

GRACENOTES

A SEASONAL PUBLICATION OF

Grace Lutheran Church



LUTHERANS & NEIGHBORISM



The Rev. Matthew A. Smuts,
Senior Pastor

He has told you, O mortal, what is good,
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice and to love kindness
and to walk humbly with your God?—Micah 6:8

Lutherans have been in the center of the universe for the last several weeks . . . and it's weird. Lutherans come from all kinds of places and cultures, but as a tradition that began in Northern Germany and spread thoroughly through the Nordic nations, we tend to be a bit more quiet, polite, and reserved. However, the klieg lights are on us now.

My first call was in Minnesota, and at the time, 20% of our denomination resided in the state of Minnesota. Governor Tim Walz is an ELCA Lutheran and his wife, Gwen, is an alum of Gustavus Adolphus College in St Peter, MN, a Swedish Lutheran liberal arts college where my daughter, Anika, is currently a junior. When clergy protested a week ago at MSP airport many of them were ELCA clergy and a friend who I worked with at Mt Cross in the 1990's and serves a parish in Northfield, MN was one of those who were arrested that day.

Switching to the other hot topic of Greenland, an autonomous territory of the Kingdom of Denmark, it's important to remember that the predominant Christian tradition is Lutheran as a part of the Church of Denmark which is their national church. They are our sister churches through the Lutheran World Federation.

And when we shift to a more historical lens, we are mindful of the Lutheran presence in sad and sinister chapters of state violence towards our neighbors in Germany in the 1930's & 40's. Not to mention the decades leading up to those times. You might say that we've seen this movie before and sadly, had a hand in the production of the first installment. There has been a lot of self-reflection as a tradition in response and the heralding of the heroes of that era, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

This brings us to 'neighborism'—defined as a commitment to protecting the people around you. No matter who they are or where they came from. This is a term shared in Adam Serwer's excellent and recent article 'Minnesota Proved

MAGA Wrong' in The Atlantic. This is a powerful expression of what is happening in Minnesota and what we are being called to be about. For all the talk of 'paid agitators' in certain media circles, what we are actually seeing is people being organized in much the same fashion as Lutherans preparing for an upcoming potluck. It is grass roots care for neighbor.

We don't know what the future holds for our nation. However, we do know that God calls us to care for our neighbors in ways that may increasingly run us up against our federal government. It is a time for deep prayer and reflection and action. However, God's call is clear as we hear from the prophet Micah, 'He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?'

So, in this Lenten season, be deliberate in journeying together in/at Grace. Challenge yourself to return to the Lord your God, so that in forgiveness you may experience and then share God's mercy and grace. May we continue to become the Body of Christ that shines as a light in our community, nation, and world, demonstrating gracious and merciful human community. ❖

Peace,



PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

Grace Lutheran Preschool

growing together in grace

After 50 Years, Grace Lutheran Preschool to Close

Dear Grace Family,

When I was a camp counselor in my college days, we had a rule while playing games. Always quit while you're still having fun. It is in some ways in that spirit that I write to say to you that, sadly, the 2025-26 preschool year will be Grace Lutheran Preschool's last. The headwinds of the pandemic, and then critically, California's shift to universal four year old transitional kindergarten have eroded both our preschool's financial stamina and enrollment confidence.

Grace, as a congregation, has experienced renewed momentum since the pandemic with record giving and more new faces this last Fall than at any other time in my ministry here. We are fully staffed up and are excited about our direction! However, this changed preschool landscape has become insurmountable for our preschool ministry.

As a Grace Lutheran Preschool parent myself, this 50+ year legacy will be sorely missed. Rest assured that the Preschool Board will be taking time to make sure that we celebrate this legacy in the community with an exuberant hooray! While there is much sadness, there are no bad feelings. Felicity & Gina have been a sheer joy to work with, and it's crystal clear in joyful laughter and quick smiles that our current families have treasured this special place as well. I have to say, that in my 20 years at Grace, this last year has been one of the best!

If you have any questions at all or would simply like to be in touch, don't hesitate to reach out to me.

Peace,
Pr Matt Smuts
Senior Pastor

PRESCHOOL SPRING UPDATE

The Preschool children are looking forward to some February activities that focus around Valentine's Day. Some of the fun activities will include decorating cookies with our families and grand-friends and exchanging valentine cards with each other.

March is everything green—art with green paint, wearing green clothing, and tasting some green vegetables. We'll set the leprechaun trap and try to get lucky this year and catch one! They are so fast! We will go on a treasure hunt in the play yard, looking for gold coins. We will also celebrate Dr Seuss' birthday (March 2) by reading several Dr Seuss classic books, making red and white striped hats, and even tasting some green eggs and ham!

April is all about spring time. We are planning a spring party complete with a pajama day, spring egg hunt, and painting colorful rocks to decorate the preschool garden.

