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JOIN US EVERY SUNDAY FOR WORSHIP SERVICE AT 10:00 A.M.

SHREWD GRACE

By: Ralen M. Robinson

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We don't usually put the words "shrewd" and "grace" together. They aren't compatible. Rather, they are opposed in character, each carrying its own connotations that divide them into separate categories. The word "shrewd" rolls off the tongue; its sharp sound reflects the closed-off, incisive nature it evokes. Whereas the word "grace" caresses the mouth—it's gentler, softer and flows through the air, offering reassurance. Yet, when you piece those words together, a powerful concept emerges that penetrates the soul and allows God's love to move. This grace is active, engaging and dynamic. Shrewd grace is God's love in motion; it's a grace that doesn't sit quietly but instead engages the world as it is.

Shrewd grace is both tender and clever, practical, and resourceful enough to navigate and move through this messy, unjust, broken world. It's the firm and yet compassionate, wise grace that asks one, "How can love make a difference in this situation despite the predicament?" Shrewd grace is bold. It takes our talents and gifts, then puts them to work for God's kin-dom. It loves deeply beyond depths, sees sharply and acts astutely.

Christ dares us to hold both the sharpness of shrewdness and the gentleness of grace side by side.

One can easily wag a finger at and condemn the stark stories of the dishonest manager in the Gospel of Luke and Jesus with a woman caught in adultery in the Gospel of John. How many times have we effortlessly been the one at the end of the finger, wagging it at those we deemed as wrongdoers, unwilling to help but judge? Or have even been the culprits, intentionally choosing transgressions over transformation, hiding behind ease and excuses. Yet, Jesus doesn't condemn or judge either situation—he extends shrewd grace. Not one of meekness, but one which disarms devilish deviances that steer us away from God's direction. This direction allows us to be transformed.

Look at the transformation led by God in the healing relationship of Jacob and Esau in Genesis. For decades jealousy consumed the brothers, hatred hardened their hearts and ill contempt tore them apart. Until God gave them reconciliation, hatred may have driven them together that day, but love mended their heart in the form of an embrace that enveloped them. Everything changes when God steps in and disarms us.

(continued on next page)

SECOND SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS READINGS

*Jeremiah 31:7-14; PSALM 147:12-20;
Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:[1-9] 10-18*

ADULT FORUM

Holy Trinity Adult Forums feature in-person presentations beginning at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday. The presentations are also available via [Zoom](#) (meeting ID:858 5687 1594; passcode:317879) for those unable to attend in person.

January 4 "Lake Street"
 Pastor Doug

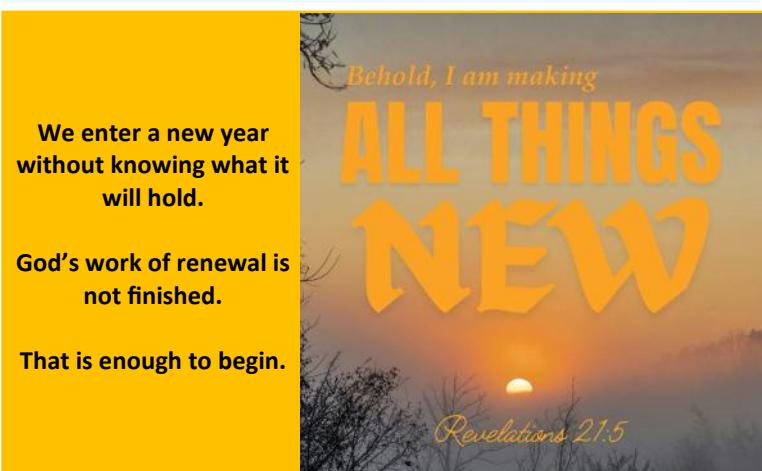
Pastor Doug will facilitate a conversation about Lake Street recovery. Please come with your own thoughts and reflections about where we are and where we need go.

January 11

Watch for details in next week's newsletter.

~ Concerning People ~

We pray today for all those in need of God's tender care, especially those who face illness, sorrow, or hard times. We pray especially for **John Stumme; Merlin Wells; Wilson Murray; Dorothy Kelly; Nikki Randolph-Martinez; Carol Kelly; Mary Petersen**; Mary Petersen's friends, **Jean Ebrahimi and Lenny Garber**; Tre Tellor's mom **Jill**; **Tina and Neela; Rick Lathrop**; Karen Batdorf's sister **Marie; Mike Kelly; Josie Tober; Stella Townsend**; the family of Kathy Ekwall's friend, **Mark Caffrey**, upon his death.



