

# Grace Family Weekly Message

1 December 2022



**WORSHIP AT GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**THIS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup>, THE 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT.**  
Sunday's Gospel reading is Matthew 3:1-12 (See page 3 for more information)

**Enjoy the fellowship of Advent Soup Suppers and the meaningful experiences of Advent Evening Prayer Services—Wednesday evenings at 6:00 PM/7:00 PM**

## **A BIBLE STUDY ABOUT ESTHER—A JEWISH NATIONAL HEROINE**

Last week's Bible Study discussed a Jewish youth named Daniel who became a trusted and powerful official in the Babylonian and Persian regimes that had conquered Israel and Judah. This week's study considers another Jewish person who became a Persian Queen and national heroine by saving the Jewish people who were in exile in Persia from annihilation.

### **Esther 2:16-17** (NKJV)

**<sup>16</sup>So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month...in the seventh year of his reign. <sup>17</sup>The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so, he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.**

### **Esther 3:8-9** (NKJV)

**<sup>8</sup>Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people's, and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore, it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. <sup>9</sup>If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed...**

### **Esther 8:3-6** (NKJV)

**<sup>3</sup>Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews. <sup>4</sup>And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So, Esther arose and stood before the king, <sup>5</sup>and said, "If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman...which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. <sup>6</sup>For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?"**

The Book of Esther is one of only two books in the Bible that are named after women. It is the only book in the Bible that does not mention God. Like the Book of Daniel, which we discussed last week, Most Bible scholars doubt that there was an

historical Daniel or Esther. Nevertheless, their stories convey important messages that have had lasting meanings for God's people. The Book of Esther is read during the annual Jewish Festival of Purim which celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people from threatened annihilation.

Like the Daniel story, the setting for the story of Esther occurred during the Jewish exile in Babylonia and Persia. The Persian King in the Book of Esther is



*A 19th-century depiction of Esther, the queen of Ahasuerus, and the heroine of the Biblical Book of Esther*

Ahasuerus, or King Xerxes, who ruled from 485 BCE to 464 BCE. The story began when King Ahasuerus deposed his first wife, Queen Vashti, after she defied the king's decree that "**all wives will honor their husbands**" (Esther 1:20). The king's servants were charged with finding the most beautiful women in the land, from whom "**the woman that pleases the king will be queen**" (Esther 2:4).

Esther was an orphan girl who grew up in the home of her cousin Mordecai, in the Persian capital city of Susa. She was very beautiful and was chosen to be one of the candidates for the new queen, but Mordecai had instructed her not to disclose that she was Jewish. After several months of training and preparation, Esther was taken to the King, who "**loved her more than all the other women**" (Esther 2:17) so she became Queen Esther.

After Esther became Queen, Mordecai learned that two of the King's staff were plotting to assassinate him. He told Esther who warned the King and saved his life. The King executed

the two plotters and appointed a man named Haman as his chief of staff. Haman let the authority of his position go to his head and began to demand that everyone bow down and "**pay him homage**." Mordecai refused to bow down before Haman, so Haman convinced the King to issue a decree that the entire Jewish population in Persia shall be annihilated. Haman advanced 10,000 silver talents to pay for their extermination and he cast lots (**Purim**) to determine the date when it would take place.

Mordecai learned of these plans and strategized with Esther regarding how she could approach the King to appeal to save the Jewish people. The story gets even more complicated from there. Haman made plans to hang Mordecai, but when the King was reminded about how Mordecai had saved his life, he ordered Haman to publicly honor Mordecai. Esther was mortally fearful of revealing her Jewishness to the King as part of her appeal to convince him to spare the Jewish people from Haman's planned extermination. She finally was able to arrange a banquet for the King during which she explained how Haman was preparing to kill all the Jewish people according to the King's decree, and that this would also include her (*Surprise—I'm Jewish too!*). The King became furious with Haman and had him hanged on the gallows Haman had planned to use to hang Mordecai.

The King gave Haman's estate to Esther, and he made Mordecai his adviser. The King then issued a new order giving the Jewish people the right to defend themselves against their oppressors on the same day when Haman's casting of lots (*Purim*) had designated for their extermination. That day became the day of the Jewish Feast of Purim, which celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people from a planned annihilation. Esther acted as a leader of God's people by risking her life when she revealed her Jewish identity to the King, but she convinced the King to spare her people. Today the Jewish people celebrate the Feast of Purim as a national holiday in much the same way that the American people celebrate the fourth of July.

