

ISSUE NO 12 | VOLUME 2



- grace -
insider

DECEMBER 2019

Merry Christmas from Around the World

We asked our Field Staff and their State-side Advocates to share some Christmas 'card' greetings, stories and traditions with each other and with all of our readers. Here's what they had to share...

Dear Olivia,

Merry Christmas from your family in Iowa! We are so grateful to partner with you in the gospel and look forward to seeing you back in the states over the holidays! May the Father bless you and keep you and lavish his grace upon you during this season when we celebrate the birth of the Son.

Much Love from Eva & Steve Anderson



Dear Grace Family,

Merry Christmas! For the first time in five years, I am back in the US heartland and celebrating with family (come chat, pg. 23). It feels surreal to be here, the hustle and bustle of preparations all month long, the overall cheer of those you meet, the constant conversation about gifts and the Gift of the Son. It's overwhelming! In my Asian-heartland, Christmas goes by with a few Santa masks worn by kids demanding little chocolates from their parents, and that's about it. It's heartbreaking that the vast majority of locals don't understand the significance and are blinded to the Truth of this day. The only "Christmas" they know is the secular Christmas of the West that they have seen on the internet.

I have done my best to draw out this season as much as possible by using the practice of Advent. Growing up, Advent wasn't a part of my Christmas traditions, but after moving to a place where Christmas has little significance, I have established my own traditions and celebrate in such a way that can easily be made understandable and relatable to people in my new cultural context. I incorporate various forms of local worship, reading or storytelling, praying, singing, and lighting incense and a candle.



Two years ago, I invited every female that I knew to a gathering in my home on Christmas Day. I drew up this mehendi design and hired a woman to make it on each woman's hand. At the gathering, I and a friend, who had walked through Advent with me, explained each part of the design and how it represented the Son and His character. Each woman walked away that day with something they could share with another, and my hope was that this hand-design would be a conversation starter and that the truth of Emmanuel would enter many homes and hearts.

I'm thankful to be in the US this year, don't get me wrong, but honestly, I'm missing the simplicity of Christmas in Asia. There's nothing like it; nothing like establishing traditions and having the privilege of sharing that with others for the very first time.

*Pressing on and pressing in,
Olivia*

My Mehendi Tradition

1. The "rainbow" ribbon through the middle of the hand represents God's promise to all mankind that He would send a Savior to the world to take upon himself all of our wrongs.

Each of the following images represents characteristics of the Savior, Jesus. Each are coming out of the promised Savior (rainbow) symbolizing that we can only truly and fully know and experience these things by knowing Him.

2. The flower represents joy. "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Psalm 16:11

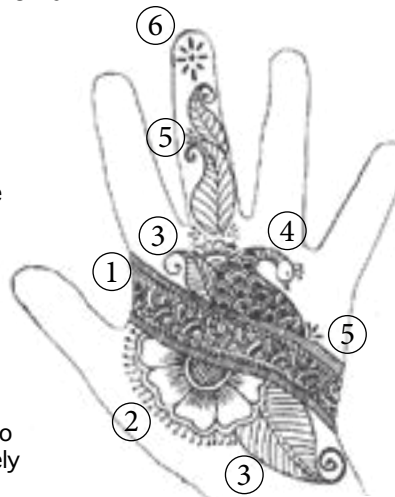
3. The leaves represent love. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son [Jesus] that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son [Jesus] into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." John 3:16-17

4. The bird represents peace. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ." Philippians 4:7

5. The flower buds represent hope. "For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from Him. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us." Psalm 62:5, 8

6. The star at the top symbolizes that the Savior is a "light to the nations." He is a Savior for all mankind. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

This design has been placed on the palm of your hand to remind you that all of these things have been given freely to you by God through Jesus.



John and Lorna, we send you Christmas Greetings from Iowa!

Our community group recently spent an evening reflecting on our great time having you join us last December for supper. We were so glad your busy Iowa schedule allowed time to connect with us. It was so good for many of us to meet your family, hear about your mission and hear from Jordan and Nathan. What two lovely children you have that have matured so much since we've seen them as youngsters.



Steve and Diane with their host of grandkids!

