



Grace Lutheran Church, ELCA  
1245 6th Ave. W., Hendersonville NC 28739  
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January 2021

**Strategic Vision:** *Grace is a diverse community of faith serving Christ and sharing the love of God.*

**Mission Statement:** *We believe that God in Christ is central to all life and we WORSHIP him through TELLING his story, GROWING in faith, SUPPORTING each other, and CARING for his world.*

**Purpose:**  
*Transforming Lives Through Christ.*

**Core Values:**

- *Being a nurturing family of faith*
- *Growing faith in God the Father, Son & Holy Spirit*
- *Serving others with the heart of Jesus*
- *Seeking unity in Christ*
- *Embracing people seeking Christ*
- *Welcoming cross-cultural, Cross+Generational*

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## The Joy of Serving: Serving in Small Ways

Grace Social Ministry

Grace has been blessed sharing ministry with El Centro, the Henderson County nonprofit that has become a hub of services for immigrants for the last 22 years. As any community organization, El Centro has changed facilities, direct services' focus, and leadership, just because of the nature of the services provided and changing needs in the immigrant community. The most important goals of El Centro are further community collaboration, advocacy, and creating a welcoming environment for newcomers while at the same time assisting immigrants in becoming productive citizens.

Recently, Sergio Fernández came on board as the Executive Director. In a phone conversation with Pastor Alfredo, Sergio shared some of the highlights and challenges for El Centro. Here is a brief summary of that conversation.

COVID-19 has shaped both the focus and the priorities of direct services El Centro provides. It is not new that mental health service has become one of the pressing focuses of El Centro due to the needs of immigrants and the community at large.

The experience of immigrants, whatever the reason they have left their land and countries of origin, takes a toll on their emotional and mental health. In the same way there might be excitement and high hopes, just for the nature of life changes, there is surely a sense of loss and leaving behind their natural social systems of support, which eventually impacts the emotional and mental health of immigrants... And of course, hosting communities could make a great difference in helping them to develop healthy coping mechanisms.

El Centro has grown the numbers of mental health professionals now available. They offer direct individual services and group support on grief, anger management, depression, and make referrals to other mental health community providers.

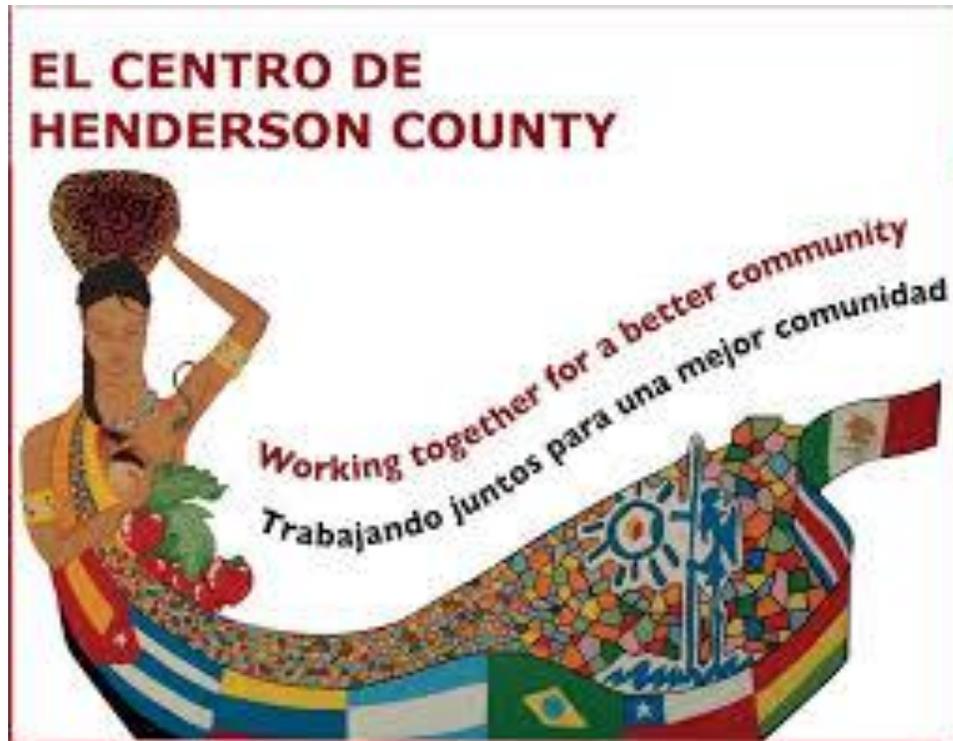
For 2021, El Centro will continue focusing on education by means of GED and ESL classes. They always welcome community volunteers to tutor and coach their students. If interested, just contact El Centro (828-290-7134, <https://www.elcentrolac.org>, [sergio@elcentrolac.org](mailto:sergio@elcentrolac.org)).

