

Grace Community Presbyterian Church
2751 Grant Street
Lower Burrell, PA 15068
724-339-9661
E-mail: secretary@gracecommunitypresbyterian.org
Website: gracecommunitypresbyterian.org



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Our Staff

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Owar O. Ojulu
pastorowar@gracecommunitypresbyterian.org

Secretary: Kellie Newcomb
secretary@gracecommunitypresbyterian.org

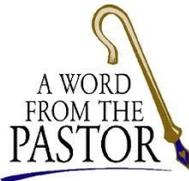
Christian Ed: Bill Ludwig
Organist: Kenneth McGeary
Treasurer: Ray Zerjav
Custodian: John Baron and Paul Zurich

Office Hours:
Monday-Thursday
9:-00am—2:00pm

Worship Times:
9:00-9:45am-Kids Sunday School
10:00 am– Worship
11:00 am– Adult Sunday School



11:00 am– Coffee Fellowship in Cana Hall (downstairs) every Sunday (unless otherwise stated).



Lord, you delight to set your truth deep in my spirit. Come into my secret heart and teach me wisdom. Purify my conscience! Make this leper clean again! Wash me in your love until I am pure in heart. Satisfy me in your sweetness, and my song of joy will return. The places within me you have crushed will rejoice in your healing touch. Psalm 51:6-8

Time flies, and it's already February, which means we begin our Lenten journey to Calvary and celebrate Easter!

Historically, Lent was the time set apart for the new converts ready for baptism. The candidates would prepare themselves by spending time in fasting, refraining from food from sunrise to sunset before baptism. Over time, Lent became a time for general penance and abstinence. Reflection and contemplating on gracious acts of God and spiritual renewal become the emphasis of the season. As the psalmist noted, this is the time to humble ourselves, seek the face of God and invite him to our innermost secrets. WE ASK GOD TO SHOW US HIS LOVE, PURIFY OUR CONSCIENCES, AND HEAL US, THAT WE REJOICE IN THE COVENANT PROMISE AGAIN.

During Lent, we are invited to walk the path of Jesus to Calvary and are encouraged to observe the season with fasting and self-emptying in our spiritual practices (Mark 1:13). We ask the Lord to occupy our hearts, our minds, and our whole being, nurturing our faith as we embark on a new journey, while we limit ourselves from things that distract us from our spiritual disciplines.

Even if many believers pay less attention to Lent these days, we are convinced that the Christian church can restore the importance of Lent in our 21st century world. The first step is to acknowledge the purpose of the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus on the Cross. Christians need to take seriously the act of faith and the importance of the Cross as part of the divine correlation for redemption. Second, believers ought to ask who we are. As we are called and chosen for God, we are encouraged to lead this life and commit ourselves and exercise our faith.

Paul urged the Ephesians to put off their old selves and put on their new humanity “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” Ephesians 4:22-24.

Therefore, starting on Ash Wednesday we observe Lent, imitating Jesus, because his temptation mirrors our path as everyone carries their own crosses in this life (Mark 8:34).

In observing, we also encounter God in our prayers. We are called to empty ourselves, sacrifice our needs, and pursue God’s presence in repentance. **We practice self-discipline as we direct our attention away from ourselves, social media, TVs, smartphone buzzes, and our needs and toward God.**

This season, I encourage you to begin with the simple step taking a few minutes every day for God and make an intentional focus to God each day. Set a time throughout the day, whether in the morning, at noon or evening, and read a scripture passage or pray. Remember how the Lord your God has walked with you all these years and how he strengthened you and showed you his gracious love through your hard times (Deuteronomy 8:2-3).

And as the Psalms states, may God *Come into your secret hearts, purify your conscience, strengthen you; may he heal you, and teach you wisdom this season. Amen*

Pastor Owar Ojulu



Sermon Titles & summary—February 2026

This is the month of Transfiguration, and we will begin our journey through the season of Lent. Our scriptures will reflect on our close walk with God as we accompany Jesus to Calvary at the climax of His ministry and ultimate victory on Easter morning!

Sunday, February 1st

Matthew 5:1-12; Micah 6: 8— "Kingdom Requirements?"

