

January 2026 In Touch with Grace



Dear family and friends of Grace,
Happy New Year! Welcome to Epiphany - which is the name of the season after Christmas. Epiphany is a time when we see God revealed in Jesus. The 12th Day of Christmas is the first day of Epiphany. Advent and Christmas were all about waiting and preparing for Jesus. Now we are to seek Jesus in our daily lives and follow where he might be leading us in this coming year. The Gospel of Matthew tells us of the arrival of the Magi from the East who sought diligently for the Christ Child, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

In an article on Epiphany, Rev. Dr. Ruth Barton wondered what the Magi had to leave behind in order to take such a strange, lengthy, and dangerous journey. There must have been professional priorities and personal goals to abandon or postpone, all because of a star in the sky. Regardless, they set off together on an adventure that would change their lives with joy and amazement.

In this New Year, what are the priorities and goals that might be filling your life? What might you need to postpone or leave behind as you move forward seeking Jesus in the months ahead? What is the star leading you forward? Sometimes, we need to tweak our plans to make room for what is holy and new. Perhaps this would create space for epiphany moments that would fill our lives with unexpected joy and amazement.

One of my favorite poems at this time of year is by Howard Thurman. I have shared it before. It goes like this: "When the song of the angels is stilled; when the star in the sky is gone; when the kings and the princes are home; when the shepherds are back with their flocks; the work

of Christmas begins. To find the lost; to heal the broken; to feed the hungry; to release the prisoner; to rebuild the nations; to bring peace among people; to make music in the heart."

As we journey into the adventure that will be 2026, may we have ordinary epiphanies of seeing God at work in our lives and the world around us; may we continue the work of Christmas; may we listen for the songs of the angels and learn to sing their songs of peace on earth, goodwill to all; may we work to embrace all that God loves; may we keep room in our hearts for new priorities, goals, and space for the sacred. May the year ahead be filled with many blessings!

Peace to you this season,

Pastor Karen



Announcements

- Thank you to all who participated, led, and created our children's Christmas program. The kids did a great job!!!! Pics are with the Sunday School article and on the back page of the calendar.
- If you have a family member suffering from dementia, there is a Dementia Support Group that meets every third Wednesday of the month from 2-3 p.m. at Cerenity-Marian. (225 Frank Street, St. Paul. All are welcome to attend.

Annual Reports for February Annual Meeting are due in the office by Jan. 15th!

The Community Connections Committee delivered presents to LSS for our Adopted family of 5 on December 17th. LSS delivered them to the families the week before Christmas. We had enough funds to purchase all of the items on their wish lists thanks to the generosity of those tasting chili in November! Thanks to all of you they should have a good Christmas.



**Lutheran
Social Service** "Keeping families together"
of Minnesota Program

P.S. I'm working on getting the chili recipes from those who made the ones we tasted for next month's In Touch. Stay tuned.

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION Have you noticed 'Coffee and Conversation' on the calendar of Grace's monthly *InTouch*? Or on the calendar on the back page of the weekly bulletins? We meet informally every Wednesday (well, we do occasionally cancel, depending on other church or outside activities) from 10 am 'til Noon—and you're all invited!

We started meeting several years before COVID. The pandemic caused us to shut down but we resumed in 2024. Our only agenda is to have coffee ready to pour at 10 am. At Noon we clear the table, clean up the area and then go about our daily business. Some participants bring in bakery items, snacks, fresh fruit cheese, crackers, deli meat, or ? to share.

All are welcome - church members, visitors, seniors, youth. We meet in the South Tower room where there is plenty of seating available. Come late. Leave early. Don't converse...just listen, if you like.

Hope to see you soon on a Wednesday morning!



January 4th is Food Shelf Sunday!!

The Giving Tree -

THANK YOU!!

To all the members of the Congregation at Grace who participated and brought gifts for the Giving Tree please accept our heartfelt thanks. Donations were shared between LSS Learning Center in the lower level of Grace and Project Home families. Because of your generosity many children will be a lot warmer this winter in our community. Together we make a difference and share the love and blessing of the Christmas season.



JANUARY MISSION OF THE MONTH

The Mission of the Month for January at Grace is Doctors Without Borders. DWB provides lifesaving care in over 70 countries. They are dedicated to providing medical care to people in distress including victims of political violence and natural disasters. The population the group assists typically lack access to adequate resources for medical treatment.

Please prayerfully consider making a donation to this organization which serves those in need of medical attention but are unable to financially get access to life-saving and life-changing medical procedures. Please use your blue multi-purpose envelope, mark mission of the month and place in the offering or mail to the church office. Checks should be made payable to Grace. Thank you.