We appreciate you sharing your South Africa Christmas traditions. 'Summer' at Christmas is so different from Christmas in Iowa! In fact, we've already had two days of snow at the end of October which is a bit unusual. We won't be having a BBQ around the swimming pool like some of you in South Africa. (Although it sounds inviting right now at 32° F)!

After sharing some of your traditions, here are some from our Community Group:

We put up indoor and outdoor decorations, make lots of cookies and candy (We'll be trying your Chocolate Shortbread Balls if we figure out what Castor sugar is), read the Christmas story on Christmas Eve, let the kids play with nativities and act out the story. We also do Advent calendars, games, silly gift exchanges, make an angel food cake with candles and sing 'Happy Birthday' to Jesus, put out cookies, milk and carrots for Santa and reindeer, assemble Samaritan's Purse shoe boxes, help at kitchens, donate food and items to the poor, and go Christmas caroling.

We appreciate your frequent communication and prayer requests. We ask you to pray for family unity for many in our community. The holiday time is especially hard when barriers exist between family members.

May the peace, love and joy of Christmas be yours

Steve & Diane Meyerholz and the Community Group



Hullo from South Africa!

Lorna says that Christmas in South Africa is acutally celebrated in the middle of the summer and lots of folks do Christmas Braai (barbeque) and some do a traditional roast, which is what the Abrahamse's do. They also do a Christmas tree, set out cookies and milk for Father Christmas and get involved in Santa's Shoebox (like Operation Christmas Child).

Lorna Abrahamse's Chocolate & Shortbread & Balls

1 lb. (500 g).....Butter
1/8 cup (100 g).....Castor (super fine) sugar
1 oz. (30 ml).....Water
5 cups (600g).....Flour
7 oz. (200 g).....Semisweet Chocolate - cut into small pieces



one Microwave butter for 1 minute until soft (not melted).

two Cream butter and castor sugar together in a mixer, add water. Beat until creamy.

three Mix in one cup of flour at a time. Mix well.

four Roll shortbread, press pieces of chocolate into each ball. Place onto baking trays.

five Bake for 16 minutes at 360°F.
Roll shortbread balls in castor sugar while still warm.

Yuletide Greetings!

Halo from Papua, Indonesia! A Christmas tradition throughout the island of Papua happens each year when local government leaders fly in rice and pigs so that the villagers can celebrate with a big feast called a Batu Bakar (rock BBQ). They wrap the pig meat in banana leaves and bury it under stacks of hot rocks.



A new team of Bible translators that we serve in Nabire has just moved into their Maolagi tribe to start language learning. In order to get there they need a 30-minute flight from Nabire to the closest village of Bugalaga, high in the mountains, and then a helicopter ride over the ridge to their village where there is not yet an airstrip. They tell about the Maolagi people making the 24-hour trek over the ridge through difficult and dangerous terrain in order to join in the Christmas Batu Bakar celebration in Bugalaga.

The barbeque tradition is used to celebrate important things happening or for important people coming to a village. What a great opportunity to celebrate the coming of the most important person to ever come, Jesus Christ! However, these Maolagi people don't know who Jesus really is or why they are celebrating. They use the opportunity to be able to eat rice, which they don't grow in the mountains, and pork, a rare delicacy and form of money. How great it is that this new team is starting their work for these people so that one day soon they will know whose arrival they are really celebrating.

~ From team Ludvick

We wish you a Merry Christmas, and happy ham eating all ye gentiles!

Alex, Tricia, Jackson and Benaya -

Merry Christmas! We miss you and look forward to seeing you soon (pg. 22). Over the holidays, we are praying for your time with family and friends. We pray that your new, more permanent location is one where you quickly feel at home while also feeling like you can bless others. Our community group, home, and lives are less lively without you. We pray for the deep rest of the Lord even as you continue on the adventure that He has you on. We will send you some pictures of the boys at Christmas and will pray for you as we do our advent activities each night. Alex, I (Jason) can't wait to get your December newsletters in the mail. I can only imagine they will be addressed to Jason Jolly Old Saint Nick Blackley. We will send the boys some snow but it might be water when you receive it. :)

Love, the Blackleys



PRAYER IN DECEMBER

BY PASTOR TARRYL BOCKELMAN



The older I get, the more I realize God's direction for my life is often the opposite of what seems logical on a human scale. I guess this shouldn't surprise me. Everything about the gospel and God's plan seems antithetical to human reasoning.