The last addition of El Centro's arrangement of services for 2021 will be assisting immigrants in the process of application and completion of state regulated vocational licenses and certifications. If you are interested in knowing more and becoming a volunteer and/or supporter of El Centro, you may join the Social Ministry ZOOM meeting on Jan. 14 at 10 a.m. The

link will be posted on Grace's social media and webpage. El Centro Executive Director, Sergio, will join us in this meeting to speak and answer questions.

Thanks & Have a Blessed New Year!

In the Love of Christ,  
Rev. Alfredo M Oviedo



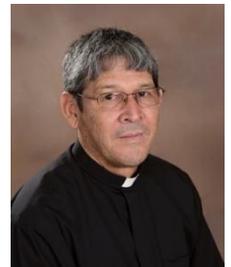
## Reflections from Pastor Alfredo Oviedo

Pastor Alfredo Oviedo – [aoviedo@gracehendersonville.com](mailto:aoviedo@gracehendersonville.com) / 828-693-4890 x331

### Time to Reboot

Welcome to 2021! 2020 is over! We, pastors of Grace, pray and hope for your wellbeing and a meaningful life experience for you and your family throughout 2021 and beyond. Ten months ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic that has disrupted our lives, challenged our ministry, and tested our patience and limits, we are ready to move on! Grace has not stopped doing ministry, and with God's help and guidance, we won't stop! We just keep learning together how to be faithful to God's calling when the world keeps changing around us - in the lingo of baseball lovers, when the world "pitches us a curve."

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, the text for this reflection is the Lectionary reading for January 1. I am not fully convinced that it is the most appropriate to start a new year, though I always trust the Holy Spirit when it comes to reading the scriptures. A short context about the Book of Ecclesiastes - it belongs to Wisdom Literature in the Hebrew sacred tradition. It is titled Kohelet, often translated "the Preacher." Christian tradition adopted the title Ecclesiastes, the Greek translation of Kohelet found in the Septuagint, which literally translates "one who addresses an assembly." It was written between the V and II Centuries BCE and according to Jewish tradition, by King Solomon.



For the purpose of this reflection, in my opinion, Ecclesiastes, is a prototype of an ancient short autobiography, sort of self-talk, self-indulgent, gloomy, and nihilist document. In fact, its path to and place in the Hebrew sacred Canon have been both controversial and contested. Ecclesiastes made its way to the Canon may be thanks to its final remark in Chapter 12:13-14: "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."

Here are some excerpts of the Preacher's discourse in Ecclesiastes: "I said to myself, "Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself." But again, this also was vanity."

"Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil."

"There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God; <sup>25</sup>for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?"

It sounds pretty hedonistic and self-indulgent, doesn't it?

What about the dualistic monologue of chapter 3?

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: <sup>2</sup>a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; <sup>3</sup>a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; <sup>4</sup>a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; <sup>5</sup>a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; <sup>6</sup>a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; <sup>7</sup>a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; <sup>8</sup>a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace."

Given credit to this text, wherever we are in our life and faith journey, a time to reboot might be helpful. When our life and journey get to a point where it seems nothing matters, in a world where supposedly everything is predetermined, when there is no clear direction and purpose, and/or too many choices or places to consider, and/or we are too tired of some of the same daily routines, it is time to reboot!

