

Grace Lutheran Church
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Messenger

January 2026

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

**Sunday, February 1 immediately following the
10:15 AM worship service.**

Please note that **your attendance is vitally important, as we are required to have a quorum!** We will have some very important items to discuss on our agenda, and will be voting in new council members. Your input and votes matter!

There will be a **budget hearing for the annual meeting on Sunday, January 18 at the 10:15 AM worship service.** This will give the congregation an opportunity to receive the proposed budget for 2026 and to ask any questions regarding it before the annual meeting, to hopefully save time during the annual meeting.

From the Pastor's Desk...

A "new" sletter for the new year! As Grace awaits the call of a permanent pastor - and thankfully the process is ongoing - I as your interim continue looking at our Church through the lens of a newly-arrived shepherd. What is stable and healthy? What needs quick action to keep momentum going? What deeper relationships will need to be formed and how will that happen?

One of the best things that members of Grace can do to welcome a new Pastor is to fill gaps in volunteer roles. When a pastor comes in, they'll want to have people ready to partner in caring for our congregation and in sharing the Gospel. As your Interim, and with current leaders, I'll be asking many of you to consider stepping into roles that hold our Church together so we can be efficient, effective, and affectionate.

In the Bible, many leaders like Moses believed that they couldn't lead and argued God's call to them before they even knew what God would ask. The first thing they needed to do was to be open to the idea of serving God. Once they did that, God gave them the ability they needed. I'm not God but I am asking you to consider yourself as a leader, especially if you haven't done that at Church before.
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Staff at Grace

Rev. Wendolyn Trozzo, Interim Pastor
Scott J. Breiner, Music Director
Corinne Rhodes, Administrative Assistant
Heidi Toth, Church Treasurer
Sandy Piskun, Financial Secretary

Joseph Martin, Church Council President
Jim Dolan, Church Council Vice President
Chris Dennis, Church Council Secretary
Alison Toth, Social Media Consultant

We need a variety of volunteers to join in this new year. Please prayerfully consider whether you can help us in these ways:

- Financial health: counters (once a month), Financial Secretary (works with Treasurer to input income), Assistant Treasurer (we have no backup for Heidi and this is a significant gap)
- Fellowship: Team head who would schedule coffee hour monthly, Setup-cleanup teams of 2, Food/beverage donors 2-3 times/year
- Council: Faithful members have completed their terms or needed to step back. We need 3 new members of Council who can meet monthly, discuss decisions facing the Church, and keep abreast of spiritual/physical/financial needs in our congregation
- Youth ministry: when we have kids attend, we lack adults ready to jump in for Sunday School or activities. We need: a scheduler and 4-6 teacher volunteers for Sunday School, and a scheduler plus 2-4 volunteers for youth activities (like Synod weekend retreats).
- Worship: Assisting Ministers (1-2 Bible readings, speak the prayers provided by the office, serve communion), Back up Ushers and Livestream, 2-4 person decoration team.
- Facilities: learn where things are so you can jump in on tasks as they arrive. Tasks include physical repairs and sourcing estimates as needs arrive.

There are of course more roles, but I hope that you will look at these and consider how you can help. If you are a past leader, your wisdom will be needed in training volunteers new to their roles! All of these roles are ways you can care for our Church home and Church family. We need you and will surround you with co-workers in the Gospel!

In Christ,
Pastor Wendolyn

Former "The Lutheran" Magazine back in print!

Now called "Living Lutheran"

The new **LivingLutheran.org** has launched! Available to all congregation members of the NJ Synod.

Living Lutheran tells the stories of the ELCA, bonding us as a church across congregations, synods, states, regions and countries. Get informed, inspired and equipped with the perspectives you need to deepen your faith and connect with the broader Lutheran community. Visit livinglutheran.org/subscribe now to sign up for your **free digital membership** or for **paid print subscriptions**.

YEAR-END SUMMARY **Council President, Joe Martin**

Dear Congregation of Grace,

Your church council has had a very busy and challenging year! Thank you to Pastor Wendolyn for staying with Grace while our Call Committee has continued the search for our new full time pastor.

