Grace Lutheran Church

A radically inclusive multicultural community who serve and lead together with the love of Jesus.

Winter 2026-2027
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Quarterly Newsletter

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grace in ACTION

Congregational Care

Deepening Discipleship

by Pastor Chad Johnson

Every day, from the moment we open our eyes, we are being discipled. Not just by sermons and podcasts and devotional resources but by something deeper, more invisible.

We are being discipled by narratives. By stories. We live in a world that doesn't just sell products. It sells identities. It doesn't just give us content, it gives us meaning. It tells us:

Who we are. What the good life is. What we should fear. What we should chase.

These narratives are not neutral ideas. They are *competing gospels*. And unless you consciously resist them, you will unconsciously believe them. Romans 12:2 tells us plainly: *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* The word for '*world*' is '*aion,*' the spirit of the age. It means the cultural current— the air we breathe.

Paul is saying, *'Don't be shaped by the world's story. Be transformed by God's story.'*

We are constantly being shaped by false narratives, false gospels that the world is feeding us. These are swimming in default stories, reinforced with every click, like, share, and listen. Every person is shaped by the stories they inhabit. The post-modern world tells many stories—some obvious, others more subtle—all of which rival the good news of Jesus. These false narratives promise life but deliver much less. The question is not *if* you're being shaped, but *by* which story? Here are some of today's stories that we are most likely to inhabit:

Romanticism: *"You are your feelings."* Idol: *Emotions. Your feelings.* Lie: *Salvation through self-expression.* Promise: *If you feel deeply, you are truly alive. Intensity equals authenticity.*

Truth: *"The heart is deceitful above all things"* [Jeremiah 17:9]. Your feelings and emotions are valid, but not always spot on. Your feelings are not a compass. We are more than just our feelings; we are made in the image of God and remade in the image of Christ.

Consumerism: *"You are what you have."* Idol: *Money and possessions.* Lie: *Salvation through acquisition.* Promise: *Stuff = Status. Accumulate to prove your value. More things mean more life.*

Truth: *"Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions"* [Luke 12:15]. Be rich in Christ, not Costco. You will not leave this world with any of your possessions, thus all this stuff, is a good gift from God to be used for God's glory.

Deepening Discipleship, continued

Rationalism: *"Only what I can reason is true."* Idol: *Human intellect.* Lie: *Salvation through the mind.* Promise: *Trust yourself, your intelligence is the final authority. If it doesn't make sense, it can't be true.*

Truth: *"Lean not on your own understanding"* [Proverbs 3:5]. Truth is not human-discovered, but God-revealed. Who is the ultimate source of truth? God. Who is the great revealer of truth? The Holy Spirit. Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life? Jesus.

Pragmatism: *"If it works, it must be right."* Idol: *Utility and function.* Lie: *Salvation through efficiency and outcomes.* Promise: *Functionality justifies morality. Effectiveness equals truthfulness. If it works it must be true.*

Truth: *"There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death"* [Proverbs. 14:12]. The values of God's Kingdom are the opposite of what the world promotes. Blessed are the humble, the meek, those who weep, those who are persecuted, etc… [Matthew 5].

Individualism / Hedonism: *"You are the center."* Idol: *Self.* Lie: *Salvation through autonomy and self-discovery.* Promise: *Be your own god. Do what makes you happy. Freedom is found in doing what you want.*

Truth: *"Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me"* [Luke 9:23]. *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me"* [Galatians 2:20]. The good life is not discovering your true self. The good life comes when you learn to die to self and live for God and others, and in essence, discovering the purpose for your life.

Relativism: *"There is no ultimate truth."* Idol: *Choice.* Lie: *Salvation through tolerance.* Promise: *No one can tell you you're wrong. Truth is subjective; every path leads somewhere good.*

Truth: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"* [John 14:6]. Truth is not a concept but a person.

Perfectionism: *"You must perform to be accepted."* Idol: *Achievement.* Lie: *Salvation through flawlessness and perfection.* Promise: *If you succeed, you'll be loved. You are only as good as your last performance.*

Truth: *"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* [Romans. 5:8]. You are not loved because you are perfect; you are being perfected because you are loved.

Western Religion [Moralistic Therapeutic Deism]: *"God wants you to be nice, safe, and happy."* Idol: *Comfort, ease, and pleasure.* Lie: *Salvation through positivity and politeness.* Promise: *God exists to meet your needs and provide for your comfort. The Christian life should be easy.*

Truth: *"Through many tribulations we enter the kingdom of God"* [Acts 14:22]. Full stop.

All these stories have three things in common: They center on the self, not the Savior. They preach and teach ease, not sacrifice. They promise life but deliver death.

Each of these narratives preach a false gospel: A false creation [you are your desires]. A false fall [your only problem is a lack of freedom]. A false savior [more stuff, more therapy, more progress]. A false redemption [be happy, be nice, be you].

The Jesus story declares: *"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price"* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). The good life is not comfort but living more into the fullness of Jesus Christ. As C.S. Lewis warned: *"The most dangerous ideas in a society are not the ones being argued, but the ones that are assumed."* These false gospels are assumed everywhere. But the gospel of death and resurrection must be proclaimed.

God's story says: "*You are made in God's image. Our sin befalls us. Our hope is the cross and resurrection. Your purpose is centered in God's Vision and to lead and serve together with the love of Jesus.*

So much of what the world is selling is … lost, dead, and empty. What Jesus shows us leads us to flourishing and full life! May we follow him and live…truly live. Amen.

A few resources to consider as you deepen in the journey with Jesus:

Our free to you Dwell Bible Audio App. Morning devos – daily Scripture – listen to the Bible in a year – Evening Prayer and Reflection. Join 109 other Gracers who are utilizing this wonderful resource, with over 18,589 minutes already listened to.

A newly released book by two dear friends of mine. Throughout *The Re-Storied Life*, you will begin to see the false scripts that have been shaping your life, and where God's story intersects with your life. As you discover God's story, you can uncover the truth of your identity in Christ, and the story God is writing in the world. These are worthy and important sets to live with hope. To flourish in today's world, we must be re-storied.

Learn more in *The Re-Storied Life* →
https://bit.ly/4zfBgbl



Grace Highlights

by Paul Marth, Congregational Board President

As 2026 comes to an end and we look ahead to 2027, I want to highlight some of the many things we have going on here at Grace.

Where do you fit in our ministry? Grace thrives when each of us shares our gifts, and there are many ways to do that. Our recent Ministry Showcase, created by a team of servant leaders, highlighted the variety of ways to serve at GLC. Whether your gift is hospitality, teaching, cooking, gardening, or simply showing up, there's a place for you here. Serving is how we put our gifts to work, take an active part in our church community, and grow in fellowship with one another.

If you missed the Ministry Showcase, or want to look again, please pick up a Ministry Showcase brochure at the Welcome Center. Our ministries grow stronger with every new volunteer, and we are always looking for more servant leaders to help guide them. As you pray about where you might serve, ask yourself what gifts you can share to support our vision and mission. Your service is essential to Grace, and we would love to have you join us.

Our pastoral staff continues to search for ways to increase our engagement, add fuel to our individual journeys, and help strengthen our faith, both individually and as a church. They recently found the Dwell Bible App. Dwell offers Bible studies, simple devotions, and meditations that help support a consistent faith practice. There are different Bible studies to try, and a program to listen to and study every Bible verse too. Any of the offerings only take a few moments every day. I've found the "Dwell Daily" is a much better way to start my day than anything else on my phone! I've also gotten used to listening to "Dwell Nightly" to finish my days. The "Doxology" tune as the meditation background helps make it easy to quiet the day's events and to reflect gratefully on many blessings. Our subscription is paid for by Grace and available to all of us, so give it a try.

We started November with a special Congregational meeting to approve the needed replacement of our Fire Alarm Panel. The meeting was called because our Constitution only allows the Board to spend $25,000 outside the Spend Plan, without congregational approval. We will ask to raise that limit at our Annual meeting in January. The motion passed unanimously, and we have ordered the work.

On Sunday, November 1, many members took time to make greeting cards to support our USO ministry. It looked like we made about 100 cards that will be sent to our US Service Members as part of our continuing outreach and care toward others. Service can be that easy and meaningful, and there will be more chances to join in. Special thanks to Fran Carson for her leadership to make this wonderful service event happen.

Please watch for ongoing grace in ACTION events as we organize them throughout the year. We have many events planned so servants with different schedules and passions all have a chance to participate and serve. Come try one. It will make your heart sing!

As I write this, I'm waiting for the forecasted 8 - 9 days of upcoming rain to start. The clocks have slipped back, the days now seem shorter, a bit colder too. Soon, the grateful moments of Thanksgiving will be behind us, and we'll be hurrying to finish "everything" before Christmas. As we dedicated those beautiful, love-filled quilts on Sunday, November 8, I was reminded of our Mosaic Ways of Life. So many different pieces, each one important, put together with purpose, to spread and share warmth and God's love.

I hope you each have a moment during this holiday season to be grateful for our Grace family: our blessings, our personalities, our gifts, our backgrounds, and all of the many beautiful loving pieces that make us Grace.

Neurodivergence, Accessibility, and the Church

by Amber Sellars

Neurodivergence, Accessibility, and the Church. What is neurodivergence, and why should you care?

What is Neurodivergence?
Neurodivergent is the term describing folks with a brain which functions differently than the "average." Because this is a term largely based on societal expectations, everyone has a different idea of Neurodivergence. Many people identify with it as a label; but it is not a diagnosis, nor is it a universal experience. Neurodivergence covers everything from Tourette's syndrome to ADHD to Downs Syndrome, and no two people, even with the same diagnosis, have the same experience of being neurodivergent. Conditions vary widely, with some people having symptoms that are visible to even the untrained eye, where others have symptoms that are completely invisible to anyone who doesn't know them.

What is Neurodiversity?
Neurodiversity is a common term for the idea that various neurodivergent diagnoses are an ordinary variance within the human species. Popularized by Judy Singer, an Australian sociologist who studied autism and disability rights, the term (and ideology of) Neurodiversity hopes to make diagnoses like Autism something that doesn't change the way people are viewed/respected, nor treated as a disability outright, but rather simply a label. One which enables colleagues and loved ones to learn, and better accommodate.

How is this language different from Disability?
Disability is defined as a condition of the mind or body which significantly limits an individual's ability to perform one or more major life activities. This is not limited by diagnosis, or something that should be restricted, or rather gatekept, by doctors or peers. If someone feels they are disabled by their mental or physical health conditions, they may call them self disabled. Others may not see themselves that way! ADHD, Autism, and many other diagnoses may be disabling to some, and simply a way of being to others.

Why is it important to be aware of Neurodiversity/Disability in a church setting?
Neurodiverse and disabled individuals often have daily struggles which influence their ability to engage with the broader church in a traditional way. Those of us who are neurodivergent may struggle with sensory sensitivities, difficulty making eye contact, uncontrolled physical movements or verbal outbursts and more. Those of us with physical disabilities or chronic illnesses occurring alongside our neurodivergent diagnosis may have difficulty standing for long periods, not be able to walk far enough to get communion, have a risk of fainting, and more. There are lots of reasons someone may struggle to sit through a service, community gathering, or annual meeting. Unfortunately, the wider church community tends to see different ways of engaging with Christ and his church, as wrong. **In the interest of following our ways of life, ALL means ALL, we have a responsibility**. We are called to see how neurodiverse and disabled people may engage differently, and enable their unique form of worship and engagement.



A word from someone who is neurodivergent and disabled.
I can't speak to everyone's experience, and trying to do so would leave a lot of very important things out. I can only really speak to mine, so that's what I will do here!

There is a lot going on with my health, which I won't be listing here. What I will focus on is the thing that makes me Neurodivergent, and that is OCD, or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. OCD is quite prevalent; about 1 in 40 adults have OCD in their lifetime. It is considered one of the most disabling mental health conditions. The WHO classified it within the top 10 most disabling conditions worldwide.

