



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gathering in Grace, Growing in Faith, Serving in Love

April 2026 Newsletter

Pastor's Ponderings



This month begins right in the middle of Holy Week, as we retell the stories of Jesus' last days. We remember the night that Jesus knelt on the floor to wash his disciples' feet. We remember his prayer in the garden and his arrest only moments later. We recall the trials and the cries of the crowds, the procession to Calvary, and the insults of the spectators. We visualize Jesus hanging on the cross, the criminals hung beside him, and his mother weeping on the ground below. We picture the hasty death procession to the tomb to lay Jesus' body to rest before the Sabbath began. And we can imagine the darkness that Jesus' loved ones experienced for the next days.

And we can relate to feeling enshrouded in darkness. Often, it feels like darkness is threatening to take over the world. There's an increased sense of anxiety, fear, and hopelessness in our world. Will things get better? When will things get better? What can we do so the darkness doesn't win? Is it even worth getting out of bed in the morning?

Jesus' followers were hiding in a dark house – frightened, guilty, and hopeless. Nothing would ever be the same. Jesus was gone forever. They were lost. They may as well learn to live in the darkness.

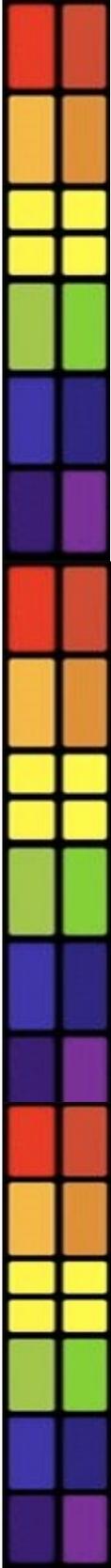
But then there was light. And life. And joy.

The light of that Easter morning is even more brilliant because of the darkness of the Friday before. The life of Easter is more miraculous after the death of that Friday. The joy of Easter is even more stunning after emerging from the deepest sorrow imaginable. Easter is our reminder that no matter how bad things get, God is always with us, offering light and life and joy.

When we feel bogged down in darkness, hopelessness, and worry, it's easy to hide in fear. But Easter calls us to live, to emerge from our hiding, to embrace new life, to reach out in love. Living means loving. Reach out to someone who needs a little love. Listen, give, and support others. Living means serving. What people, what causes could use your help? Helping others also helps yourself. Living means learning. When we stop learning, we stop living. Learn about other people's lives, try something new, learn something you can share with others. Jesus is risen! New life is here! And we are Easter people – called to share the light, life, love, and joy with the world.

In Christ,

+ *Pastor Jennifer*





Join us during Holy Week and then celebrate Christ's resurrection on Easter!

March 29: Palm Sunday- 9am Worship

April 2: Maundy Thursday - 7pm Service

April 3: Good Friday

Community Service at Veteran's Park-12 noon

Good Friday Service - 7pm

April 5: Easter Sunday - 7am & 9am Worship

Holy Humor Sunday

After we celebrate Jesus' resurrection on Easter, come back the next Sunday to laugh at Jesus' defeat over death on Holy Humor Sunday! Join us April 12 for our annual celebration of joy and laughter. Want to share a joke or funny story? You can either share it yourself on April 12, write it down at church, or send it to Pastor Jennifer by April 1 (no foolin'!). And if you feel like wearing something goofy to worship that day, we'd love it!

With Gratitude

Thank You! Thank you so much to those who helped feed the Augustana Symphonic Band on March 24. They were extremely grateful! A big thanks to all of our actors and Holden Evening Prayer leaders for our mid-week Lenten services. You made our Lenten journey very special. Thanks to the many who brought soup and helped serve for our Soup Suppers. A big thanks to Cindy Hartman, Peggy Punsel, and Pat Northey for all their work preparing for the suppers as well.

Want to Access the Online Directory? Attend the *Breeze* Information Session

Our online church directory, available through our church management system, *Breeze*, is now live! *Breeze* will help members stay connected and access important information in one convenient place. To help everyone get started, we will be hosting a brief informational session on Sunday, April 12 at 10:15 am in the Fellowship Hall following worship. We'll walk through how to access the directory, explore its features, and show how it can be used for church groups and activities. If possible, please bring your laptop or tablet so you can follow along. We hope you'll join us!