Gina and Felicity



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Summer 2026

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A THOUGHT ON OUR TIME

I was born in 1986 in what is today former Eastern Germany, meaning: I was born in a country with an authoritarian regime that was about to breathe it's last, though no one knew at that time for sure.

I grew up in a family that—like a lot of families—had wiggled its way through 40 years of socialist dictatorship, and what they told us, the late-born and the later-born, about this time is a story of compromise, in the worst sense of the word. “You adapted” or “you worked with the authorities” so that you

would not lose all your farm land to the agricultural production cooperatives (LPGs). You learned where you could say things (in private) and where not to say things (in public) already as a school aged child, you went to church and confirmation class secretly, but also did the state ordered youth activities and sang their hymns. I also learned about people who didn't run with the flow and who spoke up—and what happened to them.

Pretty early on in my school career in a now unified Germany, I learned about the Third Reich and the Holocaust. In class, we

read fiction and non-fiction books, like *Maus* and Anne Frank's diary, went on field trips to Concentration Camps, talked to contemporary witnesses who showed us their prisoner number tattooed into their skin. We learned about the uprising of the Nazis to power and how they, piece by piece, dismantled the—granted very young and feeble—democracy.

Throughout all the personal experience with the German Socialist Regime (DDR) and throughout all the learning on the Third Reich that I had at school, one question was unanswered: How can something like this happen?

The last year in the US has given me answers to that question—something I had never expected here in California. I had a lot of moments over the last couple of months where I thought “That's how they did it.” Governmental actions taken straight from the authoritarian playbook. But I also thought “Oh, this is how it worked.” That's how most of the society stays quiet and lets things happen, because yes, it is horrible, but also it doesn't affect me directly—and, isn't it a little bit justified? Just a little bit?

Photo: Prisoner's barracks, Dachau

This quote of Pastor Martin Niemöller came to my mind, a pastor of the Confessing Church during the Nazi Regime, who reflects on the complacency, and with that the complicity, of fellow Germans in the injustice and the killing of Jewish, socialist, and oppositional people by the Nazis:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a trade unionist.

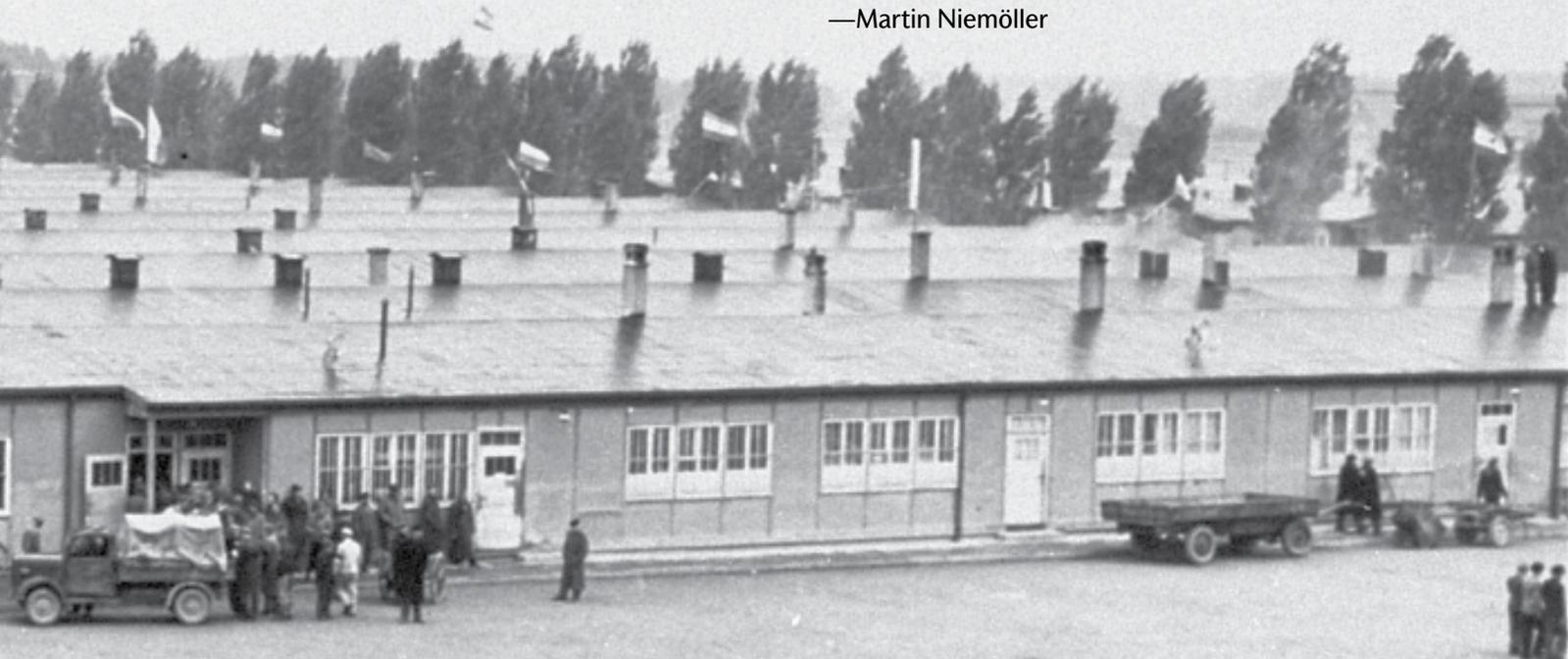
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

