



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gathering in Grace, Growing in Faith, Serving in Love

JANUARY 2026 Newsletter

Pastor's Ponderings



How was your holiday season? Were you able to spend time with family and friends? Was there any stress or tension around the dinner table? Any topics or conversations you chose to avoid? Did you leave, wishing there was something you could do to reduce the tension and improve those relationships? Then you're not alone.

There are so many things in our world that divide us from one another – politics, religion, distance, values, beliefs, and more. Sometimes it's a matter of different life experiences, different cultural backgrounds, different education, different dreams and goals. Sometimes it seems easiest to stick with people who have similar beliefs, rather than deal with those who we disagree with. But if we only hang around people who are similar to us, we miss the richness of diversity others bring. But how do we engage with people who have such different views and lives? How do we relate to people and work for healing in this time of difference and division? How can we make a difference in the world when we don't know where to start?

On Monday nights this month, we're going to explore those questions in a study called "The Difference Course." This course encourages us to "*Be Curious, Be Present, and Reimagine*" so we can cross divides, navigate disagreements, and pursue a just and flourishing world. This course includes video clips, activities, Bible study, and discussions so we can learn and practice what we learn together.

Even if you've never come to a Monday night study, we invite you to come check out "The Difference" this month, and feel free to bring a friend. The Difference Course will be held on Monday nights from 6:45-8:15 p.m., starting January 14.



The Difference Course

- Jan. 12 - God's Call
- Jan. 19 - Crossing Divides
- Jan. 26 - Navigating Disagreement
- Feb. 2 - Practicing Forgiveness
- Feb. 9 - Risking Hope

In Christ,
+ *Pastor Jennifer*



Star Words

In this season when we celebrate the star that guided the magi to Jesus, we continue the tradition of Star Words here at Grace. On Jan. 4 and throughout January, you'll have the opportunity to receive a star with a word to help guide and focus you throughout this new year. If you'd like to receive a star virtually, you may go to his website: www.wordsatgrace.com



Confirmation Corner



Confirmation class will begin our study of the New Testament this month. Mentor Night is on January 7 at 6:30 pm. Pre-Confirmation will meet January 7 and 21.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting for Grace Lutheran Church will take place on Sunday, January 25, 2026 at 10:15 a.m. in the Sanctuary. All adult Grace members are invited to participate in this important meeting.

Funerals / Member Deaths

Gloria Frey - Funeral 12/22/25

Emergency Weather Closing

If you question whether Grace is cancelling worship due to weather or an emergency, please check: **Weather emergency closing** announcements on Channel 3 (CBS), Channel 5 (NBC), Channel 27 (ABC), and Radio station WSJY (107.3 FM), as well as on Grace Lutheran's answering machine, website, and Grace's Facebook page.



Holiday Caroling



Thanks to all who were able to participate in caroling at Home Again. The residents really seemed to enjoy it, and it was great having Jeannie and Jim singing along with us too! As Pastor Jennifer said, It was "good for the soul." Beer & Carols went over well, too - we had a fabulous turnout, and everyone seemed to enjoy it. Even some non-GLC members cracked a hymnal and sang along with us. And Diane & Rich Fronek really got things going with an audience-participation version of "The Twelve Days of Christmas!" There is talk of making this an annual event! HUGE THANK YOU to Kenneth for his wonderful accompanying throughout the evening and to Pastor Jennifer for coming up with the whole idea!

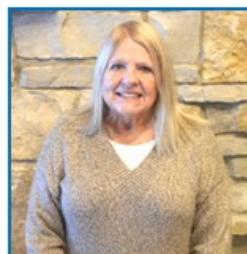
Diner's Delight Sign-Up

Do you like to eat? Do you like to hang out with fun people? Then we invite you to join Diner's Delight this year. Each quarter, you'll be grouped with a few other Grace folks to share a meal together. It's a great way to get to know other people and eat delicious food together. Interested? Please sign up this month in the Fellowship Hall or ask Pastor Jennifer to add you to the list.