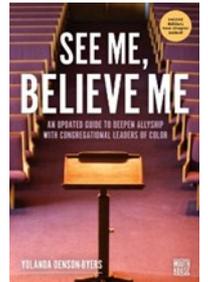
Want to Worship from Home? Here's How!

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://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdWxSntOyuupFnyLgxSU8aw>

Monday Night Adult Education

In 2025, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly elected a new presiding bishop – Bishop Yehiel Curry and a new ELCA Secretary – Rev. Cecee Mills. Both Bishop Curry and Rev. Mills are the first African Americans elected to those positions in the ELCA. Since the ELCA has historically been “the whitest denomination in America,” it’s important that we learn what from the experiences of people of color, particularly leaders of color in the ELCA. In April-May, we will be reading a book written especially on this topic - “See Me, Believe Me: An Updated Guide to Deepen Allyship with Congregational Leaders of Color” by Yolanda Denson-Byers. This study will be on Monday nights at 7:00 p.m., beginning on April 13. The updated book is currently only available through Augsburg Fortress, so the church will order a bunch, and they’ll be available for \$13 in the church office. Even if you don’t buy/read the book, please feel free to come be part of the conversations.



Safety Committee: AED and CPR Refresher: April 26th @ 10:15 am



The Grace Safety Committee is currently updating our emergency action plans for situations such as weather, medical, and other safety emergencies while at Grace. As these plans are finalized, we are looking for volunteers to serve on a Medical Response Team to assist in the event of a medical emergency within the building. If you are interested in being part of this team, please reach out to Pastor Jennifer or Breah Klemp.

To help refresh both the congregation and response teams on our procedures, we will also be offering an informational session on AED use and brief CPR reminders. This session will take place Sunday, April 26th after worship in the sanctuary and will be led by Cambridge Area EMS Director Che Stedman. The session is open to anyone who would like to attend.

APRIL VOLUNTEERS



- April 2** - Ushers: Wendy Lehr & Cindy Hartman Assisting Minister: Jeff Gafner
Maundy Reader: Shawn Whitman
Thurs Communion Servers: Shawn Whitman & April Mickelson
Communion Set Up: Ruth Circle
- April 3** - Readers: Tom Watson Assisting Minister: Rich Fronek
Good Fri Acolyte: Haven Lovick-Gill
- April 5** - Ushers: Wendy Lehr & Cindy Hartman Assisting Minister: Jeff Gafner
7am Reader: Shawn Whitman
Communion Servers: Shawn Whitman & April Mickelson
Communion Set Up: Ruth Circle
- April 5** - Ushers: Richard & Jean Scott Assisting Minister: Kelly Witte
9am Reader: Sandi Aston Hall
Communion Servers: Judy Heidebrecht & Mary Jo Fowler
Acolytes: Bentley Bauler & ?
Communion Set Up: Ruth Circle
- April 12** - Ushers: Jeanine Thurow & Marcia Sivesind Assisting Minister: Diane Fronek
Reader: Mary Bielefeldt
Communion Servers: Sharon Erb & Marcia Klemp
Acolytes: George & Henry Albrecht
Communion Set Up: Ruth Circle
Coffee Hour: Schutte & Tufte
- April 19** - Ushers: Doug Tufte & Cindy Hartman Assisting Minister: Jeff Gafner
Reader: Tim Neuenschwander
Communion Servers: Rich & Diane Fronek
Communion Set Up: Ruth Circle
Acolytes: Easton & Elliott Bernhardt
Coffee Hour Hosts: Nagel & Spindler
- April 26** - Ushers: Amy Simdon & Jennifer Budewitz Assisting Minister: Kelly Witte
Reader: Amy Simdon
Communion Servers: Kenny Zickert & Mary Behling
Communion Set Up: Geis Family
Acolytes: Wiliam Gottschalk & Paige Neuenschwander
Coffee Hour: Neuenschwander & Thayer