Scripture is pretty clear that God chooses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and He chooses the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong. (I Cor. 1:27) Paul's letter to the Corinthians clearly states that "the world through its wisdom did not come to know God" and that "God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." And when Paul implored

God to remove the "thorn in his flesh", God's response was clear: *"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."* (II Cor. 12:9).

In his book, "Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire, Jim Cymbala explains, "I discovered an astonishing truth: God is attracted to weakness. He can't resist those who humbly and honestly admit how desperately they need Him. Our weakness in fact makes room for his power." I've seen this over and over as I first came to Christ for salvation, and then again when I realize my spiritual growth and maturity are in dire straits. The problem is I don't see it clearly enough, often enough.

Within the congregation and the leadership at Grace, I see this lesson emerging in the lives of people. From the pulpit, in small groups, in prayer circles, and around the table during finance and building committee meetings, God seems to be bringing us to the end of our own "great plans" and instead, is calling us to humble ourselves and pray.

My hope is that I would be moved to pray, personally and then corporately in small groups and gatherings, and that as a congregation we would realize our need and God's desire to be glorified in our weakness. Come and join us in prayer on Sunday mornings at 7 AM and again at 8 AM in room #307 to see what God can do with our weakness.



Many Christian traditions across the world celebrate the whole month of December by lighting Advent candles on a wreath and reading scripture that whets our anticipation of Christmas coming and what it means for us. Will you join us in your families, groups and family-like groups and pray through the weekly themes and for our Field Staff?



READ ROM. 5:7-13



Jesus is coming. There is much to hope for that we do not yet see. Pray that God would prepare our hearts this advent season to see Him, hope in Him and cast aside all others who would seek His place in our lives.

- Pray for our Field Staff: the McIntyres in the Middle East and the Bournes in South East Asia. That they might have much hope.
- Pray for the nations, the lost and unreached. Those living in darkness. Pray that they would see a great light and that He would captivate their hearts.



READ MAL. 3:1-4



In faith many people lived and died before Jesus came to Bethlehem. In faith we believe that Jesus is God the Son, who came into the world to bring peace between God and mankind again.

- Pray this season for the people you know who don't have faith in Jesus. Pray for the parts of your life where faith has been thin.
- Pray for our Field Staff: the Abrahamses who have just adopted a seven-year-old boy in faith and hope that God will bless him and them through the process of becoming family.



READ 2 COR. 9



Joy to the world! The angels proclaimed this to the least of society, shepherds. We proclaim this to our world now.

- Pray that you would have chances to share the joy of King Jesus through normal seasonal things that you do this year.
- Pray for our Field Staff: the Ewigs in North Africa who have been faithful through a fair few trials that have tested their joy in 2019. Pray that they would continue in the One whose joy never ends.



READ JOHN 3:16-21



Peace: that elusive sense of tranquility even in the midst of storms is what deep seated and steadfast faith in Jesus brings to His people because we know we're no longer at odds with God.

- Pray for peace amongst Christians, that we would remain and grow as good witnesses to the world until Christ comes again.
- Pray for our Field Staff: Olivia in Southeast Asia, that the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, would guard her heart and mind as she serves in a place that has so many fraudulent gods.



READ JOHN 1:29



He is making all things new. As new things come into our homes this season we enjoy them knowing that they are but a dim shadow of the newness that Christ is bringing into our hearts.

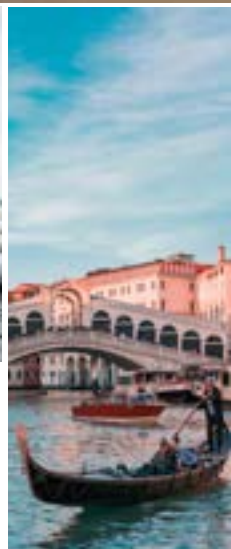
- Pray and give thanks for the indescribable gift we have in Jesus. The removal of our sin and shame, the restoration of our minds in His word, and the future promise of glory.
- Pray for our Field Staff: the Ludviceks who've just moved, after three years of overseas service, into a more permanent location in Papua. The one thing that hasn't changed in the last three years has been Jesus. Pray that they continue to earnestly seek Him.