OCD is an anxiety disorder characterized by two things: Obsessions and Compulsions. Obsessions are a severe form of intrusive thoughts, which are very difficult to let go of, and tend to stick around for a long period of time, accompanied by extreme worry about what the thoughts mean about oneself. People experiencing obsessions may have sudden and alarming thoughts of an act of violence, perpetrated by themselves or another. They may be concerned that they are contaminated by a virus or a chemical, and fear harm to themselves or another. They may be plagued by thoughts that everything and everyone around them hates them and is

Neurodivergence, Accessibility, and the Church, continued

out to get them. The important thing to know about Obsessions is that they are Ego-Dystonic. This is a term in psychology used to describe something that is against the ego - against the self. OCD takes and twists the things that you value most. It convinces you that something horrible will happen to you, or because of you, if you don't take a particular action, or think a particular thought - these are the Compulsions. Compulsions are actions that a person with OCD takes to relieve the stress of the Obsessions. A person worried about being contaminated by a virus may wash their hands repeatedly; a certain number of times, or until it feels "right." They may repeatedly check that the door to their home is locked, or that the windows are closed, or that the stove is turned off. They may double, triple, and quadruple check their memory, to make sure they weren't misunderstood in a conversation, or to ensure they didn't accidentally say something horrific. They may be overly concerned with the order in which they do normal daily activities. Having to redo activities over and over again until it's correct. As you can imagine, this is exhausting, and time consuming. Until starting therapy recently, I would check every piece of bread I ate over, and over, and over again until I felt like I knew for sure that it wasn't moldy. I would restart every prayer I did several times to make sure I was doing it right, and that God wouldn't be mad at me. I would double check the side mirrors in my car over and over again to ensure that I hadn't accidentally run someone over on the highway. OCD makes you doubt everything you are, and everything you do. It makes you doubt your religion, your morals, your job, your value as a human being, and your safety, and then makes you waste your time, energy, and sometimes money, to reassure yourself that you are not an evil person, and that you are not in danger.

Winter Wellness: Staying Healthy and Protecting One Another This Season

by Ginny Abeyta, RN, Parish Nurse

As December arrives in the Pacific Northwest, our days grow shorter, the air turns crisp, and our calendar fills with indoor gatherings, holiday concerts, and family celebrations. While this season brings wonderful opportunities for fellowship and joy, spending more time indoors also makes it easier for seasonal viruses—like influenza, COVID-19, RSV, and the common cold—to spread through our community.

As your Parish Nurse, my prayer is that you experience a season filled with peace, vitality, and good health. Caring for our bodies is one way we honor God and love our neighbors, especially the infants, older adults, and immunocompromised friends sitting beside us in the pews. Here are a few simple, practical habits we can all practice to keep ourselves and our congregation healthy this winter:

1. **Stay Up to Date on Seasonal Vaccines**
   Early December marks National Influenza Vaccination Week, making it a great time to check in on your preventive care. Annual flu shots, updated COVID-19 vaccines, and RSV immunizations (for eligible older adults and pregnant individuals) remain our strongest defense against severe illness and hospitalization. If you have not received yours yet, most local pharmacies and neighborhood clinics in our area offer walk-in appointments. Talk with your healthcare provider about which vaccines are right for you.

2. **Practice Simple, Everyday Hygiene**
   Never underestimate the power of clean hands! Washing your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds—especially before meals, after coughing or sneezing, and after greeting others—removes germs before they can make you sick.
   When soap and water are not handy, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Keeping tissues and sanitizer in your coat pocket or purse makes it easy to stay prepared on the go.

3. **Support Your Immune System**
   The busyness of December can easily lead to exhaustion, which lowers our natural defenses. Aim for seven to eight hours of restful sleep each night, drink plenty of water even when you do not feel thirsty, and balance holiday treats with nourishing fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins.

   A brisk walk between rain showers or a few minutes of quiet prayer and deep breathing can also lower stress and boost your immune health.

4. **Love Your Neighbor by Staying Home When Sick**
   One of the kindest gifts we can give our church family this winter is staying home when we feel unwell. If you develop a fever, new cough, sore throat, body aches, or stomach symptoms, please rest at home and join our worship service online instead.

   Waiting until you have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication helps keep vulnerable members safe.

If you have questions about local vaccination clinics, need help finding health resources, or simply want someone to pray with you during this busy season, please reach out to me after service or through the church office. May God bless you with warmth, health, and joy throughout December!

A Message From Our Bishop

by Rev. Shelley Bryan Wee, Bishop of Northwest Washington Synod



For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. ~ Ecclesiastes 3:1

Thank you so much for the opportunity to be on sabbatical this summer/fall. When asked what I was focusing on during my sabbatical, my overall answer was, "less." I wanted to be less busy, less frenetic, less torn between competing responsibilities. I wanted rest, renewal, and re-connection. I wanted to return following sabbatical with a new understanding of how to be in the office of bishop and also be healthy and whole. Unfortunately, while my weeks away were filled with many things, what I was hoping for did not materialize. Let me explain.

During my sabbatical many joyful family things happened including officiating at my niece's wedding, a niece having a baby, several birthday celebrations, and my son getting married. Sadly, there was also tragedy: My uncle died, my aunt's partner died, and my dad died quite unexpectedly. (My son got married on September 5, I left for a trip to Guatemala on September 8, and my dad died on September 11 – while I was in Guatemala.)

Before my dad's death, the trip to Guatemala was truly a life-changing experience through a tour with Augsburg Center for Global Education. The stories and the new understanding of the country will inform my ministry for many years to come. I was encouraged to see hopeful signs of democracy and entrepreneurship as well as difficulties with farmers dealing with climate change, the poor not receiving what is rightfully theirs, and ongoing corruption. The beauty and resilience of the people along with the gorgeous land will stay with me.

All in all, as I return to my responsibilities, I celebrate the joys, grieve the deaths that have happened, and wish that my sabbatical had truly been "less."

In the days and weeks to come, I am focusing on listening and learning what occurred in the synod while I was gone, speaking at three different gatherings against Christian Nationalism, gearing up to visit congregations, and continue planning for the good of the synod.

What did I learn/discover in this sabbatical? The fragility of life, family is precious, God is truly present in all things, people are beautiful and resilient, joys and sorrows can be packed together, and we cannot choose what happens on what time-line. Perhaps these are obvious and perhaps I knew them already … but in this time I am feeling these things more deeply and holding them more closely.

Thank you for the many prayers, cards, and messages I have received from you. I feel surrounded by your care. Thank you for the time of sabbatical.

In Christ,
Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

GriefShare - Healing from Loss is a Journey...

by Diane Nelson

Everyone experiences grief differently…

There's no "right way" to grieve
Feeling angry or full of regret? Are you depressed and wondering how to heal? Do you walk around in a mental fog? All this is normal. And while your grief journey is unique, you'll find many grieving people are facing the same struggles. And others who've gone before you can help.

Grief cannot be rushed
You may wish you could bypass the difficult emotions or push down the pain. Or maybe others are pressuring you to "get up and move on." But healing from grief and loss requires you to go through your grief. We have resources that can help you find relief and stability.

Finding support is crucial
Grief is a journey that shouldn't be traveled alone. You may feel like no one understands and be tempted to isolate, but as counselor David Bueno Martin says, "Healing happens in the context of finding others who can help you." A GriefShare group is a safe place to find support.

We are blessed by Louise Luberts and her passion to lead GriefShare Groups at Grace. Here are the upcoming schedule of events:

Loss of a Spouse **One session on Sunday, January 31 at 12:30 - 2:30 pm** in the Upper Room. This group is designed to help those who have lost a spouse to death. Our prayer is that this group will help you find peace, hope, and joy again.

GriefShare Video & Discussion Series meet **Sundays at 12:30 - 2:30 pm** in the Upper Room on the following dates: **February 7, 21, 28, March 7, *14, 21, April *4, 11, 18, 25 and May 2.** Join us and others who have lost a loved one. This is where we can learn to process the loss we have experienced. We welcome you to join at anytime during the sessions. Please know you will be in a place of loving kindness. Your workbook will be provided for you at the first session. God bless you!

These double sessions will meet until 3:00 p.m.

Questions? Contact Louise Luberts at griefshare@gotgrace.com



Hope Rising for India 20th Anniversary

by Pastor Chad Johnson

On October 20, our faith family and partners in India were in full celebration mode. Over 250 gathered together on this joyous day. All 13 pastors from our various church sites and outreach locations, in addition to servant leader families, and guests from the local outreach network, joined as ONE.

Take a moment to pray, breathe deeply, smile with joy, and hear these words from Jesus, "Well done good and faithful ones!" Please continue to share the impact that is being made — www.hoperisingforindia.org and forward messages on Facebook and Instagram to help in sharing the story and raising support. Thank you Grace!

Pastor Chad

Here is the 20th Anniversary Letter from Pastor Titus:

Grace and peace to you in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As we prepare to celebrate the **twentieth anniversary of Abiding Hope Church on October 20, 2026**, my heart overflows with thanksgiving to God and profound gratitude to you. This milestone bears enduring testimony to your generosity, pastoral compassion and faithful partnership.

I remember with great affection our first meeting in Delhi in 2003. Little could we have imagined how significantly that encounter would influence the journey ahead. Your willingness to stand beside us brought encouragement to our vision and strength to our hands.



On **October 20, 2006**, we established our first church. In the years that followed, we constructed one church each year, eventually reaching **thirteen villages and appointing thirteen pastors** to shepherd these congregations. Your financial assistance helped us carry this vision forward, bringing worship, fellowship and pastoral care into communities hungry for hope.



Your generosity has become part of our ministry's living history: in every congregation gathered, every pastor encouraged and every life touched, your partnership continues to bear fruit.

Our gratitude extends equally to your support for our humanitarian activities through Abiding Hope Trust. Your compassion has helped us serve people facing illness, hunger and hardship. Through assistance to cancer patients, people living with HIV, tuberculosis patients, families affected by leprosy, vulnerable children and elderly people, your kindness has reached far beyond the walls of the church.



You have exemplified a faith expressed through sacrificial generosity and practical love. Your support has helped us place food into hungry hands, offer comfort to troubled hearts and uphold the dignity of people enduring profound difficulties. We honor you for recognizing their suffering and helping us respond with compassion.

As we commemorate these twenty years, we remember you with affection, esteem and prayer. We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to Hope Rising for India, Grace Lutheran Church and eve-

Hope Rising for India 20th Anniversary, continued

ryone who has shared in your support for this work. May you find deep encouragement in knowing that your gifts have helped nurture a ministry whose influence continues across villages, families and generations.



As we look to the years ahead, we warmly invite Hope Rising for India and Grace Lutheran Church to continue walking with us in a spirit of prayer, fellowship and shared service. We would be grateful for your prayers for the spiritual strength and unity of our thirteen congregations, for encouragement and support for the pastors who serve them, and for assistance as we respond to people facing serious illness, poverty and social vulnerability through Abiding Hope Trust. Your pastoral fellowship—whether through a message, a visit or continued conversation—would also mean a great deal to those serving faithfully in these communities.



We do not regard this invitation simply as a request for resources, but as an invitation to continue a relationship that has already borne beautiful fruit. Together, we can prayerfully discern how best to strengthen the churches God has established, encourage their leaders and extend compassionate care to neighbors in need. Whatever form your partnership may take, your prayers and fellowship will remain a treasured source of encouragement.



It would be a particular joy and honor to receive a message of blessing from you for our anniversary celebration. A few words from you, reflecting on God's faithfulness and offering prayer for the years ahead, would be deeply meaningful to our pastors and congregations. They would hear in your message not only congratulations, but also the affection and encouragement of a trusted friend who has helped sustain this journey from its early days.

Thank you, dear Pastor Chad, Bro. David and friends at Hope Rising for India, for believing in this ministry and for giving so generously of your prayers, resources and friendship. May the Lord renew your strength, bless your families and congregations, and grant you the joy of witnessing the enduring harvest of your faithfulness.

As we celebrate twenty years of God's grace, we gratefully honor the compassion He has shown us through you.

With profound gratitude, affection and prayers,

Rev. Dr. M. Titus Nirmal Kumar
Bishop, Abiding Hope Church
Director, Abiding Hope Trust
Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, India

El Salvador Immersion Experience

by Valerie Constantino

Our immersion experience to El Salvador this past August was a wonderful success. There is so much going on there that the week whizzed by much too quickly. So much happened this year that I can't possibly fit it all into this space. God has huge plans for El Salvador and witnessing those plans unfold is always the highlight of my summer.

