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## grace in ACTION

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

## Rooted & Rising Discipleship Generosity Initiative

by Jason Hervin, Congregational Board President

Hello Grace,

This year has flown by and it's hard to believe that it is already mid-November as I am writing this article. This year has been filled with many key activities for the Board as we've launched the Rooted & Rising Discipleship Generosity Initiative. This article is to provide information on some of the key activities from the Board.



## Rooted & Rising Discipleship Generosity Initiative

### Colossians 2:7

*Let your roots grow down into Jesus, and let your lives be built on Jesus. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.*

This past quarter has been filled with life-giving events where our Board and Finance Team has had the opportunity to engage across the congregation. In September, through seven Vision events, we reached 252 people sharing in the vision for Rooted & Rising, hearing the impact Grace has had on their lives, and affirming key themes of worship | connect | serve. Our October launch involved a holistic approach across all programs from our sermon series, Faith Formation curriculum, youth, and children's programs. Our primary goal as part of Rooted & Rising is 100% engagement. Our prayerful hope is that everyone who calls Grace "home" will engage by praying, showing up in worship and at events, entering into this discipleship journey, and joining together with us, along with your friends and loved ones. Throughout the initiative thus far it has been heartwarming to see the amount of engagement, energy, and positivity.



*My cup overflows with your blessings.*

Psalm 23:5

As we shared on Celebration Sunday, we are encouraged by our progress towards the \$3.9 million financial goal of Rooted & Rising. Through the 155 Commitment Cards that have been received we have raised \$2,432,588 and this number continues to grow. When we factor in unpledged households who normally give but have not yet submitted a Commitment Card that number grows to \$3,095,048. When including other projected income from rent, and other income, the total grows further to \$3,195,048.

With this amount, we can increase our investment in key areas of ministry, deepening in worship and

## Rooted & Rising Discipleship Generosity Initiative, continued

faith for our adult, youth, children, and family programs and activities. Our pastors and ministry leaders are already active in planning for 2024 and beyond so that we can continue to grow in new ways. Some of these areas include: developing what is needed to offer bi-lingual worship services and ministry in our community; working to increase our outreach in the areas of care ministry; additional outreach to our shut-in and elderly members; and working to increase and further engage our members in small group ministries.

Through your commitments, we can again increase our pastor salaries to meet synod guidelines along with increases for our devoted and talented staff. Another key aspect planned for our 2024 spend plan is integrating our local, and global outreach initiatives into our spend plan as we will be integrating 15% of total giving towards Outreach as outlined in our narrative budget.

For now, we are holding off on other projects and areas outlined in the narrative. These include: the second HVAC project to complete the replacement of all of our units, other non-essential building projects to modernize our building to the experience for Grace and our partners who use our facility, and allocating additional funds towards reserves for capital projects.

As we look ahead it is important to keep in mind this is a two-year journey we are on together. We are just getting started and it will be exciting to see what God has in store for Grace!

For those who have submitted a Commitment Card, thank you for your commitment, your service, and your generosity!

## Property Sale

At the special congregational meeting, we provided an update that there was a potential buyer that had entered into a "feasibility period" that if successful would have completed the sale of the Kent-Des Moines Road property. This potential buyer's plans included condos and businesses on the bottom floor which were outside of what the property is currently zoned for and would require re-zoning with the City of Des Moines. As a result, the potential buyer canceled the feasibility period and the property is back on the market. Due to the high interest rates currently, it is not an ideal time for property development and our property may be on the market for some time. We will provide updates on any further events that happen with the property. If you have any questions, you can email the Board at [board@gotgrace.com](mailto:board@gotgrace.com)



## Looking Ahead

- ❑ **January 7 – First Fruits Sunday**
  - ❑ This will be a celebratory day as we begin 2024 strong with bringing our first fruits of generosity forward.
  - ❑ During Faith Formation we will also hold our first 2024 Spend Plan & Financial FAQ.
- ❑ **January 14 – Second 2024 Spend Plan & Financial FAQ**
- ❑ **January 28 – Annual Meeting**

If you have questions, ideas, concerns, please contact the Board at [board@gotgrace.com](mailto:board@gotgrace.com) and you can contact me directly at [jasonhervin@salt.gotgrace.com](mailto:jasonhervin@salt.gotgrace.com)



## Rooted and Rising Events





## A Message From Our Bishop

by Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee



In the song *Amazing Grace* we sing, "I once was lost but now I'm found."

Because my job sometimes involves travel, there are times when I am wandering unfamiliar airports – trying to find my flight, trying to find edible food, trying to find a place to charge my phone, trying to find a place where there isn't a cacophony of sound and crowds of people. And sometimes at airports I also experience a feeling like a disconnection from my "self." Sometimes I am wandering the airport trying to find my "self." Strangely, there are moments at airports where I get this feeling as though I am unmoored from what connects me to other people. Honestly, I don't know if this is something only I experience or if others feel the same way.

There have been a slew of recent articles and social media posts written about how churches are dying and pastors are leaving and people are upset and no one goes to church anymore and so on. These posts are hard to read, and I wonder - is this a sign that we are feeling unmoored? That we are searching for something? Or maybe it is simply being lost.

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus tells two parables – one about a lost sheep and one about a lost coin (Luke 15:1-10). You probably remember these parables – the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine in search of the one. The woman turns over her entire house for the one coin that is missing from her purse. I think that traditionally we hear these parables as Jesus searching for the one who needs to hear the good news of Jesus for the very first time. But I think that is a misreading. The lost lamb was a part of the shepherd's flock. The lost coin was in the woman's purse. This story is for insiders. For those who know and yet have gotten lost.

This lostness might be of one's own volition. The sheep wanders from the prescribed pasture. But it can also be something that just happens. A coin cannot, on its own, get lost. We have all experienced the disruption of the pandemic, the cracks in our government, the warming of our climate causing suffering and death, and so much more. We notice changes in our churches and in our families and in our communities. Many of us have experienced personal troubles and tragedies. These all can lead to a sense of feeling adrift. And it can lead to fractures in our church community and our faith life.

However, the circumstance comes about – because of one's own actions or because of something that descends upon us – lostness occurs. And even when we know God's love and grace and comfort, even when we know that community is important, even when we are already part of God's community and church, we can still feel unmoored, lose our sense of belonging, our capacity to trust. We can get so lost that we don't know who we are or whose we are or where we belong anymore.

I don't know where you are at as you read this article today. Perhaps you are feeling snug with the other ninety-nine in the sheepfold of God. Perhaps you are a coin cozy with the other nine coins. But perhaps you are not. Perhaps you, too, are wondering and wandering. Perhaps you, too, are feeling disconnected from friends or family or your church community. Perhaps you, too, are wandering in Concourse C wondering how in the world you get to Concourse A. Perhaps you, too, are a sheep bleating for help or a coin under the couch cushions.

If this is you, the good news is that God is a searcher and a finder. The amazing news is that God is the shepherd hiking into the wilderness looking for you. The astounding news is that God is the housewife lighting her lamp and sweeping every corner in the house to find you. You are worth looking for. You are loved and desired. And when God finds you, there is rejoicing and laughter and a party! As Dan Erlander writes, "Love is God's action to bring us into abundant life – reconciled to God, to each other, and all creation!"

If you are feeling unmoored, lost, alone, adrift, I encourage you to first join in your community at your church and second, to join in the offerings in the wider synod. We are church together. We are journeying together. We get lost, and we get found, together.

Together we sing, "We once were lost but now we're found."

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee / [bishop@lutheransnw.org](mailto:bishop@lutheransnw.org)



## Celebrating the Generosity of Grace!

by Tessa Krippaehne

Two years ago, after the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan and the fall of Kabul, I was sent an Instagram post about the need for Refugee Sponsors. I could never have imagined the trajectory that one post would send my life on. With the spirit of service alive at Grace, a dedicated group of 36 volunteers formed and agreed to sponsor a refugee family from Afghanistan. We spent the next year waiting for the call to let us know that we had been placed with a family. Bureaucracy and the lingering effects of the pandemic delayed refugee resettlement as thousands of refugees from Afghanistan with Special Immigrant Visas (given to those in Afghanistan who worked with the US Military) sat in refugee camps around the world awaiting their promised new life in the United States. In September 2022 we finally received that call. We were being placed with a family of 11, the Mashwani family, who had spent the past year in a refugee camp in Qatar and were eager to begin their new life in the United States.

Our time in sponsorship has been a whirlwind for our team of volunteers. It seems that every day brought both a new challenge and a new opportunity. We accompanied them to 108 doctor/dentist appointments, multiple parent/teacher conferences, advocated for them at legal aid appointments, helped them fill out many applications for services, as well as job applications, and have enjoyed countless meals together. Through the incredible generosity of Grace, we furnished their whole apartment, were able to help them with rent until they could secure stable employment, and we gifted them with two vehicles to solidify their independence. We celebrate the generosity of Grace that has continued to allow us to help them as needed.

