



# GRACE NOTES

We Welcome You...because you are you.

December 2015

## Waiting in the Dark

Have you ever been awake at night when the electricity went off and everything got dark? That can be scary! It can also be a time of hope, because you know that the electricity will come back on eventually, and daylight will come again. That's what Advent is all about. The word Advent means "coming." We see things differently because Jesus came to us and will come to us again, and that fills us with hope. That's why Advent's color is blue for hope. It could also be purple reminding us that Jesus is a royal king.

On the "New Year's Day" of the church—the first Sunday of Advent—we start using a different series of Bible readings in worship. Some years we read from the book of Matthew, the next year we use Mark, and then we use Luke. The Gospel of John is used every year.

Advent is a time of waiting. Sometimes the four weeks of Advent seem like a long time, but that time can help us remember that there is more to Christmas than shopping for Christmas presents! Some people light a candle on each of the four Sundays of Advent, both at church and at home. Some people use Advent calendars to count the days until Christmas. Some people drill holes in a log, one for each day before Christmas, and put a candle in each hole. One candle is lit each day. Sometimes Advent carols are sung, and prayers for those who are homeless or hungry are shared. Why not try some of these ideas in your home this year? Jesus came to save us all!

### *December Assistants*

December 6

**Reader:** Janet Boyd

**Refreshments:** Michelle and Cindy

December 13

**Reader:** Steve Anderson

**Refreshments:** Steve and Joni Anderson

December 20

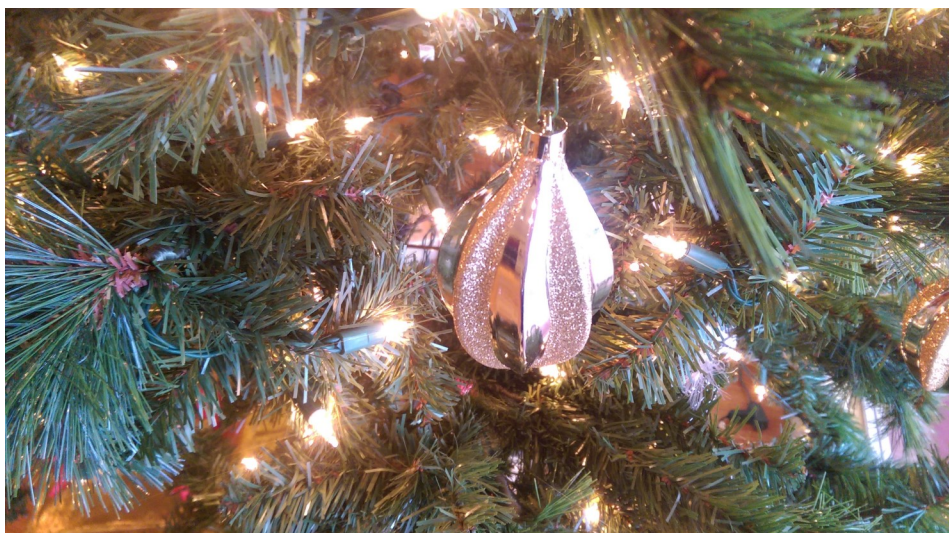
**Reader:** Christmas Program

**Refreshments:** Flora Larson

December 27

**Reader:** Regina Marks

**Refreshments:** David and Regina Marks



## In This Issue

- Bishop's Visit
- Pack With A Purpose
- Christmas Program
- December Benevolence



But now, in many and various ways the story is again retold

## The Christmas Story —

Familiar. Traditional. Unexpected. Heartfelt. All these words and more only touch the surface of that yearly event that we all look forward to—the Children’s Christmas Program. An annual event, the program is surrounded by noise, lights, music and a general sense of chaos—much like I expect it was that first Christmas night. It is always a unique way of telling the story of the birth of Jesus as we celebrate the coming of God in the baby Jesus and live in expectant hope for the return of Jesus. We invite to join with us, and the children, on Sunday morning, December 20th as we enter again into the Christmas Story.

**First United Methodist Church presents**

**23rd Annual Living Nativity**

**Saturday, December 12th, 6-8p**

**Sunday, December 13th, 4-6p**

**191 E. Gladys Ave**



**This adventure will take you through a beautiful setting featuring live animals and characters so you can experience first-hand the birth of our Savior. Then come inside for warm drinks and cookies. Please bring you friends and family and enjoy this**

*Continued from page 3)*

access to traditional banking systems. One hundred percent of your loan is sent to these microfinance institutions, which we call Field Partners, who administer the loans in the field.

Kiva relies on a world wide network of over 450 volunteers who work with our Field Partners, edit and translate borrower stories, and ensure the smooth operation of countless other Kiva programs.

Learn more about [kiva.org](http://kiva.org).

### How we're funded

100% of every dollar you lend on Kiva goes directly towards funding loans; Kiva does not take a cut. Furthermore, Kiva does not charge interest to our Field Partners, who administer the loans.

