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ISSUE 2602

#GRACENOTES

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A SEASONAL PUBLICATION OF



Grace Lutheran Church



Confirmation 2026

TAKE HEART

Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." Matthew 9:22

The words above here come on the first Sunday of Ordinary Time. We are moving into the second half of the church year, away from the central stories that bring us together through the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ towards the stories intended to shape the way in which we live our lives here and now. So many miles and years separate us from the events captured in the Gospels, but they continue to be so human and current and pressing.



The Rev. Matthew Smuts,
Senior Pastor

Matthew 9:22 is one such powerful verse with so few words. Jesus 'sees' her, encourages her to 'take heart' and declares that her faith has 'made her well'. The prior verses explain that she had had a flow of blood for 12 years. She should not have been touching him, and any reasonable hearer of this story in its first forms would have anticipated that the rabbi surely would have chastised her for doing so. Had she no shame? But Jesus does not chastise her. There is compassion. There is empathy. There is the power to heal that is exercised towards one that society would have said was not worthy. This single Gospel text, Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26 has the calling of Matthew, the Tax Collector, the raising of a dead girl, and this remarkable story of healing. Jesus is at the margins, bringing into his circle the outsiders, the outcasts, and those who are lost seemingly beyond recall.

As you move through the summer season be mindful of how Christ is approaching you. Christ sees you, perhaps even when you want to remain hidden and feel ashamed. Christ calls you to see others who are hurting with care and empathy. Christ is about the work of healing and restoring . . . you! And Christ calls all of us to be about that healing work in our world as well. We do this through community, through empathy, and through the humility born of knowing that Christ sees us in our brokenness.

I look forward to seeing you over the summer as we share stories of our times away and the healing that that brings, restoring us to relationship and community together in Christ. ❖

Peace,

Rev. Matthew A. Smuts
Senior Pastor

COURTYARD LANDSCAPING 2026!

After reaching a consensus on the schematic renderings of the plan, Council approved on Tuesday, May 19, to engage our landscape architect for the construction drawings and city permits. We are thrilled about embarking on these next steps and eagerly anticipate the commencement of construction earlier this fall!



**September 25-27
is the weekend we
celebrate 75 years!**

It's a remarkable
milestone and there
is a lot to celebrate!
Mark your calendars
and look for more
details to come!



GRACE GOES TO MT CROSS AUGUST 28-30...OR JUST 29!

This is a FANTASTIC annual event for all ages. There are multiple housing options for the weekend, and a commute option for Saturday only. With Mt Cross being only 55 minutes from Grace it's an easy drive for a great day! Go to gracepa.org and find the **Connect** page. There you can find the link to sign up which contains all kinds of information from schedule to housing and any number of things. You can be in touch with Pr Matt at pastormatt@gracepa.org if you have any questions. If you are wondering if there's a single thing you can do to deepen your experience this coming programming year . . . this is it!



GRACE GOES TO MT CROSS AUGUST 28-30, 2026 | USE QR TO SIGN UP



Tuesdays | 7:00 am | Palo Alto Café

Men's Breakfast



Three little letters will define my life over the next three months: OOO - Out of Office. This term sounds really technical. It doesn't give you a clue to what I am up to. But I do have a little bit of a plan ;). Also, I am not just OOO. Thanks to your generosity, this season has a much better name: sabbatical. This sounds so much more purposeful.

I am very excited about this time away and eager for the experiences I will make. My plans include a lot of traveling, on my own (thanks to my husband, Tilman) and with my family.

More than anything, I am excited to see what comes my way—I do not have a stack of books I need to work through nor have I signed up to learn a new craft or sport. If I learn to sleep in again during these three months, I will be very happy and return to you on Monday, August 17, hugely refreshed!

Thank you again for your gift of these three months! I will cherish them!

God bless you,
Pr Friederike



The Rev. Friederike Wekel,
Associate Pastor

Preview Women's Retreat: FOCUS

This topic vaguely swam through my mind all last year. It was so hard to focus. To concentrate. To just do one thing at a time. To enjoy what I was doing in that one moment. When I challenged myself to focus more, I was surprised how much determination it required to just do one thing. My main, but by far not only tempter, was of course my phone.



This Fall I want to think about that topic with you at our Women's Retreat.

What are our distractions? What helps us focus? What happens when we focus and set time apart to doing just that?

Because of our 75th anniversary, the Women's Retreat has moved from our September date to Saturday, October 17 at Grace Lutheran Church.