The work we have done and the impact it has made is a testament to the mission and vision God is calling us to at Grace. As we pass the year mark of our sponsorship journey, we are more inspired than ever to continue our refugee resettlement work. I can't imagine any refugee family having to come to this country without an incredible support system behind them. It is because of Grace and so many servant hearts that we get to witness this family fully settling into a new life in a new country they now call home. I am confident that this life-changing experience has fully equipped us to welcome another refugee family in the coming year. I know our friendship with the Mashwani family won't end here, but the purpose of our visits will change as the family transitions into full independence. No longer spending our time in dentist waiting rooms, we will be there for holidays, graduations, citizenship ceremonies, weddings, and of course babies (baby boy Mashwani, is due December 6!). This is lasting accompaniment!



Van gifted to Sharif,  
father of our Afghan family



How has God impacted  
your life through  
Grace Lutheran  
Church?

Grace has always been the anchor keeping me in safe harbor and centered when the weather was calm and the anchor I could pull hard against when the storms came. I find God here over and over again.



## grace in ACTION Service Projects

by Al Vraspir

We completed quite a few projects in 2023, many of them during our “grace in ACTION” day in September. The following is a summary of our projects.

Wheelchair Ramp – We completed a large wheelchair ramp for a lady in Des Moines that had recently changed from a manual wheelchair to a motorized wheelchair and could no longer get out of her home. She needed safe access to the home and up to the street for public transportation. Below is a photo:



For “grace in ACTION” day in September, plus many days following that we did a variety of projects on 10 homes in Parkwood Lane, an over 55 community. We also did a very large yard cleanup in north Des Moines and painted the exterior of Grace Children’s Center.

The following photos show some of the highlights:



Added railing to existing ramp that was constructed without railings. Very dangerous!



Improved access with deck modification and railing



Major yard cleanup north Des Moines

Another project completed this fall was minor repairs in the bathroom for a member of GLC plus replacement of a dryer that was not functional.

There were many members of the congregation that participated in these projects. This will continue in the future, including additional projects in the over 55 community.



How has God impacted your life through Grace Lutheran Church?

He has taught me how to be a working part of the Body of Christ.



## grace in ACTION Sunday - September 17, 2023





## El Salvador Mission Support

by Valerie Constantino

### Meet our Grace sponsored student: Julissa Mina Olmedo

Julissa was a 4-year-old the first time members from Grace met her. She is the granddaughter of Maria Trinidad....or Mama Trini to those who she has carefully taken care of.

Julissa's family are all refugees from the war. Julissa, her siblings and cousins are the first generation to finish school and the first generation to go to college. Previous generations of family had their lives interrupted by war. There are high hopes in this new generation.

Julissa wants to be a dental assistant. While in El Salvador August 2023, the team witnessed Julissa's commitment to her future profession and to those who struggle financially. Julissa, with no urging from anyone on our team, just showed up to our rural dental clinic and was ready to do whatever was needed. She continued to show up the rest of the week to every clinic we held.

I have no doubt that this smart, talented young woman will make an excellent dental assistant. With the help of Grace Lutheran Church, and through the Lutheran Youth Impact El Salvador program, we are now all sponsors of this student. We all play a financial role in getting her through two years of college at only \$1,500.00 per year. Through our Grace Ministry Fund, with funds going into various outreach programs, this sponsorship is possible. THANK YOU.

If you want to meet Julissa, and her family, come to El Salvador in August 2024. Or, if you want to sponsor your very own student, contact Valerie Constantino at [valerie.constantino@gmail.com](mailto:valerie.constantino@gmail.com) or go online and pick a student for yourself - [lutheranyouthimpactelsalvador.org](http://lutheranyouthimpactelsalvador.org). All of these students have been handpicked, by Pastor Matias, for being good students in high school, good community members and young leaders in their churches.

Its exciting to witness this shy 4-year-old blossom into a woman who will also help change her own country.



Julissa at age 4



Julissa last summer  
second from the right.



# Hope Rising for India News

by Pastor Chad Johnson

Autumn greetings to you from Titus and the Board of Hope Rising for India!

We recently held a Board meeting in which the celebrations of impact were many. It brought joy to our hearts as we continue to be amazed over the transformed lives in this day-to-day work of Hope Rising. The grassroots equipping and empowerment of this organization is tremendous and you are making that possible!

An organization called Hope for Today recognized the local impact of Titus and team and decided to generously partner together with a gift of 12k for a new Soy Bean machine. This will allow for soy-milk production for all of the health and nutrition programs that we are leading. Hope for Today is providing the machine, training the operators and paying the salaries, and providing the raw beans. Hope Rising for India will pay for the electric and host the daily program. A win-win for those most in need.

A local pastor in the neighboring areas outside of Nellore approached Pastor Titus for a new church partnership. This means we will be rehabbing and dedicating three new church locations which brings our outreach locations to sixteen. Another wonderful multiplication of hope and grace amongst the people. With sixteen churches in partnership, new song books and worship resources are being created for each location. Monthly gatherings and trainings among the pastors network continues to provide great blessings.

Local government officials recently recognized the work of Hope Rising and gave a community service award for the outstanding care and compassion that we are displaying through our programs. These inroads of partnership for the most vulnerable in society take



time and trust to develop, and with each passing month those pathways are being enlarged. Our hope is that through acts of deepening generosity that we can expand our health, food, and education programs to orphan needs and single parent homes.

Titus and team are also working to create a new website for their local India context. As the word spreads of this transformational work, it will be another added equipping and teaching tool that is most needed.

Looking ahead to February 2024, we are hopeful to host Titus in a multi-state tour stop. True accompaniment of walking hand in hand together is our strength. Be praying for that added blessing and be stirring about the possibility of a transformational travel trip to India in November of 2024. More details to come in the coming months.

As you make plans for year-end giving, please go to our [Giving Page | Hope Rising for India \(hoperisingforindia.org\)](https://givingpage.hoperisingforindia.org) or use the QR code provided.

Thank you for your generosity and for your partnership that truly is changing lives, one person at a time!

Pastor Chad Johnson on behalf of Hope Rising for India Board



## ELCA World Hunger & Lutheran World Relief

by Laura Woods

**Grace Lutheran Church partners with both ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran World Relief to support programs working to end food insecurity and disaster relief across the globe.**

### ELCA World Hunger

ELCA describes the current level of food insecurity and the ELCA World Hunger response below:

More than 820 million people - that's about 11 percent of people in our world today - are hungry.

As members of the ELCA, we are called to respond. We are a church that rolls up our sleeves and gets to work.

Working with and through our congregations, in the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands Lutheran churches overseas and other partners, **ELCA World Hunger** is uniquely positioned to reach communities in need. From health clinics to microloans, water wells to animal husbandry, community meals to advocacy, your gifts to ELCA World Hunger make it possible for the ELCA to respond, supporting sustainable solutions that get at the root causes of hunger and poverty.

### Hunger facts

- 821 million people around the world - that's more than 1 in 10 - can't access the food they need to live active, healthy lives. [1]
- According to the most recent estimates, 736 million people live in extreme poverty on less than \$1.90 per day. That's 10% of the world's population. [2]
- At some point in 2017 (the most recent year available), more than 40 million people in the United States were unsure where their next meal might come from. [3]
- 39.7 million Americans were living in poverty in 2017. For a family of four, this means their annual household income was below \$25,094. [4]

[1] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2018

[2] The World Bank, 2018

[3] USDA, 2018

[4] US Census Bureau, 2018

Ana lived with her husband and four children in a safe, secure village in Sinjar, a town in northern Iraq. But then an ISIS attack changed everything. Ana lost several family members in the attack, including her father, mother, brother and sister. Trying to figure out what might be next for their family, Ana and her

husband survived tough conditions, without food or water, before moving into a temporary camp. Eventually they returned to Sinjar, but it had been destroyed. The ISIS attack traumatized Ana. Overwhelmed and unsure where to turn, she decided to seek medical treatment. When her friends and neighbors heard about her situation, they recommended that she visit a women's center in Sinjar for support. The women's center is part of a larger project, supported by ELCA World Hunger, that empowers women and youth from marginalized communities to claim their fundamental rights in Iraq. The project builds on relationships that ELCA World Hunger has established through prior work with local communities supported by ELCA World Hunger in Sinjar and Sumel, and works with local neighbors to build sustainable livelihoods. "I visited the center and explained my situation to the staff, who were very helpful and kind," Ana said. The staff recommended that she participate in individual and group sessions aimed at supporting people such as Ana as they struggle to cope with traumatic experiences in their everyday lives. "During my participation in those sessions, I realized I was not alone and that many other women were facing similar struggles," said Ana. "We were able to openly discuss our problems with each other and learn from each other. These sessions really increased our awareness and helped us manage and overcome our problems and stress, allowing us to feel positive and alive again." With the center's support, Ana and other women facing similar challenges are better equipped to cope with the stress of rebuilding their lives after such significant loss. Such support is critical in equipping neighbors to overcome the poverty and hunger that often result from violence and vulnerability. With the support of ELCA World Hunger, Ana can envision and begin to claim a hopeful future for herself and her family.