Meet Our Newest Members



**Kerstin, Eleanor, Peter
and Josh Mabie**



Mary Jo Fowler



Ted Swanson



Erin and Olivia Sterwald

Want to Worship from Home? Here's How!



Grace's Sunday services continue to be broadcast on Spectrum cable channel 987 Sundays at 9am. Sunday services are also livestreamed on Grace's Facebook page. Just looking for sermons? Check out our YouTube Channel: [https://](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdWxSntOyuupFnyLgxSU8aw)

www.youtube.com/channel/UCdWxSntOyuupFnyLgxSU8aw



JANUARY VOLUNTEERS



- Jan 4** - Ushers: Jeanine Thurow & Marcia Sivesind Assisting Minister: Rich Fronek
Reader: Tim Neuenschwander
Communion Servers: Sharon Erb & Felix Egli
Acolytes: Ashton Thayer & Haven Lovick-Gill
Communion Set Up: Ruth Circle
Coffee Hour Hosts: Jill Jensen & Watsons
- Jan 11** - Ushers: Donna Simdon & Ted Swanson Assisting Minister: Shawn Koebeke
Reader: Jim Leser
Communion Servers: Kenny Zickert & Gordie Grender
Acolytes: George & Henry Albrecht
Communion Set Up: Ruth Circle
Coffee Hour: Koehler & Olson
- Jan 18** - Ushers: Amy Simdon & Jennifer Budewitz Assisting Minister: Andrya Coutts
Reader: Amy Simdon
Communion Servers: Rich & Dianne Fronek
Communion Set Up: Ruth Circle
Acolytes: Emmett & Paxton Koehler
Coffee Hour Hosts: Sivesind & Hall
- Jan 25** - Ushers: Gary & Sharon Haberkorn Assisting Minister: Kelly Witte
Reader: Jean Scott
Communion Servers: Gordie Grender & Marcia Klemp
Communion Set Up: Geis Family
Acolytes: August Ciha & Blake Schutte
Coffee Hour Hosts: Youth



Altar Guild - Pat Hall, Pat Northey and Sharon Erb

Office Hours

The Church Office is open from 9 am – noon, Monday- Friday. Variable additional hours are available; please contact us if you'd like to make an appointment (608)423-3135 or via email at gracelutherancambridgwi@gmail.com

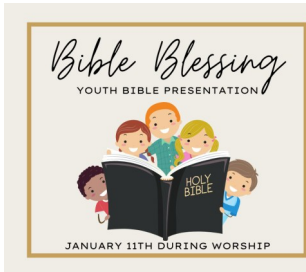
JANUARY AT GRACE

| Sunday | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat |
|--|---|---|---|---|-----------|-----------|
| 28 9 am Worship SERVICE- Also on Cable Channel 987 & Facebook | 29 9:30 am Quilters OFFICE CLOSED | 30 | 31 | Jan 1 New Year's Day OFFICE CLOSED | 2 | 3 |
| 4 9 am Worship SERVICE- Also on Cable Channel 987 & Facebook 10:15 Choir Rehearsal | 5 9:30 am Quilters 7 pm Adult Study | 6 | 7 9 am Ruth Circle 11am Out- reach Committee 6:30 pm Confirmation & Pre- Confirmation | 8 2 pm Staff Mtg | 9 | 10 |
| 11 BIBLE CLASS—3rd Graders 9 am Worship SERVICE- Also on Cable Channel 987 & Facebook 10:15 Choir Rehearsal | 12 9:30 am Quilters 7 pm Adult Study | 13 7 pm Council Meeting | 14 9 am Lydia Circle 6:30 pm Confirmation | 15 Newsletter content due | 16 | 17 |
| 18 9 am Worship SERVICE- Also on Cable Channel 987 & Facebook 10:15 Choir Rehearsal 10:15 Sunday School | 19 9:30 am Quilters 7 pm Adult Study | 20 | 21 6:30 pm Confirmation & Pre- Confirmation | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 9 am Worship SERVICE- Also on Cable Channel 987 & Facebook 10:15 Sunday School 10:15 Annual Meeting | 26 7 pm Adult Study | 27 | 28 6:30 pm Confirmation | 29 | 30 | 31 |