P A R I S H I N F O R M A T I O N

The paradox Jesus sets before us is that God's grace is not only tender but also shrewd. And maybe it's not a contradiction at all but the grace we need in the world around us. We may be embarking on a new year, but the world is still broken. There are people who are still ignored, hurt, beaten down by societal standards, and who find comfort in complacency. It's tempting to separate ourselves and look down, blindly ignoring those who are hurting, holding on to our righteous indignation because we are right. It's easy to walk around with our biases, blame and battle wounds, but God calls us to let them go.

Then we can see life differently in a lens that is both boundless and bounded. This embodiment appears to be forgiveness, but it also sets boundaries to secure one's safety. Grace is not weak but powerful. It offers not only assistance but resources to help individuals thrive. It's easy to give money, but it's another thing to teach them how to manage it. Simply giving can be fleeting, but to give from love takes root, forms and grows. It can shape a person into who God calls us to be—a people who are led to the power of God's healing faith in an assembly that cares for one another lovingly and mercifully. It's both giving generously when you're able to share, showing restraint, and then teaching how to be economical and conscious. It's a reconciliation with established parameters of protection. Setting boundaries of reconciliation that don't cause further harm. God doesn't desire us to be in places or situations that harm us, but to be loved and protected. It's forgiving but not forgetting; it balances both mercy and forgiveness, then allows God to equip us through the tension to the resolution. Ultimately, it allows us not to see the hurt and pain or the wrongdoing but the person, our siblings in Christ.

When we embrace shrewd grace, we begin to see both the beauty and complexity in every person and predicament. We learn to hold truth and compassion together, responding with love that is both wise and courageous. This kind of grace is not passive, weak or timid but active, brave and discerning. This concept challenges us to set boundaries that protect, to forgive without forgetting and to care for others. This is the kind of grace that Christ entrusts to us, a grace the world desperately needs right now. Shrewd grace is not just a word—it's a way to live in a longing world.

Ralen M. Robinson is pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church in Wichita, KS

THIS WEEK

MONDAY, JANUARY 5—ADULT CHOIR RESUMES

Adult Choir (6:30-8:00 p.m.) will kick off their second half of the year Monday, January 5. The Adult Choir sings most Sundays throughout the school year and sings a wide range of repertoire from ancient chants to newly composed anthems. Their presence in worship helps lead congregational singing and offers music that complements themes for that day. Can't make all the rehearsals or Sundays? No problem, we don't expect you to! Join us when you are able and raise your voice with others who love to sing! Look for a sign up in the Community Room or contact Cantor Phil if you are interested in singing!

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6—KNITTING GROUP

Knitters (and crocheters!) are invited to bring their knitting or crochet projects to Holy Trinity on the first Tuesday of each month at 1:30 p.m. All are welcome to join in for needlework and conversation. For more information, contact Liz Blood.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7—WEDNESDAY NIGHT MEALS, MUSIC, AND GYM TIME RETURN

Beginning Wednesday, January 7, our full Wednesday evening rhythm resumes with community meals, youth and adult music ensembles, and open gym time. All are warmly invited!

Wednesday Evening Meal

Volunteers, supported by staff, will offer a community meal in the Lunchroom from 5:00–6:00 p.m. each Wednesday that ensembles are in session. This shared meal has become a meaningful time to build relationships, and everyone is welcome—whether or not you or your loved ones participate in music-making.

Music Ensembles (rehearse most weeks during the school year):

- Children's Choir (K-5th grade): 5:45–6:45 p.m. Focuses on basic music and singing skills and leadership in worship; sings every 4–5 weeks.
- Jubilation Handbells (6th–12th grade): 5:45–6:30 p.m. Youth handbell ensemble; plays in worship 4–5 times per year.
- Gloria Ringers (Adults): 6:00–7:30 p.m. Adult handbell ensemble; plays in worship every 6–7 weeks.
- Cantate (6th–12th grade choir): 6:45–7:30 p.m. Sings in worship every 6–7 weeks.

Sign up in the Community Room, or email Phil for vocal choirs or Logan for handbell ensembles. For more information about choral, instrumental, or solo opportunities, talk with Cantor Phil.

