**PASTOR’S CORNER** *The people walking in darkness
     have seen a great light…* Isaiah 9:2a

On Sunday, November 29th, the church begins its annual celebration of the season of Advent. We break out the Advent wreath and light the candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love in our Sunday worship. At the same time, we start looking towards Christmas, with our Christmas tree in the sanctuary and Christmas carols on our lips. Yet in its truest form, Advent is not a celebration of Christmas, or at least not primarily. It is an important time in the church year on its own. Fleming Rutledge, a long-time Episcopalian priest who has retired to Virginia, puts it this way:

“Of all the seasons of the church year, Advent most closely mirrors the daily lives of Christians and of the church, asks the most important ethical questions, presents the most accurate picture of the human condition, and above all, orients us to the future of the God who will come again.”
(Rutledge, Advent: The Once and Future Coming of Christ, p.1)

This Advent, which is so different from all those that have gone before in many of our lives, it is incredibly important to really celebrate Advent as it is designed to be celebrated. We will make time for Christmas, of course, but for the 27 days of Advent, we will be listening, not primarily to the stories of the birth of Jesus, but to the words of the prophets. They will call us to ponder our lives, both individually and together. They will invite us to make the preparations we need to make for the coming of Christ, a coming we see in stereo, for we celebrate his first coming and long for his second. And they will challenge us to do the things we would do if we knew Christ was coming again soon, even as soon as Christmas Day.

Soon enough, I will be joining so many in wishing you a Merry Christmas. But first, I want to give you an invitation: celebrate Advent with us this year. It will bring you closer to your Lord and Savior, Jesus.

 In Christ,
 Adam

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Many years, we offer a midweek Advent service as part of our church program. This year, we will do this on Thursday mornings in December at 10:30 AM in the Grace Hills sanctuary. We will observe the same COVID precautions as on Sunday mornings (wearing masks, spacing out physically, not singing). Our hope is to provide additional opportunities to engage in the worship of God during the Advent season, as well as an option for folks who may not feel comfortable coming to worship on Sundays because of the larger congregation. These services will occur at 10:30 AM on 12/3, 12/10, 12/17.

For the fourth Thursday of December, 12/24, we hope you’ll join us at our Christmas Eve service. Weather-permitting, we’ll gather on the front steps of the church at 5:00 PM for a short carol service and a reading of the Christmas story.

From the Deacons

Greetings and best wishes for a merry Christmas and a happy, healthy new year! It is a joy to be a part of the Grace Hills family. We have much to celebrate as God blesses and cares for us.

We will begin 2021 with three newly elected deacons as we welcome Linda Lipscomb, Dennis Torrence, and Renee Wingfield. To each of them, we express appreciation for their willingness to be involved in this servant ministry. They will join with Josh Harrison, Tim Peterson, Nancy Williams, Joyce Bennett, Jamie Davis, and Pat Torrence, who will continue to serve. Linda Mays, Hank Davis, and Janice Marston rotate off the council at the end of December. We thank them for their important work during the past three years.

The pandemic situation continues to hit our community. Along with increasing threats for COVID, come increasing requests for benevolence assistance. Nine individuals sought help with rent, food, electric and water bills during November. We also recognize the challenges and stress of our teachers and schools. In response, we are providing coffee for teachers at the local schools on a rotating monthly basis and coffee cards periodically to those in our church who work in the schools. Deacons will also be connecting with their families with a special Christmas remembrance during the next several months. Your donations make it possible for us to reach out in Christian love to our friends in need.

The important ministry work of the deacons is to care for our families at Grace Hills. Recently, a member passed away. Also, several of our members are facing serious illnesses. We join in sympathy and prayers of healing for these individuals and their families. Also, this month we will be making an effort to contact, and when possible, visit as many shut-ins as we can. If you know of someone in our church or community who would appreciate a visit or other assistance, please let us know. The pastor and deacons are also willing to provide communion for our at-home families.

The Deacon Council is a servant ministry of service and love. The Church Council is the administrative leadership council. All of us together are leading the way for good in our church. Please let us know if you are aware of those for whom we should pray, visit, or assist.

