

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH



Grace
Lutheran Church

**MAY 2026
GRACE VINE
NEWSLETTER**



Luke 24:45-53

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

Letter from the Pastors

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

- Acts 1:8-11

May 14th is the feast of the Ascension of our Lord; it marks forty days from the resurrection. Saint Luke tells us in Acts 1:2-3 that Jesus "presented himself alive to (the Apostles) after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during *forty days* and speaking about the kingdom of God." Saint Paul also alludes to these appearances in 1 Corinthians 15:5-6.



The ascension to the right hand of the Father is probably the strangest, most abstract thing we confess about Jesus in the Creeds. The conception and birth of Jesus is very graspable... the Holy Spirit's part in the conception might be strange for us, but we very much understand conception and birth. The suffering, death, and burial of Jesus is also very much within human understanding and experience. The resurrection stretches us to be sure, but he who died and was buried then rose and actually appeared first to the disciples and then to others as well. Though nobody actually saw the resurrection happen (that is to say, nobody actually witnessed the moment that Jesus came back to life), yet because the tomb was empty and so many people saw Jesus after he rose, and because the appearance accounts that we do have go to great lengths to show that this was not a spirit/ghost but a touchable, pokable, eating breakfast, flesh-and-bones body, the resurrection is also graspable. But nobody saw Christ after the ascension and so it is a more challenging aspect of the faith to grasp.

So what does it mean that Christ "ascended to the right hand of the Father?"

- In Ephesians 4:9-10 Saint Paul tells us that it means that he "also descended into the lower regions of the earth" and that "He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things." Because he ascended we can be confident that he first descended from heaven. That he descended from heaven means that we can have confidence in the testimony that he proclaimed to us because it comes as first-hand proclamation from the Father, "The word that you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me" (Jn.14:24).

- In John 14:2-3 Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

Here the ascension of Christ means that you have a place prepared for you in glory; that when you die, yet shall you live and you can have confidence knowing *where* you will live, i.e., with Christ and the Saints in the Father's house.

That Christ is preparing a place for you in the Father's house does *not mean* that he's getting all these rooms prepared for a lot of company... getting sheets, beds and clean towels out in preparation for your arrival. Christ preparing the Father's house for your arrival means that he is advocating for you – on your behalf – before the Father (1 Jn. 2:1-2), "See that sinner? I died for that sinner. My blood covers/forgives *that* sinner's sins and so he/she is not a sinner at all."

- In Ephesians 1:20-21 Saint Paul says that Christ's ascension to the right hand of the Father means that Christ has been seated "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the (age) to come." What does this mean? It means that the reign of Christ has already begun; it means that we aren't waiting for his reign to begin, but are already living in it. The thousand-year reign that the various stripes of millennialists try to define and nail down perpetually miss the mark because the "thousand year reign" is not about time, but relationship,

John does not actually say whether his vision of the thousand-year reign of the saints takes place on earth or in heaven... John speaks of the saints whereabouts in relational, rather than in geographical terms. Each time we might expect him to say that they "reigned on earth," he says that they "reigned with Christ" (Rev. 20:4,6). The point bears repeating. If we ask, "Where are the saints? We receive the answer, "They are with Christ." ***The relational answer "with Christ" points us to the heart of life in the millennial kingdom.****

As in other places in Revelation, a thousand symbolizes fullness; so, for example the 144,000 from every tribe of Israel (Rev. 7:4) becomes "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes of peoples..." (Rev. 7:9). 144,000 comes to symbolize the full number of the multitude of saints. So too, the thousand year reign of Christ is not a literal one thousand years, but rather the fullness of time for which Christ reigns. And the ascension to the right hand of the Father means that the reign of Christ has begun even though for now his reign is as "head over all things to the Church" (Eph. 1:22) and we look for the Day of his return when he "transforms our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" (Phil. 3:21); that Great Day when, "every knee bows down and tongue confesses God" (Rom. 14:11).

Ascension Day Blessings,
Pastor Kris

*Koester, Craig R. Revelation and the End of All Things, pg.184-185. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK, 2001. (emphasis is my own)

Scripture Readings for May


Date	Gospel Reading	Additional Readings
May 3	John 14:1-14	First Reading: Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60 Psalm Reading: 146 Second Reading: 1 Peter 2:2-10
May 10	John 14:15-21	First Reading: Acts 17:16-31 Psalm Reading: 66:8-20 Second Reading: 1 Peter 3:13-22
May 17	John 17:1-11	First Reading: Acts 1:12-26 Psalm Reading: 68:1-10 Second Reading: 1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-11
May 24	John 7:37-39	First Reading: Numbers 11:24-30 Psalm Reading: 25:1-15 Second Reading: Acts 2:1-21
May 31	Mathew 28:16-20	First Reading: Genesis 1:1-2:4a Psalm Reading: 8 Second Reading: Acts 2:14a, 22-36