—Martin Niemöller



The Rev. Friederike Wekel,
Associate Pastor



There are many other groups of people that the Nazis targeted: handicapped, Sinti and Roma, gay people, Jehovah's witnesses and other smaller faith groups...and they could do that because people didn't stop in their tracks and speak up and out for their neighbor. It was risky. There was a majority with a different opinion, who agreed maybe not with all, but at least partly with the actions of the Nazi government. Looking at the political events in the US today, and looking at my own behavior, trying to live my every day life, avoiding the news because it is unsettling, thinking Minneapolis is far away, thinking that I don't understand the events completely and that there are always several sides to a conflict, being busy with job and family duties—I feel meant by Niemöller's quote. Am I missing the moment to speak out?

And then there is this question: just speaking up in this day and age where everyone is not shy holding back their opinion on social media, is that enough? I think that one voice might not be able to make a difference, but a chorus can. And

that speaking up is the first step under which united and discerned next steps can and need to be taken.

On Sunday, January 25, we read the Gospel text of Jesus calling out to four strangers: Follow me! (Matthew 4:12-23). And they followed Jesus. They each had their own reasons to follow, but they joined in together—uniting under Jesus, who loved the world despite its brokenness. Determining the call of “Follow me!” is something very personal. But I hear Jesus' call in the cries of “Help!” from the people ICE is detaining, legal and illegal immigrants, protestors, neighbors. I clearly see history repeating itself and I don't want my grandchildren to visit a Detention Center Museum in 50 years and learn about what happened when again people didn't use their voice to speak up for their neighbor and ask me the question I asked myself: How can something like this happen?

Pr. Friederike ❖

Friederike

BE STILL...

Tim Getz,
Director of Music



You don't need me or anyone else to tell you that there's a lot of angst in our nation and our world these days. Stories in the news, arguments on social media, and even real-life experiences reported by our friends and family can make our blood boil. The season of Lent calls us to quiet our minds, still our hearts, and draw closer to God. In doing this, we may not find the perfect answer to every problem, but we might become clearer in our thinking, more open to the needs of others, and able to make better decisions about how we can be most helpful in the situation at hand.

The church can help with this. One way is through regular Sunday worship that might be quieter or more reflective during the Lenten season. There may be more attention given to the time for Confession and Forgiveness at the beginning of the service. Music choices might be more subdued or meditative. We will sing one of the most ancient and simple prayers of the church: Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison... Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy.

Prayer in the style of Taizé is another way to quiet the mind, during Lent and all year round. This unique prayer form, pioneered in the modern-day monastic community in Taizé, France, invites stillness in more than one way. First, there is the singing of very short, repetitive songs. Brother Roger, the founder of the Taizé Community, wrote, "For many Christians down through the ages, a few words repeated endlessly have been a road to contemplation. When these words are sung, then perhaps they have even more of an impact on the whole personality, penetrating its very depths." Second, at the center of every time of prayer according to this pattern, there is a lengthy period of full silence. Again, in the words of the community: "When we try to express communion with God in words, our minds quickly come up short. But in the depths of our being, through the Holy Spirit, Christ is praying far more than we imagine.... The road to contemplation is not one of achieving inner silence at all costs by following some technique that creates a kind of emptiness within. If, with a childlike trust we let Christ pray silently within us, then one

day we shall discover that the depths of our being are inhabited by a Presence." At Grace, we sometimes use the songs of Taizé during Sunday worship, and we explore the practice of Taizé prayer more fully on the second Sunday evening of every month at 7 pm.

For some people, sitting still for long periods, as is done at Taizé prayer, can be a challenge. It can even produce anxiety... the opposite of the intent of a contemplative practice! And so for many, walking the path of a labyrinth can help provide focus. The labyrinth can enable one's body to be active while allowing the mind a chance to focus and center. A labyrinth is a circular pattern with a circuitous path within it. It is not a maze, which is a puzzle with many false leads and dead ends. Rather, a labyrinth has only one way in and one way out. Following a single, simple path, with many turns but no decisions, slows and clears the mind. Walking the labyrinth can be a type of prayer, but just as at Taizé, that prayer may or may not come in words. There's no right or wrong way to walk the labyrinth, although in the spirit of slowing the mind, it's best walked at a slow pace, perhaps with a pause for reflection upon reaching the center and then following the same path back out. Our own outdoor labyrinth at Grace, outside the sanctuary along Waverley Street and encircled by olive trees, is available at all times of the day and is particularly lovely in the evenings with good but subtle lighting. Give it a try before or after church some Sunday, or any time you happen to be in the neighborhood.

