

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH



**FEBRUARY 2026
GRACE VINE
NEWSLETTER**

2 Corinthians 5:20b-21

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.



Letter from the Pastors

From Peace on Earth to Sackcloth and Ashes

Most years the Church calendar gives pastors a breather between the Advent/Christmas season and the Lenten/Easter season. Sometimes it's a big breather such that we wonder what we're going to do with all the extra time we have. But every so often Lent seems to start early and it feels as though we jump from Christmas straight into Lent. This year is one of those years.

At the time of writing this article (January 20), my house is still decorated for Christmas; this is due to the fact that I and my family returned home from Christmas & New Year's celebrations with the flu and, for me, the after effects of the flu bug have lingered... and lingered and lingered. So with the tree and nativities and all the warmth of Christmas decorations still up at home, in the office I'm planning for the penitential season of Lent. The manger and the cross have collided and this is, in some regards, a very strange place to be.

The manger and the cross always go hand-in-hand: the reason for Christmas – for the incarnation of our Lord – is death, "No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." This is to say that Son of God descends from heaven to earth (or we can say it this way, "is born") so as to be lifted up on the cross and die so that we ourselves would be spared from death even as the Israelites in the wilderness were spared from death when they looked to Moses' bronze serpent (more on this March 1st).

The death of Christ is written all over our Christmas and Epiphany hymns, "nails, spears shall pierce him through, the cross be born for me for you..." Or again, "Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom; sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone-cold tomb." And again, "I wonder as I wander, out under the sky, how Jesus the Savior did come for to die..." But unless you happen to be in a season of grief and sorrow in your own life, it can be difficult to see the death of Bethlehem's baby in a season that is so focused on themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. Golgotha and Good Friday are the farthest thing from our minds when we're so focused on Bethlehem and the "glad tidings of great joy that is for all people..."

But then we get an early start to Lent. Just weeks after getting our Christmas decorations put away, we gather in the house of God to hear those haunting words, "From dust you were made and to dust you shall return." With these words Christmas takes on a much deeper meaning: now I'm faced with my mortality, and the cute little baby in the manger is not just some cute little baby like all the other cute little babies of the world; this baby is the very medicine God gives to take away my mortality. Now those themes of hope, peace, joy, and love are more than pleasantries, more than words to throw on a wall, a coffee cup, or a t-shirt; these words are the very gifts of God won for us through the life, death, and resurrection of His incarnate Son.