Sunday
Morning

Scripture
Readings

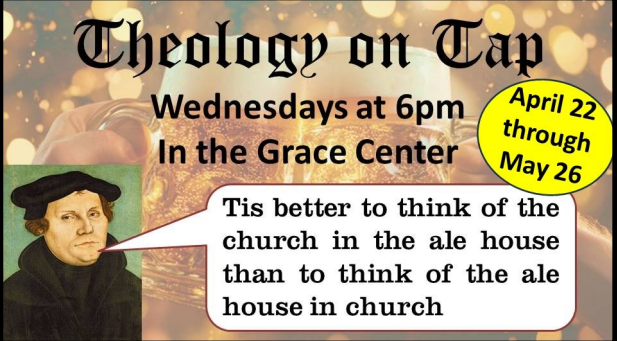
PSALM 33:12
12 ^a Blessed is the LORD who
the people
13 The LORD who
he sees all
14 from ^a where
on all the
15 he who fash
and observ
16 ^c The king is
a warrior
17 ^d The war hor
and by its
18 Behold, the
/ on those w

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.



Theology on Tap

Wednesdays at 6pm
In the Grace Center

April 22 through May 26

Tis better to think of the church in the ale house than to think of the ale house in church

Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, May 17 at 11:30

On the Agenda:

- Election of two new council members
- Proposed amendments to the Bylaws
Notable changes include moving to a single required congregational meeting per year and moving that meeting to November.
- Approval of roofing project

Forums on the roofing project will be this Sunday and next Sunday at 9:15 in room 7



Save the Date:
Interest Meeting for 2027 Mission Trip in Eastern Europe
Sunday, May 10 between services (9:15) in Room 8

Open Hearth YG Baseball Trip 2026


Wednesday, July 22nd, 9am-9pm
Cost: \$40

Join Pastor Smee as we head on down to Angel's Stadium for a baseball game. We will meet at the church at 8am to head on down. Pr. Smee will cover lunch. Bring money for any souvenirs or snacks in the park, plus dinner on the way home.

Open Hearth YG Summer Pool Party

June 14th, 6pm-8pm
At the Lindula's house

Join us for some fun, food, and fellowship. Maybe we will even have s'mores. (Pink flamingo floaties are optional)



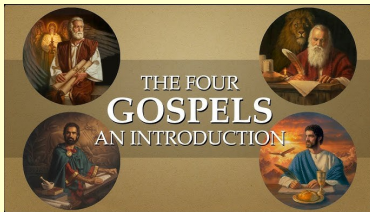
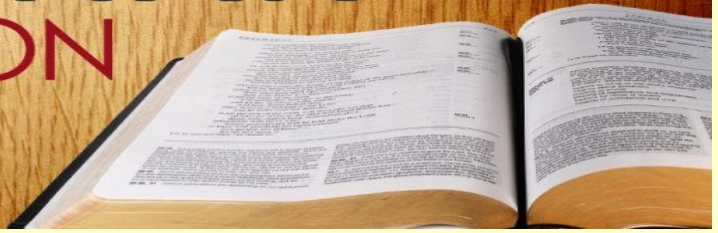
Naomi's Friends
Is a widow's Support Group.

They meet the 2nd & 4th
Wednesday of each month
At Lugo's Grill @ 12pm.



(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.

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.

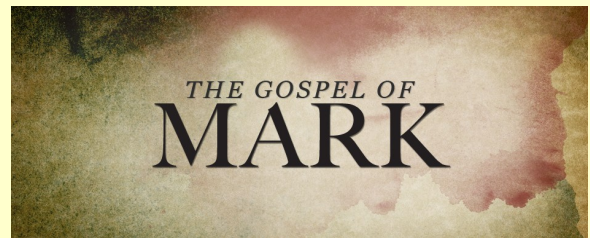
Team 784 meets in the Fellowship Hall

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*

**Matt
Szpynda**



Matt Szpynda's father was in the Navy and stationed at China Lake when Matt was born here in Ridgecrest in 1991. Deployments kept the family moving between the San Diego area and Ridgecrest, so Matt spent most of his years growing up in Ridgecrest and graduated from Burroughs High School. He intended to enlist in the Navy after graduation, but the Navy only offered him the opportunity to go into nuclear reactor training, which was of no interest to Matt, so he enlisted in the Air Force instead. The Air Force sent him to the Middle East 4 times. Unfortunately, he did suffer significant disability during his military career, including PTSD, and left the Air Force with a decade of service. After leaving the military, he came back to Ridgecrest to work for a government contractor for two years, before becoming a civil servant. He is currently taking advantage of his VA educational benefits and expects to graduate with distinction when he earns his Master's Degree in Aviation Cyber Security at the end of this year.