APRIL AT GRACE

Sunday	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
29 PALM SUNDAY 9 am Worship SERVICE-Also on Cable Channel 987 & Facebook 10:15 Choir Rehearsal 10:15 Sunday School	30 9:30 am Quilters	31	1 9 am Ruth Circle 11am Outreach Committee	2 7 pm Maundy Thursday Service	3 Good Friday 12 noon Community Service @ Veteran's Pk 7pm Service @ Grace	4
5 EASTER SUNDAY 7am Sunrise Service 9 am Worship SERVICE- Also on Cable Channel 987 & Facebook	6 9:30 am Quilters OFFICE CLOSED	7	8 9 am Lydia Circle 6:30 Confirmation	9	10	11
12 9 am Worship SERVICE- Also on Cable Channel 987 & Facebook 10:15 Choir Rehearsal 10:15 Sunday School 10:15 Breeze Tutorial	13 9:30 am Quilters 7 pm Adult Study	14 7 pm Council Meeting	15 Newsletter content due 6:30 Confirmation	16 12 noon- Staff Mtg	17	18
19 9 am Worship SERVICE- Also on Cable Channel 987 & Facebook 10:15 Choir Rehearsal 10:15 Sunday School	20 9:30 am Quilters 7 pm Adult Study	21	22 6:30 Confirmation	23	24	25
26 9 am Worship SERVICE- Also on Cable Channel 987 & Facebook 10:15 Choir Rehearsal 10:15 Sunday School 10:15 AED Training	27 9:30 am Quilters 7 pm Adult Study	28	29 6:30 Confirmation	30	May 1 6pm Piano Recital	2

Altar Guild - Brenda, Haven, and Cally Lovick

GROWING FAITH-FILLED KIDS



RISEN: Escape the Tomb

During Sunday School on March 22, our children participated in this year's RISEN Easter event, Escape the Tomb. In this escape-room-style experience, kids worked together to solve clues, meet witnesses from Holy Week, and crack the mystery of the empty tomb. As they moved between classrooms, they interacted with characters, discovered pieces of the Easter story, and ultimately revealed the joyful truth of the resurrection. It was a fun and meaningful morning of teamwork, curiosity, and faith as our students explored the story of Easter and celebrated that He is RISEN!



Easter/Spring Break Schedule

Reminder: there will be no Sunday School on April 5th, Happy Easter! Classes will resume weekly on April 12th from 10:15-11:00 am until our last day on May 3rd.

What We Are Learning: Trailblazer

Jesus was a true trailblazer—not just for his time, but for all time! Jesus' teachings and way of life often went against the grain of what people expected, showing us a whole new way to live and love. While blazing new trails, Jesus never wavered from the path of following God, and he paved the way for us to follow his lead. In this 4-week series, kids will learn to trust Jesus even when it's not easy, show others the way to God, let God's love take the lead, and pray the way Jesus prayed.

Confirmation Corner



As we enter Holy Week, with the extra services, please make sure you check when your child is scheduled to acolyte. Also, the final Sermon Note in your booklet must be taken on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, whether it's in-person or watching a broadcast. Confirmation begins again this month with Mentor Night on April 9 at 6:30 pm.

LENTEN CHALLENGE

We're almost there! The Outreach Committee has chosen Gaza as our Lenten Challenge for 2026. Our goal is to raise \$2000 by Easter Sunday, April 5th. Donations will be sent to the ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response, which uses 100% of donations for the designated program. More information can be found on a display near the church entrance. Contributions may be made by check or VENMO, made out to Grace Lutheran, with *Lenten Challenge* in the memo line. Thank you for caring for our neighbors!



It's Blue Jay Back Pack Time!



During the month of April, Grace has been asked to help address food insecurity issues for students in grades K - 5th at Cambridge Elementary School, by filling 30 bags with healthy snacks and easily prepared meals for weekends and holidays when school is not in session. Each bag would ideally include 8 meal items, 8 breakfast items and 8 snacks. Ideas of what might be included in the bags are:

Breakfast items: individual servings (small boxes) of cereal, individual packets of oatmeal or grits, granola bars.