Open Gym Time

Following rehearsals, open gym time with adult supervision will be available from 6:30–8:00 p.m. Parents and guardians are encouraged to have children participate in youth ensembles—and to consider joining a bell choir themselves!

Some parents choose to head to Arbeiter Brewing for fellowship (with beer and NA options) during the evening—feel free to join in.

Come for the meal, stay for the music, enjoy the gym, and be part of this life-giving midweek community!

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7—YOUNG ADULT MONTHLY SOCIAL

Young adults are invited to join the community meal on the first Wednesday of each month from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the church building. Following the meal, the group will walk to Arbeiter Brewing for fellowship and fun! For further information, please reach out to Dave Herrera at dave.herrera24@gmail.com.

WEDNESDAY EVENING MEAL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you would like to help provide a Wednesday evening meal for children and youth (and parents) attending choir and bell rehearsals, and supervised play time, please sign up in the Community Room. You can reach out to Cantor Phil or Kathy for more information. We will reach out to you with details before your assigned date.

SAVE THE DATE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11—POST-CONFIRMATION & HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION, SERVICE IN WORSHIP, AND FUN AT CAN CAN WONDERLAND

Post confirmation/high school youth will join John Buzzia for spiritual conversation in the Community Room at 9:00 a.m., serve as worship leaders in the 10:00 a.m. worship service, and then head off to Can Can Wonderland for lunch, video games, and mini-golf. They will return to the church building by 2:00 p.m. Please reach out to Nicki Hines for more information.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11—BIG MEETING SUNDAY

With our new worship schedule and growing attendance, we're shifting committee meetings to in-person gatherings on the second Sunday of each month. After worship, we'll hold a Big Meeting beginning at 11:20 a.m., with a simple lunch provided. We look forward to the joy and connection of being together in person from 11:20 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

THURSDAYS, JANUARY 15 AND 29, FEBRUARY 12 AND 26—EXPLORE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES – WINTER SMALL GROUP INVITATION

Are you looking to deepen or refresh your spiritual life this winter? Join us for a four-week small group exploring a variety of spiritual practices—simple, grounding ways to connect more fully with God in everyday life.

Led by Grace Basler and Julie Cahoy, this group will meet every other Thursday in January and February. Meeting Dates: January 15, January 29, February 12, February 26.

Each session will include time for reflection, sharing, and trying out a different practice together. Whether you're new to spiritual practices or hoping to grow, all are welcome.

Sign up in the Community Room by January 11. We hope you'll join us!

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15—ENCORE! AT TURTLE BREAD

Encore! (the group for members 50 years of age and older) meets monthly at 8:00 a.m. at Turtle Bread (4205 E. 34th St.). There is no agenda. Breakfast goers simply get to know one another. No sign up necessary.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16—ANNUAL REPORT IS EMAILED TO ALL MEMBERS

The 122nd Annual Meeting of this congregation will be held on Sunday, January 25, at 11:00 a.m. (following the one 10:00 a.m. service that day). In preparation for that meeting, the annual report will be emailed to all members on Friday, January 16. Print copies will also be available for those who need them on Sunday, January 18, and Sunday, January 25.

SUGARCANE SHOWING SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 11:30 A.M.

Please join us in the Bartsch Room on Sunday, January 18, at 11:30 a.m. for a showing of the award-winning debut feature documentary from Julian Brave NoiseCat and Emily Kassie. *Sugarcane* is a groundbreaking investigation into an Indian residential school. More information to follow. Sign up in the Community Room.

MONDAY, JANUARY 19—OFFICE CLOSED FOR MLK HOLIDAY

The church office is closed in honor of American prophet Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. A pastor of churches in Montgomery, Alabama, and Atlanta, Georgia, his witness was taken to the streets in such other places as Birmingham, Alabama, where he was arrested and jailed while protesting against segregation. He preached nonviolence and demanded that love be returned for hate. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, he was killed by an assassin on April 4, 1968. We honor his memory and witness.

ANNUAL MEETING SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 11:00 A.M.

Following the 10:00 a.m. service, all are invited to the gym for a free meal and the annual congregational meeting, as we celebrate the 122nd year of God's ministry through Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. We will review committee goals, elect new council members, and approve the 2026 budget. The annual meeting is also an opportunity for us to check on our progress made toward congregational goals.