Here are the stats:

There were 43 people from all across the US with us this year. Marlene Mathison and myself represented Grace. We visited two of Pastor Matias' congregations and drove three hours away to visit another congregation of Lutherans that moved far away due to past gang violence. They very much enjoy our visits as not many US citizens travel that far to visit them.



I, or my Salvadoran prodigies (dental students), applied fluoride varnish to over 100 children from those three communities. Many people were seen by the Salvadoran doctor or the US nurse and we fitted many folks with much needed reading glasses.

On the last full day of our immersion, we gathered in the neighborhood of San Miguelito where the Lutheran National Cathedral is located. We visited the homeless shelter where the medical campaign was being held and in the Lutheran Clinic, we set up a dental clinic where we saw 29 kids. Those kids had an application of Silver Diamine Fluoride in hopes of preventing decay. This is a very new application for SDF and it is great for places where applying sealants is impossible due to water and equipment restrictions.

Bishop Gomez's children now own the building of the Lutheran Clinic and are renaming it to reflect the history of their parents: Bishop Medardo Gomez and Pastor Abelina Gomez. Inside they have a small medical clinic and they were just outfitting a small laboratory while we were there. The building has hosted a number of free discussions on various medical and dental issues that the neighborhood can take advantage of. They want to outfit the entire building to be a community center of sorts. (You can visit their Facebook page to see what they offer: Clinica Luterana Salvadorena) My own interests are in a corner of the building which we hope to convert to a small dental clinic. The clinic will offer low-cost or free dentistry to the surrounding neighborhood. We dream of being able to treat dental disease as well as prevent it. Our long relationship with El Salvador has gained a small handful of local to ES dentists who want to volunteer in such a clinic as well as two dental students who have helped apply fluoride with this mission for the past many years. Having such a clinic in the poorest neighborhood of San Salvador would be a huge benefit. We have long talked about bringing US dental teams to ES to volunteer as well but the real dream is to have something for Salvadorans run by Salvadorans. Our role has always been to walk beside our Salvadoran sisters and brothers as they build and flourish in their own country. We are excited to see where this project goes for the Gomez family.

One other important project, among everything we were witness to, was the purchase of land near Milagro de Dios Iglesia Luterana, the church in Guaycume. Guaycume is a small village on the side of the mountain Guazapa and it has long been a dream of Pastor Matias for this village to have water within the community. As it is, they currently travel daily to the bottom of the mountain where a pipe spews water from the side of the mountain. During the August trip, we received a large donation which was used to buy land on which to drill for water. As of today, I just received a message from Pastor Matias that a drill hit water at 90 meters into the mountain. I don't know a lot about what comes next but I do know that this is a good thing. The well for the community is right next to the church and having water in your community is a great convenience.

Every year, as I go back, I think I couldn't possibly experience more joy than the year before but God just continues to appear in ever moment in El Salvador.





LWR Quilting and School Kits

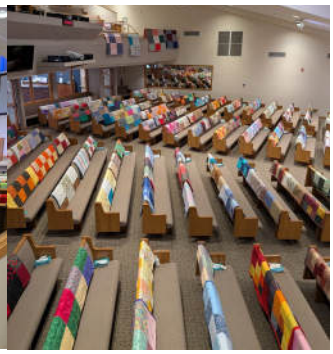
by Janet Labes

The culmination of the year 2026 for Grace Quilters was gathering on November 5 for the packing of 165 quilts for the second shipment to Lutheran World Relief. In May, 153 quilts were sent for a total of 318 quilts for the year 2026, more than our goal of 300. Now the total number of quilts given to LWR since 1968 is **12,194**.

Quilt #12,000 was completed on April 9, in time for the 70th anniversary of Grace Lutheran Church.

On two Sunday mornings the sanctuary was adorned with LWR quilts ready to be blessed before they were sent off to LWR. At the blessing on All Saints Day, November 1, quilters also were remembering the many saints who have been part of the Grace Quilting Ministry since 1968.



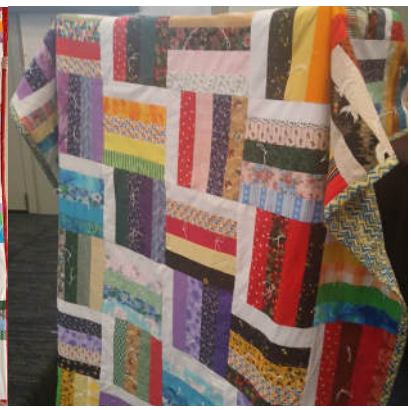


There were 290 School Kits assembled and packed on September 27. Contents were contributed by congregation members and purchased with one Thrivent Project grant of $250. Bags for the kits were made by quilters. Thanks for all the donations to be able to send so many. Rev. Lisa Kipp of LWR visited Grace on that day, preached at both services, gave a presentation about LWR work, and helped assemble some kits.

Grace Ministry Showcase on Septemer 20: Visitors to the Quilters display were invited to design a 11" quilt square from five strips of fabric. Enough blocks were done to assemble two quilt tops which quilters finished to give to LWR; and two times during the year special quilts were designed by quilters as give-away quilts. Tickets were sold in April/May and in October/November for drawings. Proceeds help purchase batting and some quilting supplies.







During 2026 the quilters were recipients of ten Thrivent projects. The $250 grants received were used to purchase batting for quilts, about 25 quilts from each grant. Thanks to Thrivent members and all the quilters who participated in making those quilts.

Quilters meet on Thursday mornings in the Fellowship Hall. We have an average of between 15 and 20 participants each week. We met about 42 times in 2026 (canceling occasionally). Anyone is welcome to join. There are many tasks to making quilts, even if you cannot sew. If you sew, but cannot come on a Thursday morning, we have a basket of bundles with blocks of fabric ready to sew together to complete a 60" x 80" quilt top. Check at the Welcome Center and return tops there.

Donations of fabrics are always appreciated and put to good use.

A special opportunity was given to our quilters this summer. As a recognition of Quilting and Quilters for the 250th anniversary of the United States each U.S. House Representative could have a quilt displayed in their Washington DC office from a quilting group in their district. With the help of Karen Keiser and her connections with Representative Adam Smith, District 9, we received the offer. A quilt was designed and assembled by our group. After display the quilt will be donated to a local DC charity.



Quilt on display at US Rep Adam Smith office.

By sharing our blessings with simple gifts of quilts and kits our love goes to neighbors around the world. Each gift carries comfort, opportunities and hope in uncertain times of conflict, disaster, and deep needs. God's heart! Our hands!



Questions? Contact Janet Labes, 206.870.4226

grace in ACTION

by Al Vraspir

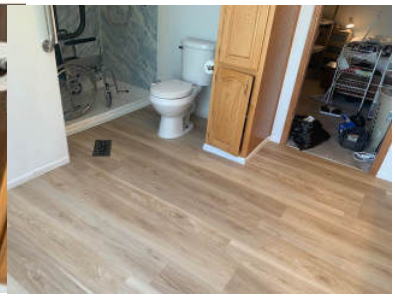
We have been busy this year helping members of Grace and our community.

In March, we rebuilt a large deck that had deteriorated. It included new decking, railings, and steps. This made the deck area much safer.

Over the next few months, we had several home repairs including a dishwasher replacement and replacement of two windows in a home in an over 55 community.

In late August, we received a call from a very disabled man who we had helped previously with a wheelchair ramp. The floor in his bathroom was very rotten from a leaking toilet. It had a hole through the floor and he was very concerned about falling through the floor. We had significant repair in the toilet area which we rebuilt and covered with new flooring in six hours. This was the only toilet he could use so we could not have it out of service overnight. We then replaced the flooring in the rest of the bathroom. When his wife, his full time caregiver, was telling a good friend about the project, the friend was amazed and wanted to know what organization was doing the work. She then sent a generous check to GLC that covered the full cost of materials for the project.





In early September, we built a short wheelchair ramp for a member of Grace.

In later September, we built a ramp for a lady in Des Moines whose 87 year old mother had fallen twice getting out of her home. We responded quickly and constructed a wheelchair ramp which was difficult because of congested area exiting from the home. This was in an over 55 community.

Another recent project was replacement of a rotten fence in an over 55 community for a lady we had helped previously. This was not an access issue but made her back deck area much more usable.

There is always need for help on these projects, so if you have skills and time to help, please let us know.





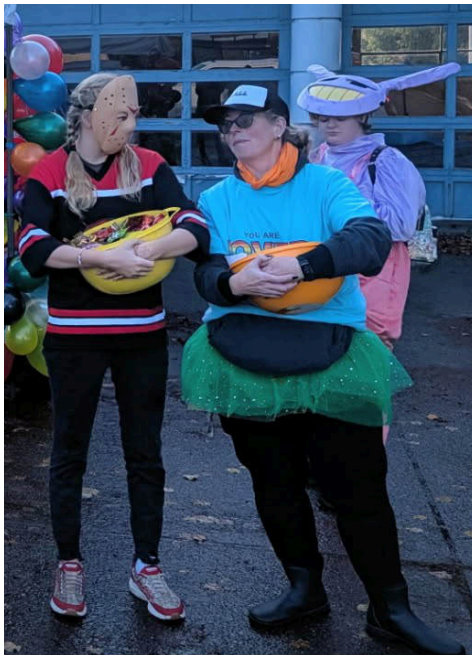
I would like to use my tithe this month to give to grace in ACTION.

Al Vraspir and men have helped my best friend and her disabled husband with some projects that needed done in their home. They have a hard time just paying their bills on their fixed income. Your church and the men and woman in this group sure help this community.

Thank you.
Ruth A Bryant

Sharing Love, Kindness, and Plenty of Candy!

by Pastor Salvador Cossio



A heartfelt thank you to the Shackelford family - Kathy, Paul and their daughters for representing Grace Lutheran Church at the Des Moines Trick-or-Treat event!

Their warm welcome, kindness, and generosity helped share God's love with our neighbors.

In just two hours, they handed out 15 Costco-sized bags of candy, 36 packages of microwave popcorn, and approximately 500 invitations to Grace's Fall Fest. Organizers estimated that around 900 trick-or-treaters of all ages attended.

One especially meaningful part of the evening was hearing children and families recognize Grace's banner and say, "That's my school!" or "That's where you went to camp!" These connections remind us that Grace's ministries create lasting memories and a sense of belonging in our community.

The family shared how much fun it was. They said it was a wonderful opportunity to build on those relationships.

Thank you for being God's heart and our hands, grace in ACTION!



Fall Fest Fun!







We had 55 people attend, including 31 kids and eight families who had never been to Fall Fest before!