I have found meaning in these contemplative practices, as well as others like yoga and walking in nature, for many years. This Lent, maybe you'll try them too! ❖

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Getz". The signature is fluid and cursive.

2026 LENT & HOLY WEEK AT GRACE

ROOTED | SUNDAY FORUMS & NEW MEMBER CLASSES

On the Sundays of Lent (February 22, March 1, 8, 15, 22, & 29) from 9:45 - 10:30 we will be having a special series of forums that will center on the basics of the Christian Faith and what that looks like engaged in the community that we call Grace. There will be small group segments for discussion and this will include a track, of sorts, for anyone interested in becoming a member of Grace. These forums

are intended for everyone and you are encouraged to participate as we refresh our understanding of the essential elements of our faith and reflect on their implications for our life together. If you are not a member and would like to use this opportunity to become one, please let Pastor Matt know at pastormatt@gracepa.org. We look forward to seeing everyone!

LABYRINTH

Keep your eyes peeled for special opportunities to use the labyrinth this season. There is an upcoming Connections Café opportunity for instruction on the labyrinth's use. We are also in the early steps of planning some additional intentional time on the labyrinth. PLEASE NOTE that it is available to you 24/7/365, so come anytime! Also know that the labyrinth is a beautiful way to ground yourself in these times of dysregulation. Center your heart, walk the labyrinth.



February 18, 2026 | 12:00 & 7:00 pm

Ash Wednesday

IMPOSITION OF ASHES | HOLY COMMUNION

On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter, marking our foreheads with ashes symbolizing repentance, mortality, and humility.
"Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

ALL ARE
WELCOME!



Grace Lutheran Church

SCHEDULE

February 18 | Ash Wednesday
Worship: 12:00 pm and 7:00 pm

Wednesdays in Lent

February 25, March 4, 11, 18, 21
Life Together Dinner: 6:15 pm
Confirmation (online): 4:30 pm
Confirmation (in person): 7:00 pm
Youth Group, Choir: 7:00 pm

Thursdays in Lent

February 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26
Bible Study: 1:00 pm | Library

February 26, March 12, 26
Connections Café | Emmaus Room

Sundays in Lent

February 22, March 1, 8, 15, 22
Worship: 8:30 and 10:45 am
Sunday School/Forum: 9:45 am

Holy Week

March 29 | Palm Sunday
Worship: 8:30 and 10:45 am
Sunday School/Forum/Mentor Sunday: 9:45 am

April 2 | Maundy Thursday
Dinner: 6:15 pm | Worship: 7:30 pm

April 3 | Good Friday
Worship: 12:00 pm and 7:30 pm

April 4 | Vigil of Easter
Worship: 7:34 pm (sunset)

Easter

April 5 | The Resurrection of Our Lord
Worship: 8:30 and 10:45 am
Easter Breakfast: 9:00 - 10:30 am
Easter Egg Hunt: 10:00 am

TRADITIONS

Emily King-Nobles,
Director of Children, Youth & Young Adult Ministry



Emily

When you picture Jesus, what comes to mind? Is he feeding the five thousand? Walking on water? Calling the little children to come near? Healing the sick?

I'm guessing it's a mix of all of those. But, how often is our picture of Jesus one of him crying out in anguish? As we enter the season of Lent, and as we witness ongoing violence in Minnesota and across the world, it feels especially important to reflect on the stories of Jesus that reveal His deep vulnerability. Throughout the Bible, Jesus is full of emotion.

In John 11, Jesus weeps at the death of his friend Lazarus. In the Garden of Gethsemane, on the night before his death, Jesus is overcome with sorrow and begs his father to take the suffering from him. Earlier in Matthew's gospel, Jesus is led into the wilderness, feeling malnourished, exhausted and vulnerable after forty days of fasting. These are not side notes in the story of Jesus; they are central to who he is.

Jesus was vulnerable.

Jesus wept.

Jesus was angry and flipped tables.

Because of that, we are reminded that our own emotions are not something to hide or dismiss. As we move through Lent, perhaps feeling weary from the news of the world, we are reminded that Jesus knows this pain, too. If you're feeling sad, you're valid. If you're feeling exhausted, you're valid. If you're feeling confused, you're valid. If you're feeling a loss of all emotion, you're valid. If you're holding your babies a little closer, you're valid. Our hope is that Grace can be a place where you show up exactly as you are, and with whatever you are bringing. You, every piece of you, is welcome here.

