



JANUARY GRACE NOTES

Volume 14 Issue 1 2026

High-Low

“Faith is not knowing what the future holds,
but knowing who holds the future.”

Most evenings around the dinner table, our family plays a game called *High-Low*. We take turns sharing the best part of the day and then the least favorite part. Sometimes the answers are silly; other times they are wildly inappropriate (I live with a lot of boys!). There are evenings when we have to search hard for a “high” after a difficult day, and other days when one of the little ones announces, “Everything was good! Best day ever!” This simple ritual gives me a small window into their lives and helps us stay connected to one another.

As we near the end of another year, reflection seems natural. Perhaps 2025 has been a wonderful year for you. For our family, it was a difficult one. Loss, death, and grief wove their way through the seasons. And yet, this same year brought one of the greatest “highs” of my life: the birth of my first grandson, Myles. I was present for his birth and the days that followed, have been blessed to see him often over the past few months, and even had him in our home this past week. So much joy contained in such a tiny person. Watching him smile, learn to walk, interact with his uncles and aunt, and seeing my own child become a parent has been a profound gift.

No one knows what 2026 will bring. The hymn *I Know Who Holds Tomorrow* offers these words: “I know who holds tomorrow, and I know who holds my hand.” Hopes, goals, and aspirations for the new year are good and faithful practices, yet much remains beyond human control. James reminds us, “You do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (James 4:14).

There will be both highs and lows in the year ahead. Whatever the new year brings, trust can be placed in God who goes before us and walks beside us. May 2026 offer fresh opportunities to grow in faith and to live that faith with intention, courage, and hope.

Happy New Year! Pastor Laura



Faith and Wellness

Welcome to the New Year! We hope that you had a blessed and joyous Christmas Season. As we enter January, Cathy DuBois, of our Faith and Wellness Team, is coordinating our effort to “Be a Ready Congregation.”

In today’s world there can be a lot of uncertainty and the best way to deal with it is to be prepared ahead of time. To be prepared saves lives; to do nothing reduces your chance of survival. Our churches have traditionally been a sanctuary of safety and peace but they are not immune to fire, severe weather or gun violence. Therefore we are offering the following programs:

1. Sunday, January 11th at 9:00 am in the sanctuary: “Stop the Bleed.”
2. Saturday, January 24th at 10:00 am in the sanctuary: “Active Shooter Training” presenter is Joliet Police Officer Chuck Mascolino.
3. Sunday, January 25th at 9:00 am in the sanctuary: “Be a Ready Congregation: Fire, Severe Weather and Active Shooter”.

Sunday, January 4th, the 1st Sunday of the month, BP readings are done in the library from 10:00 — 10:25 am.

Faith and Wellness Team’s meeting is Wednesday, January 7th at 12:00 noon.

Happy New Year!
Your Faith and Wellness Team



Join the Fun! Sign Up for the Chili Cook-Off!

Get ready to spice things up at our upcoming Chili Cook-Off! Whether you're a seasoned chef or a first-time competitor, we want YOU to bring your best chili recipe to the table. This is a great opportunity to showcase your cooking skills, and compete for the title of best chili cooker in the church.

Not a cook? No worries! Come enjoy the tasty creations, vote for your favorites, and help crown the ultimate Chili Champion.

Sign up today to participate as a cook! We can't wait to see (and taste) what you've got. Let's make this year's Chili Cook-Off the best one yet!



We will have a sign up sheet outside the sanctuary for you to sign up. We look forward to this competition! Thank You!

This will be in conjunction with the Potato Bar. So dine in and select your favorite chili!

Jonah Barkley

THANK YOU

"A Future With Hope", our Stewardship Campaign last fall to underwrite the budget for 2026 resulted in 71 pledges for \$232,442. This reflects a few more pledges and a few more dollars than last year, and as a result the Church Council had the confidence to approve a budget for this year similar to that of 2025. Thanks to those who pledged for your continued financial support, and to all who share their time, talents, gifts, service and witness at Grace Church.



Jim Morrow

Finance Committee Chair

BE A READY CONGREGATION

Join us in January

Last November I (Cathy DuBois) represented our church in Elgin for a 2.5 hour training seminar presented by our Northern Conference on how to address Active Shooters in the religious communities. We were asked to bring back the info to our individual churches. We have formed a task force within our congregation who have agreed to attend training and review it annually to stay prepared. But the training is open to all who are interested.

Churches have traditionally been a sanctuary of safety and peace, but they are not immune to fire, severe weather, and gun violence. The purpose of this training is not to upset anyone, but to help us be prepared ahead of time. To be prepared saves lives, to do nothing reduces your chance of survival.

PLEASE SAVE THESE DATES, BE PREPARED

Sunday, January 11, 2026 at 9:00am Stop the Bleed: in the sanctuary

Saturday, January 24 at 10:00am Active Shooter Training: Joliet Police Officer Chuck Mascalino, starting in the sanctuary.