Thank you volunteers:

Crafts: Stephanie Nichols and Amy Sylvester

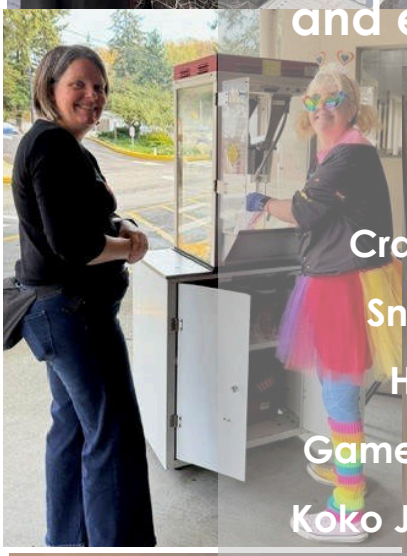
Snacks: Judy Martinson, Michele Larabee, Hans & Victoria Pann, and Nancy Jones

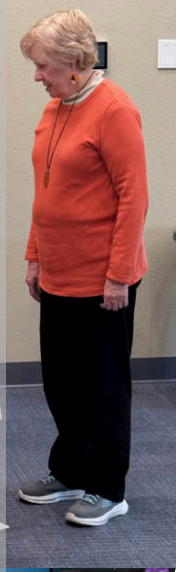
Games: Julie Marshall, Amber Sellers, Iris Robson, Koko Johnson, Merritt Johnson, Mada Shackelford, Cora Shackelford

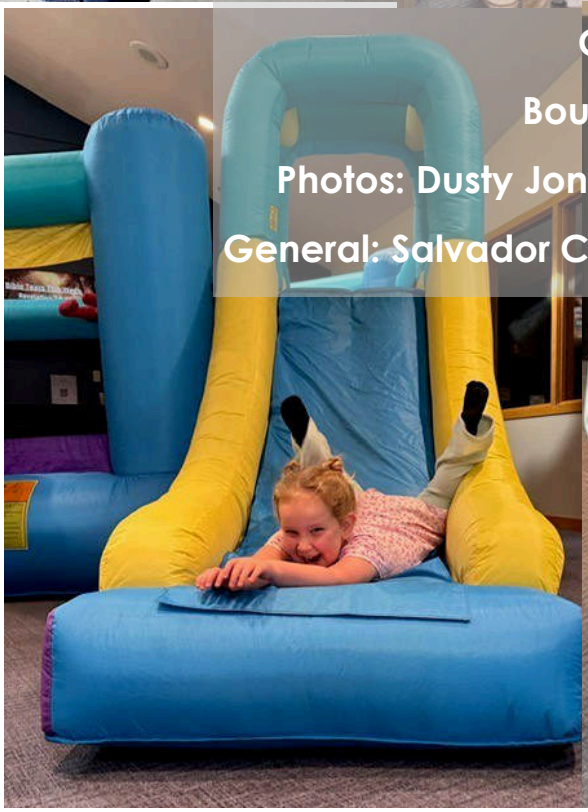
Bounce House: Fiona Lui

Photos: Dusty Jones, Dorsey Marx, and Jakob Twedt

General: Salvador Cossio, Chris Hornung, and Kristin Pann











KidREACH Tutoring

by Amy Sylvester

KidREACH Tutoring is off to an amazing start this fall! We had 12 lovely volunteers come to KidREACH Tutoring training on September 24, with another four planning to tutor or sub! We started on October 1 with 13 students enrolled and eight more on the wait list (which tends to increase on a regular basis). The students on the wait list range in tutoring needs from Pre-K all the way up to 6th grade. So if you've thought about tutoring, maybe this will help convince you.

- We have three siblings new to the program and on the wait list: Jaxs is in 2nd grade and he needs help with sounding out letters, and with reading. Azlan is in 1st grade and she needs help with reading and sounding out letters. Zailya is also in 1st grade and she needs help with reading and math.
- Aubrey is in 3rd grade and is having trouble with reading and writing, apparently she's very good at math!
- Alisson is in 3rd grade and needs a tutor who can help with reading, writing and pronunciation.
- Eyoam has two older siblings already in the program and is four years old. He's enrolled in preschool, but would love to join his big brothers in tutoring if someone is looking to work with a pre-kindergartner.
- Henos and Javaughn are our two 6th graders also on the wait list. They both have siblings in the program and were enrolled last year. If you are looking for a bigger challenge in terms of school subjects, but would also like to work with sweet bright kind students, these two are for you!

We are working with students from many different schools and backgrounds. Teachers have been providing helpful feedback on where we need to focus, which has helped tremendously. A few of us will attending the Fall World Vision lunch and training in November and are looking forward to bringing some new ideas back to our tutors. We also started serving meals in October, and have had students, families and tutors enjoy the meals we have provided.

If you would like to tutor or just come check the program out to see if it might be a good fit for you, we'd love to have you! And if tutoring isn't your cup of tea, but cooking and community is, we also need a few volunteers to bring meals on Thursday nights. If you would like to help as a tutor or with a meal, please contact Amy Sylvester at amysdahlias@aol.com or 206.979.1665.



We are seeing miracles happen between the students and their tutors each and every Thursday. Just seeing the relationships and progress each and every week is so amazing. If you would like to help, or learn more about the program, please contact Amy Sylvester at 206.979.1665, amysdahlias@aol.com. We meet Thursdays from 6:00 - 7:30 pm, you are welcome to drop in and check us out, and training will be provided if you decide to give it a try. We happily accept high school and middle schoolers as tutors, as well as adults.

KidREACH
Relating, Educating And Communicating Hope

World Vision

Help Support Des Moines Food Bank



December needs… Oatmeal packets and toilet paper
January needs… Fruit cups, canned pears or peaches
February needs… Fruit juice boxes (apple, grape, tomato) & canned corn and paper grocery bags.

Servant opportunities available.
For more information call 206.878.2660.

Pregnancy Aid of South King County

by Catherine Madison, Director

Pregnancy Aid of South King County is a small non-profit that provides free clothing, diapers, car seats, winter coats and other essentials to families in need. Located in Des Moines, we have been serving the local community and surrounding areas for over 50 years. Pregnancy Aid's mission is to serve the well-being of mothers and families with children by providing material and emotional support guided by Christian values.

Parents can visit Pregnancy Aid every thirty days to receive items for their children. Our office is set up like a small store, so that parents can choose the items they need. Clothes are provided in a wide range of sizes from newborn up to a kid's size 10/12. Shoes, winter coats, blankets, even maternity clothes are on display. A large selection of books, toys and baby equipment are also available. Diapers and baby wipes are distributed as well. During a mother's last month of pregnancy, she receives a layette, which is a gift set containing a large variety of items for a newborn baby. These sets are lovingly prepared by dedicated volunteers and include blankets, clothes, diapers, baby wipes and much more, all tucked in a handmade fabric bag with a soft toy tied to the outside.



Pregnancy Aid of South King County is very fortunate to have its own volunteer Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician. This allows Pregnancy Aid to provide the appropriate car seat for a child in need and provides valuable education to parents about car seat safety.

In 2025, Pregnancy Aid of South King County distributed over 54,000 diapers, 49,000 articles of clothing and over 600 winter coats. We also provided 216 layette gift sets for new babies and distributed 127 car sets.

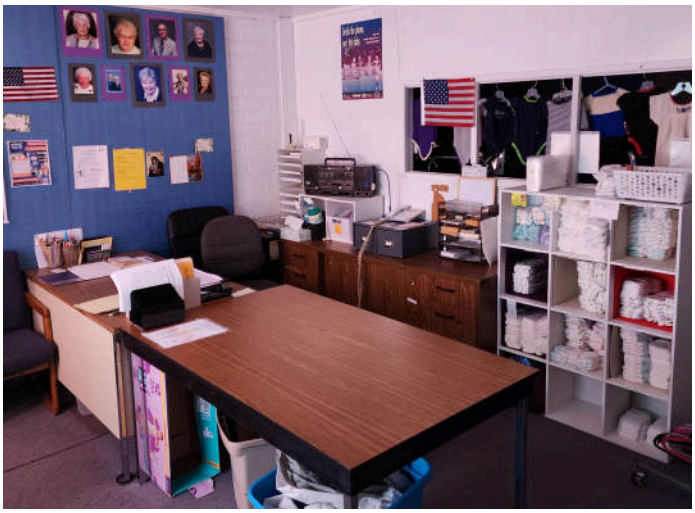
Pregnancy Aid is all volunteer run and relies completely on private donations. Donations help to pay for car seats, diapers and baby wipes. They also help cover the operational costs such as rent and utilities, which run about $12,000 per year. Pregnancy Aid does not spend any money on salaries or fundraising, so everything received above the operating costs goes directly to helping families.

Volunteers and community partnerships are critical to Pregnancy Aid's success. Volunteers are needed during operating hours to serve clients and process donations. Volunteers are also needed outside of normal hours to perform tasks such as cleaning, organizing, bundling diapers into packs for families, preparing layette gift sets and more. There are even opportunities to volunteer from home! Helping with things like washing donated clothes and bundling donated storybooks together with ribbon for the children to take home are a great help and are things the whole family can do together. Community partnerships like diaper and coat drives, back to school supply drives and other fundraisers help to fill the gaps and ensure that every child is served with love and dignity.

Oftentimes, it's the smallest things that can be the most helpful and Pregnancy Aid believes that everyone can help in some way. Things like following Pregnancy Aid's social media, leaving a review on Google and telling others about our work really helps to reach more people who may need help or who want to support what we do. The most important thing that everyone can do is to pray for Pregnancy Aid of South King County. Pray for the volunteers, the donors and supporters, and for all the families that we serve.

We at Pregnancy Aid of South King County want to especially thank the wonderful community at Grace Lutheran Church. Our most generous donations and acts of service have come from the Grace community, and some of our best volunteers are members of Grace Lutheran Church! We cannot begin to express how grateful we are for all the support we have received from Grace, we could not do this work without help like yours. May God richly reward all of you for your sacrifices to help "the least of these".

"And the King answering shall say to them: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." Matthew 25:40



Christmas Toy Drive

by Pastor Rachel Swenson

We are excited to be partnering again this year with Amara as our community partner for our annual Christmas Eve service toy drive. Since 1921, Amara has been working to meet the needs of children and families involved in Foster Care and adoption in the Puget Sound Region. Through their work, Amara partners with the Pierce County Early Childhood Court Program, a program that works to come alongside parents, families, and children as they work towards stability and unification in the face of concerns of child safety. **You can find out more at their website:**

https://amarafamily.org/programs-resources/pcecc/

As we partner with Julie Hoffman, Community Coordinator for Early Childhood Court, and Morgan Chaput, with the Child Advocate Program of Pierce County, this year our gifts will again be going to children who are working through this program with their families. As their caregivers work towards stability and safety for everyone within their family system, holiday and birthday gifts aren't always a possibility as many families juggle strained resources. These kiddos, ages 0-3, aren't in licensed Foster Care homes so they don't have access to resources through the Foster Care system and often aren't as visible for community partners working directly through Foster Care.



Which is where we come in! Our collected gifts for these kiddos will help bring some joy to families who are working so hard towards health and vitality. Some of these collected gifts will be distributed at the holidays and some will be stored for families to access when celebrating birthdays throughout the year. In fact, when talking about this year, Julie shared that there are still some presents left over from last year but that our one time drive has sustained through the entire year! Thanks be to God!

Presents like those suggested below bless families with the opportunity to shower their precious children with abundance at the holidays and at their birthdays. Some possible gift ideas include:

bubbles
crayons and coloring books
markers
bottles
sippy cups
stickers
puzzles
board books
stacking toys
learning toys
blankets
games
bath toys
potty seats
strollers
gift cards (grocery - Walmart, Target, Fred Meyer, etc.)
diapers (sizes 4 and up)
wipes
aquaphor

As we continue to come alongside the most vulnerable and the most in need, this partnership brings to mind many things that we at Grace are all about – first fruits giving, living abundantly, radical inclusion, and lasting accompaniment. We lift a special prayer of thanksgiving for all the good work done through the Early Childhood Court Program and for the good work of Julie and Morgan. May God continue to bless this partnership as we learn what it means to walk together, serving our community and answering God's call to love and serve our neighbor!

All gifts should be new, unwrapped, age appropriate for 0-3 year-olds, and brought to our family Christmas Eve service at 4:00 pm on December 24.

Honoring Our Saints Through Día de Muertos

by Pastor Salvador Cossio



At Grace, in the Spanish worship service, we remember the saints whose love, faith, and presence have shaped our lives. As we observe All Saints and share in the Latin American tradition of **Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead)**, we make space for gratitude, remembrance, and the stories that keep us connected across generations.

An *ofrenda*, or remembrance altar, offers a place to display photographs, flowers, and meaningful objects that honor loved ones who have died. Each photograph holds a story. Each remembrance invites us to share how someone's life continues to shape our own.

In our Lutheran tradition, saints are God's beloved people, made holy by grace through Christ. We remember those who have died while recognizing that we, too, belong to this communion of saints.

Grief and gratitude can share the same space. Through tears, stories, and even laughter, we give thanks for those we miss and trust in Christ's promise of resurrection. Together, we remember that God holds us in love in life and in death.

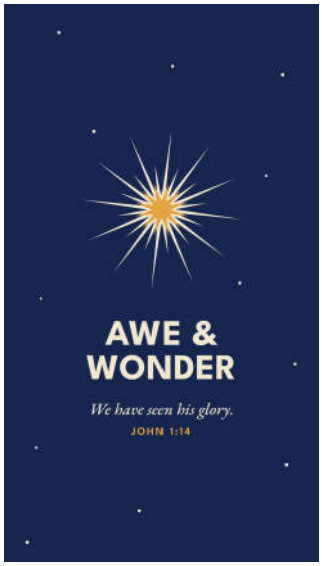


Baptism of Jamal Dorel



Advent and Christmas Season

by Chad Johnson



From November 29 to January 3, our overarching theme is "Awe and Wonder." In a world of distraction and discouragement, we bolster our faith on a journey to rediscover our awe and wonder in the Gospel story of infant Jesus.