Lenten Blessings,
Pastor Kris

John 3:13-15

What Child is This vs.2

We Three Kings, vs.4

I Wonder as I Wander, vs.1

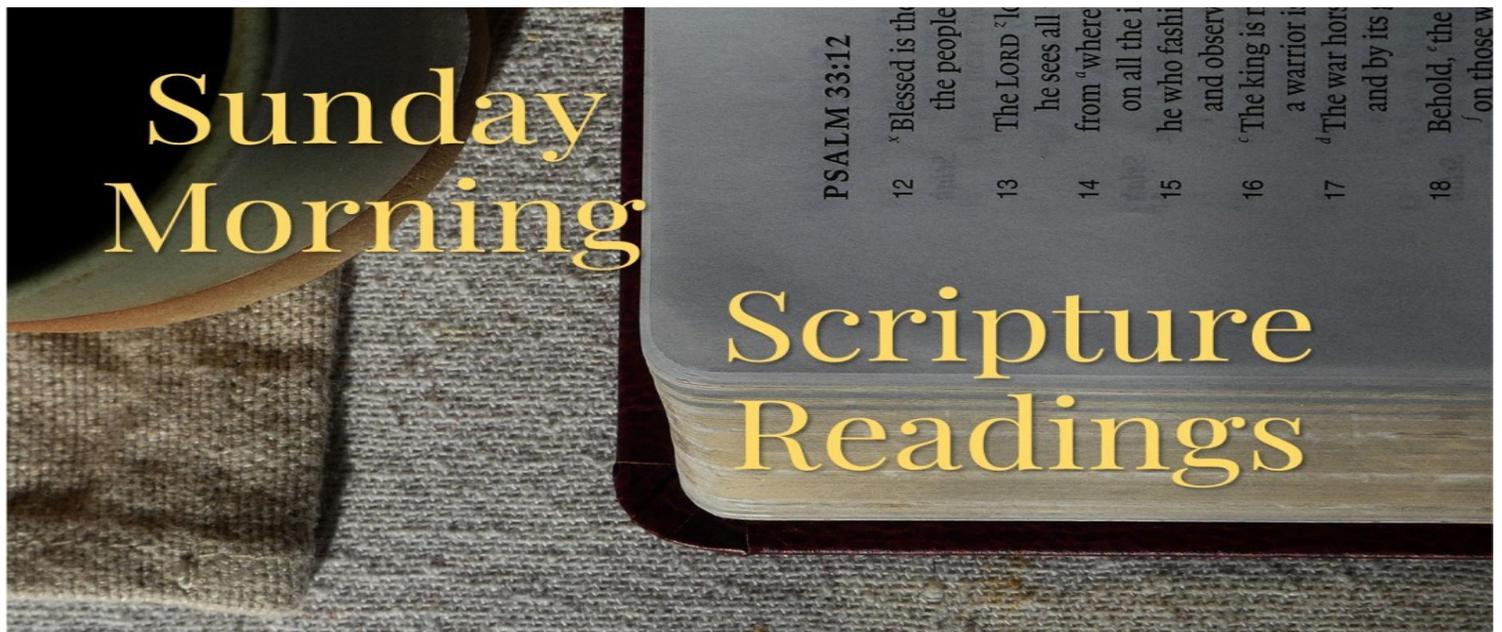
These are the themes and names of the Advent candles

Glad tidings of great joy that is for all people, Luke 2

From dust you were made and to dust you shall return, Genesis3

Scripture Readings for February

Date	Gospel Reading	Additional Readings
Feb 1	Matthew 5:1-12	First Reading: Micah 6:1-8 Psalm Reading: 15 Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
Feb 8	Matthew 5:13-20	First Reading: Isaiah 58:3-9a Psalm Reading: 112:1-9 Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16)
Feb 15	Matthew 17:1-9	First Reading: Exodus 24:8-18 Psalm Reading: 2:6-12 Second Reading: 2 Peter 1:16-21
Feb 22	Matthew 4:1-11	First Reading: Genesis 3:1-21 Psalm Reading: 32:1-7 Second Reading: Romans 5:12-19



Announcements



CHURCH COUNCIL

Church Council meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm in room 8. If a regularly scheduled council meeting needs to be rescheduled, the will be notified through the weekly MailChimp mass emailer as well as the bulletin.

Lenten Meal & Services  Join us in the Fellowship Hall
Dinner at 6pm
Service at 6:30pm

February 25th – Mexican Potluck
March 4th – Comfort Food Potluck
March 11th – Soup Supper
March 18th – Italian Potluck
March 25th – Best Casserole Potluck

MEN OF GRACE GATHERING
+ February 7, 2026 at 6:00pm +
2700 Maturango St., Ridgecrest, CA

Join us for a time of fellowship and good food at Scott Frastaci's house – 2700 Maturango St. Dinner will be provided

Ash Wednesday Service



February 18 @ 6:30

SOCAL DISTRICT LCMC
2026 DISTRICT GATHERING



February 27-28, 2026
1-8pm Friday, 9am-2:30pm Saturday
Ascension Lutheran Church
1600 E. Hillcrest Dr., Thousand Oaks, CA

- Breakout Sessions for Pastors and Lay Leaders
- Dinner and Worship with Keynote Address
- Business Meeting & Q&A with Chuck Hunt
- Cost: \$65.00 per person
- Friday Night Dinner and Saturday Lunch provided

Mark your calendar!