I am looking forward to focusing with you on FOCUS,
Pr Friederike

SUMMER

Around this time of year, I often find myself thinking about seasons. Our high school seniors and college graduates are closing one chapter and stepping into new adventures. Some of our youth and college students are heading off to work at camps this Summer. Kids are wrapping up the school year and looking ahead to new teachers in the Fall. Pastor Friederike is beginning her sabbatical for rest and renewal. The weather is getting warmer. Calendars are filling up. We can feel a new season approaching.



Emily King-Nobles
Children, Youth, and
Young Adult Ministry

With these changes, can come a sense of unease. What's next? Will I enjoy the new season? There can be grief over the season that is ending. I think back to this time last year, when I was preparing to graduate college and move across the country into a season filled with unknowns.

As seasons change, I find myself reflecting back to the promises we have in scripture. There is sadly no promise that every season will bring us joy. Or that we will never have fear in the unknown. However, we can cling to the promises that do exist. Ecclesiastes 3:11 promises that God makes everything beautiful in God's time. Ecclesiastes 3: 1 reminds us that there is a time and season for everything, from planting and uprooting to weeping and laughing to mourning and dancing. In time, we will feel it all. In Psalm 23, we read, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me." My prayer is that we all find comfort in these promises.

As many of our programs pause for the Summer, I encourage you to find ways to keep your faith alive and your cup overflowing at home. Here are a few ideas to try:

- If you are traveling over a Sunday, find a new church to explore in that community
- Host a weekly "gratitude cafe" with family or friends — share a drink and your gratitudes from the week
- Try out new meal time prayers (bonus points if you write your own!)
- Walk the Labyrinth with family or friends
- Watch a sunset or go stargazing and celebrate the natural beauty of the world

I'm looking forward to a wonderful Summer with you all, a meaningful High School trip to the Western States Youth Gathering, and all that will lead us into our Rally Day programming kick-off in September!

Blessings,
Emily

PHOTOS:

top to bottom, left to right

- US Women's National Team Soccer Game with Young Adult Group
- Confirmation Group Golf Outing
- Children's Sunday School Fun
- High School SPSYC Retreat
- High School Rock Climbing
- Communion Class
- Wednesday Youth Group



SOME IMPORTANT DATES TO SAVE:

Children & Family

- June 14-19: Children's Summer Camp at Mt Cross
- August 9: Blessing of Bikes & Backpacks
- August 28-30: Grace Goes to Mt Cross

Middle & High School

- June 3, 7-8:30 pm: Celebrate the end of the school year at Salt & Straw Palo Alto
- August 9: Blessing of Bikes & Backpacks
- August 28-30: Grace Goes to Mt Cross

High School

- June 22: 7-8:30pm Laser Tag at LaserMaxx San Carlos
- June 25-July 1: Summer Trip-Western States Youth Gathering (WSYG) at Cal Lutheran
- August 9: WSYG BBQ & Trip Report
- August 28-30: Grace Goes to Mt Cross

Young Adults

- June 17, 7-9pm: TopGolf San Jose
- July 30: Event TBD
- August 9: Blessing of Bikes & Backpacks
- August 28-30: Grace Goes to Mt Cross



SANCTUARY IMPROVEMENTS IN OUR ANNIVERSARY YEAR!

Don't miss the Forum's on Sunday May 31, and June 7 in the sanctuary! Grace is 75 years old, and the sanctuary was built 65 years ago. Remarkable! Think of all of the worship services and other events that have happened in that amazing space. We have been blessed to receive a couple of very generous and unexpected gifts over the last year that are allowing us to consider improvements in this anniversary year that we would not have been able to accomplish otherwise!



What kind of improvements? Two have already been accomplished or are underway! Through a generous gift from the Zepp family we have relocated the organ console from the loft to the front of the sanctuary, dramatically changing Tim's ability to lead us in worship and song. We also received a very generous gift that is allowing us to completely overhaul our audio visual system! We are several weeks (not that far!) away from accomplishing that update. We have also put a screen in the front of the sanctuary that is not so much for worship leadership, but to communicate more powerfully about upcoming and past events. On Sundays when it is used, it will rise and come down for the two minutes we need it...otherwise it's not there!