"What can I give Him,
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wiseman
I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him -
I give my heart."

When we take the time to slow down and behold Jesus, our hearts are filled with awe and our lives are transformed by wonder.

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." — John 1:14 (NRSV)

Advent/Christmas invites us to slow down and recover the sense of awe that often gets lost amid the busyness of the season. In a culture of rushing, decorating, shopping, and scheduling, the Church is called to pause and marvel at the greatest mystery in history: God has come to dwell among us. May all of us have a life-changing encounter with the living God among us.

Come join in this beautiful season together:

Nov 29 – Advent 1 - The Wonder of Hope
Advent begins in the dark, with a promise. In a world of distraction and discouragement, hope isn't wishful thinking; it's the steady trust that God keeps God's word. On this first Sunday of Advent we light the candle of hope and begin a season of slowing down, looking up, and rediscovering the wonder of a God who comes to us.

Dec 6 – Advent 2 - The Wonder of Peace
The peace Christ brings is more than a quiet moment in a busy December. It's God setting right what is broken: in our hearts, in our homes and in the world. This week we light the candle of peace and ask where we most need God's peace, and how we might carry it to others.

Dec 13 – Advent 3 - The Wonder of Joy
Joy is the gift of knowing we are not forgotten. On this third Sunday of Advent we light the candle of joy and remember the good news first announced to shepherds in a field: news of great joy for all people. Come rediscover a joy that doesn't depend on a perfect season, because it rests in a faithful God.

Dec 20 – Advent 4 - The Wonder of Love
(Las Posada Christmas Party between services)
Everything in this season points to one truth: God so loved the world. On the last Sunday of Advent we light the candle of love and marvel that the Creator of all things chose to take up life with us as a child. Come ready to receive that love, and to share it, as we celebrate God's love together.

Dec 24 – Christmas Eve 4:00, 6:00, and 8:00 pm
The Wonder of God With Us
Emmanuel: God with us. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day we gather to hear again the story of a child born in Bethlehem, the Word made flesh who came to live among us. Bring your family, your friends and your questions. There is room for everyone here, and the light of Christ is for you.

Dec 25 – Christmas Day at 10:00 am
The Wonder of God With Us
Emmanuel: God with us. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day we gather to hear again the story of a child born in Bethlehem, the Word made flesh who came to live among us. Bring your family, your friends and your questions. There is room for everyone here, and the light of Christ is for you.

Dec 27 – One Service at 9:30 am
The Wonder of God With Us
The gifts are unwrapped and the decorations will soon come down, but the wonder doesn't have to end. On this Sunday after Christmas we gather for one service at 9:30 to linger at the manger and ask how God-with-us changes the ordinary days ahead. Christmas isn't a single day; it's a way of living with Christ fully present in our midst.

Jan 3 – The Wonder of Glory Seen
"We have seen his glory." On the final Sunday of this series we return to the heart of our theme verse: the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth. As Christmas turns toward Epiphany, we ask how we can keep seeing Christ's glory in the year ahead, and how others might see it in us.

This season is a wonderful time to be highly invitational to those who may be searching for faith, meaning, purpose, and a place to call home. Send the invites and bring folks with you. May GRACE be the place for ALL to experience Emmanuel – God With Us!

Epiphany Season

by Pastor Chad Johnson

From January 10 to February 7, our overarching theme is "Indwelling." From Genesis to Revelation, the story of Scripture is God's desire to dwell with us and all of creation. The Bible begins with God walking in the garden with Adam and Eve and ends with God's dwelling among humanity in the New Jerusalem. Through Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are invited not merely to believe in God but to become the very place where God dwells. This five-week journey explores what it means to live as people in whom Christ dwells, allowing God's presence to shape our identity, relationships, purpose, and witness.

"Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." John 14:23 (NRSV)

Indwelling: Christ in us. Christ with us. Christ through us.

In this mid-winter season of our world, this is a perfect time to keep our eyes on the light of Christ that indwells among and within us.

Jan 10 – Epiphany – The Light Comes to Stay

> *The wise men followed a star to find the Christ child. But the story of Epiphany doesn't end with a visit; it ends with God choosing to stay. As we begin a new series, we ask what it means that the light of Christ doesn't just shine on us from a distance, but comes to make its home in us.*

Jan 17 – Christ In Us

> *We are invited not merely to believe in God but to become the very place where God dwells. This week we explore what it means to have Christ living in us: how God's presence shapes who we are, how we see ourselves, and how we face each ordinary day.*

Jan 24 – Christ With Us (One Service at 9:30 am and Annual Meeting at 10:45 am)

> *God doesn't only dwell in us one by one; Christ is present when we gather as His body. This week we worship together in one service at 9:30, followed by our Annual Meeting. It's a fitting day to remember that the church itself is a dwelling place for God, built from people who belong to God and to each other.*

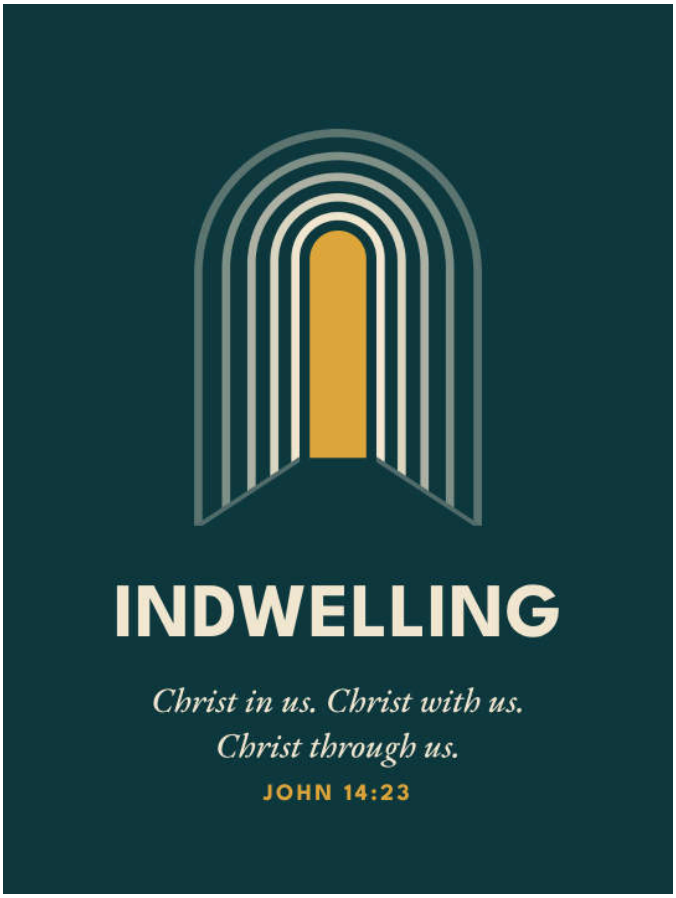
Jan 31 – Christ Through Us

> *When Christ lives in us, His love doesn't stay put. This week we explore what it means for Jesus' presence to flow through us into our homes, workplaces, neighborhood and world. Where might Jesus be inviting you to be the place someone else meets Him?*

Feb 7 – A Dwelling Place for God

> *Scripture ends where it began: with God at home among God's people. On the last Sunday of this series, we step back to see the whole story, from the garden to the New Jerusalem, and ask how we can keep making room for God in every part of our lives.*

May your hearts be warmed this Epiphany season as we gather together in worship as God's people!



Lent Season

by Pastor Chad Johnson



From February 10 to March 28, our overarching theme is "Make Me an Instrument." We will center in on the beautiful prayer of St. Francis as we discover the depths of Jesus teaching and his life poured out into us. This prayer will guide us into and out of many of the anxieties, fears, and doubts of the present moment, showing how Jesus is still the one leading and guiding us through our broken world. *May we daily experience being a people of The Way of Christ.*

The Prayer

English version

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace:

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

Amen.

Spanish version

Señor, haz de mí un instrumento de tu paz.

Allá donde hay odio, yo ponga el amor.

Allá donde hay ofensa, yo ponga el perdón.

Allá donde hay discordia, yo ponga la unión.

Allá donde hay error, yo ponga la verdad.

Allá donde hay duda, yo ponga la fe.

Allá donde hay desesperación, yo ponga la esperanza.

Allá donde hay tinieblas, yo ponga la luz.

Allá donde hay tristeza, yo ponga la alegría.

Oh Señor, que yo no busque tanto ser consolado, cuanto consolar, ser comprendido, cuanto comprender, ser amado, cuanto amar.

Porque es dándose como se recibe, es olvidándose de sí mismo como uno se encuentra a sí mismo, es perdonando, como se es perdonado, es muriendo como se resucita a la vida eterna.

Lent Season, continued

by Pastor Chad Johnson

A daily devotional will be given to all to guide the Lenten process and you can order a book to go deeper in this journey: **Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace: Becoming More Like Jesus through the Prayer of St. Francis by Mark DeYmaz.**

Please join in worship on both Sundays (8:30 am and 11:00 am) and Wednesdays (3:00 pm and 6:30 pm) throughout the entire season. (On Wednesdays, afternoon snacks during 3:00 pm worship and soup supper before evening worship.)

February 10 - Ash Wednesday - Surrender Before Service (worship at 3:00 pm and 7:00 pm)

We begin Lent marked with ashes, letting go of control so God can go to work in our lives.

February 14 – Anointed with Christ: Represent Jesus Well, Reflect His Anointing

> *Lent begins with an honest question: when people look at our lives, do they see Jesus? On this first Sunday of Lent we begin praying the Prayer of St. Francis together and remember that in baptism we are anointed to represent Christ in the world. This week we ask what it means to reflect Him well, not by our own effort, but by His Spirit at work in us.*

February 17 – Where There is Hatred, Let Me Sow Love

Praying for love to take root where hatred has grown.

February 21 – Empowered by Christ: Spread Love, Extend Forgiveness

> *Where there is hatred, love; where there is injury, pardon. Love and forgiveness rarely come naturally, especially toward people who have hurt us. This week we explore how Christ empowers us to do what we can't do alone: to spread love where it's missing and to extend forgiveness where it's hard.*

February 24 – Where There Is Injury, Pardon

Praying for healing and forgiveness in our hearts and in our world.

February 28 – Empowered by Christ: Inspire Faith, Cultivate Hope

> *Doubt and despair are real, and Jesus doesn't ask us to pretend otherwise. This week we pray for the grace to sow faith where there is doubt and hope where there is despair, and we look at the small, faithful ways God uses ordinary people to lift someone else's eyes toward Jesus.*

March 3 – Where There Is Doubt, Faith

Bringing our questions honestly to God, and asking for faith to trust Jesus.

March 7 – Empowered by Christ: Shine Light, Bring Joy

> *Where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. This week we ask how Christ can shine through us into the dark places around us: a hard diagnosis, a lonely neighbor, a world weighed down by grief. Joy isn't ignoring the darkness; it's carrying light into it.*

Lent Season, continued

by Pastor Chad Johnson

March 10 – Where There Is Despair, Hope

Holding before God those who have lost hope, and asking God to make us bearers of it.

March 14 – Engaged for Christ: Seek to Comfort and Give

> *Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console. This week the prayer turns us outward. We explore what it looks like to be engaged for Christ: offering comfort before we ask for it, and finding, as St. Francis promised, that it is in giving that we receive.*

March 17 – Where There Is Darkness, Light

Lighting candles for the nations and praying for Christ's light in dark places.

March 21 – Palm Sunday – Engaged for Christ: Pardon to Flourish

> *On Palm Sunday the crowds wave branches for a king who will soon forgive the very people who reject Him. We enter Holy Week by asking how pardon helps us flourish: the pardon we receive from Christ, and the pardon we're called to offer, so nothing stands between us and the life He gives.*

Pastor Christian Chavarria from El Salvador will preach for Palm Sunday and lead a cross painting workshop the day prior.

