



GRACE NOTES

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, 46 WOODLAND STREET, HARTFORD, CT 06105

860-527-7792

December 2017—January 2018

Grace Lutheran invites you to be informed and attend:

The State Economy,
the State Budget,
and the State of our Children

CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN

Live Event - Webinar

**Wednesday, January 17th
11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

CT Voices for Children	Page 1
Pastor's Letter	Pages 2, 3
Albert Bell's Memorial Service	Page 3
Saying Goodbye	Page 4
Fresh Start News	Page 5
Jerusalem Churches Christmas Message	Pages 6, 10
Birthdays and Anniversaries	Page 7
The Most Segregated Day	Page 8
Christian Unity Service photos	Page 9
Another Gift from a Friend	Page 10
Upcoming Events	Page 11

The budget passed by the General Assembly in October was much more than a budget document. In addition to severe cuts, the General Assembly also **imposed sweeping changes to the state's constitutional spending cap** along with **several new budget restrictions**. These rules, together, could **dramatically weaken Connecticut's ability to make children and families a priority**, and hamper the strategic investments key to long-term economic growth.

The coming legislative session will be crucial. These four new fiscal restrictions (bond cap, spending cap, volatility cap and bond lock) have the potential to make all our efforts moot. **Unless they are addressed, fixed costs will crowd out spending in children and families**, with the legislature constrained to only austerity budgeting.

In our upcoming webinar, Ellen Shemitz, Executive Director at Connecticut Voices for Children, and Ray Noonan, Associate Policy Fellow, will explore these pressing budgetary issues before the state legislature this session. On the agenda:

- **The state of Connecticut's economy**, and why it matters for the state budget.
- **The state of Connecticut's budget**, with an overview on revenues and liabilities.
- **The state of our children**, and how the state has shifted away from its priorities.
- **The new fiscal restrictions** in the budget, and how they might impede future growth.
- How to chart a path towards **fact-based, equitable solutions**.

The webinar will be broadcast live [on our website](#) and [YouTube Page](#). Register below and join us January 17th.

<https://ctvoices.salsalabs.org/17thannualstatebudgetforumcopy2/index.html?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=67408914-1ee9-4b7f-a31e-db579a7cf200>

Sponsored by: Connecticut Voices for Children,
33 Whitney Ave, New Haven, Connecticut 06510 (203) 498-4240

voices@ctvoices.org

And, How Are You Feeling?

By Pastor Rick

December was a wondrous blur for us, from the very beginning. Our concerns were about a number of people in the church, in our family and in the world who were struggling. A dear pastor friend offered an ELW prayer to the members of his congregation that goes like this:

Lord Christ, you came into the world as one of us, and suffered as we do. As we go through the trials of life, help us to realize that you are with us at all times and in all things; that we have no secrets from you; and that your loving grace enfolds us for eternity. In the security of your embrace we pray. Amen.

I worried about Mavis Smith; the Jones Family; Walter, when he hurt his back; Rebecca, when she fell; Rev. Albert Bell; Mary, the salad lady; Barbara Ruhe and Ken; Kim, and so many others. There were lots of preparations for a special service combining three congregations at Grace (Baptist, Lutheran and Pentecostal), there was the unplanned funeral for Albert, and feeding of the 150 that followed. Christmas is always a time for preparation, and this year, all that preparation had us living Advent as if it were a race, not a time of peace and reflection.

Fresh Start even got into the mix with our year-end fund-raiser, our location of a manufacturing site for the business, and the actual move itself, going from Trinity Episcopal to Veeder Place all in a matter of weeks.

Did I mention our unique Sunday, that was a combination Fourth Sunday in Advent, a community celebration (with gifts, sandwiches - 250 were made - a repeat of a wonderful puppet show, followed by a gifted ballerina, Christmas caroling) and a special candle-light Christmas service all on the same day! After which it SNOWED!

And on the night before, this pastor was up 15 times in 12 hours and ended up at Urgent Care and then to the Hartford Hospital ER with a stomach virus and dehydration (a once in a lifetime experience). For the first time in memory, I was not at a Christmas Eve Service, our community event, the Christmas caroling, and I even had skipped out on the last Advent candle.