Throughout Lent, our young adult group will be studying the book, *The Good Life*, by Robert Waldinger and Marc Schulz. It is based on an 80-year Harvard Study on happiness. Spoiler alert: The most significant factor in a long, healthy, and fulfilling life is not wealth or success—but strong, meaningful relationships. The research shows that deep connections sustain us emotionally and physically.

As we journey together through uncertain and vulnerable times, my prayer is that you are surrounded by relationships that nourish and refuel you. Perhaps I'm biased, but I think church is a great place to find that kind of community. Much of our youth curriculum at Grace is rooted in this idea of community and relationship building. We want our kids to grow up surrounded by unconditional love, trusted relationships, and a community that walks with them through every season of life.

Thank you for being here. Let's journey through life together.

Blessings,
Emily ❖

FOR YOUR CALENDAR:

Children, Youth, & Family

- **February 6:** Middle School Mini Golf at Golfland, 7-9pm
- **March 1:** Children singing at 10:45 service
- **March 6-8:** High School Retreat at Mt. Cross Camp, Registration due Feb 11
- **March 28:** First Communion Class, 1-3pm
- **June 14-19:** Summer Camp at Mt Cross for 3rd-8th graders with Emily
- **June 25-July 1:** Summer High School Trip: Western States Youth Gathering at Cal Lutheran and Universal Studios!
- **August 2-6:** Let's Grow! Week: Five intergenerational evenings to engage in community building and talk about our relationship with technology)



Young Adults

- **February 15:** PALentines Party: Heart-shaped pizza and watching the movie, Valentines Day, 6-9pm
- **Lent Weekly Study: The Good Life,** Contact Emily for interest in joining



Adult Forum

- April 26, May 3 & May 10— Adult Forum series about *The Anxious Generation*: Come learn how the great rewiring of childhood is causing an epidemic of mental illness. You don't have to be a parent to attend; this research touches us all.
- Recommended, but not required: Read *The Anxious Generation* book beforehand :) ❖



Photos (from top):
Fall Youth Retreat at Mt. Cross;
Children's Christmas Play;
Young Adult Escape Room;
High School Bowling;
Children's Sunday School Art;
Youth Volunteering at EHP

CONFIRMATION

This year, Confirmation Sunday will be on April 19. We've moved it forward a little bit so that the confirmation celebration isn't added as an additional burden to the business of the end of the school year. Nine students are being confirmed: Ella Bauer, Maggie Choma, Vance Demler, Leah Dias, Jacob Flatmo, Hayden Hallada, Jacob Hanna-Weir, Gabe Lungren, and Sophia Mack. Please join us during the second service (10:45am) on **April 19** to celebrate the affirmation of faith of these young members of our congregation.

Overall, I am happy to report that the confirmation program is thriving. This year, 20 middle schoolers joined our program (confirmation classes and/or Mentor Sundays). About one third use the option to join the class online, the rest come in person on Wednesday evenings. Aside from regular pillow fights (only in-person, sorry), over the last couple of months we talked about death and thoughts of the after life (personal and biblical), about stress, about Christmas and origins of a lot of Christmas symbols, and about creeds and personal credos. ❖



WOMEN'S MINISTRY: WOMEN'S NIGHT OUT (x2!) & A WOMEN'S RETREAT

It is hard to believe, but there are only two Women's Nights Out left this programming year! Join us on March 5, 7-9pm, in the Emmaus Room to celebrate International Women's Day (March 8) a little early by watching the movie "The Day Iceland Stood Still." It is about the legendary strike of the women of Iceland on October 24, 1975, when 90% of the female population "took the day off."

From Friday, March 13 through Sunday, March 15, I will lead the synod-wide Women's Retreat up at Mt Cross. This year, we are exploring the topic "God's Image." What images of God do we carry in us and what does it mean to be made in God's image? And how do your images affect your faith? I would love to spend the time up in the Santa Cruz Mountains with you to discuss, reflect, relax, hike, eat, and laugh together. Childcare is available as well. Sign ups are through Mt Cross (use the link on GraceConnect).

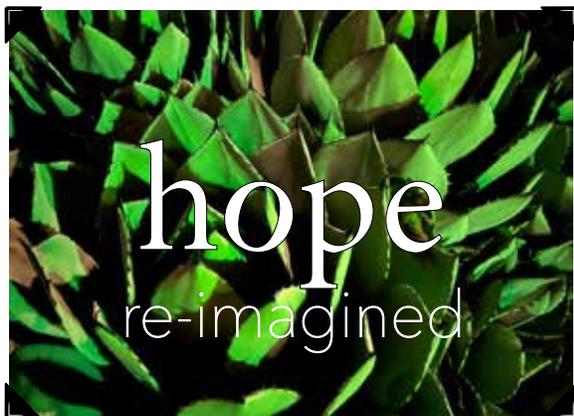
Our Women's Night Out in April falls on Maundy Thursday, so there won't be a Women's Night. Join us instead for the **Maundy Thursday Dinner** and the following Worship service—one of my favorites of the year!