March 25 – MT - It Is in Dying That We Are Born (worship at 7:00 pm)

We gather at the table where Jesus washed His disciples' feet and gave Himself in bread and wine.

March 26 – GF - It Is in Dying That We Are Born – Carpenter and the Cross (worship at 7:00 pm)

We keep watch at the cross, where the carpenter from Nazareth gave His life for the world.

March 27 – Easter Vigil – The Journeys of Faith (Vigil at 6:00 pm in Fellowship Hall)

In the dark before Easter dawn, we tell the story of God's saving love and light the new fire.

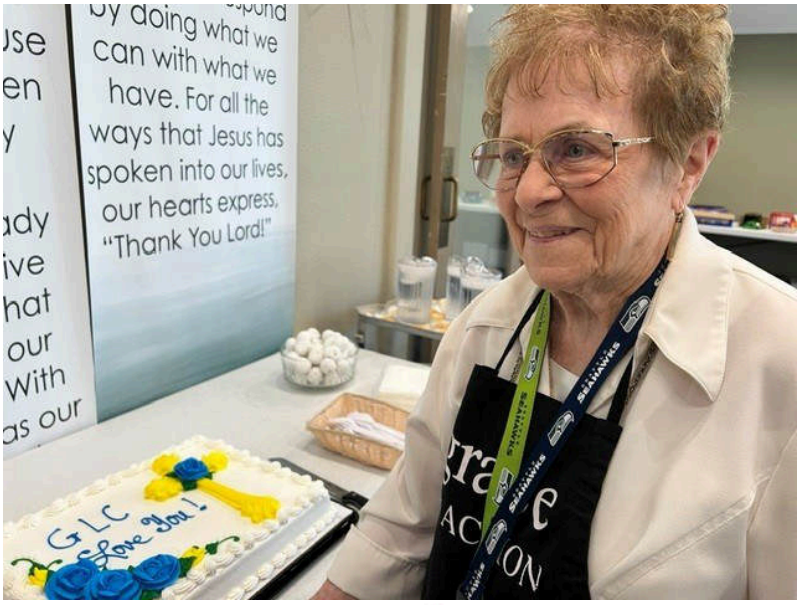
March 28 – Easter Sunday – More Like Jesus (worship at 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 am and Spanish worship at 12:15 pm)

> *Christ is risen! It is in dying that we are born to eternal life. On Easter Sunday we celebrate the empty tomb and the promise that the risen Jesus is still making us new. After seven weeks of praying to become instruments of His peace, we rejoice that the One who conquered death is shaping us to be more like Him. Everyone is welcome.*

Come walk the dusty discipleship roads of life with Jesus and discover more purpose and meaning for this life! A great season to bring those who are searching.

90 Years Young - Honoring Sandy Bollinger

by Pastor Chad Johnson



How do you thank someone who has so faithfully served their church? A great question for all of us to ponder.

For as many years as your memory can hold, Sandy Bollinger has been on the frontline of the hospitality ministry at Grace. Every Sunday, she shows up before anyone else to turn the lights on. The tablecloths get put out, the coffee pots get cranked up, and various food items all get organized beautifully, so that folks can feel at home in their church. Throughout the week she calls and connects with friends and invites their participation in making it all happen. She takes meticulous notes – organizes a shopping list – gets to the store – and stocks the fridge and cupboards with what is needed.



Sundays – yes. Week day events – yes. Every single memorial service we have hosted – yes. Dental van meals – yes. Special music events – yes. Altar Guild – yes. If you have participated in a community or worship gathering at Grace – Sandy has been the one who made sure you were hosted well.

Which reminds us of our Lord and Savior Jesus. He is the host that presides at our tables. He is the one making sure all are fed. He is the one who is showing love through table fellowship. Sandy is too humble to recognize it, but she has been Jesus in our midst.



And so how do we thank and celebrate Sandy at 90 years young? We show up and we do so with a purpose. To serve and lead together with the love of Jesus. Doing what Sandy has been doing all these years. Doing what Jesus does.

May every welcome – hot tea or coffee – food item – and event – be a table where all can flourish.

THANK YOU Sandy. God loves you and we do too!

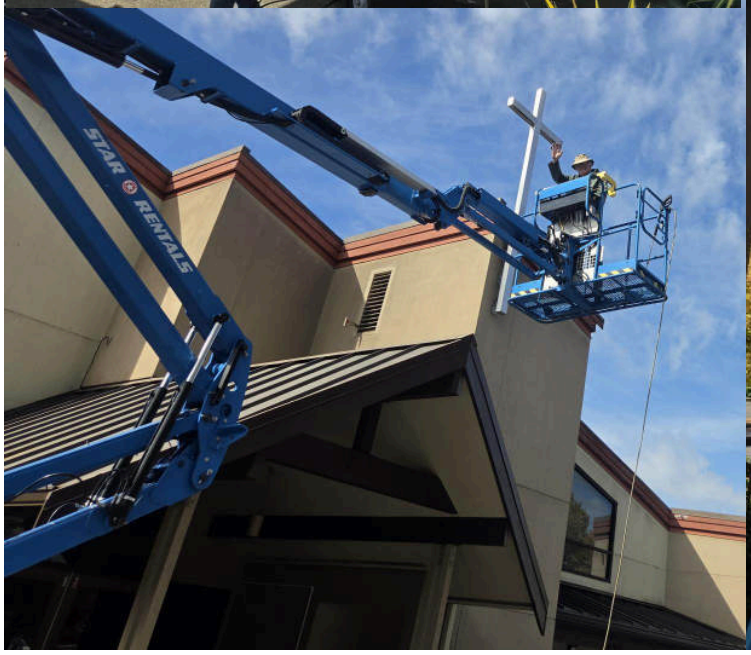
Grace Maintenance Project

Hans Pann and his crew, which included Mike Hornung, Dusty Jones, Tim Jones, Kristin Pann, Al Vraspir, Jerry Kauth, Sandy Sandoval, Nick Hagen and John and Debbie O'Neal, made use of some fine weather in early October to start getting the trim on the church painted.









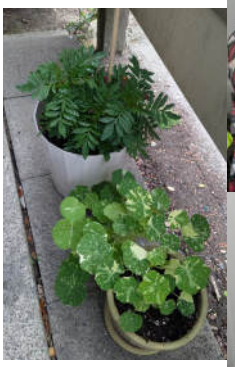
¡Pequeñas semillas, grandes sorpresas! | Little Seeds, Big Surprises!

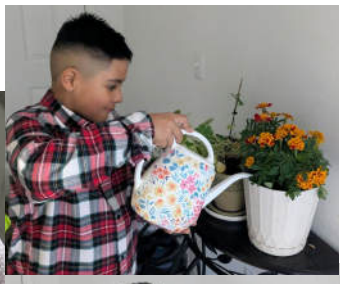
by Jaden, age 9

¡Hola! Me llamo Jaden y tengo nueve años. El verano pasado, asistí a la Escuela Bíblica de Verano (EBV) aquí en Grace. ¡Una de las cosas que más me gustó fue recibir semillas para llevar a casa!

Mi mamá me ayudó a plantarlas y las regamos juntos. ¡Luego llegó el momento de esperar! Fue divertido verlas crecer y preguntarme en qué tipo de plantas se convertirían y qué colores veríamos.

Cuidar mis plantas ha sido una actividad estupenda para compartir con mi mamá. ¡Una pequeña semilla puede transformarse en algo realmente hermoso!







¡Aquí están mis plantas! Gracias, Grace, por un verano divertido en la EBV y por algo tan especial que puedo seguir cultivando en casa.

Hello! My name is Jaden, and I am nine years old. Last summer, I went to Vacation Bible School (VBS) here at Grace. One of my favorite things was receiving seeds to take home!

My mom helped me plant them, and we watered them together. Then came the waiting! It was fun to watch them grow and wonder what kind of plants they would become and what colors we would see.

Taking care of my plants has been a great activity to do with my mom. A little seed can turn into something so beautiful!

Here are my plants! Thank you, Grace, for a fun summer at VBS and something special to keep growing at home.

Children's Church

by Susan Johnson

There is so much to celebrate in Children's Church! We're seeing more people step up and share in teaching, kids running up the aisle because they're excited to go, and little voices asking if they can do *one more craft* or play *just one more round* of a game before heading back to their families.

There have been so many smiles, laughs, and moments that remind us why this ministry matters. It's exciting to see kids not only enjoying their time together but also looking forward to coming each week, learning about Jesus, and growing in their faith.

And the joy isn't just for the kids! It's been incredibly rewarding for our leaders, too. We're grateful for everyone who gives their time, shares their gifts, and helps create a place where kids feel loved, welcomed, and excited to be there.

Thank you to all who are part of making Children's Church such a joyful place. We're excited to see what God continues to do!



#	LESSON THEME	DATE
1	Love Your Neighbor	Dec. 6
2	Different and Beautiful	Dec. 13
3	Forgiveness Brings New Life	Jan. 17
4	Include Others	Jan. 24
5	God Sees What's in Our Hearts	Feb. 14
6	Jesus Welcomes Everyone	Feb. 21
7	Kindness Changes Things	Feb. 28

#	LESSON THEME	DATE
8	God Gives Us Courage	Mar. 7
9	We Are All Part of God's Family	Mar. 14
10	Grace Helps Us Try Again	Apr. 4
11	Speak Up for What Is Right	Apr. 11
12	Share God's Love	Apr. 18
13	God's Love Never Ends	Apr. 25
14	We Belong Together	May 2

Fun at Grace Lutheran School

by Miranda Winter, GLS Director, PK Teacher

Our school year is off to a wonderful start, and we've had so much fun this fall! Hands-on learning is always the best, from scooping and hammering pumpkins to our farm field trip and our special all-school Thanksgiving meal. We love fall at GLS!

One of the most special things about our preschool is the beautiful community it brings together. Each year, we welcome families from different cities, churches, and language backgrounds. As director, it is such a joy to see friendships from my own childhood at Grace continue as those same friends return to send their children to our school. One dear friend, Baylee, has sent both of her children through our school. It is a privilege to get to be a small part of their learning journey. Watching our community grow and flourish through the generations is truly a gift.



We also had a special Veterans Day chapel visit from Mr. Porter, a Marine veteran. He reminded our children that God calls us to care for others, be brave, and help those around us. We are so grateful to Mr. Porter and all our veterans for their service!

We are blessed by the families and community who make GLS such a special place. If you would like to support our school and be part of what we're doing, please reach out to me at miranda.winter@preschool.gotgrace.com. We would love to connect with you.













Grace Children's Center

by Yunuen Cárdenas, Director



Hello wonderful GLC community,

Here at Grace Children's Center, we've had a season full of growth, learning, and joy! This fall, our littles have been busy exploring the changing seasons through hands-on activities and lots of fun experiences. We also had the opportunity to meet with our families during our parent-teacher conferences. It was wonderful to hear how this ministry has blessed their families and to celebrate the growth we have seen in each child.





One highlight of the season was our Fall Festival. The children had so much fun dressing up, playing games, decorating cookies, trick-or-treating, and a pumpkin decorating contest! It was wonderful to see their excitement and joy throughout the day.

This month, we are celebrating Native American Heritage Month, and we are excited to share that the Muckleshoot Tribe has accepted our invitation to visit our center. They will spend time with the children, read a story, and teach us about their history, culture, and traditions. We are grateful for this opportunity to help our children learn more about the Indigenous communities in our area and the land we call home.

A special thank you to all the church members who continue to volunteer at our center and make this ministry possible. Thank you for being part of this journey with us. Your support means so much, as we continue to dream big for our children and families.













Pumpkin Decorating Contest at Grace Children's Center. Congratulations Lions Class!

Transformational Travel: Growing in Identity, Belonging, and Purpose

by Pastor Salvador Cossio

At Grace, Youth Transformational Travel is a three-year discipleship pathway that helps young people grow in identity, belonging, and purpose through relationships, service, cultural learning, and encounters with the wider church.

This approach reflects a changing ministry in today's world while honoring Grace's tradition of service, generosity, and partnership. We are building on the faithful work of those who came before us, creating opportunities for a new generation to live out that same faith. As our young people's lives and communities change, we continue finding meaningful ways to connect them with God, one another, and our neighbors.

