

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER



Reflection from Pastor John Denton

The Christmas season always reminds us of how quickly time passes. We see it most clearly in our children—growing up faster than we could ever imagine. We also feel it when we think about the people who are not with us this Christmas, or when we realize how many years it has been since we lost someone we love. For some, Christmas arrives with great joy. For others, it comes with real concerns, sorrow, or grief.

In the church we call this season Advent—the weeks from Sunday, November 30th through Christmas Eve, December 24th. Advent comes from a Latin word meaning arrival or coming. It is a season of waiting, preparation, and anticipation. Because of the birth of Jesus Christ, we have great hope that life will not always remain as it is—that our world has been forever changed. The dullness, the grief, the fears, the worries (the list can feel long, can't it?)—all of these things that stand in the way of true Christmas joy will ultimately be replaced by the love and comfort of Jesus, our infant Redeemer.



So I ask: What are you hoping for this Christmas? What are you expecting? What are you waiting for?

In my own home, I look at my oldest daughter—13 years old—as we prepare to choose a high school next month, as we look at college sports camps over the winter break, and I realize: we only have five more Christmas mornings with her until she is off to college. I find myself wondering, *Have we created meaningful*

traditions as a family? Has Christmas been a time of expectant joy for her? Does she carry the same excitement about the birth of Jesus that I do?

Our family has many Advent traditions—the Advent calendar, picking out the perfect Christmas tree, cruising the neighbor-



hood in our '67 Mustang looking at lights, watching every Christmas movie far too many times, the candlelight Christmas Eve service, Christmas Eve dinner at In-N-Out, me squeezing into the same Santa suit every year to surprise the kids, opening Christmas pajamas on Christmas Eve, and waking up Christmas morning to read the birth narrative of Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew. If you asked my kids, I'm sure they could list even more. These traditions build anticipation for the arrival of Jesus, strengthen our family, and fill our home with expectant joy.

Some of you are just beginning your family's story. Others are watching from the outside as grown children carry these traditions into their own homes. And still others are waiting—praying for a Christmas miracle to break into a broken world.

Wherever you find yourself this year, let me encourage you: start a new tradition, or invite someone new into a favorite tradition of the past. Don't miss the miracle.

And I want to personally invite you to be part of one of our most meaningful traditions—the Candlelight Christmas Eve Service at Grace, December 24 at 7:00pm.

With Advent Expectation,
Rev. John Denton



Advent at Grace

CHRISTMAS AT GRACE CHRISTMAS AT GRACE CHRISTMAS AT GRACE CHRISTMAS AT GRACE CHRISTMAS AT GRACE

ADVENT SCHEDULE

Grace Presbyterian

11/30-10am	FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: HOPE
12/3-6pm	ADVENT DINNER, DISCUSSION, AND KIDS CRAFT
12/7-10am	SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: PEACE
12/7-3pm	CAROLS, COOKIES, AND CHRISTMAS SWEATER PARTY
12/10-6pm	ADVENT DINNER, DISCUSSION, AND KIDS CRAFT
12/14-10am	THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: JOY
12/17-6pm	ADVENT DINNER, DISCUSSION, AND KIDS CRAFT
12/21-10am	FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: LOVE
12/24-7pm	CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLIGHT SERVICE

CHRISTMAS AT GRACE CHRISTMAS AT GRACE CHRISTMAS AT GRACE CHRISTMAS AT GRACE CHRISTMAS AT GRACE

Finance Committee Report

Ways you can give your tithes, gifts and offerings:

- In person at the weekly worship service.
- Online at www.gpcvista.org. Choose the "Donate" button and you can pay by credit or debit card or with a PayPal account or scan the QR code to the right.
- Mail or drop off to the church office (if office is closed, drop into the mail slot near the front door to the Fellowship Hall) at 1450 E. Vista Way, Vista, CA 92084



Stewardship Corner

Love and Giving

"If we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us." 1 John 4:12

Anne Frank, a Jewish girl who kept a diary while hiding from Nazi soldiers during their occupation of the Netherlands, penned these words: "No one has ever become poor by giving." Indeed, in many ways we are made spiritually rich by giving.