On Thursday, May 7, we will have our last Women's Night Out of the 25/26 Programming Year. Topic is still TBD. ❖

SUPPORT NEEDED FOR EASTER DECORATION OF THE SANCTUARY



For the Lenten and Easter decoration of our sanctuary, we are looking for volunteers who love to fold or would love to learn to fold an origami butterfly. Please fill in the form on GraceConnect so that we can be in touch with you regarding questions and paper. You will find a link to the instructions there as well.



DEVOTIONAL

Through a team effort of Tim, Emily, Gretchen, and Pr Friederike, "Hope Re-Imagined" is this year's Lenten devotional. Hope is a strange thing. On some days tangible, on others slipping through your fingers, mind, and emotions. This year during Lent, we want to invite you to re-imagine hope, in the literal sense of the word, using the texts, hymns, and activities of the devotional. And please, by all means, share your experiences with our Grace community!

MAUNDY THURSDAY DINNER | APRIL 2, 6:15PM, BROWN HALL

The cuisine for this year's Maundy Thursday Dinner will be Finnish! Finnish cuisine is a hearty, simple, and seasonal blend of traditional Nordic, Eastern (Russian), and Scandinavian influences. What we know for sure is that it will be vegetarian, delicious, and a great occasion to start together into the Three Days. Please RSVP using the signup on Grace Connect so that we have a rough headcount. However, please, know there is always room for you at the table!

JONATHAN RUNDMAN



"BRIGHT, CATCHY INDIE POP" *NEW YORK TIMES*
 "CLEVER, INTELLIGENT SONGWRITING" *PASTE MAGAZINE*
 "HOOK FILLED GEMS" *NO DEPRESSION*

Come for a fantastic evening with Jonathan Rundman! Indie Pop musician with a strong Lutheran background (he's a pastor in MN and has played many of the national youth gatherings over the years) and just a deeply faithful man.

No tickets, just a free will offering.
 Perfect for the whole family . . . don't miss it!

Friday, February 20, 2026 @ 7pm
IN CONCERT
 here at Grace!



Grace Lutheran Church
 3149 Waverley Street | Palo Alto, CA 94306 • gracepa.org

Thank you

As the staff at Grace with you, we are so grateful for the opportunity to serve, for a beautiful Christmas season, and for your generous Christmas gifts to us. Thank you!!!

Paula Matt
Bislar Friederike
Tim Emily *JS*

ENDOWMENT GRANTS

Grace Endowment Grant Applications for 2026

The Endowment Committee would like to invite Grace members to submit grant applications to the Endowment Fund, which is a permanent resource to support the mission of Grace Lutheran Church. Requests to support ministries outside of Grace are also welcome per the guidelines below. If you have a ministry that would benefit from financial support please submit an application (link to the form can be found on the GraceConnect page or at MyGrace under FORMS. Applications will be accepted through Thursday, March 5, 2026. If you would like additional help or have questions please contact Gretchen in the church office (office@gracepa.org) or 650.494.1212.

We are most blessed to have these resources and look forward to assisting the church and the community again this year..

The Endowment Fund is made possible by contributions from past and current Grace Lutheran Church members. To learn how to include the Endowment Fund in your estate/bequest plan please contact the church office.. ❖

Barbara Erickson, for the Endowment Committee



During Lent, the Social Ministry Team focuses on fighting hunger and encourages Grace members to help in a number of ways.

We will again be writing letters and sending emails to urge Congress to protect and strengthen vital nutrition programs.

Hunger is rising in the U.S. and around the world, leaving children and families at risk. Cuts to SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and international assistance have already affected millions of people.

But hunger is not inevitable. It's a reflection of our priorities and policy choices. We can and must do better.

Ask your senators and representatives to make ending hunger a priority by strengthening SNAP and WIC (Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants & Children), fully funding global food, health and development programs, and passing a strong, bipartisan Farm Bill that supports families, farmers, and communities.

Look for letter writing tables in the Narthex in March!

Application Guidelines

Internal (Grace-related) grant requests should address one-off needs that are not included in the church operating budget.

External grant requests for **qualified non-profits** (meaning 501(c)3 U.S. organizations) should be supported by personal knowledge and member sponsorship of the non-profit organization. Priority will be given to organizations that support the local community or have strong ELCA sponsorship.

The allowable grant distribution amount (based on 5% of the average market value for the past 12 quarters) will be allocated 50% to the Grace operating budget, and up to 25% to internal and 25% to external grant requests. Suggested amounts per request are \$500-\$2500.

Applications will be reviewed by the Endowment Committee after March 5, and recommendations will be presented to the church council at the March meeting for approval. Applicants will be notified via email shortly after the council approvals.

