

GRACE
LUTHERAN
CHURCH
& SCHOOL

Dear Parents of Children Grades 1-8 at Grace School,

It may seem odd to be asked for your students to be at school on Christmas Eve, but at Grace School this has become one of the highlights of the year, every single year. The early evening worship services at 4:15 and 6:00pm on Christmas Eve are led by the children of Grace Church and School. Children in Grades 1–8 sing, ring handbells, speak, read scripture, and act out the pageant. The candlelit cross formed by the 5th – 8th grade students will begin the service for the 75th consecutive year. Students prepare carefully for the responsibility of leading worship and look forward to sharing the joy of Christ's birth on Christmas Eve. The tradition lives on in the hearts of students even after they graduate from Grace and alumni return year after year to experience the beauty of this service.

We invite you to view this 5 minute clip [Grace Lutheran Christmas Eve Rehearsal 720p.mp4](#) from our final rehearsal last December. It provides a glimpse of this wonderful service which our students lead every year. If you would like to view the full service from last year, here is a link to it as well.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNM2WpKnMDk>. We hope this inspires you to be part of the Christmas Eve service this year.

December at Grace School is an especially wonderful month. School children participate in both the Advent/Christmas Concert (Grades 5-8) and the Children's Christmas Eve services (Grades 1-8). We'd like to give you an overview of what these events entail and try to answer any questions you may have.

The Advent/Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 10 at 4:00 p.m. involves singers only (not ringers) in grades 5-8. The concert features an orchestra, as well as Grace School children and the Grace Parish Choir, performing beautiful works to celebrate the coming of Christ. We will contact you soon to ask about your child's availability for this concert.

Ringers and singers in grades 1-8 lead two services at 4:15 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. on December 24. They do it all – sing, ring, and read scripture. The service opens the same way it has for decades, with the children processing in the dark and the 5th-8th graders forming a cross on the chancel steps with their candles. The "Cross Songs" are among the children's favorites. Each year when asked to reflect on what the Christmas Eve service means to them, the words consistently used are "tradition" and "the cross." It is a powerful service which many families continue to attend even after their children graduate from Grace School.

Being asked to participate in a school event on Christmas Eve may be a first for you. There are many family traditions unique to Christmas Eve, but we encourage you to consider making this service one of them so that you and your child(ren) may be part of this experience. We are quite certain you will not be disappointed and will make this service a priority in years to come.

After reading the following information, let us know about your child(ren)'s participation in the Christmas Eve service using our online form. You will find the link to the form in e-mails from Grace about the Christmas Eve service and also on the website under "Current families."

Please fill in the online form, whether or not you are participating, by Sunday, November 12. If you have multiple children, a separate response is needed for each child.

Children in Grades 1-4

Children in grades 1-4 are asked to sing for one service but may choose to sing for both. Please go to the form online to select the service you would prefer. This year, families with last names beginning A-L will sing for the 4:15 p.m. service, and M-Z will sing for the 6 p.m. service. However, students may sing for both.

Children in Grades 5-8

Members of the 5-8 Choir and the School Handbell Choir (Strike Team) **must be present for both services.** It is very important that we maintain the integrity of the cross in the opening of the service and have a full complement of singers/ringers throughout the evening to provide the best possible worship experience for everyone worshipping at both services. Students in the School Handbell Choir will ring during the service but will also participate in Grace's traditional Christmas Cross.

If your 5th-8th grade student can only attend one service, he/she may still participate in the service by being an actor in the pageant. Actors are needed at both services. Please go to the form online and select "pageant."

8th grade students also have the option to read for a service. Please go to the form online to select the service you would prefer.

Memory Work

The children prepare diligently for Christmas Eve during school choir rehearsals but may also need to spend time on their own memorizing the words to songs. Classroom teachers may set daily/weekly goals for memory to help make the process more manageable. The largest amount of memory work is for children in 5th grade and older who are learning the cross songs for the first time. Classroom teachers will communicate with you regarding memory work deadlines for their students. Word sheets and recordings of the songs will soon be available for download from the Grace website.

Dress for Christmas Eve

Children in grades 1-4 wear dress clothes for Christmas Eve. Children in grades 5-8 wear choir robes and dress shoes.

If you have questions about the services or your child's participation, please email your child's classroom teacher or Johanna Johnson at jojohnson@graceriverforest.org.

We are excited to have your child participate on Christmas Eve with us and look forward to seeing you at the services.

In Christ,

Bill Koehne, Principal

Pastor Michael D. Costello, Cantor

Johanna Johnson, Music Teacher