In John 3:16 we read that "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." This passage tells us something about the nature of love.

We read that God so loved the world that he gave his Son. From this we learn that love involves giving. If we love, we give. When we truly have love in our hearts, we are willing to give of our time, energy, finances and other resources to help others and to minister to them.

God has shown us love by giving us His Son, and when His love fills our hearts through faith, it transforms us. We become more Christlike and we want to share God's love in everything we do. Through giving and living out our love, which comes from God, we also find we are blessed with the spiritual richness of knowing that "If we love one another, God lives in us."

Financial Statement

As of October 31, 2025

	Oct. 2025	YTD 2025	YTD 2025 Budget
Income	\$ 42,104	\$ 492,846	\$ 633,750
Expense	\$ 59,388	\$ 484,629	\$ 625,402
Net Income	\$-17,284	\$ 8,217	\$ 8,348

Note: Income includes 12-month distribution from the Legacy Fund; and unbudgeted \$45,249 from the government Employee Retention Credit program.

Men's Breakfast in December

Join us on Saturday, December 6th at 8 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall for a full breakfast, good fellowship and time in the Word and in prayer. It is a great opportunity to feed your body and soul.



DECEMBER 2025

Angel Tree

Angel tree is a wonderful opportunity to bless a local child with a gift for Christmas.

Sign up at the Angel Tree table on the patio on November 30 or December 7. All gifts are due by December 14.

Drop off in the Fellowship Hall or Church Office.

See Maria for further details.

Thank you for giving!



Advent Dinner & Devotionals

Please join us as we prepare for the celebration of Christmas at a midweek dinner and devotion. This is a time to fellowship with a meal, reflection and activities for children. Invite a friend, neighbor or family member to join you.



Dinner and Devotions will be held on Wednesdays; December 3rd, 10th and 17th from 6-7pm in the Fellowship Hall. Meals will be provided by the Christian Education Committee. If you did not have a chance to sign up please feel free to join any evening. Contact the Church Office or Sue Weston if you have any questions.

Our prayer is you will be deeply blessed by this time of fellowship.

Carols, Cookies, & Christmas Sweaters



SUSAN IS A WONDERFUL AND WARM HEARTED INDIVIDUAL THAT ENJOYS ENCOURAGING OTHERS. IN ADDITION, SHE HAS SERVED IN MANY AREAS OF MINISTRY AT GPC INCLUDING, WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY, MISSIONS COMMITTEE, TEACHING SUNDAY SCHOOL AND MUCH MORE. WE ARE SO BLESSED FOR HER AND THE GIFTS SHE SHARES WITH SO MANY AT GRACE. ~ MARIA HAIGH, COMMUNITY OUTREACH DIRECTOR



Susan has been such a wonderful part of Grace for many years. Whether she is leading a Bible Study, teaching our kiddos in Sunday School, or helping to make our worship service run smoothly, she always has a smile on her face and radiates the love of God. Those aren't all the areas she has served over the years either! Susan truly has a servant's heart and is a blessing to all she interacts with. Susan, thank you for shining God's light so bright in all you do! ~ Christie Elliott, Director of Church Operations

A few years ago, when I was new to the choir, Susan and Mark were out to breakfast at a local restaurant where I was also breakfasting and we recognized each other from church but had never met. It was wonderful how welcoming they both were that day and I felt part of the church

family as we chatted. Fast forward to now, I'm no longer only singing in the choir, sometimes I am a liturgist on Sundays and recently, Susan went out of her way, writing to me expressing her appreciation of me. Wow! It should have been me thanking her for all she does. Among other things, she has the gift of an encourager and sharing her gift with me has blessed me beyond measure. I am happy to be able to thank her now. Thank you Susan! ~ Karen England