**Lutheran World Relief both manages projects and partners with other relief agencies to maximize impact. The story below illustrates a partnership project in Ukraine.**

### Corus launches project to support agricultural livelihood recovery in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Corus International has been awarded a \$1 million grant from the Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP) to support agricultural livelihood recovery in Ukraine. In partnership with local agricultural service organizations, Corus is helping Ukrainian smallholder farmers restore production and prepare for next year's winter months.

The year-long project is centered in Kharkiv Oblast, one of the first provinces targeted by the Russian offensive and where Ukrainian forces have reclaimed thousands of square kilometers of territory.



## ELCA World Hunger & Lutheran World Relief, continued

Launched on May 1, 2023, to align with the planting season, the **Agricultural Livelihoods Recovery for Food Security in Ukraine** project will reach more than 6,000 smallholders and their families, including returnees, residents that remained in Kharkiv, and families who fled their homes and now reside in Kharkiv.

“This program is critical because a year of war has decimated Ukraine’s agricultural sector and, with it, the livelihoods of people working in the country’s rural economy,” says Corus President and CEO Daniel Speckhard. “More than a third of smallholder farmers are no longer producing crops and nearly half of Kharkiv’s rural population has reported a drop in income. By working directly with local organizations, we can support families as they revive agricultural production, and we can help to reestablish capacities of agricultural advisory services that were disrupted by the war.”

Support includes both material and technical resources to restore or establish small farms. Participants in the project are receiving inputs depending upon their needs, like vegetable seeds, fertilizer, gardening tools, processing equipment, canning kits and pickling containers, chicks, chicken coops and feeders. Local agriculture advisors are providing training in small-scale, climate sensitive farming practices, that can include planting, composting and harvesting, and winterization preparedness, which involves drying, packaging and storing crops.

“The biggest and most consistent mistake the humanitarian community makes is waiting for a crisis to be over before thinking about recovery. At CDP, we know that recovery can start anytime, and as early as possible is best,” says Alex Gray, Director of International Funds at CDP. “Corus was our only partner willing to invest early on in prioritizing the research and engaging in the detailed discussions needed to determine how best to support recovery of the agriculture sector and when.”

Additionally, internally displaced people living in group shelters in Kharkiv are receiving support to start kitchen, or backyard, gar-

dens. The food they grow will provide them with a more sustainable food supply and a diversified income stream to defray their cost of living as they await permanent resettlement.

The project is part of Corus International’s large-scale response in Ukraine, which also includes emergency shelter, health care, material resource distribution, protection and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention services and technical assistance for cash transfer programs.

For more information, please contact Muhammad Tahir, Sr. Media Relations Manager, Corus International, [mtahir@corusinternational.org](mailto:mtahir@corusinternational.org).

*Corus International unites an array of nonprofit organizations and businesses, each with specialized expertise. Alongside communities and local partners in fragile settings, our expert teams integrate disciplines, approaches and resources to overcome poverty and suffering for those living in the world’s toughest and most difficult circumstances. Our traditional and nontraditional approaches bring together the multi-dimensional, holistic solutions needed to truly achieve lasting change. Corus features global public health leader IMA World Health, international development and aid organization Lutheran World Relief, technology for development consultancy CGA Technologies, impact investing firm Ground Up Investing, and direct-trade company Farmers Market Brands.*

*The Center for Disaster Philanthropy mobilizes philanthropy to strengthen communities’ ability to withstand disasters and recover equitably when they occur. It provides expert advice and resources while managing domestic and international disaster funds on behalf of corporations, foundations and individuals through targeted, holistic and localized grantmaking. Find out more at [disasterphilanthropy.org](http://disasterphilanthropy.org) and on Twitter @funds4disaster.*



### How has God impacted your life through Grace Lutheran Church?

GLC has brought me back to regular church service for more than just a few months. I have found connection and meaningful activity here including the choir, FMT and just seeing familiar faces every week that wave/smile back. Some even stop me and strike up conversation. Not an easy thing for an introvert like myself. I think most importantly this connection here manifests in my life outside of church. My walk with Jesus is more steady than it’s ever been. Love one another is taught here and not for just those who think like us. Supporting the Afghan family was very enlightening. There is more...

## Lutheran World Relief Quilts & Kits

by Janet Labes



The Grace LWR Quilting group has been meeting weekly on Thursdays to make quilts to share with our neighbors around the world. We have an average attendance of 10 to 12 people, and nearly 25 on our list. We always welcome more to our group, and we can find things for you to do, even if you do not sew. Join us in the Fellowship Hall from 9:00 am to about noon.

On November 2, 106 quilts were packed for the Seattle area collection to be sent to the LWR warehouse in Baltimore, MD. Our total quilts for the 2023 year is 207, meeting our goal of at least 200. The grand total of quilts from Grace Lutheran Church since 1968 is now 11,320 quilts.

We were able to send 197 School Kits which were packed by about 25 people as one of the grace in ACTION Day projects in September. This was the first time we provided very needed kits for LWR since 2019. Thanks to all the members who contributed supplies and money to purchase more for the contents of the kits. A Thrivent Action Team project provided an additional \$250 to purchase supplies. The dollars went further with careful shopping at Back to School sales.

Another LWR project is Fabric Kits which are used for teaching women to sew, help provide clothing for their families, and garments to sell as a source of income. This is the first time we have done this project and sent 13 kits this year. They contain two pieces of cotton fabric, three yards each and two spools of thread. Large pieces of fabric which have been donated allowed this.

We can use Thrivent Action Team service projects that provide \$250 to help us purchase batting for quilt fillers. We have done five of those this year. If you have a Thrivent Financial Product you could help us by applying for a project.

The Quilters have been gifted with a very large donation of fabric for quilts and we are in the process of sorting what we can use and reorganizing our quilting closets.

If you can't meet with us, but would like to do some sewing at home, we have fabrics to share, and packages of quilt squares cut to make a quilt top.

Any questions about LWR quilting and LWR projects? Contact Janet Labes at 206.870.4226.



How has God impacted  
your life through Grace  
Lutheran Church?

We have connected with other families to form close friendships, church cousins for our kids, a place for us to serve and a beautiful church home with great worship.



How has God impacted  
your life through Grace  
Lutheran Church?

Family, friends, network of support, opportunities to give, opportunities to stretch, way to connect and create community, home, sense of peace and belonging.



How has God impacted  
your life through Grace  
Lutheran Church?

Immeasurably. There isn't a part of me or a thing I achieved that isn't because of Grace, because of God working through Grace to lead me and mold me into who I am today.



## KidReach Tutoring

by Amy Sylvester

KidREACH Tutoring is back at Grace and we are so excited to share that we are currently working with four students in the community. Our wonderful volunteer tutors are helping students with reading and math, and perhaps most importantly, helping the students gain confidence in their abilities. We may only meet once a week for one hour (Thursday, 6:30 - 7:30 pm), but magic is happening! We would love to grow the program and welcome more students, but to do that, we need more tutors. If you are interested in tutoring a student, please reach out to Amy Sylvester for more information ([amysdahlias@aol.com](mailto:amysdahlias@aol.com), 206.979.1665).

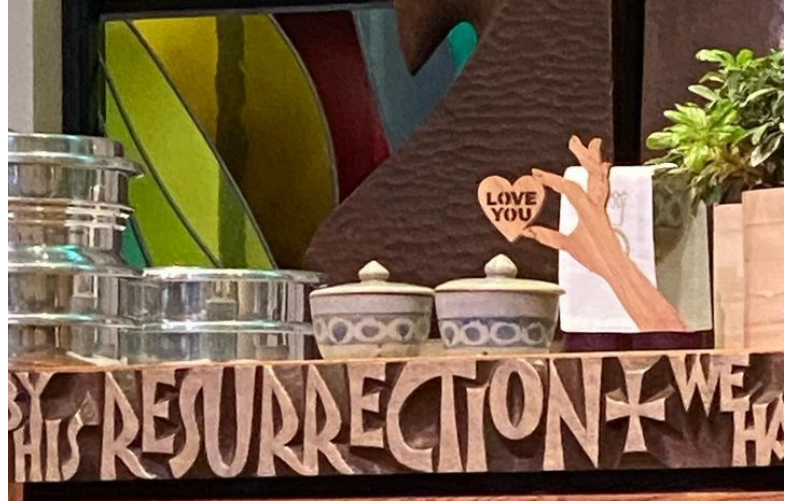


## Altar Guild

by Sandra Bollinger and Judy Martinson, Co-Directors

One hundred-seven, 107, CVII; remember this number. The Grace Lutheran Altar Guild is a dedicated group of volunteers who coordinate with the pastors to support communion at weekly services, baptisms, and special services. This group has been delighted to fill more trays of wine and wafers as the numbers of communicants grow. In fact, during 2023, the Grace Lutheran Altar Guild provided Holy Communion for 107 services!

This year, long-term members Audrey Wheeler and Ruth Wix stepped down from Altar Guild; we so appreciate their years of faithful service. We have also been fortunate to welcome Julie Johnson and Michelle Johnson as new Altar Guild members. With 107 communion services to support each year, we would certainly welcome additional new members. If you might feel called to serve as a member of this dedicated group, please contact Judy Martinson: 253.219.6320, [jmartinson249@comcast.net](mailto:jmartinson249@comcast.net).