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## WEEKLY NEWS AND ACTIVITIES AT GRACE

**WORSHIP ON SUNDAY.** This coming Sunday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of December, is the Second Sunday in Advent. The Gospel reading is **Matthew 3:1-12**. The liturgical color for this Sunday is blue. Pastor Jaci and Church Musician Bobbie Bean will conduct the worship service, with communion, which starts at 10:30 AM.

**CHOOSE HOW YOU WORSHIP.** At Grace, you can worship in a traditional setting in the Sanctuary, or you can participate in worship while remaining in your vehicle and tuning your radio to FM 94.1. Grace's worship services are broadcast on FM 94.1.

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING ALL MEMBERS OF THE GRACE FAMILY AND VISITORS TO WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY**

© **PRAYER CONCERNS.** Please keep the following persons in your prayers:

The Family of Joan Dietrich

Mike Czezele, Sue Fondessy, Max Shiple, Danny Miller, Joe Grayczyk, Bob Haas, Rosemary Jones, Donald Bench, Steve, Kathy Spangler, Jody Angelone, Mandi Palmer, LaVerne Edwards, Bev Burroughs, Ken Pettit, Carol Jacob, Bethany Collier, Leslee Bundy, Tom Szor, Shelly Sherman, Barbara Harger, Patricia Morral, Karen Southwyck, Carol Morgan, Dustin Schmidt, Chris Marquardt, Stephen Andrew, Dean Crandall, Kelly Troyer, Nadine Crisologos, Cheryl Hoot, Heather DeWitz, members of the Grace family who reside in nursing homes including Jim Flick (Commons of Providence, Sandusky), Donna Foss (Parkcliff), Sandy Cutchall (Genoa), and members of the Grace family and their colleagues who serve in the Armed Forces. If you know of someone to add to the prayer list, please inform Pastor Jaci or the Church Office.

© **ATTENDANCE AND OFFERING LAST WEEK.** 46 persons attended worship last Sunday. Last Sunday's offering total was \$12,427. This was the highest weekly offering for the whole year. Offerings need to average \$2,789 per week to meet the 2022 offering budget target. The most recent offering has lifted Grace's offering total for the year back above the budget goal. **Thank you to all who attend worship and contribute regular offerings.**

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS			
Date	Event	Time	Location
4 December, Sunday	Board of Property	9:30 AM	Grace
7 December, Wednesday	Advent Soup Supper and Evening Prayer Service	6:00 PM/ 7:00 PM	Fellowship Hall/Sanctuary
13 December, Tuesday	Board of Witness and Mission	4:30 PM	Grace
14 December, Wednesday	Advent Soup Supper and Evening Prayer Service	6:00 PM/ 7:00 PM	Fellowship Hall/Sanctuary
15 December, Thursday	Council Meeting	6:30 PM	Schlieverts
19 December, Monday	Red Cross Blood Drive	12:00 PM to 6:00 PM	Fellowship Hall
21 December, Wednesday	Advent Soup Supper and Evening Prayer Service	6:00 PM/ 7:00 PM	Fellowship Hall/Sanctuary
<b>24 December, Saturday</b>	<b>Christmas Eve Worship Service</b>	<b>8:00 PM</b>	<b>Sanctuary</b>
7 January, Saturday	Christmas Decoration Take-Down	11:00 AM	Sanctuary
22 January, Sunday	Congregational Meeting, with Potluck Brunch	11:30 AM	Fellowship Hall
<b>Regular Weekly Events:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sunday mornings, at 10:30 AM, Worship, with communion (<i>in the Sanctuary</i>)</li> <li>Tuesday evenings, at 7:00 PM, Choir Practice</li> </ul>			