The Investment Committee has been busy and has made recommendations that will be deferred until the church finds our new pastor.

Facilities has done good work all year trying to keep up with the fire department requirements of fire doors as well as the latest round of repairs and corrections that came in

September. A big thank you to Jim Dolan and Karl Suckiel as well as all the rest of the people that help keep our facility safe and functioning.

Thank you to Support as well as all the Counters who process our weekly collections -- and Heidi, who does an unbelievable job of keeping the church finances together.

Thank you to the Call Committee for all your hard work in searching for a full time pastor. This has not been an easy task but they continue to make progress.

We continue to feed the community via our Food Pantry -- and the needs keep growing! Thank you to all of our members who found that calling and are doing such a wonderful job.

We have so many people who give of themselves to keep our church a place of fellowship, prayer and community -- and I know I have missed so many members that do so much to keep our church functioning.

We have many needs coming up this year. If anyone has the time and feels the call to help, we currently need three people to join Council to replace those who are completing their 3-year terms.

Support is in desperate need of a Financial Secretary and can always use additional members. This is a very important committee that follows our finances and creates the church budget every year.

Despite the numerous challenges we've faced, we're optimistic that our future will be bright!

Thank you very much,
Joe Martin

“Thank you” from Organist Scott Breiner

A personal “thank –you” to all of our lay leaders (who “stepped up to the plate” when asked) who did such a wonderful job with our Lessons & Carols service. Also, thanks to all who filed in the front pews. A livestreaming viewer remarked how “full” our church was on December 14th.

Looks are deceiving!

Keep up the good work!
Scott

Food Pantry

The food pantry would like to sincerely thank everyone who donated food this holiday season! Many local families in need were able to enjoy Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners thanks to your generosity.

Sponsorships for Altar Flowers and Other Worship Items

The 2026 sponsorship charts are available for sign-up on the downstairs bulletin board across from the elevator. You may sign-up or call the church office and let us know what dates and items you would like to sponsor. The items and cost are as follows:

Flowers (\$30), Candles (\$10), Wine (10), Bulletins (\$15), Music (\$50), and Messenger (\$50)

January Worship Assistants

1/4 Ruth Bowden
1/11 Shirley Blankenship
1/18 Meg Markkanen
1/25 Meg La Spina

Book Exchange throughout the month of January

Take a book, leave a book, it's that simple!

For the month of January, tables will be set up in our upstairs social hall. Most any kind of book is fine - fiction, nonfiction, cookbooks, inspirational books, history, mystery, even romance. The only rule is: no books that would make the Pastor blush! At the end of the month, we will donate any remaining books to an appropriate charity.

Youth Re-Launch January 11

10:15 Service - Sunday School grades K-12

12:00-2:00 Youth Pizza Lunch and Photo Service Project at Grace
Grades 6-12

First Annual “United in Praise” Choir Festival Sunday, January 18, 2026 (snow date January 25)

The First Annual United in Praise Choir Festival will be held here at
**Grace Lutheran Church in celebration of Christian Unity Week at 3:00 PM
on Sunday January 18.**



Enjoy hearing music and scripture shared by local churches, an expression of being truly “United in Praise!”

Light refreshments will be served.

FRIENDS & FAMILY RETREAT January 23-25, 2026

Camp Cross Roads (formerly Camp Beisler)

Bring your loved ones, unplug from screens, and reconnect amidst nature with the Friends & Family Retreat at Cross Roads. Families and friends of **all ages** are invited to enjoy fun outdoor activities, meaningful meals, worship, reflection, and plenty of time to build confidence, faith, and enduring relationships. It's a values-based community experience where friendship and leadership grow organically. crossroadsretreat.com/friends-and-family-retreat/

Corinne's Office Hours for 2026

Monday & Tuesday 10:00 AM-3:00 PM

Wednesday is Corinne's day off unless noted otherwise.

Thursday & Friday 10:00 AM-3:00 PM

These hours will continue to be posted in the bulletin, especially for weeks that have holidays or any occasional changed or flexed days or times.