When I think about Susan, I think about Psalm 28:7 - A woman's strength comes from knowing the Lord as her shield. *"The Lord is my strength and my shield; in Him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him."* Susan is a dedicated volunteer at Grace Sunday School, generously offering her time and talents week after week. Her kind and loving nature creates a welcoming and supportive environment where every child feels cherished and inspired. In addition to her work with the children, she also shares her faith as the compassionate leader of a women's Bible study group. Outside of these activities, Susan frequently shares her favorite Bible verses on social media, reaching many people beyond her immediate church connections. She is a wonderful gift to Grace Presbyterian Church, and all who know her are blessed by her love of the Lord. ~ Sue Weston

Susan Hiltbrand

SUSAN WAS ONE OF THE VERY FIRST PEOPLE I MET AT GRACE, AND FROM OUR VERY FIRST CONVERSATIONS IT WAS CLEAR HOW DEEPLY SHE LOVES SERVING THE LORD AND SERVING THIS CHURCH. WEEK AFTER WEEK, SHE FAITHFULLY LEADS THE WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY EVERY THURSDAY MORNING, CREATING A MEANINGFUL SPACE FOR DISCUSSION, PRAYER, AND FELLOWSHIP.

ON SUNDAY MORNINGS, SHE SERVES AS AN USHER, MAKING SURE THAT EVERYONE IN WORSHIP IS WELCOMED, COUNTED, AND CARED FOR—OFTEN HELPING WITH SEATING AND GREETING WITH HER WARM SPIRIT. I AM ALSO PERSONALLY THANKFUL FOR THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE SHE PLAYS IN THE LIVES OF MY CHILDREN AS THEIR SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER.

SEEING THE HILTBRAND FAMILY IN WORSHIP BRINGS JOY TO MY HEART. IN LAST WEEK'S SERMON I SPOKE ABOUT EDIFICATION—THE CALLING TO BUILD UP THE CHURCH. WHEN I THINK OF SOMEONE LIVING THAT OUT, I THINK OF SUSAN. SHE CONSISTENTLY STRENGTHENS THE CHURCH BY HER PRESENCE, HER SERVICE, AND HER LOVE FOR CHRIST AND OTHERS.

THANK YOU, SUSAN, FOR THE MANY WAYS YOU EDIFY GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. WE ARE BLESSED BY YOU.

~ REV. DENTON

As we close out the month of November, our hearts are overflowing with gratitude for the many blessings we have experienced as a school community. This month was especially meaningful because we were able to celebrate our **first-ever Thanksgiving as a preschool**. Christian Education graciously hosted all of our families in the Fellowship Hall for a warm and welcoming Thanksgiving lunch complete with ham, turkey, and all the trimmings. Pastor John led us in prayer,



centering our gathering in Christ's love. Our students joyfully helped set the tables and greeted their families, showing such pride in the roles they played. It was a beautiful sight to see so many families coming together—many of whom are experiencing this kind of loving Christian community for the very first time. What a blessing it is to welcome them and to share God's love in such a meaningful way.



As we move into December, our classrooms are filled with excitement and anticipation as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus. This month, our students have been learning about the importance of thankfulness through the story of the **Ten Lepers**, focusing not only on saying "thank you," but truly understanding what it means to have a thankful heart for all that God provides. These lessons have sparked wonderful conversations among the children about gratitude, kindness, and recognizing the many gifts we receive each day.

We are thrilled to share that our students will be performing **"Away in a Manger"** during our **Carols, Cookies, and Christmas Sweaters event at 3:00pm on Sunday, December 7.**



This will be a joyful time of singing, fellowship, and celebration with our families. The children have been practicing with excitement, and we cannot wait to see them share the story of Jesus' birth through song.

In the spirit of giving, our classroom now features a **Giving Tree** decorated with ornaments labeled with items that would support our students' growth and learning. Each day of school leading up to Christmas, the children will open one present during circle time. Many of the items on our Giving Tree—such as books, paper, glue

sticks, and other classroom essentials—help us provide meaningful, hands-on learning experiences. We are deeply grateful for any contributions families feel led to make, as these gifts directly enrich our program and the daily experiences of our students.



December is a month full of joy, wonder, and celebration at Grace Preschool. We feel so blessed to walk alongside your children as they grow in faith, knowledge, and love. Thank you for being such an important part of our community.