### 2023 Altar Guild active members:

Ingrid Bentzen, Sandy Bollinger, Karlene Chavez, Marcia Heath, Cherie Hunter, Julie Johnson, Michelle Johnson, Susan Johnson, Jeanette Jones, Judy Martinson, Sheila Morrison, Colleen Powers, and Janna Robbins.

## Grace Prayer Support

by Harriet Thomsen and Carol Ervin

### Some of the quotes on prayer by Martin Luther:

- ◇ Prayer is a strong wall and fortress of the church; it is a goodly Christian weapon.
- ◇ To pray well is the better half of study.
- ◇ The less I pray, the harder it gets; the more I pray, the better it goes.
- ◇ No one can believe how powerful prayer is and what it can effect, except those who have learned it by experience.
- ◇ God sometimes delays, but He always comes.



GPS (Global Positioning System) A way to find the best route to reach a destination no matter what obstacles may be there. What a perfect name for our in-depth prayer group named **GPS or Grace Prayer Support**. We pray for the people and events near and far that are influenced by our church. Everyone who has a prayer concern or need globally is part of our scope. We always start with the Bible seeking wisdom and comfort for our session and end with our Lord's Prayer.

Grace Prayer Support meets September through May on the second Sunday of the month over Zoom 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm. If you have any questions or a prayer request, please contact Diane Nelson at [diane@gotgrace.com](mailto:diane@gotgrace.com) or Carol Ervin at [cjervin@comcast.net](mailto:cjervin@comcast.net)

Meeting ID: 827 8479 2743

Passcode: GPS

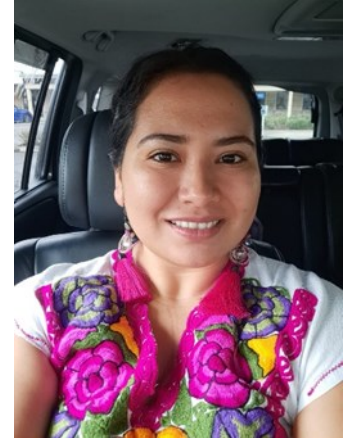


## Introducing Grace Children Center's New Co-Director

by Yunuen Cardenas, Co-Director

Hello dear families,

With great pleasure, I write this letter as the newly appointed Co-Director here at Grace Children's Center. My name is Yunuen Cardenas-Garcia. I was born in a beautiful fishing town in the Mexican Pacific in southern Mexico. I came to the United States at the age of 16 and since then Seattle has become my home, where along with my husband, we are raising our three beautiful children: 14, 11 and 4 years old. Together we enjoy spending time outdoors playing sports, camping, and swimming. When I was in high school, the Lord planted a seed in my heart and called me to serve him working with young kids. In 2018, I started my career as a toddler teacher in a bilingual center. Since then, I have been fortunate enough to have continued working with families and children of different backgrounds, as well as fellow teachers, advocating for children's rights and positive education. I am currently a student at North Seattle College, where I study Early Childhood Education, on my way to earn my Associate Degree as part of my professional growth. I am honored and overjoyed to be welcomed to this beautiful center, where I can continue to fulfill my calling with the children, teachers, and parents.



Along with all of you, I will work hard to continue the legacy of success established here at Grace Children's Center. I look forward to getting to know all the parents, students and teachers and building solid relationships. During the year, I hope we will work together to provide opportunities that will prepare the children for the world and the challenges ahead. As Co-Director my door will always be open to discuss your concerns, suggestions, or ideas to make the children's education the best it can be.

I would like to thank the Grace Ministry Team for granting me this incredible opportunity to serve our Lord Jesus together and I look forward to meeting you all soon.



### How has God impacted your life through Grace Lutheran Church?

Work in Haiti—building church pews for those in need. Work at the orphanage in Mexico; kiddos. Singing in Grace Choir for 56 years. Meeting many new people and making life long friends and so much more. Feeding the homeless at our early morning breakfast feasts. Cooking in Grace Kitchen.



### How has God impacted your life through Grace Lutheran Church?

- ☐ Joyful fellowship with other believers
- ☐ Cultural trips and diversity to open my point of view.
- ☐ Serving with others



### MANY THANKS TO...

Mary and Leslie Franz for cleaning our pews each Wednesday morning!

Rosemary O'Dell & Sandra Bollinger for your countless hours of service in Grace's kitchen!

There are many ways to volunteer at Grace. Please contact the church office if you are available to help tidy up the pews or help in the kitchen for memorials and special events.



## Young Adults at Grace

by Pastor Rachel Swenson

Our Young Adult group has been up and active this fall! Along with the whole church, we worked through the Adult Faith Formation materials of Rooted and Rising and shared together in all the ways God is calling us to invest in Christ-centered community here at Grace. We joined together in the seasonal fun of Carpinito Brothers, where no less than 10 pumpkins were purchased (yes, that's more pumpkins than people), the corn maze was conquered, and many puddles splashed in. Friendsgiving comes to us in November and December holds the promise of our very own Christmas party! With Friendsgiving on November 22, the Christmas Party on December 27, and Faith Formation every Sunday, our Young Adult group is a great place to grow in faith and make new friends. Come join in on the fun!



Not to be missed – on Sunday, November 26, during Faith Formation hour (9:45-10:45am) we'll have a guest speaker, Gabrielle Irle (they/she), who comes to us from ELCA Churchwide. Gabrielle has recently returned from serving through Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) and brings a great word about how Young Adults are active and leading throughout the church. Come join us and learn a little more from Gabrielle how we all are connected to the broader church!

Keep an eye out on our Facebook page for all updates on coming events – Young Adults @ Grace, <https://shorturl.at/ixyQX>. And if you'd like to be added to the group's What's App group, let Pr. Rachel or Shelby Chatterton know!

## It's a Small World – and the Lutheran World Even Smaller

by Pastor Rachel Swenson

At the beginning of November, Grace hosted the executive team of the Association of Asian and Pacific Islanders, an association within the ELCA focused on lifting up the expression of Christian faith from an Asian Pacific Islander perspective. The team was gathering to discuss vision, action, and all things that executive teams so often meet in boardrooms to discuss. In their generosity and want to be in relationship together, they invited our staff to join them for lunch. Free food is so hard to refuse, and a warm welcome accompanied by delicious Indian food even more so, so we jumped in and joined them. While eating, one of those gathered approached me and asked, "Excuse me, but I heard you grew up in Alaska. Is your dad a doctor and does your mom work a lot with the church?" Confused, with a bite of naan hanging from my hand, I replied that you could indeed describe both my parents that way, and he enthusiastically replied, "I knew it! I knew I recognized you!" Confused and then elated, I stood transfixed as Pastor Bimen Limbong recounted to me that we were not meeting for the first time, but in fact reuniting for the first time since 1995. That year, he had traveled to Nome, Alaska for Spring Conference, an annual gathering of Lutherans from all over the Seward Peninsula. Members of the local Lutheran church had offered their homes for visitors and Pr. Bimen regaled us with the story of a little, blonde 5-year-old who enthusiastically told him, "We're going to be best friends!"



"That was you! My little girl is all grown up!" Many hugs later, exchange of business cards ("My little girl has business cards!"), and texts home to my folks, we realized that in the time since we last saw each other, we've both become pastors and, obviously, moved out of Alaska. And yet, we found each other again, almost 20 years later, in Des Moines, WA. It is true, that it is at times a wonderfully small world. And the Lutheran world even more – delightfully so. Church, it is amazing what the Spirit is up to, here amongst us!

Pr. Bimen serves Christ Lutheran Church in Louisville, Kentucky, but even with the distance, I've been reminded of my promise that I made as a 5-year old – and less likely to be let off the hook now.



## Employee Spotlight - Colin Togher



### ***What do you like most about your job?***

My favorite thing about my job is getting to use technology and learn useful skills, like editing and sound recording.

### ***How have you grown in your position since you started?***

Over the past two years, I have gained a more comprehensive knowledge of what the church needs from me and the different ways that our community can reach people.

### ***You are a very important part of our worship services, what motivates you to do this work? Do you have a technical background?***

I don't have a technical background, but I have a passing interest in technology. My background is in arts, and so one of the things that motivates me is getting to see what a finished product or project looks like.

### ***Does sitting in the balcony, somewhat anonymously, make this a thankless job, or do you hear often how much people appreciate your work?***

I wouldn't say being a media tech is an entirely thankless job. I get to work closely with the pastors and talented musicians, and when I do

get the chance to work closely with people, I tend to hear from them more often. I think the anonymity of this job can make technicians difficult to approach, and getting to work closely with individuals in the community is a good way to mitigate that.

### ***What do you enjoy doing outside of work ... as in what are your hobbies and interests?***

In my free time, I like to write stories for my friends, and I enjoy drawing the characters from those stories. I also spend a lot of time on the phone with my buddies playing videogames and talking.

### ***Who's someone you really admire?***

I admire Pastor Salvador, because he's knowledgeable, quick-witted and has good taste. I like talking to him about food, theology, and videogames.

### ***What is something that always makes you smile?***

Hearing the choir sing on Sundays always makes me smile.