In all this, I felt the loving grace of God enfolding around me and us. I cannot offer more thanks to all those who simply made things happen without me. Dorothea, Dale, Dawn, so many who stepped up during worship, at the community event, and in every other sense. They were in the kitchen, setting up chairs and tables, decorating, and making sure the sanctuary would welcome all who would come. The Grace team handled every single detail which required even more attention as Judy comforted me and then caught a touch of the same virus. She was not able to do her part, either.

Grace enfolds us with God's Grace. In the midst of all these things, and the weather, a star was seen, the heavens opened up, the night was fresh with new life and new hope. God was in charge, we would be OK, and this issue of Grace Notes will finally come out, encompassing a couple of months rather than one.

Continued on page 3

In the midst of all this, and whatever may have transpired in your own journeys this year or this Christmas, may you remember what I carry in my heart every day since that character Albert left us. Whenever he was asked the question, "How are you feeling?" He simply said, "Better than I deserve." That response is an affirmation of the knowledge that we are embraced by a loving God, and by the love we bring to each other. If you are wondering, how I'm feeling, just know that I FEEL BETTER THAN I DESERVE! Amen.



Saying Goodbye

By Pastor Rick

Albert Elby Bell died December 7th, 2017 at the age of 89. We loved and appreciated him, in all that he was, a human being of character and feeling, of action and stubbornness, and one who was committed to those oppressed and ignored, and those suffering and in need. He wasn't perfect, nor did he argue that he was; he was a sinner and a saint as all of us may be. Albert offered himself to his family, friends, acquaintances and strangers just as he was.

If he didn't like something, he told you so. If he did like something, he'd tell you so. If he was so-so about something, he'd tell you so. Albert was always engaged. Worried about traffic lights and drug dealers, absentee landlords and the people living in their buildings, Presidents and the woman on the street carrying a child and her groceries. Nothing passed him by, everything was in his heart and in his smile.

Just as he had promised, the church was full for his funeral, more than 150 attended. They began arriving at just before 9 am and people were still in the church at 5 pm. There were tears and laughter at this celebration of his life. People who sounded more like Albert than Albert, people who had to sing for him, or cry out to him, or simply pray for him. It was a beautiful funeral and he would have loved it.

Many, many people gathered to offer food and comfort to all those who came. Once again, Grace was sharing "grace" with all who came. Emma, Lou, Sue, Barbara Calogero, Dawn, Waneta, Judy, Rebecca, Walter, Guenther, and so many others. He was loved and they loved him, and he always will be loved by us and by them.

The image I carry of him in my heart is his walking with a cane, carrying his oxygen and calling out to Waneta, "Where are my keys? I had them a minute ago." And, I smile and know that he's running late to his meeting with the Mayor, or he's headed to the march on Washington to meet Big Beverly, or he's just ready to come to church, the church that he loved, or maybe, just maybe he is going home to the room that he does deserve, you know, the one he never earned.

Right: The team from Two Men and a Truck with Louisa, Ed Johnson, Pastor Rick, Ron Bell and Rich Carman downstairs at Grace by one of Fresh Start's benches.



Fresh Start – Has a BIG Finish!

By Pastor Rick

2017 proved to be an extraordinary year for Fresh Start. Record sales, lots of challenges, and completing 25 months of our stay at Trinity Episcopal Hartford. And, as the year came to a close it was beginning to look like another year or so more with our friends and benefactors on Sigourney Street. Some of the challenges had to do with the dust levels in the space, and the fact that we had vastly over-stayed our plan to be at Trinity for one winter. God was present with us all that time, and we were looking faithfully for new space that would be more suitable for the business that we had been nurturing and building there.

At the very close of the year, a potential opportunity came up, and we jumped on it. I said “we”, and I meant “we!” The entire Fresh Start team planned a move, located a mover, and executed the move all before the end of the year. A “team” effort any way you cut it, we had to find a mover, plan the move, prepare by packing, organizing and disposing of waste, while cleaning and preparing the new space and deciding what would go where. Rich (40 hours/week) Carman led the frontal attack, working with Ron and Waseem and the Avon High School basketball team who volunteered to box materials and tools for the move.