Our goal goes beyond visiting a different place each summer. These experiences are part of our faith formation, creating opportunities for youth to step outside familiar surroundings, encounter God and neighbor in new contexts, and discover their connection to a much larger community.

Our three-year pathway includes:

- ◊ 2026: Baja California, Mexico, with Door of Faith Orphanage and Amor Ministries.
- ◊ 2027: The ELCA Youth Gathering in Minnesota.
- ◊ 2028: Transformational and service travel, with the next partner and location to be discerned.

Through this rhythm, we nurture growth in Identity → Belonging → Purpose → Leadership. We want our young people to know who they are as beloved children of God, to trust that they belong to God and a community larger than themselves, and to explore how God calls them to use their gifts for the flourishing of our neighbors and the world.

The destination provides the setting; transformation is at the heart of the ministry. Through travel, we deepen relationships, learn from different cultures and communities, practice accompaniment, walking alongside others with humility and mutual respect, and help young people connect faith with everyday life.

This vision connects with the whole of Grace's outreach ministry, including relationships in El Salvador, Guatemala, India, and beyond. Youth can participate in every part of this ministry alongside the congregation: learning, praying, serving, supporting our partners, and building relationships across generations and borders. Their formation is a shared calling for our whole church community.

That is why we call these experiences Transformational Travel. We go expecting to learn, receive, serve, and be changed. Our hope is that young people return home with deeper faith, stronger relationships, and a growing sense of how they can contribute to God's work in our congregation, their schools, their neighborhoods, and the world.

Grace Youth Attend Northwest and Southwest WA Synods Retreat

by Pastor Salvador Cossio



For the first time in many years, Grace's youth joined other Lutheran youth for a fall retreat! The Northwest Washington and Southwestern Washington Synods brought together 140 young people, along with retreat staff, for a weekend of worship, shared meals, games, and new friendships.

Together, we explore what faith looks like when life gets hard. In Joseph's story, we saw how God stayed with him through difficult times. In Matthew 6:25–34, Jesus invited us to look at the birds and the flowers and remember how deeply God cares for us.

It was a joy to see our youth make new friends and discover how wide their church family is. Grace is our church home, and we belong to a much larger body of Christ. May the Holy Spirit keep reminding our young people how deeply loved they are by God and how much they mean to all of us at Grace.

Confirmation News

by Shelby Chatterton



Our confirmation students are split into two classes: 6th grade and 7th grade together taught by Doug Stensby, Tessa Krippaehne and myself, then 8th grade in their own class with Pastor Chad. Both classes have been exploring their faith in meaningful ways based in curiosity and openness. We have been engaging in thought provoking conversations and activities about what it means to be a Lutheran, the structures of the church calendar, and how Lutheranism is practiced around the world. All of this is joined by many discussions of how they see their futures as a follower of Christ, what they find meaningful in church and where they feel challenged. Let me tell you that the future is bright! These youth are some of the most caring and curious people I know and I loved getting to teach them, truly a highlight of my year.



2026 Confirmation Overnight Retreat at Dash Point State Park

Connection & Belonging

Check Out a Few Upcoming Christmas Events...

Women's Candlelight Dinner

Saturday, December 5, 5:30 - 8:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall

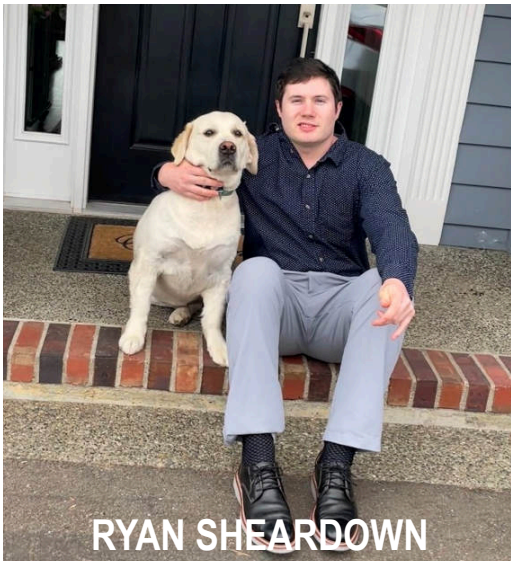
Come experience a beautiful evening of festive tables, wonderful food, meaningful conversation, and connection with women from across Grace. With open seating this year, you're invited to arrive, choose a place that catches your eye, and enjoy an evening designed to bring women together. We can't wait to celebrate the season with you! ***All registration and $30 payment is online only.*** Register to attend: https://gotgrace.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/3307710 or use QR Code.

Inspired Retired Group Christmas Party

Saturday, December 19, 5:00 pm at Huntington Park Clubhouse

Food, fun and fellowship! Ham and drinks provided. Sides, salads & desserts are potluck. $15 per person. **Sign up at the Welcome Center.**
Questions? Contact Sally Vraspir at 253.709.0961

Welcome Newcomers



Ryan Sheardown is a local University of Washington graduate, a CPA, and currently works in the nonprofit sector. In his free time, he enjoys golfing, following the financial markets, and spending time with family. He looks forward to getting more involved with the church community and meeting new people!



I am 61 years old. I will be 62 on January 23. I was born in Van Nuys, California.

I have been a widower since June 21, 2021. I have been coming to this church ever since. I have been in this house since June 24, 1994. This is the longest that I have lived anywhere in my life. Debra and I got married August 28,1993. We purchased this house a year later. We had no kids. I have not had any kids myself.

My parents split up when I was four years old. My mom and stepdad dad and myself along with younger sister Anna and my older brother George. We ended up in Phoenix, Arizona. My dad stayed in Midland, Texas with his second wife Billie and her daughter my step sister Lisa. So I would often fly from Phoenix to Midland. That is until I reached the age of 13 years old. That was when I moved permanently to Midland, Texas. My dad divorced Billie my sophomore year in high-school. I was going to Midland High-School. We moved to near Austin, Texas Lake Travis. I went to Lake Travis High School. I graduated in 1983. I married my first wife Laura shortly after that.

A friend of mine was going to join the US Navy. He asked me if I wanted to join with him. Since I was in between jobs at the time and there was no jobs in or near Austin, Texas at the time I said sure. So I joined the US NAVY with him. Laura and I got divorced in 1986. We had no kids. I got out in 1987. I was an aviation structural mechanic or AMS3.

Two things that are most important to me in my life: My walk with God and community.

God bless.



Hello! My name is Anneliese Weik. I was raised in Montana and relocated to the area where I earned my nursing degree at Pacific Lutheran University and later a graduate degree at UW. My career as a critical care nurse and cardiac nurse practitioner in Seattle spans over 40 years. Recently retired, I spend time on road trips-especially to the mountains / national parks and general travel. At home, I particularly love time with family, enjoy gardening, wine tasting and all sorts of various projects. Most of the time you will find me doing something outside. I am passionate about wildlife, especially bears. I share my home with my dog Murphy and cat Luna. I have been a frequent visitor to GLC for many years and have found this church community particularly warm and welcoming. I'm looking forward to getting to know everyone and become involved here.

Q & A with Congregational Board Member, Shelby Chatterton

by Shelby Chatterton



How long have you attended Grace? I have been attending Grace since I was in first grade so about 19 years now!

What do you enjoy most about serving on the Board? What I enjoy most about serving on the board is the incredible team of people that I get to learn from and work with!

What ministry/ministries area are you especially passionate about? My ministries of passion are the youth and the young adults as an advisor for the youth and one of the members of the planning team for the young adults!

What is your favorite Bible verse? At the moment, my favorite Bible verse is Luke 1:45: "Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her."

What is something people may not know about you? Something that people may not know about me is that my family and I own a 1964 1/2 mustang that we show at local car shows in a car club!

If you could travel anywhere, where would you go? If I could travel anywhere, I would go to Italy for the love of food and history!

What do you love most about our church family? I love that our church family is so happy to open their arms to people and that we put action behind what we say, a community of caring do-gooders that I know shaped me to be the woman I am today.

How can our congregation pray for you? Our congregation can pray for me as I continue to navigate my twenties and everything that comes with that!

Young Adults Gatherings

by Amber Sellars

Young adults, ages 18-30, are welcome to join us for any of our monthly events!

Friendsgiving - November 28 from 2:00 - 4:30 pm at GLC. We'll gather together for a Thanksgiving themed potluck! Feel free to bring leftovers of thanksgiving dishes, or something entirely new that sparks joy! We'll chat about the things we're thankful for, eat delicious food, and spend time in community together.

Christmas Lights - December 19, in the evening, (exact time TBD) we'll gather at GLC, and then head out to take a look at some Christmas lights!

Escape Room - January 16, in the afternoon, (exact time TBD) we'll be doing an escape room! We'll learn to trust each other, and work as a team to escape from a themed room.

If you're interested in joining us for any of these events, please join our Whatsapp group at this QR code!

Building Sustainable Ministries: Growing & Strengthening Ministries at Grace

by Tessa Krippaehne

As part of our Building Sustainable Ministries initiative, we've been looking for new ways to highlight the many opportunities to connect, serve, and participate in the life of Grace. We wanted to do more than share a list of ministries; we wanted to bring them to life. That vision became our Ministry Showcase in September, where people could meet ministry leaders, ask questions, and discover where their own gifts and passions might fit.

Thank you to everyone who joined us, to the ministry leaders who hosted tables and shared their passion, and to the many hands behind the scenes who brought the day together. It was wonderful to see so many ministries represented and to celebrate the people who make them happen!

But the Showcase was about more than one Sunday. It was the culmination of several months of work, and the beginning of some exciting next steps.

One idea led to another.

As we planned the Showcase, we realized we needed something to tell the bigger story of ministry at Grace. So we created a ministry booklet highlighting nearly 50 ministries and the many ways people can connect, serve, and share their gifts.

That raised a new question: How could we make this information available beyond the Showcase? The answer was a new ministries section on our website, with a page for every ministry, and a Ministry Matching Quiz that suggests ministries based on your interests, gifts, and availability. More than 100 people have tried it so far. From there, we began seeing ways to streamline our communications so it's easier to stay informed about what's happening, where help is needed, and how to get involved.

Looking inward

The planning also gave us a chance to look inward. We dedicated a Sunday to exploring the Grace Mosaic, recognizing the gifts and talents we see in one another and considering how they can be shared in service to God.

Along the way, we also invited ministry leaders to share their experiences through surveys. We wanted to better understand what's working well, where leaders are feeling stretched, what challenges they face, and what support would help their ministries thrive. Thirty-five leaders responded, and a few themes stood out:

- Many ministries rest on one or two faithful people. Only five of 35 leaders said someone is clearly ready to step in if they stepped away.
- Every ministry could use more hands. Together, leaders told us they need nearly 200 more volunteers to sustain or grow their work.
- Nearly half of leaders said getting the word out to the wider congregation is inconsistent.
- Many longtime ministries hope to welcome a new generation. Building relationships across generations is the heart of Mosaic Life, one of our Ways of Life.

Together, these conversations have given us a clearer picture of the incredible gifts already present in our congregation, and of the opportunities to strengthen how we share them.

So, what's next?

In the months ahead, we'll be working on several things that grew out of these conversations. We want to do a better job of highlighting servant opportunities at Grace, making it easier to see where help is needed and how your gifts can make a difference. We'll be meeting with leaders of ministries that are ready for new energy to talk through what support would help most. We'll also look for ways to encourage and support new leaders. Healthy, sustainable ministries need more than willing volunteers; they need people ready to share responsibility, bring new ideas, and help carry the work forward.

We're also making it easier to learn about our ministries wherever you look, whether that's the booklet, website, email, the bulletin, or the Welcome Center: who they are, what they need, and how you can support them or get involved.

Just as importantly, we want to find meaningful ways to celebrate and express gratitude for the people who give so

Building Sustainable Ministries: Growing & Strengthening Ministries at Grace, continued

much of their time, energy, and heart to Grace. So much of what makes our church community special happens because of people who quietly show up, serve faithfully, and make things happen behind the scenes. Their contributions deserve to be seen and celebrated.

This work is about more than organizing ministries. This fall, our Generous Life series reminded us that everything we have begins with God's generosity, and we respond by sharing what we've been given: our time, our talents, our leadership, and our willingness to show up for one another. As we move into our next series, Awe & Wonder, this Advent, we hope you'll look for God at work in the people around you.