### ***What are you most thankful for?***

I think I am most thankful for a small group of close friends.

### ***How did you first come to Grace and what keeps you coming back?***

I have been coming to Grace ever since I was 3 or 4 years old. I keep coming here because I like hearing what the pastors have to say about theology and how it relates to the world.

### ***Have a favorite childhood/youth memory as a member of Grace?***

My favorite childhood memory at Grace is Pastor Ed trying to skip campers like stones across the surface of the lake at Camp Lutherhaven.

### ***How do you see God at work in our worship life together?***

I see God working through people in this community every day. The generosity of the people at Grace Lutheran Church really makes a difference in our local and global community.



How has God impacted your life through Grace Lutheran Church?

Grace provides a loving community around our family.



Another beautiful wedding at Grace... introducing Tony and Irina Busse

## Update from Pastor Salvador Cossio

by Pastor Salvador Cossio

It is with great pleasure that I thank all the congregation for sharing the love of our Lord with 30 families that will now be able to have a nice Thanksgiving dinner thanks to the generosity of Grace. This is the third year that GLC has shared kindness and love in this special way. Grace's youth group and I thank you!



Last October, I started my second year at Pacific Lutheran Theology Seminary. I had Pauline Epistles and Lutheran confessions and Theology; this is a great journey. The learning process is great with the different context of all the students that enrich our comprehension of the Love of God through the Lutheran Vision. Next January, I will continue the in-person classes and can't wait to share with all of you how this process is stretching me.

Thank you for being part of this process. I feel really blessed to be representing Grace at Pacific Lutheran Theology Seminary.



**November 19, 2023 - This is a special date because we are starting our Spanish Bible Study.** We are full of joy because we are starting to study the scriptures fully in Spanish. Everyone is welcome to join us. We are meeting in the Adult Learning Center at 1:00 pm. Please keep us in your prayers, so we can be a safe and loving worship church for everyone that is interested in joining us.

## Faith and Everyday Life

by staff members of Lutheran Counseling Network

**Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. (Psalm 42:11)**



This verse describes a state of depression: Cast down, disquieted within. The depressed person looks down, not up; his inner emotional state is disturbed, sad, and hopeless. In depression, there is a kind of giving up on life, of learned helplessness. Like other psalms, this passage is one that demonstrates the intersection of good psychology and good theology. We use the principles and strategies of psychology and medicine to treat depression. Sometimes we see relief of symptoms through cognitive therapy, grief and loss therapy, problem-solving or healing of a relationship. Then there is positive psychology—what one writer has coined “learned optimism.” It is revealed in the statement, “I shall again praise him, my help and my God.” Good psychology, good theology!

**May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)**



Apprehensions and anxiety can rob us of joy and peace in life. We can't relax and enjoy the present. Instead we worry about the future, caught up in anticipating every conceivable consequence, large and small. We miss the good moments of our life as we fret over a future we can't control. God invites us to lay down our worries and burdens. God wants to carry them for us. The hard part can be letting them go. But when we can trust God enough to lay down our worries – by writing them in a journal or imagining them as clouds floating across the sky – God is more than able to carry them, and us. When we release our worries to God, we find peace and joy in the present moment. We notice a bird watching us from a telephone line. We see a sunset that fills the sky with color. We feel the touch of a loved one's hand. We live our moments to the fullest, trusting in God, who fills us with joy and peace.



## Annual Confirmation Class Cruise



## Acolyting

Our Youth Group meets every Wednesday at 7:30 pm for WOW and every other Wednesday for high school Devos at 6:30 pm. If you are interested in serving and investing in the lives of the kiddos, please talk to Pastor Salvador. Investing time and resources is a great way to share God's love for them. Being present in the lives of our youth means a lot to them and for our world.



## Backpack Blessings

**Afterschool Program** Grace is a safe space for the middle schoolers that want to wait for their parents or the bus in our Fireside Room. Marlene Mathison and Haley Mellinger are hosting this great space. They welcome the kiddos with a big smile when they get in to our Fireside Room. If you see them please say hello and share some kind words for sharing the love of God and representing GLC.



## Summer Camp







## Youth Band led worship on All Saints Sunday



Guest Preacher,  
Pastor Kristen Capel



Advance  
Commitment Night



## Contemporary Music & Handbell Ministries

by Dean Krippaehne, Contemporary Music Director

As I am writing this, we are about to move into the Advent season followed by Christmas here at Grace. I love these seasons and this time of year. A time of reflecting upon the coming of our Savior, preparing all those great Christmas songs, and of course, the swelling of our hearts as we relive the birth of Jesus through His story on Christmas Eve.



We are truly blessed here in this congregation, in this community, and by our Lord - in all seasons. This last year has brought about numerous opportunities to share, participate, and worship together for which I am eternally grateful.

When I think about the last ten months or so, I remember the warm intimacy of our Lenten gatherings, the long rehearsals and combining of our musical groups for the performance of "The Song of Mark." I recall the servitude lesson of Maundy Thursday, the darkness of Good Friday, and, of course, the brilliance of Easter morning rising.

I can still feel the heat of summer as our Gospel Band continued to rehearse, learn new songs, and lead worship each Sunday morning. And as we moved into the fall season, I felt a new sense of hope and a new beginning with our Rooted and Rising series.

There is so much to be thankful for here in our active community, but for me, what always rises to the top - is the people. The people, the relationships, the service opportunities, the kids singing their hearts out, my friends in our Gospel Band team, all the staff and volunteers, and, of course, the pastors bringing the words of Jesus to our ears in such a way that they come alive - growing our hearts.

I don't know what the new year will bring, but I am certain that if we remain true to Jesus, it will bring a thousand songs of joy, peace, and an overflowing love to all we reach and touch. I look forward to being surprised as God's plan unfolds in us and through us.

Thank you, people of Grace, for letting me, and our worship team, continue to be a part of your family in Christ. Being immersed in this ever-flowing, ever-changing mystery is, indeed, the greatest gift of all.

by Brian Tervo, - Handbell Director

This past year, the handbell choirs have been blessed with the opportunity to collaborate more frequently with other musical groups in our congregation. On Palm Sunday, we participated in the "Song of Mark" and this fall, we have been included in many choral anthems and hymn accompaniment. We look forward to continuing this effort in 2024 and beyond.

Resounding Grace, our adult handbell continues to thrive and grow musically with 14 participants attending rehearsal regularly. We are down in numbers in our children and youth handbell choirs and are hopeful that the Rooted and Rising initiative as well as other ministries starting up post-Covid will increase the number of families with children in our congregation, and ultimately participation in the handbell program. This summer, the Jubilant Ringers are planning their first trip since prior to the pandemic, attending Distinctly Teen in Hartford, Connecticut.



Congregation of Grace - Thank you for your continued support of the handbell program. It is a privilege for us to share our music with you.



How has God impacted your life through Grace Lutheran Church?

Brought us together with new friends, (family in Christ). Experience wonderful music—handbells, Gospel Band. The enjoyment of experiencing mission to others (SMT) and serving in the church needs. Prayers in the time of need (illness & injury) Extended "family" to help with bringing up children in the church.

## Music Ministry - Grace Choir



### Introducing Our New Organ...

Join us for a "Meet and Greet" on February 11 during the Faith Formation hour at 9:45 am

Amy Boers will introduce the brand new instrument and give a short recital to highlight what it is capable of.



How has God impacted your life through Grace Lutheran Church?

I felt God calling/moving my heart to come here. As a musician, I always thought I would have a church choir later in life, during retirement. But this was a call, not a gig. God has given me a heart for service and ministry that keeps growing through my time here at Grace. To be corny about R & R – my faith life has grown and been restored, and the branches are continued ideas and expansion of my work and ministry at Grace.



How has God impacted your life through Grace Lutheran Church?

Through Grace, we have had a "home" and great friends. We have learned to serve God, sing His praises, and feel that God has worked in our lives in so many ways.

## VINTAGE BAND

The horn section...a few of the Vintage Band members lead by conductor, John Welsh. Thank you for a wonderful concert on November 4!



## A Brief Look Back on 2023 in Children and Junior High Ministries

by Pastor Rachel Swenson

While 2022 may have seen the return of many of our Children's ministries, 2023 saw them grow and even more return! Our communion class grew, hosting 11 kids and four parents as we shared together the story of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday. Our Egg Hunt served over 120 kids and their families! In VBS this year we learned through our theme of 'Operation Restoration' about how we are all a part of God's restoring of all of creation. We built birthday kits for at-risk youth in our community, sent thank you cards to first responders and veterinarians, talked about how we can be restorers of creation, and dreamed about what a restored world might look like. Our backpack blessing started off our school year with a bang, blessing over 30 kids and a handful of grown-ups. In October, we presented three new Bibles to our 3<sup>rd</sup> graders and one 4<sup>th</sup> grader who wasn't able to be present last year – big congrats to Olivia Baker, Cora Shackelford, and Shelby Tossey! Our Harvest Party celebrated fall time fun with 50 kids and their families. And our Good News Crew (GNC) gathered every Sunday to hear about God's word and to learn about the Spirit's activity amongst us. In the month of October, we shared together about what it means to be generous and how we live as generous disciples of Jesus. We participated in our Generosity Passport program, leading to over 100 moments of generosity lived out by our GNC disciples in October and the first part of November!



