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It is the first week of Advent as I write this, but I am ready for Christmas.

As we prepare for Christmas at home this year on YouTube, I look forward to saying those words again with you. Grace Church, have your candles ready to light in heart and home for Christmas 2020!

In the light of Jesus Christ,
Pastor Rory

YEAR END GIVING REQUEST: Thank you for your faithful support in this challenging year. No doubt you get many year-end appeals and, I hope you are able to respond with wise and prayerful generosity in this of hardship for many.

If you are able, please consider an extra year-end gift to Grace church as well. We have no publicity campaign or long mailing list to ask for support. You are it! We have had several recent maintenance and repair bills and still need to catch up on the apportionment commitment we have as part of our larger ministries with the Minnesota Annual Conference and United Methodist mission work around the world. Please help us with a good financial finish for this year, and stability for the year ahead. Thank you in advance

Please have your 2020 contributions delivered or postmarked by December 31st to meet IRS requirements.

Church Conference Notice on Zoom

December 15th at 6:30 p.m. ~ December 14th Registration

We will be joining the River Valley District-wide Church Conference led by our District Superintendent, Cynthia Williams.

Our Grace church business will include reports for Pastoral Compensation, inactive membership actions and election of Ad Dd. offices that might be ready at that time. Please register on line as noted below and also let Pastor Rory know in advance so the reports can be sent to you.

Please plan on approximately 90 minutes for worship, teaching and individual church conference voting. For congregations that are not holding their own Church Conference, your Church/Ad Council must pre-approve the clergy compensation and other actions as noted. During the District-Wide Conference, your church's approvals will be ratified. In order to receive the Zoom link for the December 15th Virtual District-Wide Conference, please have those planning to participate **register online** (<https://mnumc-reg.brtaapp.com/RiverValleyAllDistrictChurchChargeConference71>) by 8:00 a.m. on Monday, December 14th.

Grace Notes

December 2020



Grace United Methodist Church

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ

PLEASE NOTE that we are part of the statewide mask order.

Don't forget your mask when you come in the building.



Vicky Kline and Janet Barnes for their efforts in collecting coats and baskets for Emma Norton. Also thanks to all those who donated coats and winter accessories. They were most appreciative of your generosity.



We welcomed new church members Bryce Langevin on Nov. 8th (left) and Sean Litterer (right) on Nov. 15th by profession of faith through confirmation.



On Thursday, November 19th, Bishop Bruce R. Ough turned the dial on the Minnesota Conference's Phased Re-Gathering Plan for Churches from orange to red and requests that all churches return to virtual worship if they have not already done so, that all clergy and staff work

from home, and that in-person activities in church buildings be limited to pre-schools, daycares, and emergency relief activities. Activities that had been taking place, but now are suspended again, are **Movie Night**, **Prayer Shawl**, and **Rory's Tuesday Bible Study Class**. Also, **Ruth Voll Circle** will not be meeting again until March of 2021.

Grace United Methodist Church
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Pastor Rory Swenson:
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Treasurer: treasurer@graceumcburnsville.org
Web Site: www.graceumcburnsville.org

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



The light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome. John 1:5

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS IN 2020

Advent 2020:

This is not just about four candles in a circle in the weeks just before Christmas. Advent is a mood and spiritual time of waiting and watching. It is about our longing, yearning, hoping, and wanting things to change for the better. It's a time of feeling what it is that we are missing. Speaking for myself:

- Advent 2020 is what I feel this year without our children's Christmas programs, caroling and choir cantata at Grace church.
- Advent is knowing that we won't be making ginger bread houses together. Advent this year means we are not setting up the Giving tree and having Christmas parties with Ruth Voll Circle, dinner and book groups.
- Advent is the disappointment this year of not having Christmas Eve services gathered with our candles in the sanctuary, singing "Silent Night."
- Advent is the feeling when we grieve the losses of loved ones, jobs, businesses and classroom teaching.
- Advent is my yearning and readiness to get back to normal or at least a predictable new normal.
- Advent is my desire for healing, peace and wholeness after a difficult and polarized political year.
- Advent is my heartbreak over long food shelf lines, racial disparities, and exhausted health care workers.
- Advent is my waiting for the coming arrival of safe vaccines and immunizations.
- It is looking for Light in the pandemic dark winter prophesied by epidemiologists.

Are you feeling this Advent 2020? Then we need to also light our Advent candles at home this year; the candles of *Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love*. These are the candles that guide us up to Christmas! God, Immanuel, is with us and Christ is born!

On Christmas Eve 2020 we will still light the candle of Christ. And in our homes, we will still be sharing the Light. For almost every Christmas Eve service I have used some version of these words from Howard Thurman:

I will light candles this Christmas,
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
Candles of love to inspire all my living,

Candles of joy despite all the sadness,
Candles of courage for fears ever present,
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,
Candles that will burn all year long.