Kiva is primarily funded through the support of lenders making optional donations. We also raise funds through grants, corporate sponsors, and foundations.

### *Welcome Bishop Brauer-Rieke*

Sunday, December 6th will be a special day for us as we welcome Bishop David Brauer-Rieke. The Bishop will be traveling from Portland to join with us around word and table and the Table as we continue our Lenten Journey. We invite your presence, support, and prayer as we gather for worship and breakfast—at the same time and in the same place! Who said Lutheran’s can’t multi-task?!

Worship will be followed by our involvement in the Festival of Trees at the convention center. Make sure you wear your “yellow shirt” as we welcome the Bishop and support the Festival of Trees.



December Benevolence Focus

### Why we do what we do

We envision a world where all people - even in the most remote areas of the globe - hold the power to create opportunity for themselves and others.

We believe providing safe, affordable access to capital to those in need helps people create better lives for themselves and their families.

### How we do it

Making a loan on Kiva is so simple that you may not realize how much work goes on behind the scenes.

Kiva works with micro-finance institutions on five continents to provide loans to people without

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Kiva

We are a non-profit organization with a mission to connect people through lending to alleviate poverty. Leveraging the internet and a world-wide network of microfinance institutions, Kiva lets individuals lend as little as \$25 to help create opportunity around the world.

Since Kiva was founded in 2005:

- 1,355,781 Kiva lenders
- \$786,177,825 in loans
- 98.45% repayment rate

We work with

- 301 Field Partners
- 450 volunteers around the world
- 83 different countries

## Community Dinner

Volunteers are needed to serve the hundreds of people expected to take part in the annual Christmas Community Fellowship Dinner.

And if the Thanksgiving dinner is any indication, organizer Laurie Ball-Kiser will need plenty of volunteers on Christmas Day. A total of 801 people were served Thanksgiving dinner last month – more than 350 of those served had their meals delivered to their homes.

The dinner will take place from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Hermiston Senior Center. This is the 25th year of the fellowship dinners. Volunteers are needed to help set up the day before and clean up after the dinner. Volunteers are also needed to cook, serve the meals, greet guests and deliver meals to homes.

To volunteer or for more information, call Ball-Kiser at 541-567-8600.

**InspireDR**

**Wish List**

Bathing suits, goggles,  
masks, snorkles

Kickballs

Baseball bats, gloves,  
balls

Polo style shirts—sky  
blue, light green

T-shirts—sky blue, neon  
green

Shoes

Life jackets—inflatable

Dry erase markers

Dry erase practice boards

Puzzles

Books

English Language lesson  
materials

Board Games

First aid kits

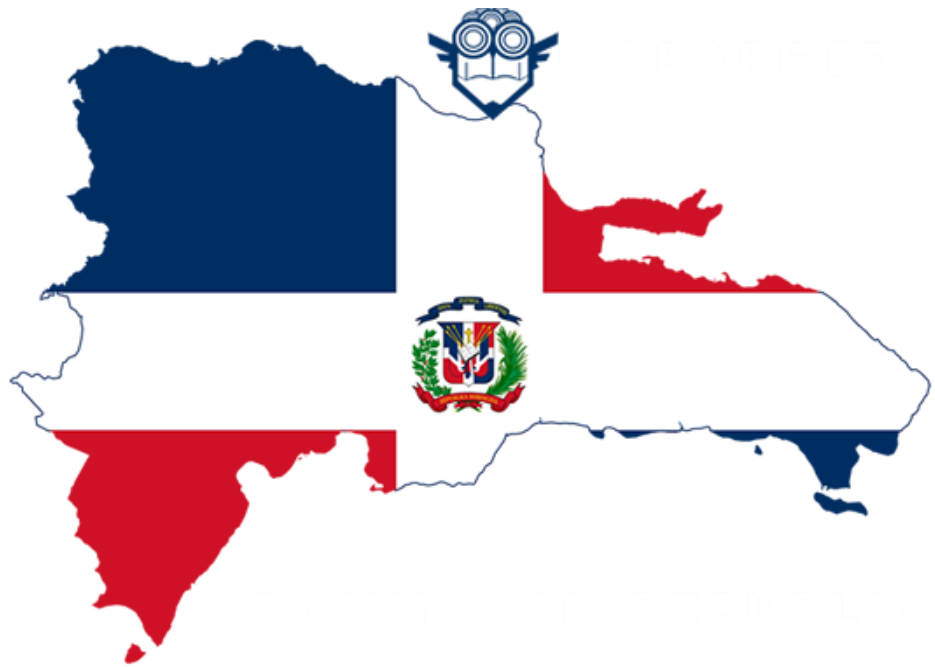
Toothbrushes

Children's vitamins

Water bottles

Children's books

Spiral notebooks



**CABARETE Dominican Republic**

## Pack With A Purpose

InspireDR: an out-of-school learning program supporting the boys of Cabarete

It started with a few simple questions: What type of bike do you ride? Where do you guys go? Do you ride every weekend? How many of you are there? What's your name?