GROWING FAITH-FILLED KIDS



Bible Blessing: January 11th, 2026



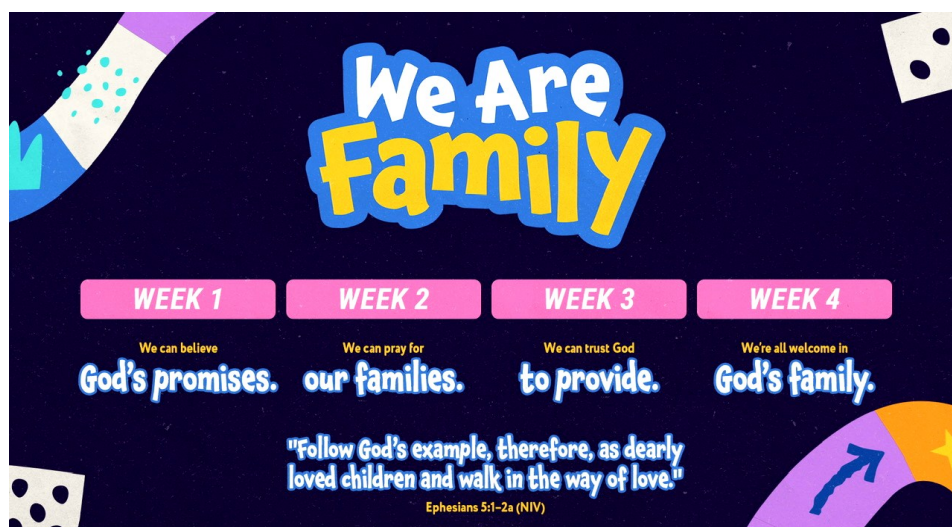
Join us for our Bible Blessing during worship on Sunday, January 11 at 9am! This favored tradition celebrates our older Sunday School students as they are presented with their very own Bibles by their families, then blessed together by our congregation.

Following worship, Pastor Jennifer will lead a short Bible class for each recipient and at least one adult, helping families explore their new Bibles and begin using them at home. All are welcome to support our students, and rejoice in God's Word!

Sunday School Resumes Jan 18th!

What we are learning:

Nothing brings a family together—or stirs up some friendly drama—like a family game night! Just like in games, family life can have its own ups and downs, whether it's with our given or chosen families. In this 4-week series, kids will explore how Abraham's family navigated challenges and blessings while learning how we can care for our families, serve them well, and remember that we're all part of God's family. As they do, kids will learn that we can believe God's promises, we can pray for our families, we can trust God to provide, and we're all welcome in God's family.



Children's Christmas Program

A huge thank you to all who helped with the December 14th Children's Program, "A Stable Surprise", especially our Christian Ed Coordinator, Breah Klemp, Sunday School teachers, Kristin Rue, Kristine Schutte, Josie Punsel, Rory Sullivan, Robin Marsden, Erin Sterwald, Bridgette Hermanson, and accompanist, Karen Johnson, Pastor Jennifer, and the AV team. Our kids are amazing!



A special thank you to our photographer, Randy Luchterhand!

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
December 9, 2025

(Minutes will be reviewed & approved at next Council meeting)

Call to Order. President Kelly Witte called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

Attendance. Present: Steve Bielefeldt, Pr. Jennifer Jelinek, John Jensen, Marcia Klemp, Charlene Luchterhand, April Mickelson, Peggy Punsel, Kristin Rue, Richard Scott, Amy Simdon, Kelly Witte. **Absent:** Sandi Aston Hall, Connie Kreuser

Devotions. Peggy shared her faith journey and Kelly led us in prayer.