SERMON FORECAST

BY PASTOR JASON BLACKLEY

I have always wanted to go to Venice. At one time, I had a poster of Venice in my office. I have read extensively about the history of Venice. I have theoretically planned many vacations there in my head though I have never been there. I have been to Turin, Italy. I can tell you what it smells like and where to get the best gelato. I have two different kinds of knowledge about these two cities. One is cognitive and one is experiential. There is also a difference between knowing God and experiencing Him in the flesh.



This fall as a church we have been through the overarching narrative of scripture in our Story of God series. We've seen that God is doing a work in and through His people from beginning to end. The climax of the story, however, is the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. He is the Messiah, the anointed one who was prophesied to come from the very beginning of human history. This December, we will allow the Apostle John to pull back the curtain on history before humans stepped onto the scene.

The gospel according to John begins with the words,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.”

This “Word” that John wrote about is Jesus, God the son incarnate. Fully man and fully God. John wrote in 1 John 1 that he and the other apostles touched, saw, and lived with God made manifest in Christ! As we come off of this series where we looked at “Story of God,” it is incredible to think that the author of the story is going to step into the story. John 1:14 puts it this way: “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”. The word dwelt comes from the words and ideas behind both the Old Testament tabernacle (Exodus 25) and the dwelling of God among His people in Revelation chapters 7 and 21. John is emphatically saying that Jesus is God and that God has come to Earth amongst His people!

This month, as we take a look at the necessity, announcement, effects, and meaning of His coming we will step inside the mind of the Apostle John who knew and experienced Jesus in a physical way. We pray that this December mini-series gives you hope, meaning, light and truth during a season that while joyous can also be difficult. We pray that you find the hope that John wrote of when he wrote, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:5) Let's celebrate our God who dwelt among His people in the flesh, dwells among us now through His Spirit, and one day we will dwell with Him in the New Jerusalem!



SERMON NOTES

ADVENT | JOHN 1:1-18

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Tuesday, December 24
North Liberty Campus
at 1, 3 & 5 pm
Live stream at 1 pm

For details visit

graceb3.org/christmas





HOLLY SMIGEL

TALENTED SERVANT AT GRACE

Holly has been part of Grace since 1994, which makes 2019 the Silver Anniversary for us and her, which is pretty exciting!

Holly and Dave have been married for about the same amount of time, Congratulations on your anniversary this year too! They have three awesome kids: Hannah, the singer, (21) in Austin, Texas; Emma, the dancer, (17); and Seth, tennis player (12). They also have two super spoiled labradoodles and a cat that is the true ruler of the homestead.

Holly owns a counseling practice in North Liberty called

Journey Counseling Services. She and the ladies that are on staff with Journey are licensed mental health counselors and practice from a Christian perspective. Grace has partnered with Journey for many years, seeking to help all who come to us be changed by the power of God's word in counseling. We are *so thankful* for the ongoing partnership between Journey and Grace's Biblical Counseling Ministry. Holly also serves on the worship team the North Liberty Campus using her vocal skills to bless the congregation.

In her free time she does a lot of traveling with Emma to dance competitions, working in the fresh air of her backyard and going for endorphin-boosting runs. She also loves to read. In her typical genre mix are typically counseling material to stay sharp in her field and Christian fiction.

Holly, we are so thankful for the compassionate spirit that God has grown in you to reach out to people who are hurting and need hope. Thank you!



SERVE ON Stage

You may think that Grace has armies of volunteers, but we've always got room for more people to join the team of people serving people. God gifts His children, not for their own benefit, but to serve those around them in their family of faith and in the community. If you're not serving, check out the serve link below, and even if you don't think you're particularly "gifted" you need to start somewhere, so dive in and see what God does as you faithfully serve.

Learn more by emailing steveo@graceb3.org

At the close of 2019 and into 2020 the North Liberty worship team is looking to fill drummer, bass player, sound technician, and lyric slide runner (ProPresenter) roles.

“SAVED PEOPLE
SERVE PEOPLE”



VICTORIA MUELLER

DOWNTOWN ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

POP-UP CHURCH [NOUN]: EVERYTHING IS SET UP AND TORN DOWN IN A SINGLE DAY OR WEEKEND



Downtown is a weekly production
and Victoria coordinates so much
curtain to curtain.

by Chelsy Reed

Victoria Mueller joined forces with the Downtown Pastors in 2018 to lend them some tactical support as the Downtown Administrative Assistant. Victoria has been attending the Downtown church since the summer of 2017 and has a passion for people and community development. She's also passionate about talking through heart issues with people and pointing them to Jesus. She served as the hospitality coordinator at the Downtown location for a little bit, and we liked her so much that transitioning her to our Downtown mastermind was a breeze.