Sunday, January 25, at 9:00. Be a Ready Congregation: what to do at Grace in case of fire, severe weather, and a summary of Active Shooter training.

Training is encouraged by Pastor Laura, Cathy DuBois, Trustees, AV Team, and Faith and Wellness Team.

To Register: Call or email Adreinne at the church or email Cathy DuBois

UWF ~Christmas Tea

United Woman in Faith gathered with 14 ladies on December 6th in Grace Place for a Christmas Tea. We had a lovely program, great fellowship and tea and goodies.

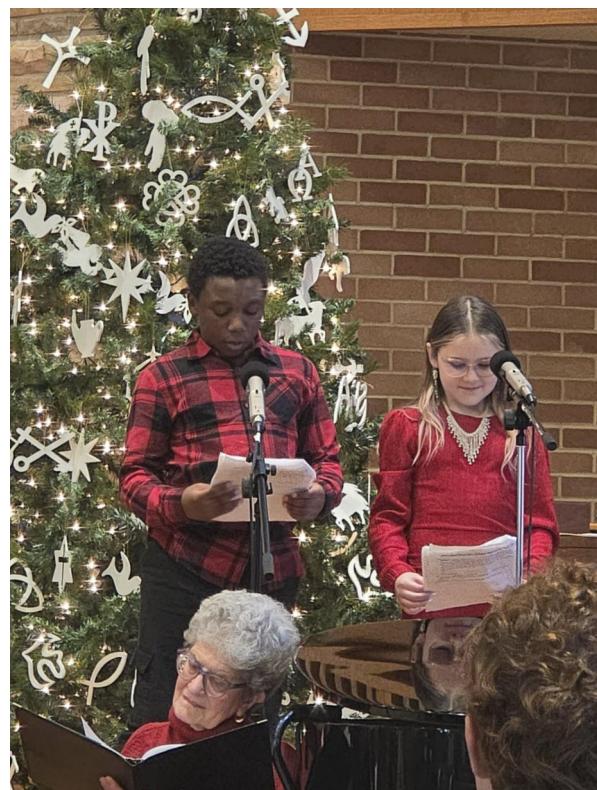




Christmas Cantata

December 14th

Waiting for Christmas





FMSC

Feed My Starving Children

It is January 24, 2026 from 1:45-3:45 pm at the Aurora facility.

Please let Diane Morrow or Serena

know if you can attend by January 11, 2026.

LUNCH BUNCHERS

It is almost a new year and Lunch Bunchers are having their 1st of the year gathering at Juybe's Breakfast & Lunch, in Joliet at 1121 Essington Road, Joliet.

We will gather at our normal time 12:30pm.

Please contact Pat Meyers or Barb Fisher by January 18th if you plan on attending.

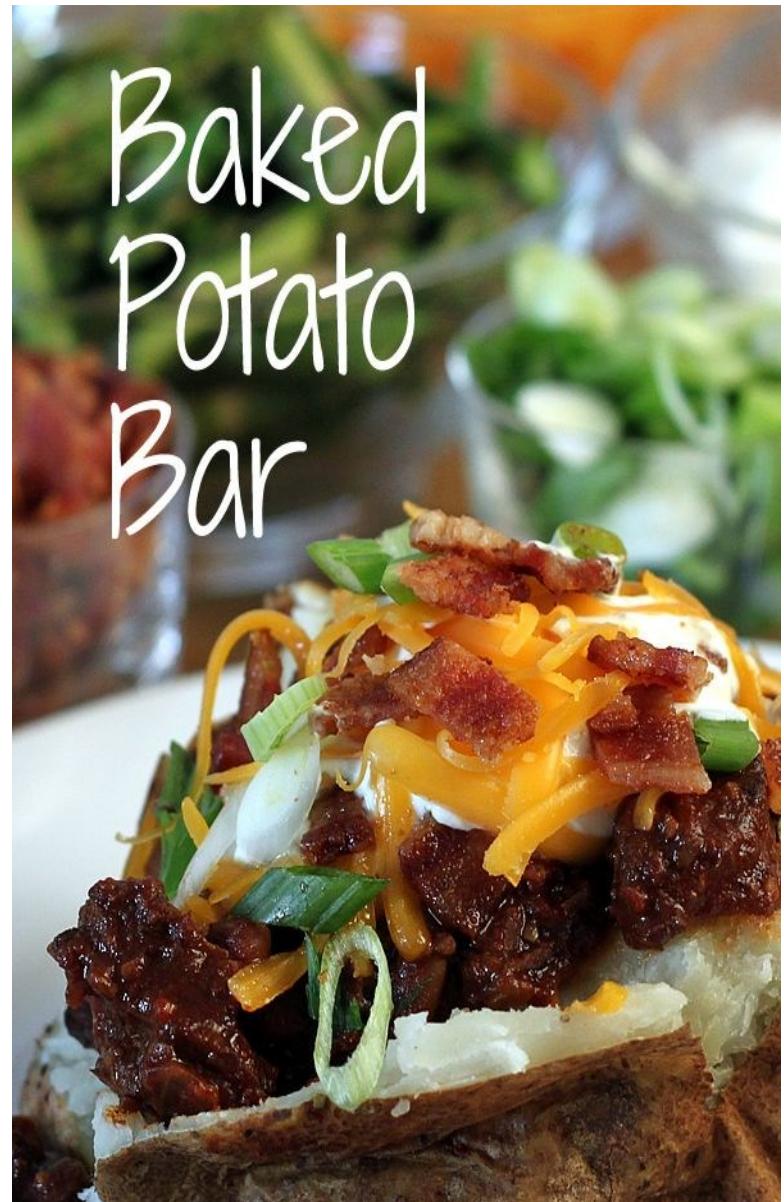
Grace Child Care Center had a fun filled Christmas program for the parents and families. Santa made a visit and everyone was delighted.