Ed Johnson the space guru managed the arrangements and details while keeping us all informed and helping plan the move. Steve Erie took on the task of selecting the mover, taking a cue from Ed, and worked 12 hours on moving day, including making payment for the professional movers hired. Many of the Steering Committee members were on hand, and the job was miraculously done. Our first Steering Committee of the year will be held at the new space on Thursday, January 4.

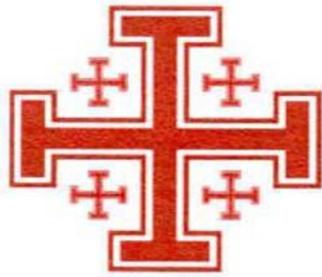
We have also found new partners in the Barney School of Business at the University of Hartford, and look forward to a very strong relationship with the Wheeler Health and Wellness Center going in across the street from Grace. We have had initial meetings with people involved with Wheeler and we are very excited. We have been working on our separate 501c(3) with the help of Barbara McGrath at the UConn School of Law, and we have been getting lots of good advice and support from the Entrepreneurial Center at the University thanks to Elaine Thomas Williams and her engagement and assistance.

Our steam punk products have been a big hit! We have another project with the Salvation Army (second for 2017) and have found lots of potential long-term agreements with others who want to benefit from our services. 2018 is shining brightly for Fresh Start and we thank all of you for your support and interest in this work. In 2017 we graduated one employee, hired another very successful young man and promoted one of our most senior employees to head up our manufacturing team. We are blessed! We truly are blessed.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grace Lutheran is partnering with Ghazi-Do Martial Arts and the Charter Oak Cultural Center in setting up an after school activity program. We are still working on finalizing the offerings of classes and the logistics for when the classes will be held. Some of the preliminary options include: History of Hip Hop and Dance Music; The Making of a Band; and Hartford's Got Talent—Creating a CD and performance. Stay tuned for more information in a future issue of Grace Notes.

Pastor Rick shared this message of hope from the Patriarch and Heads of Local Churches in Jerusalem. This is timely as the United States is taking a political stance on recognition of Jerusalem as capital of Israel.



PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF LOCAL CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

The Christmas Message of the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem (2017)

“But the angel said to them [the shepherds], ‘Do not be afraid; for see- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born...a saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.’” (Luke 2.10)

At this moment the world’s gaze is fixed on Jerusalem, a city that is holy to all Abrahamic faiths. We, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, as we approach the celebration of Christmas, reaffirm our clear position in calling for the preservation of the Status Quo of the Holy city until a just peace agreement has been reached between the Israelis and Palestinians on the bases of negotiations and International law.

The Christians of the Holy Land, know that their presence and witness is strictly related to the holy sites and their accessibility as places of meeting and encounter for unity between peoples of different faiths. It is the holy places that have given the region meaning.

Any exclusive political approach to Jerusalem will deprive the city of its real essence and characteristics and tramples on the mechanism that has maintained peace throughout the ages. Jerusalem, is a sacred gift; a tabernacle; hallowed ground to the entire world. Attempting to possess the Holy City Jerusalem, or confine it with terms of exclusivity will lead to a very dark reality.

At this time, as we await the coming of the Light, we bring you great tidings of joy, hope and peace from the City of hope and peace, Jerusalem! Year after year we join the Church universal in celebrating the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The incarnation of the Word made flesh continues, after two millennia, to be a source of joy, hope and peace, despite the suffering and affliction of many nations and communities around the globe.

The angelic proclamation to the shepherds in Bethlehem brought good news, great joy, and a promise of peace to all people, especially those who are suffering and live in fear and anxiety of what the future holds for them and their loved ones. The angel appeared to the shepherds who were watching their flock at night, and the glory of the Lord came to dispel the darkness of their night and to announce the new day that had dawned with the birth of Christ. At that moment the shepherds were afraid and could not comprehend the meaning of the angelic

continued on page 10

December Birthdays

Gail Lindstrom	12/5
Bertha Benoit	12/12
Dawn Scagel	12/16
Geraldine Pickens	12/18
Tairah Merrill	12/20
Mildred Unfried	12/21
Donna Phelan	12/22
Mary Urgitis	12/31