In Jr. High, we began our year with a fantastic boat retreat, building off of themes we talked about in Summer Camp on Vashon Island. This year we're learning about what it means to be Lutheran in 2023 and how we continue to live out the tenants of our faith that have been cornerstones of our global Lutheran community for so long. We gather every other Wednesday to talk about faith, doubt, successes, and struggles as we all continue to learn what it means to be a follower of Christ. And on Sunday mornings, we gather together to talk about life, school, and how faith plays a part in all aspects of our days.

Over all, it has been a year full of joy, excitement, and fun, with the very real understanding that we are in need of more servant leaders to make this all possible. Our vision for 2024 is to build team leadership into every ministry here at Grace, especially around the ministries that serve our youngest disciples. We all have a part to play in raising up our kids in Christ-like community. Every gift and every heart is so needed! If you're interested in spending time with our kiddos, learning way more from them than you may even think possible, if you're interested in being a part of building something wholesome and authentic and real as we all learn what it means to be Christ-followers, we'd love to have you be a part of what God is crafting in and amongst our youngest family members! Don't hesitate to reach out!

It is a joy and a blessing to be a part of the church family that gathers here at Grace. None of this, none of our work here together would be possible without so many amazing servant-leaders who call this place home and give of their lives to the work that God is doing here amongst us. Your commitment to the work of the Spirit, your hearts, your willingness to show up all truly matter. Thank you for being so wonderfully YOU!



How has God impacted your life through  
Grace Lutheran Church?

Blessed me through wonderful worship, outreach and relationships.







We had a great time at this year's Harvest Party and Trick or Treat Street! Hanging out with almost 50 kids and their grown-ups made for a wonderful day. Few tricks and many treats were had! A huge thank you to all who made it possible and who had fun with us on the day!





## Colaborate: Lutheran Confirmation

by Pastor Rachel Swenson



### *Our confirmands and adults leaders at this year's Confirmation Boat Retreat on Blake Island*

What does it mean to be a Lutheran in 2023? Why does Lutheran theology still matter? What does Lutheran theology have to say about my life or the world around us? All these questions and so many more are informing our time together in Confirmation this year. As we learn about the Law and Gospel, that we are justified through faith alone, and freedom of a Christian, we're also talking about how to live with doubt, what God is calling us all to be, and why any of this matters. Through our curriculum, *Colaborate*, a publication from Sparkhouse publishing, we're diving into our Bible and learning together what the Spirit has to teach us about what it means to be Lutheran in 2023. We started our theme off with a bang at Summer Camp this year, learning all about Luther's story - admittedly with added flair and silliness to go along with our Pirate Island theme. We remembered our baptisms on the beach during our annual boat retreat on Blake Island and played glow in the dark Frisbee. And we continue learning - about Luther, the printing press, the Reformation, and all things sinner and saint. Silliness and depth of conversation both abound whenever we get together!

Interested in joining in on our special brand of goofiness and relationship? Or wanting to talk through some of your own answers to the above questions? Contact Pr. Rachel!



How has God impacted your life through Grace Lutheran Church?

God has shown me through Jesus, how to try and love and serve all. I may fall short but I am encouraged to keep giving my best and this is brought out weekly as encouragement to us all.



How has God impacted your life through Grace Lutheran Church?

Pastors, friends, sermons, volunteer work, small groups, mission trips, community dinner, foodbank. God has been with me during good time and bad times. He has given me a beautiful family. Blessed to have the pastor call after my surgery. It is a second home or family.

# Jesus, Jews, and Palestinians

by a blogger at [saltproject.org](http://saltproject.org)



One of the most distinctive, mind-opening, life-changing aspects of Christianity is too often overlooked: the irreducibly “inter-religious,” cross-cultural character of the life Jesus calls his followers to live.

How so? Here’s “Exhibit A”: when Christians sit in a church and look at a crucifix, or admire a stained glass window of Jesus feeding the five thousand, or a painting of the Transfiguration up in a cathedral dome, we behold the faith’s founding figure, the person we seek to follow as Christians. That is, we Christians behold — a Jew.

Exhibit B: when Christians open the library of the Bible and read from its pages, for virtually every one of us, we read those words in translation: a cross-linguistic, cross-cultural recasting from the original text’s Hebrew or Greek. And in particular, when we read the words of Jesus, we’re reading a translation of a translation: first from Aramaic, the language Jesus likely spoke, into the ancient Greek of the New Testament, and then into modern English (or French, or Swahili, or whatever).

The Jewish Bible was originally written in the Hebrew in which many Jews still read it today; likewise for the Quran, originally written and now often read in Arabic. But when it comes to the Christian Bible generally, and the words of Jesus in particular, the message received is irreducibly, unavoidably translated from another language (or two). In that sense, it always arrives “from the outside.”

And what about those words of Jesus? What message does he deliver?

Well, that’s Exhibit C: As if to drive the larger point home, Jesus frequently engages in what today we’d call “cross-cultural” or “cross-religious” thinking and living, in ef-

fect dissolving the sectarian boundaries we use to justify our various forms of prejudice and self-congratulation. *Want to follow the Jewish law?* he asks. *Follow the example of this Samaritan* — a member of a group then considered adversaries by many of Jesus’ Jewish audience, including his own disciples in the chapter just before he delivers that famous parable (Luke 9). And please note: the point is not to convert the Samaritan, but rather to follow his lead.

Exhibit D: In the Gospel of Matthew, who first recognizes the baby Jesus for who he is? Not the nearby insiders, but rather three outsiders from afar, “Magi” from an entirely different culture and religion (perhaps Zoroastrians from Persia (present-day Iran)).

Exhibit E: And if that’s how the Gospels begin, in what “direction” do they and the letters of Paul finally point? Not inward to any specific sect, but rather outward to all people of all backgrounds and traditions, Jews as well as Gentiles (that is, everyone!).

In sum, Christians can only listen to Jesus by listening across cultures, across languages, across religions — and sure enough, what Jesus actually says and does encourages us to do exactly that, following the lead not so much of “Christians” (the disciples, after all, are typically inept!) but rather Zoroastrians and Samaritans and Jews and, by extension, any number of others. *Taking this situation seriously means taking up a wide open, willing-to-learn state of mind: attentively turned outward, listening keenly for the wisdom of others, including those with whom we may fiercely disagree.*

From this angle, Christian chauvinism isn’t just morally repugnant; it’s a theological contradiction in terms. Christianity itself arises in the first place out of an indelibly multicultural, multi-religious brew, and fittingly enough, as Jesus would have it, it arises (ideally!) as a humble, outward-oriented willingness to respect and admire and learn across sectarian boundaries.

All of which brings us to the current war in Israel and Gaza. Should Christians think of Jesus as Jewish? Of course — and this may help us identify and empathize with present-day Jews in Israel who seek

peace, security, and a thriving future for their children. Should we think of Jesus as Palestinian? Of course — remembering that the name “Palestinian” has long referred to Muslims, Jews, and others who have lived in that part of the world for generations; and this may help us identify and empathize with present-day Palestinians in Gaza who seek peace, security, and a thriving future for their children.

In the end, what’s ruled out is any demonization or categorical contempt, even as we may unequivocally condemn specific actions. Christian anti-Judaism is effectively a rejection of Jesus, for Jesus, too, was a Jew. Christian anti-Palestinian sentiment is likewise a rejection of Jesus, for Jesus, too, was effectively a “Palestinian.” And on an even deeper level, Jesus the Palestinian Jew was a teacher who called us — and calls us again today — to help build bridges across ethnic, cultural, and religious divides. Not only because Jesus said we should do so, but also because we can’t even *listen to Jesus in the first place* without doing so in the very act of listening.

*Jesus: the Jewish prophet and rabbi from halfway ‘round the world, who calls us (drawing on Jewish scripture) to welcome the stranger and learn from the alleged outsider.*

*Jesus: the Palestinian peasant in a time of war, the infant refugee from military violence (the “slaughter of the innocents”), who nevertheless goes on to say, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

*Jesus: the Child of God who calls us to do likewise, again and again, to reach across lines of enmity, suspicion, and recrimination; to help end the world’s apparently endless cycles of vengeance; and to highlight and harness religion’s life-giving, reconciling capacities precisely in order to counter its death-dealing, divisive ones.*

*Jesus is a Jew. Jesus is a Palestinian. Jesus calls us to take up solidarity with all of God’s children, demonizing no-one, helping to build a new world of *shalom* and *salām*.*

salt\*





## Friend to Friend America

by Lisa Slavik, Executive Director of Friend to Friend America



Over the past five decades, Friend to Friend America has tirelessly worked to foster companionship, social engagement, and emotional well-being among seniors. We firmly believe that no one should feel alone or isolated, especially during their golden years. It is with the support of compassionate organizations like Grace Lutheran Church that we have been able to touch the lives of countless seniors, bringing them joy, laughter, and friendship.