STEWARDSHIP

Although the new year is just beginning, the pledge drive for the 26/27 program year will begin shortly after Easter. Keep an eye out for more information about the campaign, including our ministry goals and the many ways you can take part. Thank you for your past generosity and we ask you to consider your pledge as an important way to support worship, education, outreach, and the mission we share as a church community.

This year's pledge drive is especially meaningful because it represents a celebration of the 75th anniversary of Grace Lutheran Church. We plan to honor the faith and generosity of those who came before us while looking ahead with hope to the future of our community. It's a wonderful opportunity to give thanks for all that has been and to invest in all that is still to come.

ROOTED & RISING —GRACE TURNS 75!

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. Colossians 2:6-7

2026 is a BIG year as we celebrate Grace's 75th anniversary this Fall! These brief notes are simply to put this on your radar so you can get ready to celebrate!

Rooted & Rising | Grace Goes to Mt Cross! (Aug 28-30)

Join our Grace Family as we go up to Mt Cross Camp in the Santa Cruz Mountains for our annual congregational weekend. The retreat this August will be on the topic of our 75th Anniversary celebration "Rooted and Rising." As always, we have different priced sleeping options, from camping to lodge-style housing, and it's also an option to join us for just Saturday. "Rooted and Rising"—what a topic can be better explored above the intertwined roots and under the high rising canopy of our Coastal Redwoods?! With activities for all ages, we are looking forward to an unforgettable weekend with you!

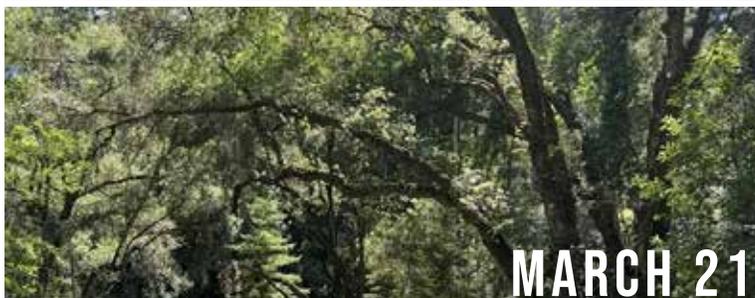
Rooted & Rising | Sanctuary Updates

We have received a few unexpected gifts from folks that are allowing us to consider some special sanctuary updates outside of our regular Capital Campaign cycles. You have already seen the refinishing and relocation of the organ console to the front of the sanctuary and we are receiving electronic components to a massive upgrade of our entire AV system in the sanctuary in the next week or two. Big things! In addition, we will be having some conversation in the near term about other updates that are now feasible . . . looking at you carpeting and dinged up pews! More to come!

Rooted & Rising | Stewardship!

Our annual Operating Fund campaign will take place immediately following Easter (April 5) and take on this challenge . . . what if our next budget allowed for \$75,000 more that it currently allows . . . what could we accomplish by the grace of God? More to come!



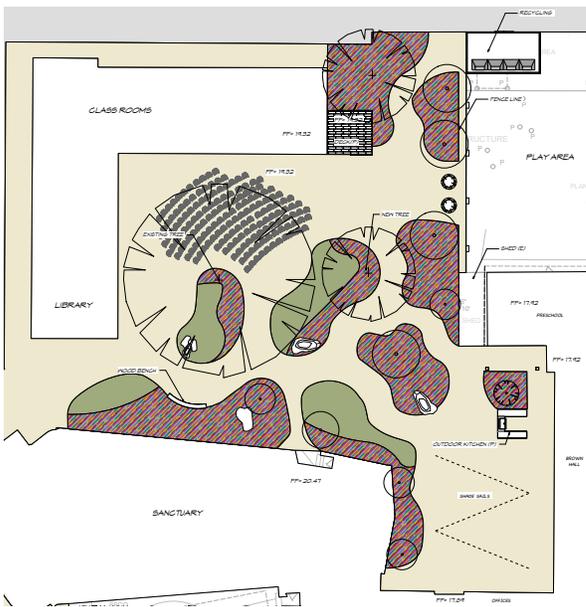


Grace Outdoors (GO!) offers programs for those who love to be active in God's creation. All are invited to participate in any activities that look fun and friends are always welcome. RSVP through the Grace website (gracepa.org)

Click on the **Grace Connect** button. See you soon!