January Birthdays

Darrell Urban	1/6	Judith A. Dudek	1/18
Rebecca Lewis	1/8	Madison Boodhoo	1/21
Cynthia Potter	1/8	Maya Boodhoo	1/21
David Budhoo	1/13	Bear McLaren	1/23
Bruce Klotz	1/17	Matthew Friedrichs	1/24
Gisela Scholz	1/18	Anne Edwards	1/27
Janet Dudek	1/18	Guenther Mamet	1/29

January Anniversaries

Guenther & Edith Mamet 1/30 58 years

May you all be blessed as you celebrate your special days!

Did we miss your birthday or anniversary? Contact Dawn at the office, 860-527-7792 or email officeatgrace@sbcglobal.net to update our records.



Right: Bertha with her Youngest & eldest.... she wrestled away the box of chocolates. She still loves chocolates!

Bertha Benoit's 100th party on Dec. 16th at Litchfield Woods in Torrington, CT.

Her two children, Rich & Ruth and their spouses were there along with her 4 grandchildren and five of her 7 great-grandchildren. Surrounded by family & friends a good time was had by all!



The Most Segregated Day of the Week

By Pastor Rick

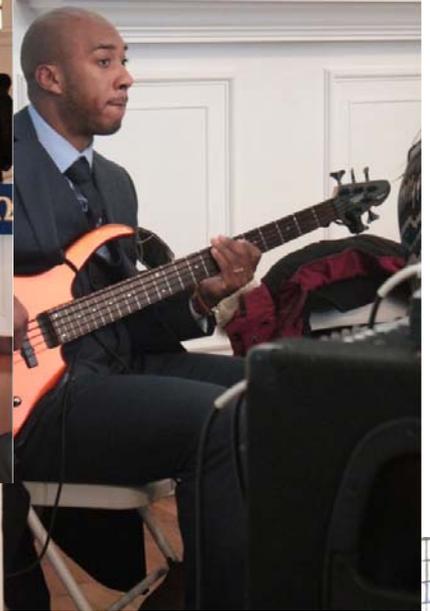
As a witness to the Civil Rights Movement, troubled cities and oppressive acts taken routinely against people of color and often women, this past year has been a sad one at many levels. At Grace we have the benefit of a congregation that has long been multi-racial and multi-cultural, one engaged in the communities of Hartford and one whose members have long worked to bring about justice and mercy in good measure to all those who came in its doors. Our long-term and newer initiatives all start from the place of we are all equal, children of God. We are no better than anyone, and are like all others in our society, sinners and saints, both at the same time. Meaning, we're not perfect, but we try to move in that direction, following the lead of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Earlier in the year, Walter Scott lost a brother to an untimely death. Walter was deeply saddened and was making plans to attend the funeral. I offered to take a group from Grace to the funeral service in Wolcott, CT, right near Waterbury. The service at Temple of Praise was a memorable one. This Pentecostal church whose members include Walter's mother Ruth, prepared and conducted a wonderful service celebrating Walter's brother's life. As a witness, I felt lifted. As Christians we do not fear death because we trust in God's promises, yet we do suffer sadness and grief. I was thankful to have come to know Walter's family and his mother's church family. The music filled every pore of my being, as did the celebrating members who were clearly praising God for the life of this young man.

I had the opportunity to speak some with Ruth, and other members of the Temple of Praise church. They were welcoming and loving. It felt like Grace. I told Walter and others how much the service had meant to me, and wondered out loud about inviting members of the Temple of Praise to worship with us. And then I began thinking and praying. Charlottesville, the deaths of so many People of Color at the hands of police officers (often white), the NFL player who kneeled, Black Lives Matter, etc. The Civil Rights issues of racism and sexism are back, the post-racial period never was and is no more.

Dr. King is the one who commented on the "most segregated" day of the week being Sundays when people of different races were most separated from each other, yet our faith calls us in a very different way. What if we could worship with a congregation that was primarily Black; having come to think of Pastor Derrick Holloway of First Calvary Baptist that worships at Grace as a Christian brother, I thought of him and his wonderful congregation. On December 10th at Grace and after a snowstorm we worshiped with three congregations, and we were together, black and white and brown, all worshipping the same God together. We broke the pattern, and I loved it, and so did everybody else.

