



The Messenger

Grace United Methodist
Church

16 Hillcrest Drive
Ravena, NY 12143

(518) 756-6688

Email: graceumcravena@statetel.com

Website: www.gumcravena.com

Rev. Kim Krause, Pastor

Working together to put our faith and love into practice.

**Services are held at 9:30am - Parking Lot Grace FM-89.7,
Temporary Sanctuary, & Facebook**

DECEMBER 2025

FROM THE DESK OF THE PASTOR

Dear Family and Friends of Grace UMC,

It's hard to believe that we are nearing the year's end - although our new church year has already begun. Advent is the beginning of the church calendar – and for those of you that follow the lectionary (the assigned 3 year cycle of readings that many denominations use) we are now in Year A, having just finished Year C before Thanksgiving. And we have much to give thanks for...even with the challenges and difficult times we have been through (individually and as a congregation) ...knowing that God is always present, always with us and always loves us.

We are now in the season of Advent (the 4 Sundays preceding Christmas) – a time of waiting and preparing, of being watchful for signs of God at work, for opportunities to be co-creators with God in our church, our community and the world. We are called to prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus – not just the birth of God Incarnate or Emmanuel (God with us) –

but with Jesus' coming again. It's a time of reflection, of prayer, of gathering, of caring, showing grace and mercy, a time of looking to the future and where God may be leading us next.

We dare to have hope – knowing that everything is not as it should be – knowing that it can be different. We acknowledge that we, as a world, as a country, as a community, and often as family, are broken. And so we first recognize and acknowledge the brokenness that is all around us, and sometimes in us, so that we can begin to heal and be restored. For we believe that God came to be with us (Emmanuel) and God is still with us, even to this day. We also believe that God will come again to set all things right.

Advent allows us to acknowledge the truth of today in the promise and light of what was and what will be. So, YES, we *should* light candles against the darkness and read the scriptures that remind us of what will be. We celebrate Advent because we know of the longing for healing and restoration, knowing that God continues to seek us out, right where we are. God redeems us where we are, bringing all that is wounded or dead within us back to wholeness and life.

And so, we gather on Sunday mornings to worship. Worship helps us to get ready, to consider God's call on our lives and God's continued presence with us always. But we also know that this time of year can be difficult. Because of this, we have set aside some time for those who have experienced loss or for whom this season and time of year can be difficult, especially with all the commercials telling us how merry and bright we should be and feel. On Sunday, December 21st, we will have our Longest Night/Blue Christmas service at 4pm. This is open to everyone, however it will not be recorded.

Advent and all the preparing leads us to Christmas Eve, where we will once again hear the story of Jesus' birth, of God Incarnate, choosing to dwell amongst us. Worship will be at 4 pm in our temporary sanctuary, as well as Facebook live and on Grace FM in the parking lot.

May we continue to put our faith and love into practice each day.

Peace for the Journey,
Pastor Kim

December

Birthdays & Anniversaries

9 Edna Rominger
11 Padraig McTigue
11 Marty Van Wie
16 Sarah Bliss

18 Druhan Gordon-Stacey
22 Rick Robertson
23 Ray Bradshaw
31 Al & JoAnne Burrill

Some of the special days celebrated in December are:

- *Second Sunday of Advent* — December 7, 2025
- *Third Sunday of Advent* — December 14, 2025
- *First Day of Winter* — December 21, 2025
- *Fourth Sunday of Advent* — December 21, 2025
- *Longest Night/Blue Christmas* – Dec. 21 at 4:00pm
- *Christmas Eve* — December 24, 2025 at 4:00 pm
- *Christmas Day* — December 25, 2025
- *New Year's Eve* — December 31, 2025
- Book Nook & Bargain Shed are open Tuesdays and Saturdays from 9:00am-Noon

BLUE CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICE - *Sunday - Dec. 21st* *4:00pm*



Blue? Yes, blue as in the blues.
As in "I am feeling blue."

Not everyone is up and cheery for the Christmas holidays. Dealing with the death of a loved one, facing life after divorce or separation, coping with the loss of a job, living with cancer or some other dis-ease that puts a question mark over the future, and a number of other

human situations make parties and joviality painful for many people in our congregations and communities.