"What does the Lord require of you?" is not theoretical; it's personal and practical. God desires a relationship with you. He requires a relationship that transforms your heart and drives you to live in a way that reflects His love and justice in the world. He desires you to be the person of God's own heart.

Sunday, February 8th

Matthew 5:13-20 — "Life in the Kingdom"



Our call as Christians is not just to exist but to shine brightly in a dark world. Are we taking the opportunities to share the love of Christ? Are we illuminating the truth in our workplaces, families, and communities? Christians are called to stand against the moral decay in our society. Are we living lives that reflect God's desires for honesty and righteousness? Are we bringing the essence of Christ into our interactions? When people see us, do they see the hope, grace, and peace that only Jesus can provide?

Sunday, February 15th

Matthew 17:1-9— "While on the Mountaintop"

In this moment of Transfiguration, Jesus feels the weight of His mission and wonders, "Is it God's will for me?" This passage invites us to reflect on our own lives. Each of us experiences personal mountaintop times of achievement or spiritual awakening. But like the disciples, we must ask ourselves: Are we fully awake to what God is doing in our lives? Are we as alert as we should be? Or are we slumbering, like the disciples, missing the miracles unfolding all around us? What questions do you bring to God?

Sunday, February 22nd

Matthew 4:1-11 — "Tempted but Not Defeated?"

The temptation of Jesus reminds that being a Christians does not exempt us from life's trials and tribulations. In fact, it often seems to invite them. We live in a world filled with ceaseless temptations and challenges. Just as Jesus faced temptation, so too will we encounter moments that test our faith, our resolve, and our character. As such, temptation reveals what lies within us. Like gold tested in the fire, we discover where our genuine faith resides. Temptation pushes us to affirm our identity in Christ, reminding us that we are beloved children of God, the truth that the devil seeks to undermine. Perhaps the most comforting

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Some of the best dinners I've ever had have been the "covered dish" dinners here at the church. Ever eaten something and wondered what the recipe was for that dish? Let's share our favorites every month in Cross Currents. I'll start—I had requests for the Broccoli Cheese Soup at my mom's 90th celebration. Here you go:



Cook for 3 minutes 3 tbsp. butter and 3/4 cup chopped onion

Add 6 cups water with 6 bouillon cubes (I use chicken)

Add 8 oz. cooked noodles, 1 tsp salt and 1/8 tsp. garlic salt— Cook 3 minutes

Add 6 cups of milk slowly— bring to a boil.

Add 1 pound cubed Velveeta cheese—stir until melted

Add 1 pkg (frozen) chopped broccoli or cauliflower

Session Meeting Highlights

January 2026 Session Highlights

Approved VBS to be held week of July 20. Approved that Christian Ed. To hold an Easter event, opened to the community, on April 4

Approved to have 2026 communion on the first Monday of each month and on Maundy Thursday.

After discussion will move communion in April to the 12th, Easter Sunday being on April 5.

Dates to remember; Lent begins February 18, Palm Sunday March 29, Maundy Thursday April 2, Easter Sunday April 5

Mission reports that pie/pizza/hoagie fundraiser for OCC will be in March.

Mission reported that 31 gifts from Amy's Angel tree were taken to the Hope Center. Hope Center reported that Grace Church is their largest contributor.

Reach-out has rescheduled Souper Bowl Sunday to February 15

One Great Hour of Sharing/ Fish Banks on February 22

Property reports that now that the roof has been replaced they will begin to repair the ceiling damage in the interior of Grace Church.

Things I think about:

The Irish when talking about emotions, you don't say "I am sad" you say "Sadness is on me"

Think about that, I am not sad person it is just today not always but just for awhile "sadness is on me."

Soon something else will be on me. Another time it might be "Goodness is on me."

1 Peter 5: 10

Liturgist Schedule– February

February 1– Henry Kedzierski

February 8– Elsie Deem

February 15—LaVonne Pelisari

February 22– Michael Cochenour

Children’s Sermon Schedule

February 8– Brian Hacker

February 22– Linda Johnson



Bowling for Blessings

The Allegheny Valley Association of Churches (AVAC) is hosting a fundraiser on Sunday, March 1st and needs our help. Funds raised through this event will support the programs of the AVAC and bring blessings to those in need.

