



Christmas Newsletter - December 2025

GRACE UPON GRACE

To see Long Island awakened to the glory of Jesus Christ

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK: END OF YEAR REFLECTION

Christmas helps us slow down and notice the steady faithfulness of God. As the lights return and carols fill the air, we remember that the God who entered the world in the flesh continues to enter our lives with grace and purpose. This season has me especially grateful for how he has guided our church family.

In 2026 Lesley and I will mark twenty years since we loaded a trailer in St. Louis, settled our three little girls into their car seats at four, two, and six weeks old, invited our patient dog along, and drove to the East End to plant Grace Presbyterian Church. We were excited, exhausted, and very aware that the Lord was calling us into something far beyond our abilities. We were young, prayerful, fairly overwhelmed, and deeply convinced that Jesus loved the Hamptons far more than we ever could. And he still does.

Looking back, it is unmistakable that God has his faithful hand upon Grace Church. He has wonderfully orchestrated a beautiful church family. He has sustained us through seasons of growth and pruning, and he has shown again and again that the gospel still softens hearts, restores lives, and awakens worship. Grace Church exists because the Lord has been faithful.

But anniversaries invite us to look forward as much as back. The next twenty years will require the same dependence on Christ that the first twenty did. In many ways, our mission field is changing. The East End looks different than it did in 2006. Many of our local families have needed to move out of the area due to rising costs, and more homes are now part-time residences. These shifts bring challenges, yet they also create new opportunities for gospel ministry. The gospel does not change, but how we reach our neighbors with it may need to.

As we enter a season of prayer and planning, our vision stays the same. We long to see Long Island awakened to the glory of Jesus Christ. That vision never depends on demographics or clever strategies. It depends on Christ working through his people. Only he can bring true awakening, and he loves to do so.

This Christmas I invite you to pray with me for wisdom, for open doors, and for faithfulness in the years ahead.

Merry Christmas and blessings in Christ.
Rev. Mark Middlekauff



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Catch up on what's happening at Grace Church by following us on social media!

Scan the QR code for easy access!



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

By Cathy Distefano

For many years, Grace Church has participated in Operation Christmas Child, a Christian relief program that delivers gifts in the form of shoeboxes to children in need around the world. Since its start in 1993, this ministry has distributed shoeboxes to over 230 million children in more than 170 countries and, for many, this is the first gift they have ever received! Whenever possible, the shoeboxes contain the gospel message, creating an opportunity to share about Jesus Christ and God's love. More than 23 million boys and girls have made decisions for Christ after receiving a shoebox!

We recently held our 2nd Annual Family & Friends Packing Party at Grace, where our entire church family and guests were invited to pack a box or two, while enjoying treats and fellowship. During this event, we were able to pack 120 shoebox gifts in a little over one hour!

For the past eleven years, our church building has served as a shoebox drop-off location for the east end of Long Island, welcoming shoeboxes from families, churches and organizations in the surrounding area. God truly uses this ministry to bless those "on both sides of the shoebox" – the giver and the receiver – to bring people into a relationship with him.

National Collection Week 2025 has come to an end and a total of 711 shoeboxes were collected, both in-person and online! As we approach Christmas, please pray that God would continue to use this ministry for his glory and the salvation of many children and their families!



THE BENNETTS - LIVING LIVES OF GENEROSITY



Dave and Ann's journey is a beautiful testimony of God's faithfulness and the joy that comes from living generously. Dave grew up as a Navy "brat," moving frequently, while Ann was raised in East Hampton as part of a long-standing Bonac family.

They met at the University of Virginia, married soon after graduation, and spent the early years of their marriage navigating deployments, global moves, and the challenges of establishing a church home. Through it all, their faith remained their anchor. After Dave's 27-year Naval career and a season in Maryland—where he co-founded a small contracting firm—they felt God leading them back to East Hampton in 2019.

Unsure about the transition and praying for a church family, they discovered Grace Church through a Redeemer podcast. A providential lunch with Mark and Lesley confirmed that Grace might be home. Even before moving, Ann listened faithfully to online sermons, and just two days after settling in, they walked through Grace's doors—ready to serve.

For Dave and Ann, being alive in Christ means loving, serving, and giving beyond comfort zones. Their generosity has taken many forms: Dave serves as an elder, and together they've invested in the BUILD, Hospitality and Children's Ministry, participated in Grace Groups, visited those in need, and opened their home to pastors, families, and international guests. Time after time, they found that the blessings flowed both ways—whether watching a small child experience the ocean for the first time or sharing the gospel during a morning drive.

Their lives remind us that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and we thank God for the joy and love they bring to our church family.

BE A PART OF GRACE CHURCH'S VISION

Whether you are an active part of Grace Church or a friend who is thankful to God for us, would you pray for our vision to see Long Island awakened to the glory of Jesus Christ? And if able, would you consider regular monthly giving or a year-end offering to help us towards our vision? Whatever you decide, may the treasure of Christ capture your heart this Christmas!

EXTEND YOUR HEART. SUPPORT GRACE! OUR TOTAL NEED FOR DECEMBER IS \$174,000

Please consider helping us finish 2025 in a strong financial position.

- To give online, scan the QR code or visit gracehamptons.org/giving
- To give via check, please make sure your envelope is postmarked by Dec. 31st.
- To donate stocks, please email adriana@gracehamptons.org for details.

If you would like to let us know that you're praying for us, email us at contact@gracehamptons.org. We'd love to hear from you!