Please stay tuned for forthcoming updates regarding our 50<sup>th</sup> year celebration. Let us join hands and continue to ensure that every senior in an assisted living community feels valued, connected, and loved.

I'm excited to share a heartwarming story that embodies the very essence of what we do at Friend to Friend America. I had the privilege of witnessing a truly inspiring friendship that has blossomed within our organization, and I thought you might find it as uplifting as I do.

Christina and Jeannie, two remarkable individuals, both share a deep passion for gardening and crafts. Christina, who once felt the pangs of loneliness and isolation, now finds joy and companionship through our Friendly Visitors program. Jeannie, one of our dedicated volunteers, has formed a beautiful bond with Christina.

Twice a month, Jeannie visits Christina, and their time together is

nothing short of magical. They immerse themselves in the world of gardening, tending to vibrant blooms, and creating intricate crafts that reflect their shared creativity. The laughter that fills Christina's home during these visits is a testament to the profound impact of their friendship.

Christina's life has been transformed. No longer does she feel the weight of isolation; she now experiences the warmth of companionship and the joy of shared hobbies; she thanked me personally for bringing Jeannie into her life. For Jeannie, this friendship has enriched her life in ways she never anticipated.

This story illustrates the magic that happens when individuals come together through Friend to Friend America. It showcases the power of genuine connections and the transformative effect of shared interests. We believe that fostering such bonds is at the heart of what we do, and we are immensely grateful for individuals like Jeannie, who dedicate their time and hearts to making a difference in the lives of seniors like Christina.

We share this story with you as an example of the profound impact of our mission. But stories like Christina and Jeannie's are not unique. They happen every day in the lives of seniors we serve, thanks to the dedication of our volunteers and the support of compassionate community members like you.



## GriefShare

by Louise Luberts

GriefShare is a 13-session, Christ-centered grief support group program. Each week participants and leaders meet for about two hours. Each person in a group is grieving the death of someone close.

There are three components to GriefShare. These work together to help group members heal. Every session has a 30 minute video with valuable insights from Christian counselors, pastors and teachers, as well as personal stories of people who've found healing after a loved one's death.

Following the video there is a small group discussion based on what they learned on the video and opportunity to process any recent challenges. These meetings are confidential and everyone knows this is a safe place to share.

Each member receives a participant guide, provided by Grace Lutheran Church. The guide includes note taking outlines to use during the video seminars. Between meetings, participants will find personal help and encouragement as they go through the short exercises, journaling prompts and Scriptures.

Currently there are eight people attending our group at Grace. Most of them are men and most of them have recently lost a spouse. This is an incredible outreach tool as only three in our group are connected to Grace. We have enjoyed watching them bond with each other. Each week we get to watch them ministering to each other. Some have even gotten together outside of our sessions.

We also hosted a Loss of Spouse seminar in the early fall. This is a one session two hour program. We were excited to have four people pre-register for that group. On the day of the seminar we were happy to welcome nine people to our meeting.

GriefShare is for adults (not teens or children) who are grieving the death of a family member or friend. Participants may join at any time during the 13-sessions.

For additional information please contact Louise or Diane at [griefshare@gotgrace.com](mailto:griefshare@gotgrace.com)

**GriefShare®**

# Year-End Giving to Support the Mission and Ministry of GLC

by GLC Generosity Team

Dear GLC faith family,

Thank you for faithfully supporting ministry at GLC this year. Your investments of time, resources, and prayer enabled us to share the hope of Jesus Christ with people in our city and around the world all year long.

GLC is a generous congregation. This year, with your partnership, we provided food, clothing, and supplies to people in need in our city; gathered together weekly to worship and grow as disciples of Jesus; supported out-reach partners and global relief efforts; baptized children and adults at the font and received new members; extended the love of Jesus to countless children and families; held community wide events and retreats; prayed alongside grieving families while honoring the lives of those who lived by faith here; grew ever deeper in our faith through all the work of Rooted and Rising; and so much more. Thank you for your ministry partnership which makes all of these things possible.

**As we finish out this year, I invite you to prayerfully consider making a year-end gift to support the mission and ministry of GLC.** We aim to finish in a strong financial position for 2023 and begin 2024 with abundant resources to fund ministries. December is the perfect time to make an extra gift. Gifts can be given at worship, made online ([www.gotgrace.com](http://www.gotgrace.com)), or mailed in to the church office. Gifts of stock or appreciated assets are another way to make an impact. A reminder that gifts must be received or postmarked no later than December 31 to qualify for a 2023 tax deduction.

Thank you again for being a part of the GLC family. We are grateful for you and look forward to seeing what God will do in and through us in this coming year.

Blessings to you and your family during this wonderful Advent and Christmas Season. Peace and hope.

Scan to Give  
Online



**NOTE:** After Christmas, the church office will be open December 27 - 29. In order for your year end Financial Giving Statement to reflect your total giving for the year 2023, please turn in your final offering by December 29 or postmarked by December 31, 2023. Thank you!

## GENEROSITY 101

**"What is a Qualified Charitable Distribution?"**

**NOTICE:** If you are 70.5-years or older (or plan to be), currently have retirement assets (or plan to have them), and give an offering to your church (or plan to give an offering to your church)...THEN YOU SHOULD READ THIS!

I'd like to introduce you to my friend, Katie. She has been attending the ELCA Lutheran church in her neighborhood, and just received an invitation to fill out a pledge card during the fall Stewardship initiative. Last week, Katie and I were chatting on the phone when she shared how important her church is in her life - in between the worries and excitement she has about the future. And, almost like a gift from God, Katie shared the most innocent and casual comment that changed our whole conversation, she said... "I sure wish I had the ability to give more."

Katie's desire to be more generous is not unique - most people report they would be more generous if they were given the opportunity. However, there are some common situations where we actually could be more generous with the assets we already have... and decrease our taxation at the same time. Let's take a look!

### CASE STUDY:

Katie is 75 years old, and she has an IRA valued at \$425,000 with a current annual Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) of

\$16,000. After state and federal tax withholding, approximately \$12,000 will be deposited into her checking account this December. Katie has been giving \$1,000/month to the church through the congregations online giving platform that pulls those offerings from Katie's checking account - for an annual offering of \$12,000. Katie certainly understood that her Required Minimum Distributions are... required, so not taking that distribution was not an option. Also, by receiving that RMD she was obligated to pay income tax on the distribution. And honestly, Katie is like most people, and she was spending the RMDs she was receiving, so she hadn't actually considered an alternative... but there is another option! Instead of taking the RMD, Katie - can instruct her investment advisor to send that money directly to her congregation through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD), which will not impose a tax on Katie - or the congregation! Now here is where it gets fun! Since Katie's financial plan was already taking into consideration the RMD's, but the QCD is eliminating \$4,000 in direct taxes and maybe even more by reducing her taxable income - instead of sending the original \$12,000 to her congregation, Katie is able to increase her pledge to \$16,000 (the full RMD amount) with no financial impact to her overall financial plan!

*According to data from the Federal Reserve's most recent Survey of Consumer Finances, the average 65 to 74-year-old has a little over \$426,000 saved in retirement specific accounts, like 401(k) plans and IRAs.*



## Women's Retreat

by Pastor Rachel Swenson



After too many years gone, this September saw the return of our Women's Retreat! Gathered in Leavenworth, the 30 of us were grateful to spend time together getting to know one another better, grounding ourselves in God's word, and remembering how to Ignite Life as followers of Jesus. We shared the heaviness of our lives, the joys and laughter, and everything in-between. It was a blessing to be together and to hear anew the presence of the Spirit in our lives!





## GLC Preschool

by Miranda Winter, GLC Preschool Director



It is our 41<sup>st</sup> year as a ministry of Grace – and we feel blessed! We currently are running three classes, and we are serving 28 kids and families this year. Besides English, there are seven other languages spoken at home by our families (Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Ukrainian, Spanish, Tigrigna, and Tagalog) which reflects the rich diversity God designed Des Moines, Washington with. Our small but mighty school has grown by eight students this year! Our 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes are completely full. We hope to continue to see this growth at the school so that we can have the greatest positive impact on our community possible. The GLC Preschool is a special place, and I want to share it with as many people as we can. As Desmond Tutu said, “Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

At the school, our emphasis is on the total development of the child. The child's social development and self-concept are of primary importance. Basic to this development are consideration and love for others. . . lessons which cannot be learned with rigid rules and regulations, but require a relaxed and loving atmosphere. We get to develop this at the GLC Preschool. We get to develop curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and in the middle of all this learning and growth, are the moments that warm your soul. The moments that matter the most. Like when a child learns how to make friends, and you see them making up games together on the playground. Like hearing the chant “you can do it” from a kindhearted classmate to their friend who is spelling their name out loud on their own for the very first time. Like the smile when a child realizes they are capable and CAN do so many things. These moments can change everything for a child.

We have a fantastic team of teachers, leaders, board members, and volunteers who pour love into this pre-school program. I am honored to know them and to work with them. God, the GLC Preschool team, our families, and our church have been the best support and blessing this past year. Our updated playground that was finished this summer has been a joy to play on – the kids absolutely love it! Thank you to everyone who has supported the school this year. We needed you, and you have made the biggest difference.