Thanks to all of you for your patience, dedication, loving care, and even when you have forced us to rethink and question our pastoral decisions. We can assure you that all of you are always present in our decision-making processes, your safety, your spiritual well being, and yes, your health; we won't do anything that increases your risk of catching COVID-19. On the other hand, we are serious about listening to God through your many voices, to do what is moral, ethical, what is right, regardless of the personal consequences we might face, and we will continue doing so. By the time this pastoral reflection comes to publication, a COVID-19 vaccine will continue rolling out and hopefully be available for many more people in the US and around the world, but unfortunately, many people will continue being exposed and will test positive for the virus. We pray for them and will continue providing pastoral support, and through your kindness and support of the many community agencies we partner with, we do provide food, clothing, and some emergency financial assistance for those who have lost their jobs. Regarding face-to-face regathering, we will continue listening to and informing our decisions by the recommendations of both our scientific based health care experts and our civil authorities. Until then, we will continue providing on-line and hybrid online face-to-face streaming worship, communion, faith formation, outreach, limited fellowship, special events, and service opportunities.

In the love of Christ,  
Pastor Alfredo

## Grace Youth Ministry

Dir. of Youth & Young Adult Ministry: Anne Monroe – [amonroe@gracehendersonville.com](mailto:amonroe@gracehendersonville.com) / 828-693-4890 x309

### Grace Young Adults and Campus Ministry

Our Grace Young Adults and Campus Ministry students have been navigating the pandemic by working new jobs, attending virtual or in-person classes, switching to courses closer to home, and returning from deployment.

The end of the fall semester offered opportunities to catch up with our busy young adults with lunch at Hendough, an outdoor bonfire, leadership at the Christmas Eve services, and serving at La Abundancia food distribution. Elise

(freshman, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) said: *"I really enjoy getting to meet up with friends through campus ministry and see how they're doing."* Thank you to Elise for serving as worship assistant, Syedi (Junior, Brevard College) and Lara (Sophomore, NC State University) for serving as readers for Christmas Eve. Syedi said this about recording her reading for the Christmas Eve service: *"It was really strange to read the verse out loud without having people physically there to read to. Although it made me feel more comfortable it was an adjustment, but nothing I couldn't handle. I just hope by this time next year things will be more under control outside of church."*



Kameron (Junior, NC State University) shares this update: *"Covid-19 has drastically changed my experience while away at college. The semester was pretty tough with everything being online, but I was able to get through it and now that I'm on winter break, it's a good time to reconvene and get ready for my spring semester. I live with 3 good friends for roommates so we keep each other pretty busy given the circumstances, and I am really grateful for that. I recently also brought my dog Theo to Raleigh to live with me for a while. It's nice having a friend at school that always hangs out in my room and who I can take for a nice evening walk at the end of a busy day. I hope things go back to normal soon and I hope that everyone is staying healthy and safe during these crazy times!"*



### **Congratulations!**

We are thrilled to announce the winter graduation of Kimberly Juarez from Blue Ridge Community College. She plans on taking a semester off from studies to work in a business/marketing job. After the job experience, she would like to attend a 4-year university for marketing. Kimberly's parents are Lorena and Noe. Congratulations Kimberly, we know you have worked hard to complete this milestone! Our prayers and blessings go with you on this new life adventure.

## **Children & Family Ministry**

**Dir. of Children & Family Ministry: Jill Wingard – [jwingard@gracehendersonville.com](mailto:jwingard@gracehendersonville.com) / 828-693-4890 x344**

As I write this article, we are five days away from Christmas and I am thankful and humbled by the members of Grace for their generosity.

I know we are all tired of the words "Covid-19" and "pandemic", let alone "social distancing" and "quarantine". It seems like so many things in our world are not what they were a year ago and entering into the Christmas season the "normal" feelings of excitement and expectation were replaced with feelings of disappointment and dread.