PANCAKE BREAKFAST SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8

We are holding the annual pancake breakfast from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. this day. Confirmation students and their families will host the event. This will be a fundraiser for youth service/learning/fun trips. Tickets are \$10 and will be on sale at the Annual Meeting, as well as at the door on the day of the event. Please consider volunteering!

FAMILY RETREAT AT HUDSON YMCA IN HUDSON, WISCONSIN, FRIDAY-SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 13-15

Join us for a weekend of rest, renewal, and family-friendly fun with church members of all ages!

Sign up in the Community Room by January 28. The cost is \$50 per person, but there are scholarships available! Simply chat with Pr. Doug. You will be expected to drive yourselves, but carpooling can be arranged!

SILENT RETREAT WITH PASTOR INGRID AT PACEM IN TERRIS THURSDAY-SATURDAY, MAY 14-16 (REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 14)

Cost: \$280 (includes a basket of breads, cheese, and goodies to eat in your hermitage)

Silent retreats—extended periods of quiet, prayer, and reflection—are growing rapidly across the U.S. as people seek relief from constant connectivity and the pressures of daily life. In response to this deep spiritual hunger, we have reserved ten hermitages at Pacem in Terris, a serene retreat center located one hour north of Holy Trinity. Pacem in Terris is designed for those longing to rest, listen, and simply be. Participants will experience gentle structure for prayer, sitting or walking meditation, journaling, and unhurried rest. Free from small talk, eye contact, and digital interruption, retreatants often discover moments of unexpected grace. We have 8 rustic outdoor hermitages and 2 indoor accessible hermitages available. To participate, participants need to arrive by 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 14. Space is limited. Come rest in the quiet and renew your spirit. Sign up in the Community Room.

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 4, 10:00 AM

Preacher	Doug Mork (he/him)
Presiding Minister	Ingrid Rasmussen (she/her)
Cantor	Stephanie Sulzbach (she/her)
Altar Guild	Amy Hanson (she/her), Jean Swanson (she/her)
Crucifer	
Assisting Minister	Tom Skold (he/him)
Communion	Kathy Skold (she/her), Aaron Hanson (he/him), Lori Lathrop (she/her)
Ushers	Chris Amundson (he/him), Sally Kohlstedt (she/her), David Kohlstedt (he/him)
Coffee Servers	Carol Berg (she/her), David Berg (he/him)
Counters	Deb Helmel (she/her)
Closer	Bob Hulteen (he/him)
Video Operator	Bob Hulteen (he/him)

SUNDAY WORSHIP VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We invite you to explore Sunday morning volunteer opportunities. Over the next several weeks, we will have sign up sheets in the Community Room. You can also call the office or email me if you are interested in learning more about opportunities. You can volunteer in ways that fit your schedule, your personality, your sense of purpose. You can sign up to help with something once a year, once a month, once a quarter, whatever works for you. If you have a spouse or friend you'd like to team up with, let me know, we can make sure you are scheduled together. Volunteering as a family is great too, especially for greeting/ushering or serving coffee and treats.

For those that have been volunteering, we will also have our current volunteer rosters on the table to allow you the opportunity to be removed from a list if you wish to move on from those duties.

PARISH EVENTS JANUARY 4-9, 2026

Sunday, January 4	8:30 AM	Family Coffee Hour
	9:00 AM	Adult Forum
	9:00 AM	Youth Education
	10:00 AM	Worship Service of Holy Communion
	12:00 PM	Swahili Service
Monday, January 5	6:30-8:00 PM	Adult Choir Rehearsal
Tuesday, January 6	11:00 AM	Worship Readings Discussion
	1:30 PM	Knitting Group
Wednesday, January 7	5:00 PM	Choir Families Meal
	5:00 PM -7:00 PM	Young Adult Meal and Arbeiter
	5:45-6:45 PM	Children's Choir
	5:45-6:30 PM	Jubilation Youth Handbell Ensemble
	6:00-7:30 PM	Gloria Ringers
	6:30-8:00 PM	Supervised Gym Time
	6:45-7:30 PM	Cantate!

LIVESTREAM LINKS FOR WORSHIP SERVICES

A [live-stream](#) of the 10:00 a.m. Sunday service is available online at 9:55 a.m.
You can access recordings of previous worship services [here](#).