The last two items will be a bit more of a journey. They have to deal with seating in the front of the sanctuary (the *front six rows*) and then the carpeting. You may have noticed that the carpeting is a bit tired at this point. (That tends to happen after 25 years!) Also, having the floor (which is HUGE) deaden the acoustics in the space works directly against our worship life. Think of all those churches in other countries that you've visited...that are carpeted...(they are not). Read the associated piece here from Concordia Publishing (1986), a pamphlet entitled "Acoustics in the Worship Space." Note the photo there from Pr Friederike on her first church visit in Lausanna. Note the floor, which is historically much closer to Grace's original configuration. My last congregation made this exact transition in flooring, and the improvement in worship was dramatic.

The seating and the flooring will involve potential initial steps that we will live with for a period of time to get a better feel for the right path. For example, having a couple rows of chairs that link together and whose backs create a continuous pew-like affect allows for an honest trial...that could lead to a few more for flexibility in the front, or instead to relocation to the chapel. And as far as our carpeting is concerned, it could be removed and after learning the new acoustical environment we can discern what final steps would be appropriate. The carpeting at this point may not be quite fully depreciated.... but profoundly. These coming Forums are not the end of a conversation, but rather the start of a journey. See you there!

If you would like to be involved this Fall in follow-up conversations on this sanctuary improvement journey, contact Pr Matt at pastormatt@gracepa.org

Acoustics in the Worship Space, 1986

Scott R. Riedel – Concordia Publishing

The floor is typically the building surface that is largest and nearest to worshipers and musicians. It is important that the floor be reflective of sound, particularly near musicians, since it provides the first opportunity for much sound energy to be reinforced. Carpet is an inappropriate floor covering in the worship space; it is acoustically counterproductive to the needs of the worshipers.



The mood of warmth and elegance that carpeting sometimes provides can also be provided

with acoustically reflective flooring such as quarry tile or wood that is of warm color and high quality. The notion that the worshiper covers the floor surface, making its material composition acoustically unimportant is false. The large floor area of the worship space has great acoustical influence. Appropriate floor materials include slate, quarry tile, sealed wood, brick, stone, ceramic tile, terrazzo, and marble.

Wall and Ceiling. Durable, hard-surfaced walls and ceiling are also essential for good acoustical reflections. The ceiling is potentially the largest uninterrupted surface and therefore should be used to reinforce tone. Large expanses of absorptive acoustical ceiling tile are to be strictly avoided. Appropriate wall or ceiling materials include hard plaster, drywall of substantial thickness, sealed woods, glazed brick, stone, med and painted concrete block, marble, and rigidly mounted wood paneling.

WELCOME TO SUMMER!



Tim Getz
Music Ministry

We are entering the time of year when our choirs and bell choir take a much-deserved break, and in their absence, the voice of the congregation becomes the primary musical expression of the church. I would suggest that this is always the case, but it becomes even more obvious when the more rehearsed musical features of worship are missing. One of the most significant changes to worship made by Martin Luther and his followers at the time of the Reformation was the encouragement of greater participation by the congregation, particularly in singing. Assembly song was also important for John Wesley and his Methodist movement in England in the 18th century. In a time closer to our own, the documents published by the Roman Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council call for full, conscious, active participation of the full congregation in the liturgy, just as the Lutherans had already figured out some centuries before.

Every Methodist hymnal printed since 1761 has contained John Wesley's "Directions for Singing" in its introductory section. We all can still learn from this great revivalist preacher and musician; here is a sampling of some of his remarks:

- **Sing all.** See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.
- **Sing lustily and with a good courage.** Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be not afraid of your voice, nor ashamed of its being heard.
- **Sing modestly.** Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation; but strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear and melodious sound.
- **Sing in time.** Whatever time is sung be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it; but attend close to the leading voices, and move therewith as exactly as you can.
- **Above all sing spiritually.** Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing God more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.

To John Wesley's remarks I would just add a couple of other thoughts:

- **Sit near each other!** If you can hear other people, you'll never feel like you're singing a solo. John Bell, a Presbyterian minister from Scotland who is an expert in congregational singing writes: "If you sit more than three feet away from someone you'll not sing in case they hear you. If you sit closer than three feet you will sing because you hear them. (Moral: always take a measuring tape to church.)" Acoustics make a difference, too. In resonant spaces the collective voice is amplified, and



individual voices meld into the whole. I'm excited already to discover how we will sing better together when the sound-absorptive aging green carpet is removed from our worship space!

- **Don't worry if you don't know the song!** Some people learn music best by reading the notes, others learn best by listening to a verse or several before singing. Whatever works for you, jump in whenever you feel comfortable. Don't worry about getting every note right, don't worry if your voice "cracks," don't worry if you have to jump octaves mid-tune. We're all in this together!