Sunday, March 1st 1:00pm to 4:00pm

Wildlife Lanes, Lower Burrell

We are looking to fill 1-2 lanes with 5-6 bowlers in each lane. The cost per bowler is \$25.00 and includes unlimited bowling for 3 hours, shoe rental and one pizza and unlimited soda per lane. The event is open to bowlers of all ages.

Sign up for an afternoon of fun and fellowship by signing the sheet on the bulletin board in the hallway near the elevator or calling Kellie in the church office at 724-339-9661.

The deadline to sign up is Wednesday, February 18th.



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

February 2	James Drane	February 16	Ryan Gott
February 9	Janet Curry	February 18	Liam Matarrese
February 11	Debbie Roskey	February 25	Jodi Johnson
February 14	Marcia Sackett		

UPCOMING EVENTS AT GRACE

Let's have SOUP Together

Join us to celebrate colder weather with a bowl of warm homemade soup, sandwich and a sweet treat!!

Immediately following worship on **Sunday, February 15th.**

Donation/Free Will offering to benefit the Grab n Go Meals program at Knead Café.

Meal sponsorship is an opportunity for you to join the Knead Café as a valued community partner to alleviate hunger insecurity to many of our most vulnerable neighbors. This year, approximately 14,141 meals were provided to our community, and since 2020, in total, have distributed 76,414 Thursday evening outreach meals!



Ash Wednesday Breakfast

February 18th at 9 a.m.

Cana Hall



ANNUAL CHICKEN PIE DINNER!!

FEBRUARY 22, 2026 AT 5:00PM



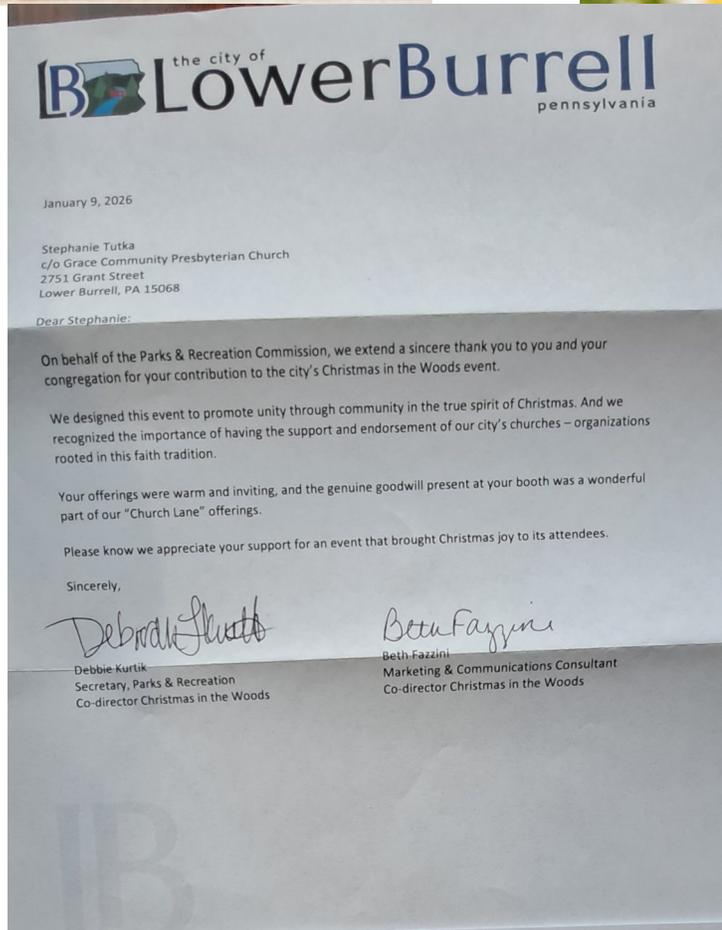
The Reach Out Committee will provide mashed potatoes, gravy and beverages. Each family is asked to bring a covered dish to serve 10-12 people.