His family was familiar with Grace; it was the church they attended for Christmas and Easter services when they were in Ridgecrest, although they attended other churches throughout the year. Familiarity brought Matt to Grace, where he was quickly invited to Limbo and Theology on Tap, which he enjoys and looks forward to greater participation once he finishes his education. His skill with technology also got him involved with Grace's audio/visual team. After attending the new members class in August of last year, Matt became the sole new member (of about 20) who was welcomed at second service in September.

Matt likes to hike, fish and hunt and is particularly fond of finding chukar on his hunts, usually done with his father. He also plays Dungeons and Dragons, both online and in person, although working full time, working on his Master's, and working with Grace's A/V team, his free time is limited.

Real Polish Pierogis

Ingredients

1. 2 cups all-purpose flour
2. 1/2 teaspoon salt
3. 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted
4. 1/2 cup sour cream
5. 1 large egg
6. 1 cup potato, peeled and cubed
7. 1/2 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
8. 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
9. 1 small onion, chopped
10. 2 tablespoons butter
11. Salt to taste
12. Sour cream for serving
13. Chopped chives for garnish



Instructions

1. In a bowl, mix flour and salt. Add melted butter, sour cream, and egg. Knead into a smooth dough, cover, and let it rest for 30 minutes.
2. Boil potatoes until tender, drain and mash. Stir in cheddar cheese, black pepper, and salt. Mix well.
3. Roll out the dough on a floured surface to 1/8-inch thickness. Cut out circles using a 3-inch cutter.
4. Place a teaspoon of potato filling in the center of each dough circle. Fold over and seal edges with a fork.
5. Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Cook pierogi in batches for 3-4 minutes or until they float. Remove and drain.
6. In a skillet, sauté onion in butter until golden brown. Add cooked pierogi and fry until lightly crisped on each side.
7. Serve warm with a dollop of sour cream and garnish with chives.

MAY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 4 pm Youth Orchestra	2
3 6:30am, 8am & 10:30am 9:15 am Christian Education Hour 9:15 am Roofing Forum 6 pm Youth Group	4 5:30pm Model Planes 6:30pm Limbo 6:30 pm High Desert Pipers 7 pm Boy Scouts	5 5:30 pm Girl Scouts	6 10 am Music Together 6:30 pm Theology on Tap	7 5 pm Praise Band Practice 5:30 pm Girl Scouts 7 pm Choir Practice	8 4 pm Youth Orchestra	9 10:30 am Music Together
10 Worship 8:00 & 10:30am 9:15 am Christian Education Hour 9:15 am Roofing Forum 9:15 am Mission Trip Interest Meet-	11 6:30pm Limbo 6:30 pm High Desert Pipers 7 pm Boy Scouts	12 1:30pm OWLS 5:30 pm Girl Scouts	13 10 am Music Together 12 pm Naomi's Friend's @ Lugo's 6 pm Theology on Tap	14 2:30pm Parkinson's Group 5 pm Praise Band Practice 5:30 pm Girl Scouts 7 pm Choir Practice	15 4 pm Youth Orchestra	16 8am IMTT Renewal 10:30 am Music Together
17 Worship 8:00 & 10:30am 9:15 am Christian Education Hour 12 pm Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting 6 pm Youth Group	18 6:30 pm Limbo 6:30 pm High Desert Pipers 7 pm Boy Scouts	19 5:30 pm Girl Scouts 6:30 pm Church Council Meeting	20 9 am Peace Bible Study 10 am Music Together 6 pm Theology on Tap	21 5 pm Praise Band Practice 5:30 pm Girl Scouts 7 pm Choir Practice	22 4 pm Youth Orchestra	23 10:30 am Music Together
24 Worship 8:00 & 10:30am 9:15 am Christian Education Hour	25 6:30 pm Limbo 6:30 pm High Desert Pipers 7 pm Boy Scouts	26 1:30pm OWLS 5:30 pm Girl Scouts	27 10 am Music Together 12 pm Naomi's Friend's @ Lugo's 6 pm Theology on Tap	28 5 pm Praise Band Practice 5:30 pm Girl Scouts 7 pm Choir Practice	29 4 pm Youth Orchestra	30 10:30 am Music Together

Celebrating 70 Years
 1956 - 2026
Grace
 Lutheran Church

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 Smeed, *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