Lunch items: individual cups of microwavable Mac-n-Cheese or other noodles, microwavable pasta meals (Ravioli/SpaghettiO's), microwavable soups, Ramen noodles.

Snack items: Individual fruit or pudding cups, individually wrap snacks (peanut butter crackers, Rice Crispy Bars, Cheez-Its, fruit bars, gummy fruit snacks, cookies, etc.)

Don't have time to shop, we can help – designate "Blue Jay Back Packs" on your Venmo or check donation.

Please bring items to church or donate by Sunday, April 26th. Outreach will assemble the bags and deliver to the Cambridge Food Pantry for distribution by the Cambridge School District.

**GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
March 10, 2026**

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

Call to Order. President Kris Tobias called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Attendance. Present: Steve Bielefeldt, Pr. Jennifer Jelinek, John Jensen, Marcia Klemp, Connie Kreuser, Peggy Punsel, Amy Simdon, Julie Leser, Janet Koepp, Kris Tobias, Richard Scott. **Absent:** Kristin Rue, Judy Heidebrecht, John Jensen.

Devotions. Amy reflected on a favorite passage from Philippians chapter 4.

Approval of Minutes. Amy moved to approve the February meeting minutes. Richard seconded the motion. Unanimously approved by those who attended the February meeting.

Approval of Agenda. Julie moved to approve the agenda. Peggy seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

Correspondence. Thank you notes were received from the Heal Palestine organization, and from Grace college students Kyla Tobias, and Emma Helberg (via text).

Treasurer's Report. (Amy) Our financial situation is steady so far this year. We had a net gain of \$221 in February, giving us a year-to-date gain of \$6,754. Our General Giving through February was \$52,914 which was \$14,084 more than 2025 and \$3,747 more than the 2026 budget. The YTD Special Giving through February of \$2,662 was \$1,372 less than last year and \$2,670 less than the budget. Our YTD expenses through February of \$49,467 were \$3,271 more than last year and \$5,686 under budget. The checking account balance was \$837 more than at the end of January with the general fund balance approximately \$1,505 less. Janet moved to approve this report and send it to audit. Connie seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

Pastor's Report. Pr. Jennifer distributed the list of current council members. Lent is at the halfway mark and Wednesday attendance has been good. Easter services will be at the usual times. Holy Week coincides with the Cambridge schools spring break, which means some people will be gone. She announced the Augustana College Symphonic Band (Sierra is a member) will perform a free concert at Nikolay Middle School at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, March 24. We will host a dinner at 5:00 PM and serve a baked potato bar for approximately 55 members of the band. Pastor shared an idea for using memorial money given for Eric. Instead of an outdoor bench near the pollinator garden, he would have liked a new glass bowl to be used inside the baptismal font. She showed a picture of one, a clear bowl with white swirls that she had found online. The copper font was actually a prototype and never completed as planned. All comments and discussion were supportive and positive.

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

- **Stewardship.** Connie reported the "Save the Bees" event will be repeated.

- **Hospitality.** The committee did not meet formally but keeps in touch on Sunday mornings and at the Lenten soup suppers.
- **Outreach & Social Justice.** Judy reported the Lenten Challenge as of March 10, 2026 is \$515. In April, Outreach is coordinating the Blue Jay Backpack project for the Cambridge Food Pantry/Elementary School.
- **Evangelism.** Marcia met with Pastor, Mary Bielefeldt, and Randy Luchterhand to discuss a new Brochure for Grace. We need a slight revision to indicate we are open and inclusive to all visitors. There will be a few more tweaks and more current photos. Big thanks to Pastor, Mary, Randy and Catherine, our Church Secretary, for their input and talents. Marcia attended the Media meeting at the Village Hall last month and asked if they could communicate when there are technical difficulties (example: 3 Sundays in January when the Church service was not working on Ch.987. They didn't have an answer; something was wrong with Spectrum is what she was told. Marcia now has names and phone # to contact, if we have concerns. Evangelism will work with our Audio-Visual Team, consisting of Kristopher Tobias, Steve Oostdik, Todd Tatlock and Jim Leser.
- **Education.** Kristin reported the WiFi is not working in the basement and asked who should be contacted to figure our next steps. Gordie Grender asked about redoing the youth room for a Scouts project. Still working through details. The Risen Easter Event will be held on March 22 during Sunday School.

