

# Grace United Methodist Church

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## January, 2025

*Happy New Year*



□ SING UNTO THE LORD  
*a new song;*  
FOR HE HATH DONE  
*marvelous things.*

PSALM 98:1, KJV

*Gleanings*

Happy New Year! Yes, it is that time again and here we are wondering what will be different this time. I don't know about your experiences, but mine tell me that the only things that will change for me are the things that I really want to change. Other than that, things will stay pretty much the same. Is that good for you or are you hoping for a bit more?

What drives us to desire change? For most of us, it is finally accepting that we can no longer tolerate the way things are going. When we are fed up enough with the way things are, we will do what we need to, to make our situation better. Until then, we will not willingly change anything.

So, how was last year for you? Did anything leave you desiring a better life for yourself or those that you love? Did you feel at a loss to make sense of events in your life or in the lives of family and friends? Has anything left you feeling, "Here we go again"?

I wonder if God sent Jesus to live among us because he knew things needed to change. Up to that point, life seemed to be one big roller coaster: up, down, fast, slow, right, left, and then back to where we started. Our understanding of how life should proceed never changed; we continued to repeat the same mistakes. Improvement seemed to be tied to doing a better job of following the rules and making everyone else do so, too. I believe you know where that has taken us.

Jesus, though, offered another solution. Instead of focusing on rule-keeping and monitoring others to make sure that they were keeping the rules, Jesus invited people to refocus. Where we had been focusing on keeping the rules, Jesus taught that we would accomplish what we needed to if we simply loved God with all of our hearts, minds, and strength, and loved our neighbors as ourselves. Do not do unto others what is abhorrent to us. As Micah writes in 6:8, act with justice, be merciful, and walk humbly with God (my translation).

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What does that mean for our new year? I believe it is an invitation to look at what we have focused on for the past year and adjust our priorities. We do not know everything, and we cannot understand everything; that is God's realm. Instead, if we will allow that Jesus is the Son of God and decide to follow his teachings, we may find that this is enough to change the outcome of this new year.

God loves us more than we can ever know, and God loves our neighbors more that they will ever know. Let's decide to allow that to be enough guidance for how we should live. Who knows, maybe it will make this year the one we have all been hoping for.

See you Sunday if not before,  
Pastor Braxton ><>



- 3 - Rose Hamby
- 6 - Lindsey Burgess
- 14 - Sherri O'Daniel
- 15 - David Johnson

## *Ladies of Grace*

*All ladies are invited to a Ladies of Grace meeting on Wednesday, January 15, at 6:30 p.m. at the church. We will be making plans for our monthly meetings for the first half of the year, so come with any suggestions you might have.*

## *Prayer Requests*

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|---------------------|---------------------|
| Sandy Gang          | Gary Blankenship    |
| Sarah Lee Westbrook | Mitch Weber         |
| Sam DeVries         | Steve Garrett       |
| Anna Carney         | Larry Taylor        |
| Tania Mize          | Our Church          |
| Blake Freeman       | Our Country         |
| Blackmore Family    | Teachers & Students |
| Buddy Mattox        |                     |