There is a growing attentiveness to the needs of people who are blue at Christmas. Increasing numbers of churches are creating sacred space for people living through dark times. Such services are reflective, accepting where we really are, and holding out healing and hope.

This event is open to all. Please consider inviting a friend, coworker or relative who might find this service especially meaningful.



BARGAIN SHED NEWS

PLEASE REMEMBER: we do not accept TV's, computers or exercise equipment. Only small furniture pieces can be accommodated (please inquire first before bringing). And, most important, please do not leave donations outside. The weather has ruined many really nice items. We're not planning to close this winter except when there is bad weather. Please check out our Facebook Page at Bargain Shed at Grace United Methodist Church. Or, if you have an email address, please let us know and we'll put you on our email list to let you know of closings or special items.

NEWS FROM THE BOOK NOOK

The Book Nook is open Tuesday and Saturday mornings from 9:00 am – Noon. Thanks to everyone

who help us further our education mission.

*And don't miss our drop in Friends Around the Table on Tuesdays.
Good conversation and free snacks.*

The Book Nook has lots going on this month.

First, is our monthly special on select books.

Children's books	10 for \$1.00
Adult hardcovers	3 for \$1.00
Adult paperbacks	5 for \$1.00
DVD's & CD's	3 for \$1.00



Second, for people who are looking for Large Print books, we received a large donation of titles from the Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk library and a private donor.

And third, we need more holiday decorations – they'll selling fast.



GIVING TREE



With the holidays approaching, we have reached out to two local families from last season. Each family, unfortunately, is still in need of our assistance in order to get through the holidays.

The generosity of our small congregation never ceases to amaze me! And the organizational effort of Sharon and Brian makes all the difference!

We'll be sending out an email with requests for each child. If you'd like to donate to help with these requests, you may send a check to Grace UMC, 16 Hillcrest Dr, Ravena, NY 12143 and mark Christmas Gifts in the memo line. Thank you!!

RECONSIDER THE RUSH

The Christmas rush leads to stress for many people. But author Burton Hills viewed the madness from another perspective:

"Eventually, the hour comes when the rushing ends and the race against the calendar mercifully comes to a close. It is only now, perhaps, that we truly recognize the spirit of Christmas. It is not a matter of days or weeks, but of centuries — [more than] twenty of them now since that holy night in Bethlehem. Regarded in this manner, the pre-Christmas rush may do us greater service than we realize. With all its temporal confusion, it may just help us to see that by contrast, Christmas itself is eternal."

The Angels' Song in Three Words

On the very first Christmas Eve, frightened shepherds were suddenly surrounded by light and music. A choir of angels filled the night sky, singing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14, KJV).

Nineteenth-century pastor Charles Kingsley reflected on how those three simple words — glory, peace, and good will — still capture the meaning of Jesus' birth and the hope it brings.

Glory. God's glory isn't shown in dazzling displays of power but in humility and mercy. The baby in the manger revealed God's greatness by stooping low, forgiving, and showing love.

Peace. True peace is more than the absence of conflict. It comes when we follow God's example of selflessness, giving up pride and selfish ambition to live in harmony with one another.

Good will. God's good will toward us is a gift that transforms our lives. Through Jesus, God invites us out of selfishness and sin into a life marked by love, kindness, and community.

The angels' song wasn't meant only for shepherds long ago. It still sings to us today, calling each of us to live in glory, peace, and good will.

Christmas Prayer: The True Gift

Dear Lord,

You have brought us to Christmastime once more. Help us not to get lost in the glitter and the glow, but to see the true glory of the birth of Your only begotten Son. Keep our hearts from clinging too tightly to parties, presents and decorations, and turn our eyes instead to Christ — who bears Your very image and brings us Your message of love and hope.

In the glorious name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
16 Hillcrest Drive
Ravena, NY 12143-1409

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK

If you are on Facebook, please join the Church page by liking us at Grace United Methodist Church, Ravena, NY. Find out what's happening each week, including meetings and special events.

OR VISIT US ON THE WEB: www.gumcravena.com