We hope for another year full of joy and learning! We are committed to making GLC Preschool a safe and happy place to learn, grow, and succeed. Through it all, God's light has shown on and around us and we are grateful!





## Grace Children's Center

by Yuni Cardenas Co-Director & GCC Board

Grace Children's Center is a truly special place in our community. Every family, every child, every staff person, and you who support it so faithfully, make it the special place that it is. God knew what God was doing when this place was created.

A very special thank you to all who gave a full weekend of their time to replace flooring and do special needed fixes in the building. With that kind of support we are able to keep our license in good standing and to keep our children and staff safe. It is amazing to see a small team of committed people making such a huge difference. We cannot say THANK YOU enough. An added over the moon THANK YOU is said in response to the exterior of the building being repainted this fall. The place looks sharp and welcoming in our neighborhood. All of our families notices this refresh and it brought smiles to their faces. The Halloween party and community events are another added blessing for all of our families. Sharing space, sharing staff, sharing resources, partnering with Grace Preschool, and sharing in life together, makes this place thrive. What a gift!

As we continue to build back from Covid with the myriad of changes in the childcare field, we are working on hiring additional teachers so we can get enrollment up and have our building filled with an abundance of love, laughter, and joy. **Our current enrollment is 32.** We currently have six caring teachers plus one lovely cook. They all do a great job of making sure our families and kiddos are cared for each day! Please help us spread the word and refer others to check us out - [childrenscenter.gotgrace.com](http://childrenscenter.gotgrace.com)

As part of our program, we embrace and encourage all our families to share their experiences and traditions with us so that we can represent them in the classroom with classmates and teachers. Having family-style dining helps them share their stories with all of us. It's fantastic to see them so engaged in their class conversations, learning and asking questions about different places and events.

We are excited for the new year! We are hoping and praying that our GCC family will continue to grow so we can continue to do our best to help children be set up for success!







How has God impacted your life through Grace Lutheran Church?



Grace has given me and my family a wonderful place to worship and grow in faith. Grace is an example over and over and over again of how I want to show up in God's world.

How has God impacted your life through Grace Lutheran Church?



- ☐ Strong friendships with others who share our faith.
- ☐ Reaching out to others in need in our community, nation and world.
- ☐ Deeply meaningful worship services.



James, a local seminary student, received a donated car from Grace.



SeaTac Pastors Cluster welcome Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee



## HOPE - The Season of Advent

### Advent Study Series 9:45 am, Fellowship Hall



Week One: November 26  
**Hope for Those Who Wait**



Week Two: December 3  
**Hope for Those Who Are Weary**



Week Three: December 10  
**Hope for Those Who Are Watching**



Week Four: December 17  
**All Church Celebration**  
Wear your Christmas sweaters,  
cookies, photo booth and  
**Kid's Candy Cane Lane**  
(downstairs 9:45 - 10:15 am)



# Mark Your Calendars & Worship With Us

## Join us for Christmas @ GLC

### Sunday, December 24, special Christmas Eve Services

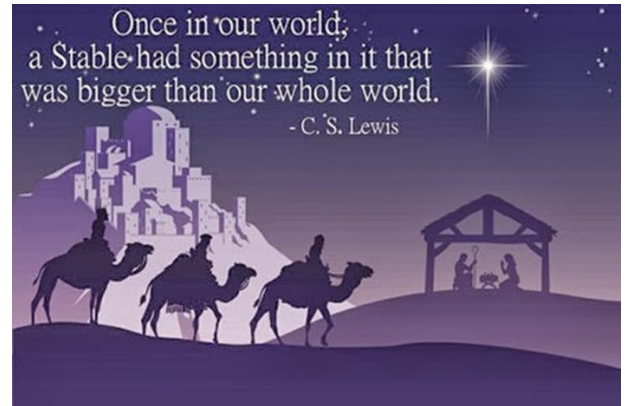
4:00 pm Family Christmas – bring gifts for Seattle Children's Hospital

6:00 pm Contemporary Band and Candlelight

8:00 pm Traditional Choir and Candlelight

Our theme for this worship evening comes from the C. S. Lewis quote (to the right.) Our world today is in great need of something bigger. If we're honest, most human life is still searching for that something bigger. As we stand in worship together, candles lit, lifting our voices, may our hearts fully discover the true joy of Christmas.

Already, begin praying about who you will invite to worship with you this Christmas. It may just be the gift someone has been searching for.



### Monday, December 25, Christmas Day

10:00 am Worship with Communion

### First Fruits Sunday



Join us Sunday, January 7, on First Fruits Sunday when we'll kick off the year with our first gifts toward the Grace Ministry Fund. We are thankful for the commitments received the last few weeks and on First Fruits Sunday we will dedicate the first fruits of the New Year to the work of the Lord through Grace. As we start a new year, this is the perfect time to begin a new way of being. Join us at our 8:30 or 11:00 am services.



In the doldrums of the cold and dreary winter season, we focus in on the Star of Wonder, the Star of Light, our Lord Jesus. One of those sacred hymns we sing goes like this.....

*I want to walk as a child of the light, I want to follow Jesus. God set the stars to give light to the world; the star of my life is Jesus. In him there is no darkness at all, the night and the day are both alike. The Lamb is the light of the city of God; shine in my heart, Lord Jesus I want to see the brightness of God; I want to look at Jesus. Clear sun of righteousness, shine on my path, and show me the way to the Father. I'm looking for the coming of Christ; I want to be with*

*Jesus. When we have run with patience the race, we shall know the joy of Jesus.*

Text: Irregular, Kathleen Thomerson ; music Kathleen. Text and music copyright 1970, 1975, Celebration. All rights reserved.

[I want to walk as a child of the light \(Lyric\) - YouTube](#) (Use QR code provided below to listen here – I invite you to put on repeat)

Children of Light, Love, Peace, and Joy.....Jesus imagines our lives to be lived this way. Join together in worship, in connection, in service, and point to the ONE true light that continues to shine in our world.

O Come, Let us Adore Him, Christ the Lord!

**The Star in the dark sky heralded His Coming.**

Led by the light of the Star, the Wise Ones came to pay homage.

**We, too, come to the stable, seeking the infant King.**

Come, Arise! Shine! The Light has come.

**God's Light of love is shining upon us. AMEN.**





## Mark Your Calendars for Lent at Grace



A sacred time, holy time, pivotal time, instructive time, blessed time.... the season of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. The season begins on February 14, yes you heard that right, Valentine's Day. Let's just say...there is no greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one another (John 15:13) ....and Jesus shows us the way.

Our theme will be **Wondrous Encounters**. Each Wednesday we will look into the heart of the characters often glossed over in the Bible story and dive deeper into their encounter with Jesus. We will also explore our relationship with Jesus and our responses to all he offers through those moments on Golgotha/Calvary.

We will once again host an afternoon worship offering, along with our evening Supper Church option. Food, faith conversation, and worship...bring yourself and others who may be hungry to discover more. A church who walks together in the way of the Lord is a blessed church!

### Reserve your Calendars for Wednesdays in Lent

February 14 – **Ash Wednesday** – Service at 3:00 pm and 7:00 pm

February 21, 28, March 6, 13, and 20 – Holden Evening Prayer – Service at 3:00 pm and 6:30 pm

### Sundays in Lent

February 18, 25, March 3, 10, and 17 – Worship at 8:30 and 11:00 am – Bible Study at 9:45 am

### Palm Sunday

March 24 – Worship at 8:30 and 11:00 am - Pancake Breakfast in the Fellowship Hall

### Holy Week

March 28 – **Maundy Thursday** - Worship at 7:00 pm

March 29 – **Good Friday** - Worship at 7:00 pm

March 31 – **Easter Sunday** - Worship at 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00 am





Grace Lutheran Church  
22975 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
Des Moines, WA 98198

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## Winter Schedule...

Sunday Worship 8:30 and 11:00 am

Online Worship 10:00 am

Monthly calendars and weekly bulletins are available at: [gotgrace.com/announcements](http://gotgrace.com/announcements)

### Advent Sundays

Bible study - November 26, December 3 & 10 @ 9:45 am

All Church Celebration - December 17 @ 9:45 am

with Christmas sweaters, cookies, photo booth  
and kids \*Candy Cane Lane (\*downstairs 9:45 - 10:15 am)

### Christmas Eve Services

Sunday, December 24

Family service: 4:00 pm - bring an unwrapped gift for Children's Hospital

\*Candlelight services: Contemporary @ 6:00 pm | Traditional @ 8:00 pm

### Christmas Day Service

Monday, December 25 @ 10:00 am

### Community Dinners

Second Tuesday of the month @ 5:00 - 6:00 pm

December 12, January 9 & February 13

SAVE  
the  
DATES

### Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 28 @ 12:15 pm

(Note: Generosity and Finance FAQ - January 7 & 14 @ 9:45 am)

### New Organ Introduction & Celebratory Recital

Sunday, February 11 @ 9:45 am

### Ash Wednesday Service

\*February 14 @ 7:00 pm (Soup supper @ 5:30 pm)

12:00 pm Dispensation of Ashes & Prayer only

\*Livestreamed services