And there's still a place for you!

If you missed the Showcase, or you've been meaning to get more involved but haven't found the right fit, it's not too late.

Not sure where to start?

Scan to take the Ministry Matching Quiz, or visit quiz.gotgrace.com. You can also explore every ministry at gotgrace.com/ministries.

You don't have to take on a big commitment to make a difference. Sometimes it starts with a conversation, a helping hand, a particular skill, or simply saying yes.

Building Sustainable Ministries Team:
Tessa Krippaehne, Pastor Rachel Swenson, Jason Astrup, Lindsey Astrup, Amy Baker, Shelby Chatterton, and Hayley Goodner









Ministry Showcase: There's a Place for You at Grace!













Special Gathering with Mikah Meyer

Thank you to everyone who joined us on Wednesday, October 21 for Mikah Meyer's "Thank You, Lutherans!" Tour! It was a wonderful evening of inspiring short films, national park stories, and a sneak peek of his short film "**Miss Adventure**."



Advent Class - Understanding the Book of Revelation

by Ken Onstot

"The Triumph of Grace:
Understanding the Book of *Revelation*"
Led by Ken Onstot
Sundays, November 29, December 6,
and December 13
9:45 in Fellowship Hall

The goal of this three-week Advent class is to offer tools for reading *Revelation* in the way it was intended to be read — not for scaring people into repentance, recruiting them for Christian militarism, or causing them to focus exclusively on individual life after death, but to give the followers of Jesus endurance and hope as they witness to the coming of a new creation.

Topics for the three classes:

- Sunday, November 29: "End Times, Past Times, and Present Times" — Understanding the time period of *Revelation*
- Sunday, December 6: "Dragons, Beasts and Swords" — Interpreting the symbols of *Revelation*
- Sunday, December 13: "The New Creation and its Witnesses" — Finding ourselves in the story

Sunday Faith Formation @ 9:45 -10:45 am

by Pastor Rachel Swenson

As winter settles in and the days grow shorter, we are invited to slow down, breathe deeply, and make space for what matters most. This winter, Adult Faith Formation invites us to **Dwell**—to consider what it means to rest in God's presence and recognize that God is already dwelling among us.

Winter can be a season of stillness. While the world around us seems to quiet down, we have an opportunity to pause from the busyness of everyday life and listen more closely for God. Together, we'll explore what it means to dwell in God's love, dwell in community, and create space in our lives for reflection, conversation, and spiritual growth.

You don't need to have all the answers or a deep knowledge of the Bible to participate. **Bring your questions, your curiosity, your experiences, and your honest self.** Whether you've been part of Adult Faith Formation for years or you're joining us for the first time, there is a place for you.

This winter, we invite you to **Dwell** with us—to linger a little longer, listen a little deeper, and discover the ways God is present in the quiet moments of life. Come gather with us, connect with others, and make space for faith to take root. We'd love to have you join us!

December

6 – Second Sunday in Advent – **"The Triumph of Grace: Understanding the Book of *Revelation*"** Lead: Ken Onstot

- Good News Crew (Grades K-5th) - Chapel

13 – Second Sunday in Advent – **"The Triumph of Grace: Understanding the Book of *Revelation*"** Lead: Ken Onstot

- Good News Crew (Grades K-5th) - Chapel

20 – Fourth Sunday in Advent – **Las Posadas**
Las Posadas is a special Christmas tradition from Mexico that helps us remember their journey. Through songs and storytelling, we'll explore how we can welcome others, share God's love, and help everyone feel they belong!

27 – First Sunday after Christmas – **No Faith Formation Hour**

January

3 – Second Sunday after Christmas - Constitution Amendments FAQ

10 – Epiphany – Los Reyes Magos
Families of all backgrounds are invited to discover how this beloved Latino tradition celebrates the Wise Men's visit to Jesus. Enjoy storytelling, festive fun, and a delicious **Rosca de Reyes (Kings Cake)** as we celebrate God's love and the gifts we share with one another.

17 – Finance Ministry FAQ

- Good News Crew (Grades K-5th) - Chapel

24 – **Annual Meeting at 10:45 am**

- Good News Crew (Grades K-5th) - Chapel

31 – TBD – grace in ACTION Project Lead: Amy Baker

February

7 – La Candelaria y Tamales – celebrating Jesus as the light of the world! We'll remember Mary and Joseph bringing Jesus to the temple and enjoy delicious tamales together. In Mexican tradition, those who find the baby Jesus figure in the Kings cake at Epiphany bring tamales for La Candelaria, this is a joyful connection between the celebrations. Come share food, fellowship, and God's love.

14 – First Sunday in Lent – Lenten Series – Dwelling in Lutheran Identity – Led: Pastor Chad

- Good News Crew (Grades K-5th) - Chapel

21 – Second Sunday in Lent – Lenten Series – Dwelling in Lutheran Identity – Led: Pastor Rachel

- Good News Crew (Grades K-5th) - Chapel

28 – Third Sunday in Lent – Lenten Series - Dwelling in Lutheran Identity – Led: Pastor Salvador

- Good News Crew (Grades K-5th) - Chapel



Las Posadas Christmas Party

by Pastor Salvador Cossio



Las Posadas Christmas Party | December 20 at 9:45 am

Join us at Grace for a joyful celebration of **Las Posadas!** We will gather for songs, delicious food, traditional Posadas games, and a photo booth. Wear your favorite ugly Christmas sweater if you can!



Las Posadas means "the inns" or "lodgings." This beloved Mexican and Latin American Advent tradition remembers Mary and Joseph's search for a place to stay before Jesus was born. Through song and the symbolic act of asking for shelter, we enter their story and prepare our hearts to welcome Christ.



At Grace, we celebrate Las Posadas to share our cultural traditions, grow in faith across generations, and remember God's call to offer hospitality. Mary and Joseph's journey invites us to recognize our neighbors who are seeking shelter, safety, and belonging and to consider how we can welcome them with love.

Bring your family, invite a friend, and celebrate with us. There is a place for everyone!

Saturday Seekers Bible Study

Saturday Seekers gather with the intention of diving deep into scripture, awakening our imagination and listening to the Holy Spirit. Vivian Kauth has been fearlessly leading us through a deep dive into the story of the apostles after Jesus ascends to heaven and the creation of the early church. Each gathering, we all gain new insights into the realities of the early church, what the apostles were facing, and how God's Spirit wove through it all. Each time we gather, we read through portions of the book, pause for questions or insights, and listen to the movement of the Spirit alive and well amongst us.

Join us as we continue our study the book of Acts and deep dive into the early church and what it has to teach us about how to be the church today. Join in on our shared exploration of the story of faith we've inherited and how we are to live into it.

SATURDAY SEEKERS
Bible Study

December 19, January 16 & February 20

9:30 - 11:00 am | Upper Room
Questions? Contact Vivian Kauth at vj.kauth@comcast.net

WINTER SPRING 2027

AUGUSTINIAN WISDOM FOR THE DIGITAL AGE



Dr. Autumn Ridenour One-day Retreat | Sat Feb 6
Location: TBD, 9am - 3pm

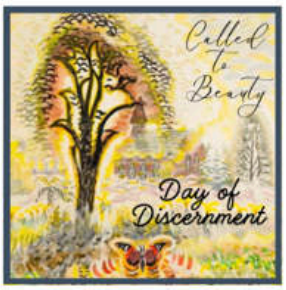
If Caesar's Roman empire is the classic case for systems of domination and subjugation, another empire most of us live inside today is digital, algorithmic, attention-hungry, endlessly forming our desires whether we notice or not. Augustine spent a lifetime thinking hard about rightly ordered loves, about what happens to a soul that loves the wrong things and in the wrong order. We turn to his wisdom not as ahistorical archive removed from our world, but as a genuinely practical, and deeply theological approach, for living faithfully inside a digital world that never stops demanding our attention, our time, and our loyalty.

BETWEEN MYSTIC & PROPHET

A Lenten Journey with Soren Kierkegaard & Howard Thurman
Facilitators: Dr. Angela Parker and Dr. Carl Hughes
Zoom Course | Thursdays 7pm-8:30pm, Feb.19 -Mar. 18



This year's Lenten course, Between Mystic and Prophet: A Lenten Journey with Søren Kierkegaard and Howard Thurman, slows us down to reflect on how we can strengthen resilience to live resistant to the empires around us. Two companions, each in their own century and particular experience, found ways to be human in light of their Christian faith. Kierkegaard's fierce insistence to resist following the crowds that deny our particular individuality and Thurman's deep well of contemplative, prophetic presence, and reclaiming of subjugated identities.Together they both point to a life in Christ where we can balance interiority and public faithfulness all in the same body. This is Lent we will deepen an understanding for what it means to give up something by setting aside the powers clamoring for our attention, and to welcome a renewing life only God in Christ gives.



CALLED BY BEAUTY

A Day of Discernment
One-day Retreat | Sat April 17
Location: TBD, 9am - 3pm

Our fourth retreat, Called by Beauty: A Day of Discernment, invites us to remember that life comes through movement and creativity. We close our LiVE program year not with more analysis, but with aesthetics. Beauty is God's way of calling us back to ourselves without demanding anything first. In this final retreat we celebrate our callings in the beauty of music, art, dance and poetry. Leaders throughout our synod will share their gifts of creativity in a variety of artistic mediums. We will celebrate how the Spirit brings them, and each of us, to life. This Spring retreat is not an ending, but a sending. It is an opportunity to recognize and discern our various gifts of beauty God is calling from us, and continue to fill and sustain us with joy for the journey. What is your gift?

WAYS TO ENGAGE

Lay Leaders have multiple ways they can participate in this ministry and grow faithfully

→ **One-day Retreats**
Curated In-Person retreats to communally engage with one another and learn together

→ **Multi-Week Courses**
Approx 7 week long series on a given topic lead by rotating facilitators/ speakers. 1 Fall Course and 1 Lenten Course

→ **Cohorts**
Groups that meet regularly around one of three affinities listed below...

→ **Lay Ministry Formation** (LMF)
2-year cohort-based, certification program for lay leaders.

This is our third year of engagement with our Northwest Washington Synod through the Live Project. The spiritual growth and formation opportunities are wonderful. This is one of our core ways to deepen in discipleship together. Theologically thoughtful, culturally responsive, and communally engaged – great ways to accompany one another. **As part of our partnership, you can sign up for any retreat and class for FREE. Yes free. When signing up, simply enter our Live Bundle code –** Promo code not available at time of publishing. Please check with the church office for aur church code. **Here is the link:** The LiVE Project | Ministries | Northwest Washington Synod

Get out your calendars, get signed up, and shoot Pastor Chad an email note pastorchad@gotgrace.com or Diane Nelson diane@gotgrace.com and we can plan for shared transportation to and from the retreats. For any online course, we will see you there on Zoom.

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Winter Schedule…

Sunday Worship 8:30 am, 11:00 am & (Spanish) at 12:15 pm
Online Worship 10:00 am

Monthly calendars and weekly bulletins are available at: gotgrace.com/announcements

SAVE the DATES

Advent Sundays Theme: Awe and Wonder

November 29, December 6, 13 & 20

All Church Celebration December 20
9:45 am - Fellowship Hall, Las Posadas & Christmas party
Wear your Christmas sweaters, enjoy cookies & photo booth.
Bring unwrapped gifts (ages 0-3) for Amara Court program

Christmas Eve Services

Thursday, December 24
Nativity service: 4:00 pm - Bring unwrapped gifts (ages 0-3) for Amara Court program
*__Candlelight services:__ Band led @ 6:00 pm | Choir led @ 8:00 pm

Christmas Day Service

Friday, December 25 @ 10:00 am

Community Dinners

December 8, January 12 & February 9 @ 5:00 - 6:00 pm
Second Tuesday of the month, Fellowship Hall

Los Reyes Magos Festive Celebration

Sunday, January 10 @ 9:45 pm – Fellowship Hall

One Worship Service & Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 24 **One Worship service @ 9:30 am | Annual Meeting @ 10:45 am**
(Note: Generosity and Finance FAQ - January 3 & 17 @ 9:45 am)

La Candelera Tamale Event

Sunday, February 7 @ 9:45 pm – Fellowship Hall