Now, we did not do a Lutheran service, or a Pentecostal service or a Baptist service. We tried to blend each of our worship styles with our liturgy and all of our music. We had about 90 people, not bad for the distances, and some were up and dancing and clapping, even an old German or two (like me) and Bodo, and so many others. The more we worship together, the more we know and trust each other. The more we know and trust each other, the closer we come to being family. The closer we get to being family the more we can become a caring, beloved community of faith. We'll try it again! We'll ask others to join with us, too. We are the body of Christ, and it was thrilling to do that together on the most segregated day of that week. Thanks be to God!



proclamation, and how the birth would impact their lives and the life of their community.

These people of Bethlehem who suffered under the Roman occupation and their compatriot Herod, and subject to distinctions and exclusions of the socio-political economy, were confronted with a different economy: God's providence. The message of the angels revealed to the shepherds - out of their own context – a new reality, where the concepts of power and authority are transformed by the incarnation of God in a lowly manger.

The shepherds responded immediately to this theophany and went to see the “thing that has taken place which the Lord has made known to [them]”. The world today is confronted once more with the challenge of responding to the angelic proclamation which demands participation in the Divine economy in bringing forth joy, hope and peace to a world torn apart by violence, injustice and greed.

We continue to hold the whole Region of the Middle East in our prayers, and ask the Prince of Peace to inspire the hearts and minds of all those in authority to walk in the path of peace, justice and reconciliation among the nations. As we celebrate the coming of Christ as the light of the world, we are inspired by and take comfort in the words of the hymn of Zechariah – “the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace”.

We wish you all a happy Christmas, and a peaceful new year.

Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem

Another Gift from Friend

By Pastor Rick

In my business life I had the blessing of meeting many very talented, capable people. One of those was my friend Gary Wendt. Gary was a bit scary, his reputation had followed him, and he had very high expectations and wanted things done just right. Working for him directly at the end of my business career was one of my most challenging experiences. Last year he gave Grace and its ministry a large, unexpected gift. He wanted to support what we were doing. He is an extraordinarily generous person, and his wife Deborah is cut from that same cloth. While I fell off a chair last year, I was deeply grateful to learn this December that our friends had repeated their gift of last year to Grace. I will thank them properly when we are together again but I want to have you know something of these folks, too. They are very special, indeed.



Right:
Grace's Sanctuary decorated for Christmas

Save The Date

During this Epiphany Season, in a world that at times seems so filled with darkness, we are called to "Be light", "To let our light shine", "To let the love of God shine through us". All are welcome to celebrate this gift of light on Sunday, January 7th at the Urban's Open House.



YOU ARE INVITED TO CELEBRATE "WALK IN THE LIGHT" ...AT THE URBAN'S OPEN HOUSE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7TH
3:00-6:00P.M.

379 Ridgewood Road
West Hartford

Rsvp: nurban@gmail.com or 860 416-3336
Need a ride? Let us know.



Save the Date



Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association's **20th Anniversary Event**

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2018

5:30PM - 8:00PM

The Hartford's Tower Suite

Presenting Sponsor: **The Hartford** 

Make early plans to celebrate our neighborhood association - and 20 of our neighbors - for 20 years of heart-filled leadership in Asylum Hill. To learn more, contact AHNA at info@asylumhill.org.

P: 860.944.6614

www.asylumhill.org



Grace Lutheran Church
46 Woodland Street
Hartford, CT 06105



Our Staff and Council Leadership

The Rev. Rick Kremer, Pastor

rickkremer@aol.com

Dawn Scagel, Parish Administrator

officeatgrace@sbcglobal.net

Dorothea Glatte, Lay Minister

Lloyd Smith, Lay Minister

Louisa Barton-Duguay, Religious Worker

Barbara Ruhe, President

Lou Oliver, Vice President

David Holmes, Secretary

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

Dale Eberhardt, Organist

Walter Scott, Sexton

www.graceistheplace.org