To all of you who donated chili creations for our tasting in October - I am hoping that you will send me your recipes for what you brought. Those who tasted have asked to have those recipes because they all enjoyed all 7 varieties! Please send by email, regular mail, drop off in the office or catch me when you see me at church. Hopefully, you are willing to share your 'secret' recipes with your friends at Grace.

Thanks!! Linda Sackreiter

Music Notes -

On the bottom right hand side of each hymn in our hymnbook are two notations—the name of the tune being sung and a series of numbers or possibly 2 or 3 letters. There may appear the word *Irregular*. What do those numbers mean? Is it a secret code?

Whereas the name that appears above the numbers refers to the melody, the numbers/letters/the word *irregular* refers to the text being sung. The numbers stand for the number of syllables in each phrase. Since every verse lines up with the same tune, those numbers apply to the numbers of syllables in each verse. Let's take for example the first hymn we'll be singing on January 4th, *Once in Royal David's City*, #269. The numbers appearing at the bottom on the right hand side of the page say 878777. Let's count the syllables: *Once in Roy-al Da-vid's cit-y*= 8. So far so good. *Stood a low-ly cat-tle shed*=7. Let's go on. *Where a moth-er laid her ba-by*=8. *In a man-ger for his bed*=7. *Mar-y was that moth-er mild*=7, followed by *Je-sus Christ, her lit-tle child*=7. In total we get 878777.

Why is this important? If you look in the back of the hymnal, starting on page 1199, you will find a listing, a metrical index of every hymn found in the hymnal. You will find that some hymns have a lot in common with other hymns having that same number sequence. On the other hand, "*Once in Royal David's City*" has only one other hymn that shares that sequence, #533 "*Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty*". That means we could easily use the tune to "*Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty*" with the words to "*Once in Royal David's City*". Most likely we wouldn't because a lot of tunes are married to the words they have. Also, sometimes the original tunes are in a major key whereas the alternative may be in minor, not necessarily a good fit.

On the other hand, some texts have quite a few strong alternatives. We sang #588 "*There's a Wideness in God's Mercy*" on December 14th that has the sequence of 8787D (D meaning 8787 another set of 8787). It has 20 other hymn tunes that could be used with that text and I grew up with those words set to a tune not found in this hymnal, so there are even more possibilities.

This can be very frustrating. Hymns can be attached to some fond memories. Augsburg Publishing House who publishes new hymn collections has utilized these number sequences in a different way. Utilizing familiar hymns can lead to introducing new hymn texts dealing with current issues meaningful to those singing them, such as aging, hunger, interfaith respect, etc.

There are other symbols to check out, i.e. CM (common meter), LM (long meter), PM (peculiar meter) as well as the aforementioned Irregular (they don't fit any of the categories). Check out your favorite hymns. Compare them to others that having the same number of syllable groupings. Enjoy!

What do they mean? Is it a secret code?

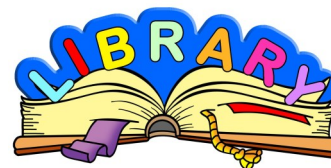
Irregular?

CM? LM? PM?



FROM THE LIBRARY:

Here's the latest from our libraries!



BOOKS FOR SALE:

The "Books for Sale" basket has gotten a refresh!

Due to some recent donations of brand new or like new books, we have a great selection in our basket! Feel free to browse and if you find one you just need to have, all donations are welcome!

NEW FEATURED TITLES:

A Step of Faith by Richard Paul Evans - After the death of his beloved wife, after the loss of his advertising business to his once-trusted partner, after bankruptcy forced him from his home, Alan Christoffersen is a broken man. Leaving everything he knows, he sets out on an extraordinary cross-country journey; with only the pack on his back, he is walking from Seattle to Key West - the end of the map.

Along the way, Alan begins to heal, meeting people who teach him lessons about love, sacrifice, and forgiveness. But in St. Louis, Alan faces another life-changing crisis, and now the Journey is in jeopardy.

The Boys In The Boat by Daniel James Brown - It was an unlikely quest from the start. With a team composed of the sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers, the University of Washington's eight-oar crew team was never expected to defeat the elite teams of the East Coast and Great Britain, yet they did, going on to shock the world by defeating the German team rowing for Adolf Hitler. The emotional heart of the tale lies with Joe Rantz, a teenager without family or prospects, who rows not only to regain his shattered self-regard but also to find a real place for himself in the world. Drawing on the boys' own journals and vivid memories of a once-in-a-lifetime shared dream, Brown has created an unforgettable portrait of an era.