Community Resources: Increased Community Need

The government shutdown highlighted the importance of our food support. It underscored how essential it is to be prepared for emergencies. The spike in demand led families to seek help from the pantry resource (Shepherd's Pantry) at Grace.

Despite the challenges, our diligent teams of volunteers continue to serve the community with compassion and determination. The experience has only strengthened our commitment to every family and individual to have access to the food they need, ensuring that no one is turned away.

We are seeing an increase of first-time visitors needing emergency food. More of our neighbors are arriving each week in need of items like fresh produce, shelf-stable foods and diapers.

In the midst of the uncertainties of the food crisis, we are blessed to help lighten the load for the many families who are in need.

If you would like to donate any food items or would like to volunteer, please contact Maria Haigh, Outreach Director at (760) 724.0077 ext. 205.

Christmas Joy Offering: Prepare the Way, Isaiah 40

The Perfect Gift

When Jesus was born among us, he came as a helpless baby destined to bring joy, peace and salvation to his people. This child, God's Word made flesh - fully human and fully God - became one of us. One with us. One among us. In all of our vulnerabilities, struggles and triumphs, Jesus became one of us - leading us, knowing us, connecting us to himself and to each other, and offering us his gift of eternal life.

The perfect gift.

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we reflect God's perfect gift to us, with generous support of church leaders among us - past, present and future - who have pointed us to God. We honor and celebrate leaders like retired pastors, church workers and their families who have faithfully guided and led us but who now find themselves in critical financial need. We honor and celebrate emerging leaders like students in schools and colleges equipping communities of color, who develop leadership skills as they pursue their education and prepare to bring their gifts in service to the world God loves so much.

Jesus' example as a child born to be among us and lead us to eternal life provides a pattern for us to follow as we celebrate those who have led us in the past and will lead us into the future. Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we come together to support past, present and future leaders, embodying God's perfect gift to us, Jesus Christ.





Generation G: Leaving a Spiritual Legacy (or Hot Topics on Grandparenting) -by Gramma Pat Whisler



When you think of December, does shopping come first to your mind, whether it be for food or gifts? Materialism is a topic that blossoms in December. Three of my 4 grandchildren are teens. What do you get teens these days and still have a bank account? Giving is something our faith wants us to do and, in our gifts, we need to honor our Lord's birth and as Christians we try to display our Lord's birth: a manger scene, the cards we send out, worship services. But how do we act when we receive a gift?

GOD'S WORD: *...remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'* **Acts 20:35**

This month's GP Hot Topic: **BLESSED TO RECEIVE**

Let's take a look at GOD'S WORD printed above. First, we must realize that nowhere in our bible does Jesus say this. So, we have to believe that Paul (who wrote Acts) possibly heard it said or quoted somewhere. Or it is very believable that Paul was inspired by God to say this. You choose.



However, it is not in the giving that we want to focus on in this Christmas newsletter. It is likely that there will be gift exchanges and we, as grandparents, may receive some. How do we feel when someone gives us a gift that we really like? Do we make the comment "*O, you shouldn't have?*" If we take our comment and put it in relation to Paul's statement in Acts, what are we really saying? Are we saying "*Don't be blessed for giving this to me*". We must be gracious in the receiving because the person who gave is being blessed for the giving of it and we want to confirm that.

Check out a few verses from Romans: v8.2 *because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.* v15.5 *May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had*



The Lord's giving showers his blessings upon us, believers. Yes, we are grateful for His gift and acknowledge his giving as worthy and our acceptance as lifesaving. So, with the next gift we receive let's look upon the giver as being blessed. Encourage that idea because that person wanted to see us happy and is blessed for that.