Approval of Minutes. Kristin moved to approve the November meeting minutes. John seconded the motion. Unanimously approved by those who attended the November meeting.

Approval of Agenda. Peggy moved to add Funeral Discussion to New Business. Marcia seconded the motion. Char moved to postpone the topic of Council Review of Committee Roles to January, when we can meet in person. John seconded the motion. Char moved to amend the agenda as proposed. Kristin seconded the motion. All three motions were unanimously approved.

Correspondence. None.

Treasurer's Report. (Amy) We had a net loss of \$2,577 in November, giving us a total loss of \$11,301 for the year. Our General Giving through November was \$20 more than 2024 and \$14,186 under the 2025 budget. The Special Giving through November was \$5,215 less than last year and \$6,598 less than budget. If the sabbatical and Youth Gathering expenses are not included, the expenses through November were \$546 more than last year and we were \$10,092 under budget. The checking balance was \$11,647 less than the beginning of 2025 with the general fund balance approximately \$16,353 less. Peggy moved to approve the treasurer's report and send it to audit. Marcia seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

- **Pastor's Report.** All are invited to a festive Diner's Delight potluck dinner at church on Friday, December 12 at 6:00 PM. During the worship service on Sunday, December 14, the children will present their Christmas program and new members will be received. **Education.** (Kristin) Still having issues with Wi-Fi in the basement. Back and side entrance doors are locked between 10:15 AM—11:00 AM during Sunday School hours. On Tuesday, December 16, our church will host a community event, Beer and Carols, from 6:30-8:30 PM at the Cambridge Taphouse.

Christmas worship service times will be the same as last year: Christmas Eve 3:00 and 5:00 PM and Christmas Day 10:00 AM. Pastor will be leaving on vacation right after that and returning on January 3. December 28 will be our annual Christmas carols/lessons and cookies Sunday. Brenda Lovick will fill in for Pr. Jennifer on January 4.

Committee Reports. (Provided in writing and/or discussed in the meeting as needed.)

- **Education.** (Kristin) Still struggling to get good Wi-Fi reception in the basement. Wondering if we have a floor cleaner that we can use to clean the water stain on the carpet in the basement? The Sunday School kids have been working hard on their Christmas program. Rehearsal will be this Saturday, December 13, from 4:00 – 7:00 PM. The program will be presented during worship service this Sunday, December 14.
- **Evangelism.** (Marcia) Last month Marcia and Pr. Jennifer met with five potential new members. Neil Johnson has created Grace Lutheran logo ornaments intended for new members. Peggy and Marcia are collaborating to integrate Hospitality with Evangelism initiatives.
- **Outreach & Social Justice.** (April) Pat Northey, Judy Heidebrecht and Jenny Horgan-Geis sorted, bagged, and delivered all the clothing, shoes and personal items donated for the Madison Area Jail Ministry--about 20 large bags. We received a very gracious thank you letter from Paul Hundt, Committee Chair, Madison Area Jail Ministry Friends.
- **Stewardship.** (Connie) Time/talents/treasure reports will be reviewed in January. Then committee chairs will receive names of people that show a possible interest in joining their committee.

Old Business.

- **Church Property.** (John & Richard)) We now have new lights in the parking lot. Outdoor trees have been trimmed and one cut down. An outdated sign was removed.
- **Council Review of Committee Roles.** Postponed until we can meet in person.
- **Budget.** John moved to approve the proposed 2026 budget and submit it to the congregation at the annual meeting in January. Peggy seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.
- **Memorials.** Kelly shared two options (glass and pottery) for a baptismal font bowl to replace the non-functional prototype currently in use. To be discussed in the future.

New Business.

- **Funeral Discussion.** Received a request from the funeral committee to purchase new salad/dessert forks. We will explore this request further.

Adjournment. Amy moved to adjourn the meeting. John seconded the motion. Unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned 7:45 PM. We ended with the Lord's Prayer.