Old Business.

- **Wi-Fi updates.** Kris is setting up an outside review of our building and systems for a free estimate of what might be needed to improve the situation in the basement.
- **Compliance needs.** Steve said everything is up to date.
- **Visitor Brochure.** See Evangelism report.
- **Security Task Force needs.** Pastor reported that members are working independently on separate policies. AED training is needed on the current machine; this may be held in April or May. Breah Klemp would like to form a Health Team.

New Business.

- **Jelinek memorial money.** See Pastor's report.
- **Event planning and calendar for the year.** A master planning calendar would be a helpful tool for committee chairs and others to coordinate events. We want to encourage collaboration and increase the number of volunteers so people and groups don't burn out. We discussed the "God's Work, Our Hands" project and agreed it would be a good thing to resume but take a big effort.

Adjournment. Marcia moved to adjourn the meeting. Richard seconded the motion. Unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned 7:58 PM. We ended with the Lord's Prayer.

Next Meeting. Our next meeting will be Tuesday, April 14 at 7:00 PM.

Submitted by Janet Koepp, Council Secretary

From the Treasurer

February 2026 Financial Snapshot

Income	Year-to-date February 2026 Actual	Year-to-date 2025 Monthly Budget	Over/(under) budget
General Giving	52,914	49,167	3,747
Special Giving	2,663	5,333	(2,670)
Misc Income	644	653	(9)
Total Income	56,221	55,153	1,069
Expenses			
Administrative	20,381	19,236	1,145
Mission	4,262	8,667	(4,405)
Pastoral	23,856	25,480	(1,625)
Program	968	1,770	(802)
Other	-	-	-
Total Expenses	49,467	55,153	(5,686)
Total Net Income (Loss)	6,754 (1)		6,755

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.

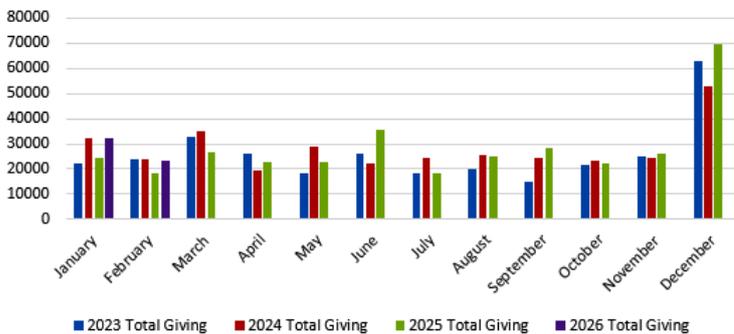
Let's continue trusting God together and giving with grateful hearts.

Thank you for being such a generous community!

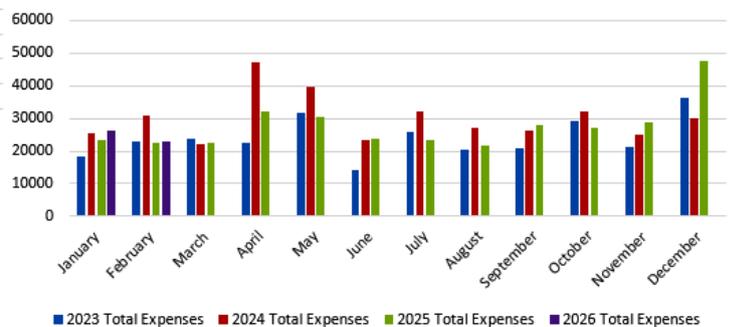


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Comparison of Total Giving - 2023-2026



Comparison of Total Expenses - 2023-2026





Staff and Council



STAFF

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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 Kris Tobias

Vice President Steve Bielefeldt

Secretary Janet Koepp

Treasurer Amy Simdon

Outreach Judy Heidebrecht

Education Kristin Rue

Stewardship Connie Kreuser

Hospitality Peggy Punsel

Evangelism Marcia Klemp

Worship Julie Leser

Property John Jensen

Property Richard Scott



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