The 2026 Missions Festival will be a Hawaiian style luau after second service
February 22, 11:30
with the Nellermoes of China Service Ventures



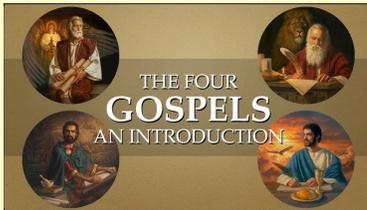
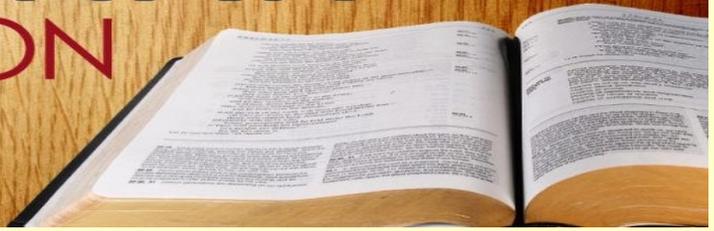
OWLS

(Older Wiser Lutherans)
Meets for games, fun, and entertainment in the Fellowship Hall the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 1:30 pm. All are welcome to attend.

Naomi's Friends 

Naomi's Friend's is a Widow's Support Group that meets the 2nd & 4th Tuesday of each month at **Ale's Crab House @ 12pm.**

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



Peace Bible Study meets the third Wednesday of the month at 9 am in the CR. The study is called *Introduction to the Four Gospels*. All are welcome.



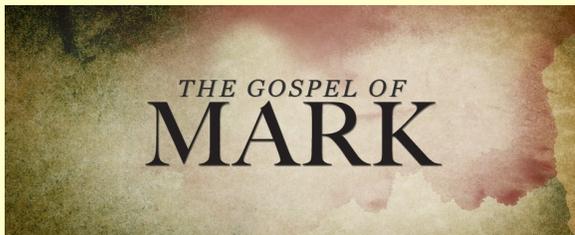
Limbo Young Adult Life group meets Mondays at 6:30 p.m. at the Smee's home.

Team 784 meets in the Fellowship Hall
For ages 3rd grade to 90+

Kingdom Kids meets in the Conference Room for kids up to 2nd grade & adults



Join "A Bible and a Pencil" Bible study via Zoom on Tuesdays at 1:00 pm. The study is on the book of Exodus. Please contact Mark Brynestad via email at marknsue78@gmail.com for further information regarding this class.



An in-depth Bible study of Mark via Zoom on Tuesday nights, 7:00, under the instruction of Mark Brynestad. Please contact Mark Brynestad via email at marknsue78@gmail.com for further information regarding this class.

*Spotlighting
the Family of Grace*

**Eric and Sandra
Burkhardt**



Eric and Sandra Burkhardt came to Ridgecrest in 1991 from Georgia via St. Louis, MO when Eric's company moved a group of engineers to an F-18 office at China Lake. Sandra was finishing her Master's degree and they initially thought she might stay behind to finish it; fortunately, she found a professor to accept transfer classes she could take here, so she was able to move with Eric. The move happened during the spring semester; Sandra was immediately accepted as a substitute teacher and taught at Monroe Junior High/Middle School since then until last school year, when she moved to Burroughs High School.

Eric and Sandra grew up in the same Georgia town where Eric was raised in the Lutheran church and Sandra in the Baptist church. Even attending the same high school, they didn't meet until adulthood, and when they married, their wedding was performed by Eric's Lutheran pastor in Sandra's Baptist church.

Sandra had played bells from an early age and after attending a Figgy Pudding performance where she got to see the Grace bell choir, they knew Grace was the place to call their church home. They have one son, Evan and as Evan grew up, the Burkhardt family were very active at Grace. Supporting Evan in youth group, the Burkhardt family donated electronics and participated in youth events happening in the Grace Center. Evan was confirmed in the faith while Eric served on the council and became council president more than once. Sandra even got Eric to play in the bell choir.

Now empty nesters, Eric and Sandra keep in shape: Sandra and Evan have entered the same running events -- they don't run together, but both come home with the same T-shirts. Eric leads exercises at the Heritage Park which grew out of covid shutting down gyms. Exercise in the park introduced them to new friends who immigrated from other countries; friends who have since invited them to join them on visits to their home countries of Sri Lanka and Thailand. Traveling with personal friends as tour guides has become their new passion.