Pillsbury Annual Recipes - With the cooler weather settling in, treat yourself to a new recipe!

LITTLE LIBRARY:

The little library at Grace is back! Check out what's out there.

Grace Book Club -

Here are the latest titles chosen -

For discussion on:

January 1 The Great Gatsby
February 5 My Friends

F. Scott Fitzgerald
Fredrik Backman

Sunday School

What a year the Sunday School kids have had. We learned about so many Heroes and Heroines of the Old Testament, that moving into 2026 we will look at the life of another great Hero of the Bible in Jesus. He saves us all and it all started in a humble manger.

The children have been tirelessly working on their Christmas Program on how they can share their gifts given to them from God to the world. What can we give? It's not just about presents for Christmas, but every day of the year. How can we give our special gifts to others? No gift is too small.

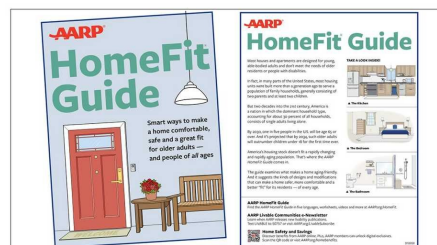
Sunday School classes will resume on January 4th.



A collage of pics from the program on December 21st. There are more pics on the back of the calendar page!

Great job done by all of you!!

XYZ's - Join the XYZ group on Thursday, **January 8 at 1:30pm** to hear our favorite AARP presenter, Joan. She will be talking to us regarding HomeFit. Most homes and apartments are designed for young, able-bodied adults and don't meet the needs of older adults or people with disabilities. American housing doesn't fit a rapidly changing and aging population. Learn smart ways to make a home comfortable, safe and a great fit for us as older adults. Come for the presentation and stay for the fellowship and refreshments.



A Note from Raiha about the Blessing Bags she made:

Hi, this is Raiha Storbakken. Thank you for all the donations I received. It really helped me make all of the blessing bags for the homeless. Thanks to your generosity, I was able to make 12 blessing bags and I was able to include a \$25 gift card to Holiday in each bag.

Surplus donations were donated to Project Home and Operation Christmas Child.



Putting together ALL the donations

Raiha with all 12 of the bags she managed to put together!!



Community Connections - ongoing projects!!

Internal, Local and Global

If you would consider serving treats on a Sunday morning, we would appreciate your help. Please take a look at the sign-up schedule in the South Tower room and see if there is a date that works for you to help out! If you would be willing to bring treats but would prefer to not serve, please speak with Linda Sackreiter and we can arrange that as well.

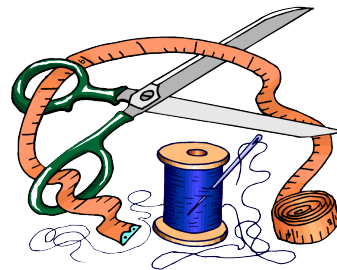
Thanks for your help!!

2026 Collections

Quilts, baby care kits (Note: soap size accepted for baby care kits is 3.5 or 4 oz gentle soap; soap in each kit has to total 8 or 9 oz)

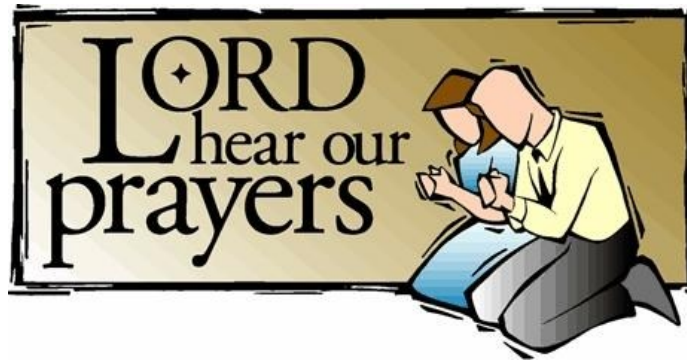
Other on-going collections at Grace - used eye glasses and cancelled stamps. Please find the small collection baskets on the library shelf. Also, Sandy Abernathy will take any American Flags that need to be disposed of properly. These can be left in the collection area in the library. She will also take any plastic bags for a neighbor doing mats for the homeless in town. (We are not currently saving soup can labels) Thank you for all donations!

Quilt Days— We will be meeting again in January on the 2nd Saturday (10th). All are welcome to join us. No skills necessary, we will teach. Most months we meet on the 2nd Saturday in the Tower rooms. Come join us in this month for some good conversation and to put those hands to use for a wonderful cause. Lutheran World Relief distributes donated quilts all over the world including in the US.