GRACE OUTDOORS

1. **Castle Rock Loop Hike:** February 21, 9 am. Leader: Chris Dunlap. Join us for a hike at beautiful Castle Rock State Park west of Saratoga. This hike is moderately difficult, and features 1,354 feet elevation climb over comfortably maintained trails. 6.6 miles; navigate to Saratoga Gap Trail for directions and park at Castle Rock State Park parking on the south side of Skyline Blvd. Carpooling encouraged as there is a \$10/vehicle day use fee charged by California State Parks. Those who can join us for lunch are welcome to do so at Big Basin Burger Bar in Saratoga, a 15-minute drive from the trailhead.
2. **Portola Redwoods Loop Hike:** March 21, 9am. Leader: Chris Dunlap. We'll take on the Pomponio, Tar Water, and Upper Coyote Ridge Loop trail through the beautiful redwoods on a moderately difficult hike (6.2 miles long, 1,207 feet of elevation gain, and an estimated 3.5 hours on the trail.) Navigate to Portola Redwoods State Park, 9000 Portola State Park Rd, La Honda, CA 94020 for directions. Lunch afterwards at State of Mind Pizza in Los Altos.
3. **Foothills Park Hike:** April 18, 9am. Leader: Andrew Ferguson. We'll start & finish at Foothills Nature Interpretive Center for a 5-mile moderate hike on a series of trails to include: Chamise, Panorama, Toyon, Steep Hollow, Sunrise, and/or Los Trancos. Lunch afterward at Menlo Park institution The Dutch Goose. ❖



COURTYARD LANDSCAPING 2026!

Our Team will be meeting (likely as you receive this newsletter) for our first meeting of 2026. We're excited to reflect on feedback on the sketches you've seen in the narthex and to move on to next steps. We anticipate breaking ground later this year and are excited to thoughtfully get underway!

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND



Join us under the redwoods for a newly expanded Memorial Day Weekend with more ways to participate than ever before. This year, you're invited to attend our **Volunteer Event**, our **Family Camp**, or **both!**

Friday afternoon-Saturday evening is the **Volunteer Event**—free to attend and focused on meaningful work projects, shared meals, worship, and community celebration.

Saturday evening-Monday evening is **Family Camp**, with programming, camp activities, meals, and time to rest and play together. Family Camp registration is **\$250 per person**, with a family maximum of \$1,000.

Come for a day, a weekend, or the full experience—and help us kick off the summer at Mt. Cross.

Registration is now open! Scan the QR code to register for the Volunteer Event, Family Camp, or both.

Movie Night @ Grace!
 Sunday, March 22
 5:30-8:30pm
 Emmaus Room

THE SWIMMERS

An inspiring true story of Syrian refugees

ANCHORED TOGETHER

A RETREAT FOR THE MEN OF GRACE
 OVERNIGHT & SATURDAY-ONLY OPTIONS
 APRIL 24-26, 2026

Evening Prayer in the style of Taizé

Second Sunday of each month
 at **7:00 pm**



Grace Lutheran Church

3149 Waverley Street Palo Alto, CA 94306 650.494.1212 gracepa.org



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Sunday Worship

In-Person (Sanctuary) 8:30 a.m.

In-Person (Sanctuary) 10:45 a.m.

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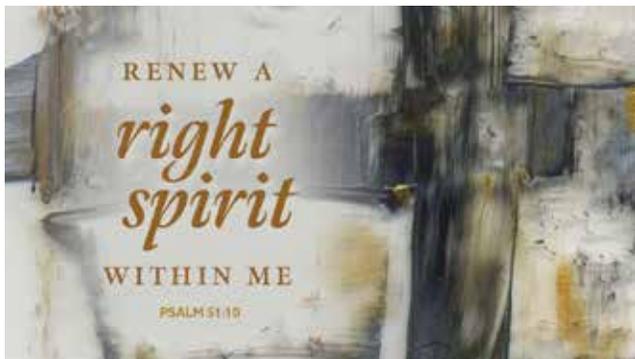
Broadcast on Cable 30

Sundays 11 a.m. | 8:30 p.m.

Mondays 12:30 p.m.

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Livestreamed on the Grace YouTube channel. Links at gracepa.org



February 18, 2026 | 12:00 & 7:00 pm

Ash Wednesday

IMPOSITION OF ASHES | HOLY COMMUNION

On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter, marking our foreheads with ashes symbolizing repentance, mortality, and humility.

"Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

ALL ARE WELCOME!



Grace Lutheran Church

Sundays in Lent

February 22, March 1, 8, 15, 22

Worship: 8:30 and 10:45 am

Sunday School/Forum: 9:45 am

Holy Week

March 29 | Palm Sunday

Worship: 8:30 and 10:45 am

Sunday School/Forum/Mentor Sunday: 9:45 am

April 2 | Maundy Thursday

Dinner: 6:15 pm | Worship: 7:30 pm

April 3 | Good Friday

Worship: 12:00 pm and 7:30 pm

April 4 | Vigil of Easter

Worship: 7:34 pm (sunset)

Easter

April 5 | The Resurrection of Our Lord

Worship: 8:30 and 10:45 am

Easter Breakfast: 9:00 - 10:30 am

Easter Egg Hunt: 10:00 am