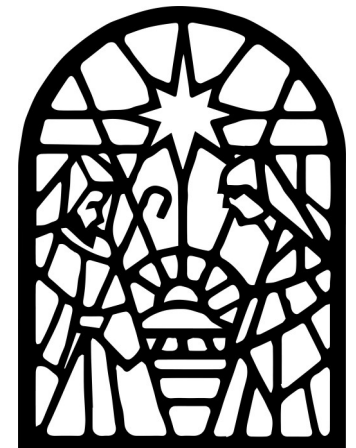
of Grace will support our striving through their beautiful music. On Sunday, December 17 the choir will help us hold fast to God's promise with their Christmas cantata. On Christmas Eve, which is a Sunday, we will declare the glory of the Incarnation through our usual two morning services and *one evening service, at 6pm. All three Christmas Eve services will be identical "lessons and carols" with candle lighting.*



Finally, our annual Wednesday evening worship that acknowledges the loss and grief that intensifies for some during this season will be

called "Service of the Longest Night" instead of "Blue Christmas." It will be on Wednesday, December 20 at 6pm. Part of this change is to dissociate the worship with the Elvis song, and part is simply to say that when the night feels the longest, we know that is when God promises to be the closest.

I personally invite you to experience Advent and Christmas with Grace Covenant in a new and special way this year. Come and see the wondrous things that God is doing in our midst.



Ruth Circle

Ruth circle completed the study on Twelve Women of the Bible. After discussion and debate the group decided to continue with the next series called Twelve More Women of the Bible. The study will begin at our January meeting.

At our December meeting we will review the outstanding contribution of the Twelve women of the Bible we have already studied. We will then enjoy a potluck holiday luncheon in Conway Hall.

The ministry of Ruth Circle continues. Servant's Heart gives \$10 gift cards from Publix to families in need so they may enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday. Members of the circle contributed more than \$300 in gift cards. Wow!!

The diaper ministry continues as important as ever. Social workers apparently are

coming to Servant's Heart when there is an immediate need.

We welcome contributions from everyone, not just circle members. If you have questions, please let me know.

Barbara Hart

We wish everyone a blessed Christmas season!

ROOTED Youth Group

Sunday evenings, 5:15p – 7p

On December 1 and 10.

Watch for events and news on Facebook - Grace Covenant PC Youth

IG - Rooted.grace.covenant.

D.E.C.K 2.0

6pm -11pm Second Fridays

Craft with others for any amount of time. Questions: contact the church office

Book Club

Panera Bread, S. Semoran

Tuesday, December 26 at 7pm

When Christmas Comes by

Debbie McComber

Have You Pledged Yet?

Small Blessings Child Care

Small Blessings gift giving, is love in action! The children and their families are very busy gathering items for a "Servant's Heart" project. The goal is to fill 40 Christmas bags to benefit children who are less fortunate in our community. A big thank you to all who participated, for having such a giving spirit and a loving heart. The Christmas Spirit is at Small Blessings. Many fun activities are used to teach the children the true meaning of Christmas, the celebration of Jesus Christ's birth. Come celebrate with Small Blessings for the precious annual K4 Christmas Pageant Dec. 7 as it is sure to delight! We wish all a Merry Christmas and a healthy Happy New Year. May God's love be with you.

It's ADVENT INTERGENERATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL TIME!

**BEGINNING, SUNDAY,
DECEMBER 3**

EVERYONE is welcome! Let's come together in Conway Hall each Sunday in December for a time of Advent/Christmas Fun! (There will be no children's Sunday school in Smith Hall during the month of December. Come as a family to Advent Intergenerational Sunday School time.) Each week we will share some of our favorite traditions. Gingerbread Houses, Stockings, Advent Candles... Looking forward to sharing together the "Wonder of the Season"

Fifth Sunday Funday December 31, One Service

10:30am

Come to Brunch!
Bring breakfast casseroles,
fruit, or pastries.