

# Koinonia *focus*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | GRACE IN THE DESERT | DECEMBER 2020

## OUR ADVENT JOURNEY CONTINUES ...

*As we continue on the way to the manger on Christmas, we continue to study who Jesus is from the writings of Isaiah the prophet. Join us as we journey to the manger.*

As we continue our journey to the manger this Advent season, we are enjoying a series of services entitled "God With Us." The theme verse for the entire series is: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)" (Matthew 1:23).

In our worship for the first week in Advent we remembered that God is with us as our Potter, who shapes us according to his will.

In our worship for the second week in Advent we will remember that God is with us as our Shepherd, who carries us close to his heart.

Our worship for the third week in Advent we will bring us to a remembrance that God is with us as our Living Branch, who died and rose to give us eternal life.

In our worship for the fourth week in Advent we will remember that God is with us as our Guide, who leads us according to his Word.

The prophet Isaiah foretold, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2). Join us for Christmas Eve to celebrate the great Light that has come into our world to dispel the darkness of sin forever. Word and Scripture will reveal the Good News that our Great Light has dawned: Jesus Christ is born: let us rejoice!

## LAUNCH TEAM SUSPENDED ... FOR NOW ...

In light of COVID and the financial situation that Grace in the Desert is facing right now, it seems prudent to hold off on meeting as a Launch Team. When we are able to meet again in person and have a more productive conversation about where Grace in the Desert should be planted, that will be the appropriate time to have these and other Launch Team-related conversations. We will keep you posted .... 😊

## Church Events

- Dec 6 – Advent 2
  - Our Shepherd
- Dec 8 – Bible Study based on Our Shepherd
- Dec 13 – Advent 3
  - Our Living Branch
- Dec 15 – Bible Study based on Our Living Branch
- Dec 20 – Advent 4
  - Our Guide
- Dec 22 – Bible Study based on Our Guide
- Dec 24 – Christmas Eve
  - A Great Light
- Dec 27 – New Year
  - God's Plan ...
  - God's Time
- Dec 29 – No Bible Study

# “It’s A Wonderful Life” – In Christ

*It’s hard to always remember the reason for this season when we are caught up in the hustle and bustle of worldly preparations*

One of my all-time favorite Christmas movies is “It’s a Wonderful Life.” It’s the story of a man named George Bailey who is selfless and always places the needs of others above his own needs and wants. But something happens that takes George to the edge of his tolerance and he decides that the world would be better off without him. The movie then relates his adventures with an angel named

Clarence who shows him what the lives of his loved ones would have been like if he had never been born.

One of the reasons I love this movie is because George finally realizes that the important things in life are not material, but the beautiful people and loved ones that we are surrounded with. It is all about LOVE ...

You know, like the LOVE that came down at the first Christmas ... the LOVE that

took Jesus to the Cross of Calvary ... the LOVE that we are all called to have for each other, no matter if we like them or not or agree with them or not. But here’s another thought ... what if Jesus hadn’t been born? What if He hadn’t died on the Cross of Calvary? What if the manger was empty on that first Christmas morning?

Where would we all be? Just like the people George Bailey touched, our lives would be totally different without the LOVE and Peace that Jesus brings to us – not only during the Christmas season, but every moment of every day of our lives.

May we always remember all that Jesus has done for us by being in our lives and our hearts today and always. God Bless and Merry Christmas. 😊

Pastor Ceri

**Luke 2:11**

*“For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”*

**Isaiah 9:6**

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

## Moving Forward

With the turning of the calendar at the end of December comes a new year and new opportunities to be of service to God and His Kingdom. We are all called to be His hands and feet and face to the world – at minimum to our little piece of it. It has always been the mission and vision of Grace in the Desert to bring God’s Word to as many people as possible. To do this, we need everyone on board – we can’t all do everything, but we can all do something, as a wise person once said. We will be starting an Alpha course as a beginning, but are open to any and all ideas that can get the word out about Jesus – and about Grace in the Desert. We all need to contribute our time, talents, and (yes) treasure to make it happen! 😊

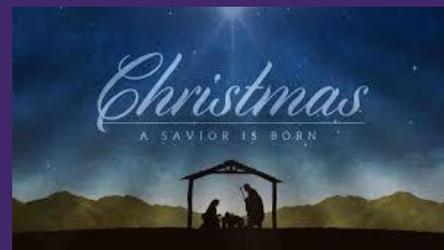
## “God with Us” Bible Study

As we journey through our services in Advent, we will also be moving through a Bible Study with the same name. We will go into more depth each week about the topic of our weekly message. We have a really fun group and we get into some great discussions about our subject matter. We’d love to have you join us – we meet via Zoom at 6:30 p.m. Arizona time on Tuesday evenings. If you’d like to join us, please email Pastor Ceri at [pastorceri18@gmail.com](mailto:pastorceri18@gmail.com) and she will make sure you get on the invite list. 😊