She graduated from Cedarville University in Cedarville, Ohio with a

degree in Social Work. Victoria also has an affinity for ambitious DIY projects, so if you want to talk superglue, staple guns and burlap, she's open to participating in brainstorming sessions. She also enjoys traveling and exploring new-to-her places, watching baseball (especially her fave, the Houston Astros), and bringing people together to make simple memories (like cookie decorating or taking in a football game).

Victoria also works with Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County doing work with junior high and high school girls. She volunteers with Junior League of Cedar Rapids which is a volunteering and networking organization.

Thrive classes begin January 12

at Heritage Christian School

Children's classes are provided on the North Liberty Campus

Learn more and register at graceb3.org/thrive

A Survivors Guide to Parenting Teenagers

8:00 am | 10 week class

If you're a parent of a teen or will be soon join us as we discuss the roller coaster ride of parenting teenagers. It's full of ups and downs, but this class is designed to help you not just survive the teen years, but to thrive.

Each week we will be teaching from the trenches, giving you tactical support to help you put the gospel front and center in your family.



Toolbar

8:00 am | 4-week class

How do I study my Bible so that it changes me? Toolbar is a four-week class that will answer that question with practical tools and a "see one, do one, teach one" class plan.



The Reality of God: A Crash Course in Apologetics

9:30 am | 10-week class

We live in a world and specifically this community where many feel that it is irrational to believe in God. We will look at the topic of existence through the lens of facts, logic, reason, evidence, human disciplines and world views to show that it is not only rational to believe in God, but it takes more faith not to.



Jesus in Your Day-to-Day

9:30 am | 10-week class

What would you do if you came face to face with Jesus on the street? What would He say? Join us as we look at meetings real people had with Jesus in the book of John to see how those meetings led to crazy life transformation. Along the way, we will watch Jesus meet with doubters, betrayers, the sick, prostitutes, hypocrites, and dear friends-people much like us-as he zeroes in on what matters most in their lives.



Preparing for Marriage

9:30 am | 10-week class

This class is for couples who are planning to be married soon. We will be teaching through the book "Tying the Knot" by Rob Green and will work through each area of a couple's life together. We will look at how to live for Christ in communication, conflict resolution, finances, sexual intimacy and more.



Counsel from the Cross

11:00 am | 10-week class

This class is designed to focus on key passages of Scripture used in helping others. We will break down a different passage each week. You will learn how to apply the passage to root issues of the heart and how to help people practically live out what the verse means. If you desire to know how to better handle the Word of God to effectively lead and disciple others, this class is for you.



thrive

Treasure

We're going for complete transparency and at the same time trying to avoid utter bore war.

Our Corridor Neighborhood

Since 2003 church attendance has been steadily ticking upward as Grace Community has continued to grow. Then in 2014, we began hitting 80% capacity in our sanctuary on Sundays, and growth started to plateau. It's common knowledge among church circles (and in the larger marketplace) that once space reaches 80% capacity, it looks and feels full, especially to newcomers. At about the same time, we launched our Downtown Campus with ten of our community groups planting the new church. At the North Liberty Campus, the space left by the Downtown Campus planters was filled by new attenders within a few months. Since then Grace has helped launched Jordon Creek in Solon, along with River City. The trend we saw when planting in Iowa City held true since then; the space created by our church planting is consistently refilled within the year by new attenders.

Hard Realizations

We've come to realize that our growth plateau is caused by shortcomings of our facility (seating in the sanctuary and parking, among other things) which is stifling the

ability of new people to make Grace their church home. A sobering fact is that our 'fullness' has been turning people away for several years, starting in 2014. Our church, the congregation, staff, leaders, earnestly desire to make Grace a welcoming and loving environment for new people. But we've reached the limits of what our current physical facility can provide, further, our facility has been preventing newcomers from attending. While our building, and the stewards in charge of its upkeep, has faithfully served the church body for over two decades, the needs of our body have outgrown what our building can currently provide.