Several months ago, it became clear that planning for our usual Christmas giving would include changing "what we always do". I spent the fall looking for opportunities, in our community, where help was needed and participation could be done from a distance. I settled on the following three projects: Blessing in Boxes through The Storehouse, Christmas card distribution through Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, and partnering with Abundancia to provide a gift to each of their participating families.

Blessing in Boxes is a ministry, through The Storehouse, that we have partnered with for several years. This year 1575 Henderson County school-aged children from 554 families received gifts. Grace sponsored 25 children and the donations filled my minivan.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services requested homemade Christmas cards which are distributed to individuals and families in immigration detention centers. Grace members created over 50 cards.

Abundancia is a food distribution non-profit who requested the use of Grace's portico in the early fall. They had grown from serving 12 families in June to over 50 families in September and they needed a larger space for their drive-up distribution. Friday, December 18, Abundancia had their final distribution of the year and 83 families (333 individuals) were served. Thanks to the generosity of Grace members and a Thrivent grant 100 blankets and 20 quilts were distributed. Pastor Greg and I assisted in the distribution and we were able to see firsthand the incredible impact this group has on Henderson County's Hispanic population.

So even though this year is not what we planned or expected some things are the same. Grace Lutheran continues to be a congregation that is the hands and feet of Christ. Thank you for making this Christmas season brighter for our brothers and sisters in need.

## A Message from Our President: Vicki Marthaler

### THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among brothers,  
To make music in the heart.

I haven't put away Christmas decorations yet. I know I should be writing my New Year's Resolution List, but I decided to let the Christmas lights twinkle a little bit longer. I like to give the wise men time to find the baby Jesus as I put out the last plate of Christmas cookies and sip the last of the wassail before I begin the "**Work of Christmas.**" Ah, the "**Work of Christmas.**" It's not about packing up all the decorations. Pastor Greg posted the "**Work of Christmas**" by Howard Thurman on his Facebook page and I keep going back to read it again.

In reviewing 2020, I am encouraged by the Women of Grace and the work they continue to accomplish in the name of Jesus even though Covid has strewn rocks along the path attempting to discourage and stunt the "**Work of Christmas.**"

The Quilters continue to quilt. The Prayer Shawl ministers continue to knit and crochet. The Circles continue to Zoom or connect in other safe ways so that they can support one another, pray for one another, and inspire one another as we live with Covid restrictions and an unknown future. Choir members continue to sing. Musicians are not silenced. Grace women continue to serve on the council and on various committees. Women work creatively to support Living Waters Food Bank and Abundancia as they work to meet the needs of those facing food insecurities. The Altar Guild continues to "guild" away! (Who would have ever imagined preparing for drive-thru communion!) Many women have boldly shared a bit of their faith journey through our "Gathering Grace" episodes on YouTube with the hope of refreshing a daunted soul. A women's Readers' Theater narrated heart-warming stories which were videoed for YouTube giving the annual Christmas Tea a new venue. A WELCA Tote Bag/Patch Fundraiser is on-going to bolster the coffers so that the women can continue their important tradition of contributing to worthwhile community charities. Food donations were generously given to support the work of Hope House in North Carolina where girls rescued from human trafficking can find a safe place to heal and be restored. And these are just the highlights!

2021 will be no different. The "**Work of Christmas**" will continue full tilt for the Women of Grace. So eat that last Christmas cookie, swig down the wassail and roll up your sleeves, ladies. The New Year is here and there is much "**Work of Christmas**" to do! Together is better! A blessed New Year to you!

Vicki Marthaler of Grace Lutheran Women.