## Christmas Eve – different this year

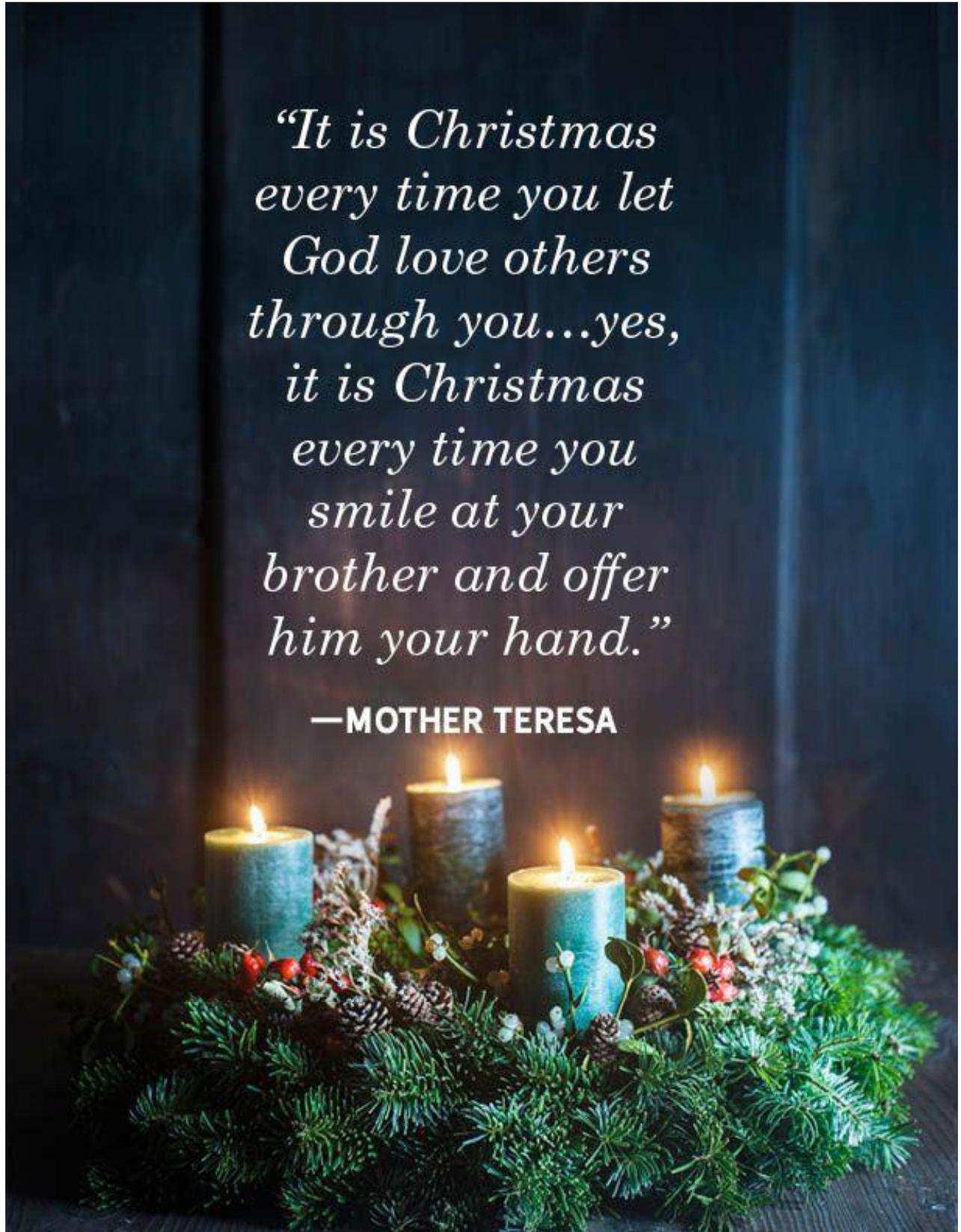
So, usually on Christmas Eve, we gather in our worship space and celebrate Jesus’ birthday with each other. We sing familiar – and some new – Christmas songs and carols. We share cookies and love and all the other sweet things that go with fellowshiping on this most beautiful and wonderful day of the year. But this year, COVID is having its way with our celebrating – and that means no gathering in person to sing a happy birthday to Jesus. No candlelight “Silent Night” because we don’t have a music license that allows for that....

But that doesn’t mean that we can’t celebrate – and we will do so at 5:00 p.m. Arizona time via Facebook Live. Satan can’t dampen our spirits and our celebration and our joy just because we can’t be together in the same place to say “Happy Birthday, Jesus!” Join us to celebrate the True Reason for the Season.



*“It is Christmas  
every time you let  
God love others  
through you...yes,  
it is Christmas  
every time you  
smile at your  
brother and offer  
him your hand.”*

**—MOTHER TERESA**



*Merry Christmas*



I wish the love of Christ  
fills your home and life and  
makes each day to release  
countless blessings  
for you.

[Christmas266greetings.com](http://Christmas266greetings.com)