___ Chicken Pie ___ Salad ___ Vegetable
___ Dessert Table service will be provided.

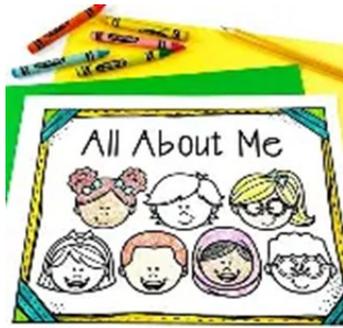


Community Events

Mark your calendars for the Free Children's
Easter Event— Saturday, April 4th!!!



**“Christmas In
The Woods”
Lower Burrell
Community
Event-
December 20,
2025
(kudos to Stef
and Sue!!)**



Get to Know.....

Linda Johnson

- Name:** Linda Johnson
- Nickname:** Faye (Middle Name)
- Family Members:** Lee, Erica (49), Jodi (45)
- Number of Years w/Grace Church:** 45 years
- Favorite thing(s) about Grace Church:** We are a family that cares about each other and there to help.
- Occupation and/or Retired from:** Teaching– HS Biology, GED and AB Education at Career Link in Butler
- Favorite Meal:** Roast Beef in gravy
- 3 Items Always in your Refrigerator:** butter, cheese, fresh bread
- Pets:** I “dog sit” - Doodles– Peppermint and Patty, Boxers– Zoey and Piper, Dachshund-Gracie
- Favorite Type of Vacation:** Cruises– Caribbean , Hawaii, Alaska
- Favorite Hobby or Recreation:** Reading & bingo, watching a TV race final.
- People Would Be Surprised to Know:** I always wanted to be a nurse like my mother and cousins. In 1964, they only had hospital based programs and I wanted to go to college with my friends.
- Hidden Talent:** None, I wish! - Teaching math in a logical way may be my only forte.
- Always Wanted to:** Cruise the Mediterranean and see the ancient ruins. 7th grade Ancient History class.
- What Makes My Heart Smile:** Helping Others. “Let Me Be a Blessing to Someone Today” - aka Father Tim Mitford series



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Samaritan’s Purse just released the 2025 shoebox total. 12,205,900 shoeboxes were collected during this Operation Christmas Child season, of which, 10,900,000 were collected in the United States!

Our 457 shoeboxes went to five countries: **Peru, Guatemala, Honduras, Burundi, and Panama**. Since shoebox tracking started in 2014, we have provided shoeboxes to 20 different countries! A full list is given at the end of this article.

Thank you for your support of this ministry!



Shoebox Distribution in Peru

As we look forward to Operation Christmas Child in 2026, we will be collecting items year-round to try to fill as many shoeboxes as possible. Below is a month-by-month guide. The monthly item for February is girl’s fashion accessories and hairbrushes. We also make some purchases on Amazon or Walmart to get reduced pricing. If you’d like to contribute to these purchases, you can write a check to Grace Church, with “Operation Christmas Child” in the comment line. Some of the items will be posted on the bulletin board and Crosscurrents if you want to order them.

Monthly Shoebox Items

February	Girl’s fashion accessories, hair brushes
March	Washcloths/ Toothbrushes
April	Games/puzzles and small stuffed animals* (we have large stuffed animals for “WOW” items for 2-4 year-olds)
May	Arts & Craft Supplies (colored pencils, watercolors, paper, sidewalk chalk, jewelry making)
June	Coloring/Activity Books , sidewalk chalk
July	WOW toys (soccer or playground balls, Barbie dolls, trucks, etc)
August	School Supplies (pens, pencils, crayons, scissors, markers notebooks)
September	Clothing, flip-flops
October	Small toys (Matchbox cars, sewing kits, jump rope, small balls)
November	WOW toys

*watch for after-Easter sales

Drop-Off Center: The Operation Christmas Child ministry at Grace Church has three parts: collecting gifts for the shoebox packing party, fundraising for the \$10 processing donation (Spaghetti Dinner and Spring fundraisers), and running the Drop-off Center. The Drop-off center is where local churches and individuals bring in their shoeboxes during National Collection Week. After almost 20 years, we are considering ending our service as a Drop-off Center to focusing our energy on the other two parts. We have had some difficulty filling our shifts and moving the cartons around gets harder each year. There may be a church out there better-suited for this role. This is only in the contemplation phase right now; if you have any thoughts on this or would like to play a leadership role in the Drop-off, please see Steve Lester (srlval@verizon.net). We need to decide by the end of March. Thank you!