**For additional information about this and other ministries of the Women of the ELCA, see the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall or contact our president, Vicki Marthaler (218-849-5683).**

## Birthdays



Bonnie Wells	1/1	Catharin McCarthy-		James Stoltenberg	1/21
Ruth Derrick	1/2	Banta	1/9	Peter Gollup	1/22
Perry Nelson	1/2	Anne Lilly	1/10	Mary Kneeland	1/22
David Pigors	1/2	Valerie Veitch	1/11	Tamara Miller	1/23
Kathy Reinhard	1/2	Christopher Bufalino	1/12	Wendy Withrow	1/23
Laurie Elliott	1/3	Rheta Luy	1/12	Mary Eichorn	1/24
Isai Solano	1/3	Reid Northrup	1/12	Marjorie Ann Loken	1/24
Said Solano-Jimenez	1/3	Hannah Lilly	1/13	Charles Mummert	1/24
Terry Schaefer	1/4	Karen Beardsley	1/14	Charlotte Osterman	1/24
Josie Lanquist	1/6	Yvonne Forsythe	1/14	David Beaty	1/25
Ema Masha	1/6	Carol Ontko	1/14	Suzanne Celtrick	1/25
Katya Pigors	1/6	Sharon Zaragoza	1/15	Rae Foster	1/25
Paige Willms	1/6	Donald Obertein	1/16	Myra Glowacki	1/25
Letha Abeln	1/7	Alli King	1/17	Nathaniel Clark	1/26
David Berks	1/7	Laura Spencer	1/17	Barbara Fountain	1/26
Norris Crigler	1/7	John Wells	1/18	Jennifer Moore	1/26
Lynn Nichols	1/7	Robert Engstrom	1/19	Lilly Bonetti	1/27
Wade Patterson	1/7	Janice Saville-		Peter Knight	1/27
Susan Steiner	1/7	Schwartz	1/20	Richard Miley	1/28
Lillie Grace Keener	1/8	Brenda Sigmon	1/20	Judith Lichtenhagen	1/30
Sharon Doty	1/9	Joan Florine	1/21	Nancy Engstrom	1/31
Charles Jones	1/9	Matthew Rholl	1/21		

## Anniversaries

Hunter & Suzanne Hale	1/1/1971	Robert & Anna Moroni	1/16/1960
Roger & Judy Bohn	1/5/1962	Warren & Yong Weber	1/16/1964
Noe & Lorena Acosta	1/6/1992	Lonnie & Pam Darr-Badin	1/23/2013
Duane & Caren Geiler	1/7/2007	Jim & Ellen Morrison	1/23/1965
Joshua & Kelly Friesen	1/8/2005	Bob & Karen Frederick	1/26/1985
Alan & Patty Ann Dietrich	1/9/1982	Mike & Lynn Nichols	1/26/1980
Ken & Catherine Langsdorf	1/9/1988	Jim & Heather Wiggins	1/28/1995
Mark & Suzanne Gibbs	1/12/1960	Dick & Vivian Pemble	1/30/1961
Jim & Joan Florine	1/13/1968	Keith & Lori Johnson	1/31/1976
Don & Nancy Bell	1/16/1965		



**1245 6<sup>th</sup> Ave W**  
**Hendersonville, NC 28739**  
**\*\*\*Return Service Requested\*\*\***

**Justice and Advocacy Zoom Book Study - "How to Be an Anti-Racist"**

Wednesdays, Jan. 13-Feb. 3, 7-8 p.m.

"How to Be an Anti-Racist" by Ibram X. Kendi. The study will be co-led by Kelly Spangler, a member of Grace Lutheran Church and a retired public health social work consultant and Daisy Morris a retired North Carolina Sickle Cell Program Director and a member of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Cary, NC.

Dr. Kendi's book is a New York Times bestseller. As quoted on the book cover, "Dr. Kendi, weaves an electrifying combination of ethics, history, law and science with his own personal story of awakening to antiracism." The study group will discuss the concepts in the book as well as how we can individually and collectively work to promote a more equal and just society. The book is available on Amazon.com for \$14.98 + tax.

You will receive more information by e-mail once you have signed up for the study. Sign up for the study here: <https://bit.ly/GraceAnti-RacistBookStudy>

If you have any questions about the study, contact Kelly Spangler, 828-273-0418 or [kelly2016swer@gmail.com](mailto:kelly2016swer@gmail.com)