Sunday morning if you peak out the front door you will see the bikes lined up as the riders head into Hales for breakfast and coffee before their journey. It was the offer of a blessing before they headed out that conversation with one of the riders, Paul Eaker, turned into a conversation about family, and then passion, and then the focus of that passion—InspireDR—a ministry in the Dominican Republic that seeks to address the needs of some of the local boys of Cabarete through education and sports. He spoke of the trips that he and his wife, Denise, have taken to Cabarete, and how the boys have touched their hearts, of the unthinkable need that is in the country, and this ministry that seeks to make a difference. And this is where the conversation got interesting: Would you help?

One of those “gotcha” questions, and I pass it on to you: Would you help? There are many opportunities for us to make a difference, to offer help to another, but a unique feature of this particular opportunity is that InspireDR could begin the process of building bridges with other faith communities here in Hermiton. Personally, I think that is a win-win combination.

If you would like to know more about InspireDR, head over to their website: <http://inspiredr.org> to get the latest news, or contact Paul and Denise at [spnke-wog@gmail.com](mailto:spnke-wog@gmail.com) for a more personal conversation—or flag him down Sunday morning as he heads for coffee.

You'll find a suitcase in church to gather the wish-list items to be taken to the Dominican Republic sometime in late January or early February.

# Food, For More Than Thought..

## *A milestone worth celebrating*

For Ruben Duran, the message is quite clear—"the church is not dying." That's a different message, he says, that what has been widely reported in recent years about the decline in membership among U.S. mainline denominations like the 3.8 million-member ELCA.

Duran believes the ELCA "is not dying. We are changing," particularly as this church reached a significant milestone this past spring.

Since the ELCA began in 1988 as a result of a merger, more than 500 new congregations have been "planted, organized and (have) joined the ELCA. That is a milestone worth celebrating." The "changing part" is that 56 percent of all ELCA new starts are in ethnic-multicultural communities, and 27 percent in communities where people are living in poverty or low income. Another 26 ministries started with leaders whose congregations left the ELCA in recent years.

Put that all together, Duran says, and "we have 10 percent of the denomination in the growing stages. This is a good moment to celebrate. (The typical new congregation) is a fusion of many nations welcomed into the ELCA. It reflects the country that we're becoming. We are not dying. We are changing."

Taken from Stories of Faith in Action

## Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our services and ministries.

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Visit us on Facebook at  
Grace and Mercy Lutheran Church

Grace And Mercy Welcomes You



**God's work.**  
Our hands.



**C**hristmas is a very special time. It's also a very busy time. There are many things to do. We decorate our homes, cook special foods, and come together as families and friends to celebrate with each other. People who like to sing get together to sing Christmas carols. We do some of these things at church, too. We also share the Christmas story with each other — the story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. What a night that was! God, who can do anything, chose to come as a baby. We all know babies are pretty helpless! But God wanted us to know that people are important.

That's one thing Christmas tells us: regular, everyday human beings are very important to God. You don't have to be an excellent athlete or musician to be noticed by God. You don't have to be popular, or smart, or good-looking. You don't have to work especially hard. God loves you just as you are.

Sing one of your family's favorite Christmas carols. You or your grandparents might know carols in a language other than English, too. Originally, carols were simple, rhythmic songs that had a refrain which was meant for dancing. Make up simple actions or a dance for your favorite carol. Celebrate the best Christmas present of all: Jesus!

# December 2015

Sun                      Mon                      Tue                      Wed                      Thu                      Fri                      Sat

		1 8am Coffee @ Pheasants 6:30pm Leadership Team @ Pastor's	2	3	4 <b>FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS</b>	5 Pastor Inch—Hermiston
6    2 Advent 10a Worship & Communion—Bishop Reike 12-4 Festival of Trees @ Community Ctr.	7 6:32a Next Text @ Pheasants	8 8a Coffee @ Pheasants	9 10a Gather Study	10	11 <b>FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS</b>	12 Pastor Inch—Hermiston
Pastor Inch—Hermiston						
13    3 Advent 9a Worship 10a Educational Hour	14 6:32a Next Text @ Pheasants	15 8a Coffee @ Pheasants	16 9:30a Foot Clinic	17	18 <b>FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS</b>	19 4:30p Caroling Pastor Inch—Hermiston
Pastor Inch—Hermiston						
20    4 Advent 9a Worship and Christmas Program	21 6:32a Next Text @ Pheasants	22 8a Coffee @ Pheasants	23 10a Gather Study	24 7p Christmas Eve Service	25 Merry Christmas 	26
Pastor Inch—Hermiston						
27    1 Christmas 9a Worship	28 6:32a Next Text @ Pheasants	29 8a Coffee @ Pheasants	30	31 New Year's Eve		
Pastor Inch—Hermiston						