Next Meeting. Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 13, at 7:00 PM. John and Richard are scheduled to present devotions.

Submitted by Charlene Luchterhand, Council Secretary

From the Treasurer

November 2025 Financial Snapshot

| Income | Year-to-date November 2025 Actual | Year-to-date 2025 Monthly Budget | Over/(under) budget |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---------------------|
| General Giving | 249,356 | 263,542 | (14,186) |
| Special Giving | 20,902 | 27,500 | (6,598) |
| Misc Income | <u>2,261</u> | <u>3,222</u> | <u>(961)</u> |
| Total Income | 272,519 | 294,264 | (21,744) |
| Expenses | | | |
| Administrative | 97,491 | 103,454 | (5,963) |
| Mission | 45,826 | 47,667 | (1,840) |
| Pastoral | 133,533 | 133,057 | 476 |
| Program | 6,970 | 9,735 | (2,765) |
| Other | - | - | - |
| Total Expenses | 283,820 | 293,912 | (10,092) |
| Total Net Income (Loss) | (11,301) | 351 | (11,652) |

A gentle reminder to everyone of the importance of staying financially faithful. Your generosity fuels everything we do—from ministry to outreach—and every gift, big or small, makes a difference.

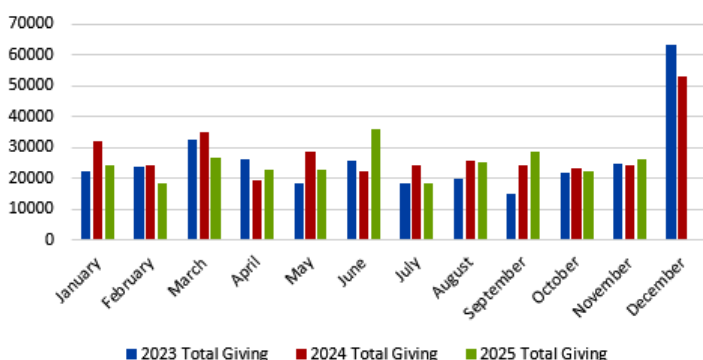
Let's continue trusting God together and giving with grateful hearts.

Thank you for being such a generous community!

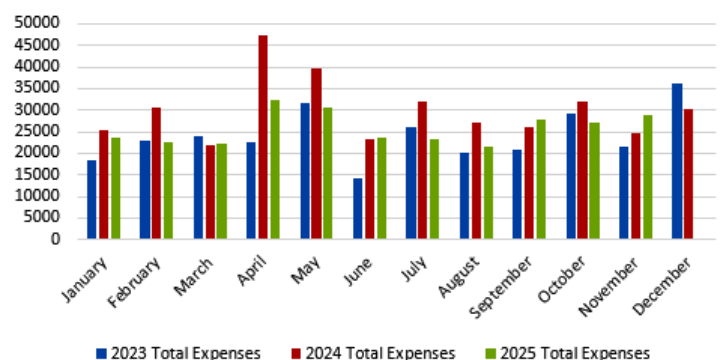


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Comparison of Total Giving - 2023/2024/2025



Comparison of Total Expenses - 2023/2024/2025





Staff and Council



STAFF

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Volunteer Coordinator Cindy Hartman cindyh1029@msn.com

Financial Secretary Diane Russo Cell: (847) 826-0131 gracelutheranfinance@gmail.com

Organist Kenneth Hoversten kenneth.hoversten@gmail.com

Handbell Choir Director Ann Engelstad gaengelstad@charter.net

COUNCIL

President Kelly Witte

Vice President Steve Bielefeldt

Secretary Char Luchterhand

Treasurer Amy Simdon

Outreach April Mickelson

Education Kristin Rue

Stewardship Connie Kreuser

Hospitality Peggy Punsel

Evangelism Marcia Klemp

Worship Sandi Aston Hall

Property John Jensen

Property Richard Scott



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