Working on a Plan

As we've discussed how to proceed, a variety of possible solutions have been suggested to leadership and staff, including sending people to other trustworthy churches in the area. As we've listened to proposed solutions, we began to examine the external factors impacting the churches at large in our community. Through this, it's become clear that the combined capacity of all the Bible-preaching churches in North Liberty (Veritas, Parkview, and others) cannot keep pace with the

growth our corridor is facing. Currently, there's enough combined space to welcome 25% of the population of North Liberty. When comparing the maximum capacity of these church campuses with the population growth of the city of North Liberty over the next ten years, our combined available space cannot accommodate the pace of the city of North Liberty's growth. In fact, it only leaves space for just 1 in 5 by 2030.

Practicing Good Stewardship

Over the last year, one of the most predominant questions our staff and leaders have heard is, "Is a new building worth it?" It's expensive and labor-intensive for our staff, pulling time and energy from other ministry work, and requires time and effort to communicate with our church body. We are increasingly convinced that our church growth, and the external growth of our corridor (and nearby communities), necessitate the earnest and thoughtful examination of possible solutions. Previously this included looking for land to use as a future building site, and as that option became impractical it's transitioned to maximizing the use and capabilities of our current facility. The lay-leaders serving on the Financial Review Committee and Building Committee, along with the Elder team, continue to earnestly examine how to responsibly move forward in solving the challenges our church body faces.

Corridor Capacity

now...



ten years later...



It's December

This is just a friendly reminder that

year end giving

must be postmarked by December 31, 2019, to be put on your 2019 taxes and such (the last Sunday of the year is the 29th, unless you wanna see us on New Year's Eve.

Go to graceb3.org/give to finish your giving year.



Times of December

LUDVICEKS

VISITING STATE SIDE

The Ludviceks are coming to services while they're here for Christmas.

Sunday December 1



FAMILY

SIT TOGETHER SUNDAYS

On Family Sit-Together Sundays our children's ministry volunteers take a break. Only nursery and two-year-old classes are offered on this Sunday.

Dec 1 and 29 | All services

North Liberty Campus



STUDENTS

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Students and parents, join us for our annual Student Ministry Christmas Party! The whole family is welcome.

Dec 4 | 6:30 - 8:30 PM | North Liberty

Campus | graceb3.org/SMChristmas



EXPECTING

WOMEN'S CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

Come celebrate the beginning of this Christmas season with your sisters at Grace.

Dec 6 | 7-9 PM | North Liberty Campus

graceb3.org/women





OPEN HOUSE

FOR OLIVIA MERRIWEATHER

Stop by and visit with Olivia, Asia Field Staff. She's back in Iowa for the holidays and is eager to share time with her Grace family.

Dec 15 | 8 AM-12 PM | North Liberty Campus
graceb3.org/openhouse

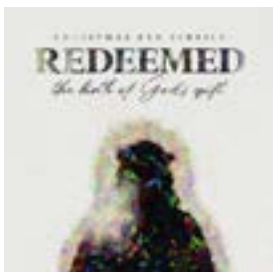
CAR SEAT DRIVE



Hope for Johnson County and Grace partner up for a car seat drive to support immigrant and refugee communities. The nations are at our door. Buckle up!

Dec 15-22 | North Liberty Campus
wades@graceb3.org

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES



Rejoice in the birth of our Savior! Grace Community is hosting three services that are open to the whole community.

Dec 24 | 1, 3 & 5 PM | North Liberty Campus
graceb3.org/christmas

mark your calendars coming in 2020

- Road trip to the annual Biblical Counseling Training Conference in Lafayette, Indiana
- Men With No Regrets Conference Simulcast
- Women's God of Covenant Bible Study

graceb3.org/events

Coming in January



Grace Community Church
graceb3.org • graceb3 app

319.626.2040

2707 Dubuque St NE
North Liberty, IA

Old Brick Church
26 E Market St, Iowa City, IA

SUNDAY SERVICES

North Liberty

8, 9:30 & 11 AM

&

Downtown Iowa City

5 PM



from left to right, top to bottom

Talent, Nikki Weinkauff, Women's Ministry
Kathryn George, Women's Ministry Director
Field Staff - Tricia and Alex Ludvick, Indonesia