Let us grandparents look into that manger wherever it is in our home and look at the giver of that babe and what it means to our lives. We certainly don't want to say "*O, you shouldn't have.*"

- **Prayer:** *Father, we thank you for your Son. We acknowledge the blessings you bring forth to those who give. We want to be like you. In Jesus we pray. Amen*
- **Action:** This Christmas, let's look at each person giving us gifts and say "I'm so glad you gave this to me", remembering how we are so glad God gave us his Son
- **A Thought and a Smile:** *Note on Christmas package: Batteries inside, toys not included.*

DECEMBER

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

SUNDAYS

9am How to Read the Bible Class
9:30am Prayer Group
10am In Person Worship (Sanctuary)
10am Online Worship

MONDAYS

6:30pm Evening Bible Study
7pm AA

TUESDAYS

8am Food Pantry Distrib.
9:15am Preschool Chapel
(no 12/23 & 12/30)
10:30am Staff Meeting
2:00pm Meals of Grace

WEDNESDAYS

2:30pm ASP Tutoring
(no 12/17, 12/24 or 12/31)
6:30pm AA Men's Group
7pm Worship Band Rehearsal

THURSDAYS





9:15am Bible 101 (no 12/4, 12/25)
10am Women's Bible Study (no 12/25)
7pm Choir Rehearsal (no 12/25)

FRIDAYS

8am Food Distribution

SATURDAYS

9:30am Soul Line Dance Class

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3 12:30pm Personnel 6pm Advent Dinner & Devotionals	4	5	6 8am Men's Breakfast 10am SCA
7 11am 	8	9	10 9am B & G 1pm Finance Committee 6pm Advent Dinner & Devotionals	11 8:30am PEO	12	13
14 3pm Carols, Cookies, & Christmas Sweaters	15	16 6:30pm Session	17 6pm Advent Dinner & Devotionals	18	19	20 10am PCSS
21 11:15am Christian Ed. Meeting	22	23	24 7pm 	25 	26	27
28	29	30	31 			



2	Jackie Bynagte	22	Juan Salazar
14	Savannah Haigh	23	Tom Bryan
18	John Denton	26	Lori Gunderson
19	Soon Ok Jun	29	Carol Lightner

If you have a birthday or anniversary in December and your name does not appear above, please contact the church office at 760-724-0077 to update our records. Thank you!

Rex Bassett

Krasovic Family

Apollo Bostian
(Elizabeth Bostian's Son)

Annie Kumar

Browning Family

Suzy Long

Bev Bush

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Eliza Newton
(Sailor's friend)

Roger Corley

Maureen Russell

Hannah Dukes

Christine Sailors

John Earnest

Judi Salazar

Michele Earnest

Tricia Sanger

Gary Eldridge

Robert Sawyer
(Terry-Jeanne's Son)

Helen Frederick

Terry-Jeanne Sawyer

Laurie Gilmore
(Pat Sexton's Sister)

Kim & Jonathan Sparkman

Lori Gunderson

Arcilia Tauber

Nancy Haigh

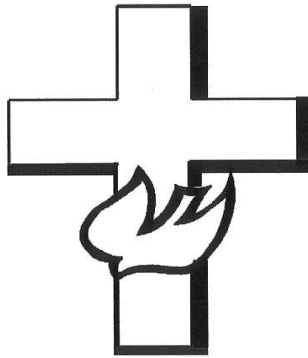
Whisler Family

Betty Haver

Mary Wilhem
(Arlene Cratsa's Sister)

Chandy Jacob
(Annie Kumar's Brother)

Woolsey Family





GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Church Staff

Pastor/Head of Staff
Director of Church Operations
Preschool Director
Preschool Teacher
Preschool Support Staff
Dir. of Community Relations
Custodian
Music Director
Organist
Praise Band Leader
Financial Specialist
Hand Bell Choir Director
Choir Section Leader

Rev. John Denton
Christie Elliott
Frankie Zavala
Miriam Mojica Santos
Denise Stockman
Maria Haigh
Savannah Haigh
Jayne Parker
Frances Hummel
Scott Huston
Albina Lumetta
Pat Sexton
Chris Nolf



GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IS A CONFESSING CHURCH,
and we believe:

That Jesus Christ alone is Lord of all and the way of salvation.

That Holy Scripture is the triune God's revealed Word,
the Church's only infallible rule of faith and life.

That God's people are called to holiness in all aspects of life.