Gallo Pinto (Costa Rican Beans and Rice)

Thanks to Nate Hardy for this recipe



Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons light-tasting vegetable oil
- 1 chopped red bell pepper
- 1 small chopped yellow onion
- 2 minced garlic cloves
- 2 cups cooked black beans in 3/4 cup liquid reserved from cooking them
- 1/4 cup Salsa Lizano
- 3 cups cooked rice
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro

Instructions

- Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Sauté bell pepper and onions until peppers are soft and onions are translucent, about 6-8 minutes. Add minced garlic and cook for 1 minute, until fragrant.
- Add black beans, reserved cooking liquid, and Salsa Lizano, stirring to combine. Simmer for 5 minutes, until slightly thickened and a little bit of the liquid has evaporated. Gently stir in cooked rice and cook until heated through and most of the liquid is absorbed, about 3-5 minutes.
- Stir in chopped cilantro. Season to taste with additional Salsa Lizano, if desired, and serve.

Salsa Lizano or Salsa Lizano Suave, a light version with 25% less sodium is essential to this dish. It's available in some Latin markets, or possibly in the International aisle at the grocery store. It can also be ordered online.

February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Worship 10:00am 9:15 am Christian Education Hour 6 pm Youth Group	2 5:30pm Model Plane Group 6:30pm Limbo 6:30 pm Flutes 7 pm Boy Scouts	3 5:30 pm Girl Scouts 6 pm Delta Beta Event	4 9am Music Together 6:30 pm Ridgecrest Explorers	5 5:30 pm Girl Scouts 5:15 pm Praise Band Practice 7 pm Choir	6 4 pm Youth Orchestra	7 10am Music Together
8 Worship 8:00 & 10:30am 9:15 am Christian Education Hour 6 pm Youth Group	9 6:30pm Limbo 6:30 pm Flutes 7 pm Boy Scouts	10 12pm Naomi's Friends 1:30pm OWLS 5:30 pm Girl Scouts	11 9am Music Together 12:30pm Ridgecrest Explorers	12 2:30pm Parkinson's Group 5:30 pm Girl Scouts 5:15 pm Praise Band Practice 7 pm Choir	13 4 pm Youth Orchestra	14 10am Music Together
15 Worship 8:00 & 10:30am 9:15 am Christian Education Hour	16 OFFICE CLOSED 6:30pm Limbo 6:30 pm Flutes 7 pm Boy Scouts	17 5:30 pm Girl Scouts 6 pm Fat Tuesday 6:30 pm Church Council Meeting	18 9 am Peace Bible Study 9am Music Together 12:30 pm Heartland Meeting 6:30pm Ash Wednesday Service	19 5:30 pm Girl Scouts 5:15 pm Praise Band Practice 7 pm Choir	20 4 pm Youth Orchestra	21 10am Music Togeth- er 8am IMTT Renewal
22 Worship 8:00 & 10:30am 11:30 pm Missions Festival 12:30 pm Youth Orchestra Concert 6 pm Youth Group	23 6:30 pm Limbo 6:30 pm Flutes 7 pm Boy Scouts	24 12 pm Naomi's Friend's 1:30 pm OWLS 5:30 pm Girl Scouts	25 9am Music Together 6 pm Lenten Supper	26 5:30 pm Girl Scouts 5:15 pm Praise Band Practice 7 pm Choir	27 4 pm Youth Orchestra	28 10am Music Together



502 N. Norma
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

For God so loved the world that
he gave his only Son, so that eve-
ryone who believes in him may
not perish but may have eternal
life.
John 3:16 (NRSV)



www.gracelutheran.org
[www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/gracelutheran.org)

We're on the Web at:

Rev. Kris Madsen, *Senior Pastor*
Rev. Carleton Smece, *Associate Pastor*
Christine McClain, *Office Manager*
Jane Kuhlman, *Music*
Paul Jauregui, *Custodian*
Michell Koenig, *Gracevine Editor*



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Worship Services Sundays at 8 & 10:30 am
Christian Education Hour Sundays 9:15 am