ASP 2026
theme



Carry Out or
Dine In at
Grace Place
\$8 each
Your choice of
toppings



February 1st
9—1 pm

Chili Cook-Off

There will be a chili tasting.

ASP 2026 Fundraiser - proceeds go to the 2026 ASP Mission Trip



Dear Grace family, thank you, all of you, for being so generous with me during the holidays. I am so very blessed to be part of Grace UMC.
Adrienne Hartman

I am so grateful too all of you for the cards and calls and flowers for my birthday. Thank you so very much, Peggy Tucker

THANK YOU!! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! Thank you to all of you for your support for our Confirmation Class Meals on Wheels Candy Drive this fall. Your donations of candy (and money to buy more), plus the time and effort of our students and their families allowed us to create 340 gift bags for delivery to shut-ins during the holidays. Your support is very much appreciated by us and all who received our gifts. Jim & Diane Morrow

Thanks to all who donated the beautiful poinsettias to decorate the altar for Christmas. Thanks to all who helped get & place them. Barb Fisher

Thank you! All of you for your kind cards, calls, texts and visits during my hospital stay and recovery. Nancy Murphy

GRATITUDE CORNER

Our church family is grateful for the multitude of gifts shared during the Christmas season to make our spiritual experiences bright as we shared the Light



ANGEL TREE

Thank you to everyone who so graciously took tags for our community families in need. This year we started very early and everyone was so good to shop fast and return quickly.

Diane Morrow



January

Samantha Kazak	January 2
Joe Sabella	January 3
Craig Barkley	January 4
Maria Cheney	January 6
Mike Parro	January 8
Scott Paulson	January 8
Cheryl Deardurff	January 9
DeWayne Barkley	January 10
Christine Butler	January 10
Carol Cook	January 11
Gus Kramer	January 15
Patrick Morrow	January 15
Anna Rocha-Gray	January 16
Kaliah Dolph	January 18
Braydon Hocking	January 18
Justin Farrar	January 19
Nancy Leggett	January 19
Becki Kabelis	January 22
Diane Parro	January 25
Karen Storcza	January 26
Steve Meister	January 31
Mason Meister	January 31
Kelly Renzi	January 31

ANNIVERSARIES

David & Debbie Black

January 16, 2001



DECEMBER ATTENDANCE	WORSHIP 8:30/10:30 AM	CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL	ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL
December 7	63	24	10
December 14	100	27	No class
December 21	70	25	15
Christmas Eve	139		
December 28	54	No class	No class

January 2026

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		31 <i>New Year's Eve</i>	1 <i>HAPPY NEW</i>	2	3
4 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 10am Blood Pressure screening 10:30 Worship	5	6	7 12:00pm Faith and Wellness mtg 7:30p Choir	8 7a Men's Breakfast	9
11 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 9am Christian Ed 9am Stop the Bleed 10:30 Worship	12	13 12:30p Lunch Bunch 6:30p Trustees	14 6:15p Bells 7:30p Choir	15 7a Men's Breakfast	16
18 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 9am Christian Ed 10:30 Worship 11:40am Worship committee mtg.	19 5p DayBreak	20 7a DayBreak 12:30p Lunch Bunch 6:30p Daycare ZOOM	21 11 am Food Pantry 6:15p Bells 7:30p Choir	22 7a Men's Breakfast	23 10:00am Active Shooter Training Grace Place 1:45-3:45 pm FMSC
25 8:30am Prayer and Gathering 9am Christian Ed 9am Be a Ready Congregation 10:30 Worship	26	27	28 6:15p Bells 7:30p Choir	29 7a Men's Breakfast	30 9-noon Play Pen Sports Grace Place