Miles of Pennies The large collection jar in the library is always accepting donations toward giving to the LSS fund for helping homeless Youth in St. Paul. Our goal was \$250.00 for 2025 and we sent \$275 to LSS this year! Let's exceed that again in 2026! Thank you to everyone who participates in this important mission. Your generous donations of coins and paper money are appreciated.





We lift our prayers to God in times of thanksgiving and times of need, in times of joy and times of sorrow. This month we especially pray for Sandy Abernathy, Josie Meyer, Patty Young, Phyllis Armstrong, Paul Hesterberg, Butch Nelson, the family and friends of Christian Ray-Taylor, Sr. and all those we name in our hearts.

How to donate other than in the offering plate:

There is always snail mail. The office is open to receive the mail and our bookkeeper will count what comes in each week and deposit it in the bank. Our address: 1730 Old Hudson Road, St. Paul, 55106.

To donate electronically: You can schedule a transfer of funds with your own bank if they have bill pay available and it will come automatically on the date you choose. Otherwise, you can go to our website (www.gracelutheranstpaul.org) and click on the GIVE page.

This site is secure for financial transactions through Vanco which is the Simply Giving program. At the GIVE page you can go through the steps as directed and give whatever amount you wish to several different categories (general, other, etc.) This works best on the Firefox or Edge browsers. This does get to us electronically in a very timely manner. If you are comfortable using the QR, it will take you directly to the GIVE page on the website. **Please call the office if you have any questions.** Thank you.

Give QR



Financial Snapshot for GLC-2025

	<u>November Actual</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>
General Fund	\$ 30,733.59	\$ 299,530.81	\$226,625.87
Expenses	\$ 19,912.72	\$ 257,690.56	\$323,897.39
Deficit/Overage	\$ 10,820.87	\$ 41,840.25	-\$97,271.52



1 Kaliska Reed
 3 Sam Martinez
 5 Susan Lindquist
 8 Anna Colvin
 Jake Kemen
 9 Carl Alleman
 10 Raymond Voss
 11 Thomas Mohwinkel
 Peter Zitzewitz
 13 Andy Martinez
 Patricia Rydel
 14 David Hunter
 15 Leila Colvin
 Rebecca Schaaf
 20 Peyton Olson

27 Brian Jackson
 Abigail Westling
 28 Patricia Young
 30 Alicia Runquist



Worship Leaders for January 2026-

<u>Date</u>	<u>Liturgist</u>	or	<u>Communion Asst.</u>	<u>Acolyte</u>	<u>Lay Reader</u>
4	----		Lana Alleman	Hailey Alleman	Lauren Alleman
11	Jan Steingas	---		Tony Childs	Jeff Oberlander
18	Jeff Oberlander	---			Peg Mathison
25	Barb Holtan	---		Tony Childs	Kris Mohwinkel

<u>Date</u>	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Greeters</u>
4	Carl & Cami Alleman	
11	Jeff Oberlander team	Larry & Sue Atneosen
18	Roger Mathison, Linda Sackreiter	Dick Gunderson
25	Greg & Kris Mohwinkel	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Money Counters</u> - (we could use some additional volunteers on our counting teams)
4	Lana Alleman team
11	Amanda Christie team
18	Monique McClure-Hegge team
25	Kate Pray team



Please see sign-up sheets for Sunday jobs in the Narthex, and the Sunday Fellowship sign-up in the S. Tower Rm.

Come Be a Part of the Worship Team!

Here are descriptions for each opportunity to join the Worship Team.

Greeters - all ages, arrive by 9:10, greet people at the lower level before the service

Ushers - all ages, arrive by 9:10, hand out bulletins, gather offering, help direct Communion, tidy Sanctuary after worship

Acolyte - all ages (with adult assistance if younger than 5th grade), arrive by 9:15, robe for festival services, light candles before the service, assist with communion during service, extinguish candles at end of service,

Lay Reader - all ages, arrive by 9:15, read the scripture lesson during worship

Liturgist - Confirmed members, arrive by 9:15, robe for most services, assist with leading the service, help serve Communion

Communion Assistant - Confirmed members, arrive by 9:20, robe for festival services, assist serving communion during service

Money Counter - Confirmed member, count offering money after the service

Chancel Care Assistant - all ages (with adult supervision if younger than 5th grade), after the service, assist in tidying up the altar area, putting away communion ware.

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Pastor:

Rev. Karen Williams

Custodial Staff:

Linda Denson

Office Staff:

Linda Sackreiter

Music Staff:

Sabe Dunlap—Director of Music
Ministries

Kathleen Hollar—Organist

Jan Steingas—Triple G's

Connie Smeby—Joyous Juniors