May the grace and peace of God and His great blessings be with you. Stay well and safe.
 Janice Marston, Chair

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🎶 🎶 **MUSIC NOTES**  🎶 🎶

The long-awaited season of Advent begins Sunday, November 29th. We look forward to decorations in the sanctuary and the air of preparation for the Christ Child settling all around us. We will surely miss singing during worship this year. This Advent will be like no other. But we have some surprises for you that will lift us all. Bells will ring once during Advent, and then in early January we will do a pre-service concert in honor of Epiphany.

I appreciate so much the music that Susie provides, that the bells have brought into worship, that Brandon has shared with us, and that the choir has provided regularly, all blending to  add  richness to the sermons and
 *Continued on page 3….*

*Music Notes continued from page 2….*prayers and scripture and testimonies that we have had. It has been wonderful. Keep the songs of Christmas in your heart all month long.

We are ready to provide audio and video in the fellowship hall as an overflow space, in case our Sunday 10 a.m. worship overgrows the sanctuary spaces.  We will still be masked and sit at respectful distances, but we will be able to enjoy the worship along with those in the sanctuary. Thank you for being so cooperative with the changes we have had to make to stay safe.  You are the best.

 Nancy Williams

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*…Let us love one another.
1 John 4:7*

Merry Christmas! It is a season of celebration and joy! Although we continue into December with the same concerns about Covid-19, may we focus on our blessings and rejoice in God’s love for us.

Good Neighbor is continuing to be on mission in our community. During November, we reached out to meet many needs. First, we worked with the mother who is deciding about moving to Appomattox to begin a new life. Be in prayer for her and for the council that God will lead us in the way we should go. Also, Good Neighbor thought of the Grace Hills Early Learning Center Staff and provided lunch for the workers in recognition of the faithful and important work they do for children and their parents, especially during these COVID times. We also reached out to those in our church and community who have not been able to get out to church through phone calls, visits, and small tokens of caring, including special “thinking of you” remembrances for our shut-ins during Thanksgiving week.

A distressed mother with four children called the center in November asking for food. Thanks to all of you who donate to the food pantry, we were able to meet her request immediately. In response to a significant personal challenge faced by another individual, Good Neighbor provided a love gift.

For nine consecutive years, Good Neighbor has hosted the Centra Mammography Unit at Grace Hills. This effort is led by Shirley Walton. On November 24th, thirteen ladies received mammograms, some at no cost.

We urge you to join us at any time for our meetings. We wear masks and social distance in the fellowship hall at church. If you are aware of someone seeking assistance, please let any member of the council know. We continue to check our messages at the center to stay in touch with those who contact us. We invite you to volunteer with Good Neighbor, for we are on mission for Christ as Grace Hills Baptist Church in Appomattox.

We pray God’s protection and blessings for wellness and safety for all.

 *Prayer: Father, help us to always realize that we are on a mission for You.*

Blessings,
The Good Neighbor Team


**WMUV ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT**

On November 7th, WMU of Virginia elected a new slate of officers during their annual meeting which was held virtually.  We are proud to announce that our own, **Lucianne Warren**, was elected as the president of WMUV.  Eight of our members were present for the “watch party” and enjoyed the meeting and refreshments.  Congratulations Lucianne—proud of you!

Blessings,
Linda Jo

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Grace Hills Early Learning Center News
Director: Leslie Galloway Bookkeeper: Lisa Dawson
Phone: (434) 352-2273 Email: gracehillselc@aol.com
Temporary Attendance: Full Time Students: 83    School Age Students: 35

*******Praying all is well with everyone during these unpredictable times.*

***November Happenings:***

*This month we have been enjoying the Fall weather. The children have been on many Fall walks and collected lots of leaves.*

*Since we celebrated Thanksgiving this month, we discussed the many reasons we are thankful.*

***Each month all of our Preschool classes have colors, numbers, shapes and letters they work on to prepare them for the next class. Each class also has monthly Bible verses!***

***ELC Council meeting: 12/8 @ 4pm; ELC closed 12/24-5 & 12/28***

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**Grace Hills Baptist Church**

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 *🎄 Have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! 🎇***