Full List of Shoebox Countries:

Peru		Shipped on: Tue Dec 16 2025
Guatemala		Shipped on: Tue Dec 09 2025
Honduras		Shipped on: Mon Dec 08 2025
Burundi		Shipped on: Sun Dec 07 2025
Panama	S	Shipped on: Sat Dec 06 2025
✦ Chile		Shipped on: Thu Dec 12 2024
✦ Ecuador		Shipped on: Thu Dec 12 2024
✦ Botswana		Shipped on: Tue Dec 19 2023
✦ Honduras		Shipped on: Fri Dec 02 2022
✦ South Africa		Shipped on: Thu Dec 01 2022
✦ Mozambique		Shipped on: Mon Dec 20 2021
✦ Burundi		Shipped on: Sun Dec 19 2021
✦ Madagascar		Shipped on: Fri Dec 17 2021
✦ Honduras		Shipped on: Sat Dec 12 2020
✦ Tanzania		Shipped on: Sat Dec 12 2020
✦ The Dominican Republic		Shipped on: Mon Dec 16 2019
✦ Ukraine		Shipped on: Sun Dec 09 2018
✦ Malawi		Shipped on: Sun Dec 09 2018
✦ The Dominican Republic		Shipped on: Wed Dec 13 2017
✦ Togo		Shipped on: Wed Dec 13 2017

PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS:

- Lori Guzikowski– She is recovering after jaw and tongue surgery and has started radiation therapy.
- Dave Highfield-He is home and recovering from a fall. (injured neck & back)
- Ken McGeary– Ongoing Oxygen Chamber treatments
- Glenn Nordmark-Hempfield Manor, 1118 Woodward Drive, Greensburg, PA 15601
- Jack Trinclisti– Rehabbing at home after knee replacement surgery.
- * Brian Hacker– Rehabbing from back surgery
- * If you have a prayer request for this newsletter, please let the secretary know. Thank You



Upcoming Events

* PSC Winter Remix

6th-12 Grade

February 6-8, 2026

*Camp Visit Day

April 18, 2026

10am-2pm

*PSC Skates

March 22, 2026

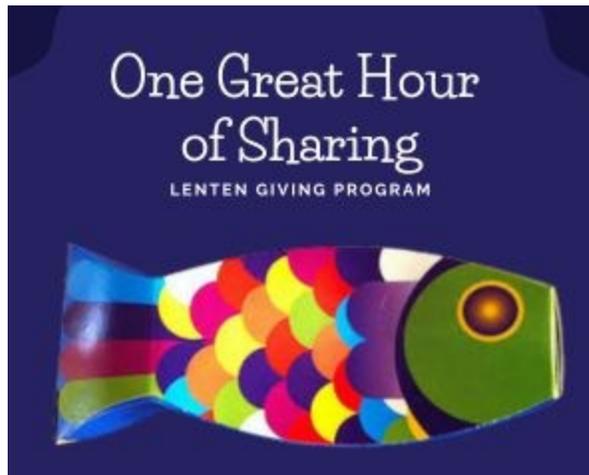
2—4pm

Printscape Arena at Southpointe

2026 Camp brochure now in
Church Office!!



Bonnie, Cathy, Sheri, Heidi, Brian and Terri braved the elements to serve at the Knead Café' January 24th . Grace Church serves the Knead Café on the 4th Saturday of each month.



Around the world, millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity. The work done in support of the causes supported by One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) — disaster, hunger, poverty, climate change, and immigration/migration and refugees — serves individuals and communities in need. This work provides people with safety, sustenance, and hope. Typically received during the season of Lent, this Offering helps to improve the lives of people in these challenging situations.

The fish banks will be distributed on Sunday February 22nd and typically are collected on Palm Sunday.

Help make this offering more personal. Let's give our fish banks a proper name so that we may "feed" it!!!!

Fish Bank Name for 2026 _____

(Place these on church secretary's desk or in the offering plate or email to secretary@gracecommunitypresbyterian.org. We'll announce results March 8th during the Children's Sermon)