- © **ADVENT WORSHIP PLANS.** Plan to attend Grace's 2022 Advent and Christmas Worship events. The **first Sunday in Advent** this year was the 27<sup>th</sup> of November; the beginning of the new Liturgical Year. This year Grace has **four Advent Soup Suppers and Evening Prayer services** on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November and the 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of December. This year's **Advent Special Offerings will be contributed to the ELCA's "A Clinic Visit for a Child" program.** Grace will have its **Christmas Eve Worship Service** on Saturday evening, the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, at 8:00 PM. On Sunday, the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, Grace's traditional **Christmas Carol and Scripture Worship Service** will take place during the Sunday worship hour at 10:30 AM. There will be a regular worship service on **Sunday, the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2023.**
- © **THANK OFFERING BOXES.** Thank offering boxes were returned and dedicated during the worship service on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November. If any Thank Offering Box remain to be turned in, please bring to worship on Sunday. **New Thank Offering Boxes** for you to fill with loose coins during the upcoming Church Year will be **available this Sunday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of December.** Placing coins in Thank Offering Boxes can give you many tangible opportunities to say "thank you" for the blessings in your life. Thank Offering contributions go to the women of the ELCA.
- © **RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE.** The American Red Cross will hold a blood drive here at Grace on Monday, December 19<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM. **Volunteers are needed for shifts of 10:30 to 1:45 and 1:45 to 5:00 to sign in and register donors**

and help with refreshments. There is a sign-up sheet on the Narthex table. If you'd like to help, please sign up there or contact Joan Eckermann. Thank you!

- © **OPERATION OREO.** Please keep all military personnel in your prayers, but especially: SSG Stephen Simkus and Cadet Julian Sanchez.

- Anyone wishing to donate to Operation Oreo to help offset the cost of shipping and also the contents of the Goody boxes -- Just mark "Op Oreo" on the memo line of your check.
- If you have a name to add to our list or if you have any questions about Operation Oreo, please contact Jennifer Marquardt

- © **BACKPACKS FOR HUMANS** (<https://backpacknation.space/>). This 501(c)(3) organization serves people in crisis in the Toledo area. Current needs for donated items include men's and toddler clothes, blankets, and pillows. Please bring donation items to the church and place them in the collection box in the Narthex.

- © **DEACON AND LECTOR SCHEDULE.** Deacons and Lectors scheduled to serve in upcoming worship services are listed in the table.

DATE	DEACONS	LECTORS
4 December	Mary & Mike Schlievert	Mike Schlievert
11 December	Steve Simkus & Steve Blausey	Nancy Bennett
18 December	Jennifer & Mark Haar	Ruth Ann Anderson
24 December	Jean & Merlyn Weng	Jean Wietelmann
25 December	Randy Jacobs & Gary Anderson	See Sign-Up in Narthex

- © **ELMORE FOOD PANTRY.** The Grace Food Pantry item for December is 14 or 18 oz. packages of cereal. Grace hosts the Elmore Food Pantry. The Food Pantry will be open on Friday the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, from 9:00 AM until noon. Anyone who wishes to drop off food items at the church may bring them to the church on Sunday or leave them inside the north door during times when the church office is open.

- © **DRIVE THRU NATIVITY.** Gibsonburg Area Churches are presenting **The 2022 Drive Thru Nativity** on Saturday and Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 7:30 PM. It will be held in the parking lot of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church at 500 S. Brentwood Avenue, Gibsonburg OH. The presentation is FREE. Enjoy the Biblical Christmas Story as it "comes to life" in 9 scenes portrayed by families from the community. Narration is available in sanitized CD or flash drive formats to accommodate all vehicles.

- © **BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE.** St. John's UCC Elmore plans to hold a Blue Christmas service on Sunday, December 4th at 7:00pm. For many, Christmas is a time of sadness as we remember those days of joy and celebration with loved ones now gone. Come share in this special service Everyone is **WELCOME!**



- © **SALVATION ARMY ANGEL TREE.** Angel Trees will be placed in the Elmore and Woodville Libraries. If you wish to help out a needy family from our community, please consider choosing a name from the tree and donating for these children.
- © **AMAZON SMILE FUNDRAISER.** Last week, Grace received \$24.11 from Amazon as a result of recent Amazon purchases by Grace members. Operation Oreo and the Piecemakers benefit from this fundraiser. With the Christmas shopping season in full swing remember to go to: [smile.amazon.com/ch34-1219970](https://smile.amazon.com/ch34-1219970) and designate Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Elmore OH to receive 0.5% of your eligible purchases. This will ensure that the funds come to Grace. The Amazon Smile program has netted \$116.96 for Grace this year.
- © **MILLERS RECEIPTS.** Members of the Grace Family who shop at Miller's New Market Grocery in Genoa should continue to keep their receipts and give them to Marilyn Crandall who will redeem them for Grace (*or send them to 9591 W Moonlight Bay Lane, Oak Harbor OH 43449*).

***Our Prayer: Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming nurture our growth as people of repentance and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.***

GRACE CONTACT INFORMATION		
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