A fun, relaxed, informal way to practice singing will be our next episode of **BEER AND HYMNS**—Friday, July 3 at 5:30 pm! We'll have both beer and non-alcoholic beverages available. I choose the first 3 or 4 hymns to get us started, and maybe share a brief story or fun historical fact about the music in our hymnal. Then it's an open sing: you call out the hymn numbers and we'll enthusiastically sing YOUR favorites! Dale Loepp will cook dinner for us and we'll end at about 7:30, full and happy. A free-will offering is collected to defray the cost of the food and beverages. All ages welcome; bring only yourself (and friends), and be ready to sing!

When we sit together and sing together, we build community with one another. It's a wonderful feeling! I'm excited to worship with you and sing with you this summer!

SING
sing

LOOKING BACK— L



MEN'S RETREAT 2026

2026 saw our second annual Men's Retreat more than DOUBLE from 2025! Over 30 men gathered up at Mt Cross and had a profound time in community, having great food, and making a difference on the campus. Mark your calendar for next year's retreat, again the last weekend of April, the 23rd-25th.



LOOKING FORWARD



SENIOR QUILT SUNDAY

Each year we send our graduating seniors out into the world wrapped in the love of Grace—literally. Our dedicated volunteers stitch a custom quilt with loving care for each student to remind them that they are precious members of our community for as they move forward on their journey.

TOP: Graduating Seniors (from left to right) with Pastor Matt and Emily Sara van Valkenburg, Annika Kulawik, Aliena Romahn, Jonah Laaker

Bottom: *"You go forth surrounded in love."*

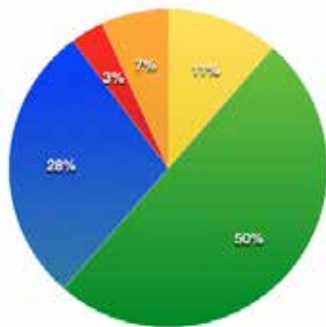
STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE SEASON UPDATE!

We are so close! As of the writing of this article, we have 83 pledges in hand and are hoping for another dozen or more to round out our pledge cycle this year! There is a LOT to celebrate, and yet some challenges remain in these curious times. (If you have not yet pledged, please use the QR Code here to do so!)



Celebrating!

- Of these 83 pledges . . . 10 are new! That's our largest number since 2018!
- Just over 50% of our pledges are increases from last year as opposed to last year's 40%!
- Less than 4% of this year's pledges are down from previous year compared to last year's 13%!
- *We are anticipating another budget that will be the largest in Grace's 75 year history!*
- **WOW!!**



Challenges:

- We have had a few more removals from our pledge list in the last year than our average. Between deaths and relocations this tends to go up and down from year to year. This year is not terribly unusual, just on the higher end of average.
- This last year's budget assumed a deficit and so we will want to be conservative in our budgeting this coming year. In essence we are building a new budget while standing in a small, but manageable, ditch.
- We have not yet received all of the pledges we are looking for, and while the response so far is full of almost endless good news, we will continue to have a conservative view of the new year until we hear back from everyone.
- 'Conservative' in our budget context means that with insurance and utilities and any number of hard baked expenses we will want to be cautious in adding voluntary increases to fixed elements of the budget. The largest of these items is staff compensation.

As the world around us feels a little chaotic, our leadership is wanting to make sure we are being good stewards of your generosity towards the ministry of Grace Lutheran Church. We have so much to celebrate already and are looking forward to a successful conclusion to our campaign.



2026/2027 Stewardship Program

Thank you all!



GOODBYE FROM THE GRACE LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

It is now June 2026, and the time for us to say our goodbyes. At the end of May, the last group of preschool children ended the school year with a family and grand-friends popsicle party out in the play yard. We said goodbye to each other and to a place that has been special to many children and their families.

When Mary Carlson, the founder and first director of the Grace Lutheran Preschool, opened the classroom door to welcome the first group of children, no one could have imagined that the same classroom door would remain open and welcome children for over five decades.

Together, let's celebrate the gift of childhood.

With gratitude,
Gina and Felicity
Co-Directors, Grace Lutheran Preschool



CANOPY



Thank you

With your help, the Sunday School classes raised \$750—enough to plant and care for six trees where people need them the most, growing the urban forest and creating greener, healthier communities!



“Silicon Valley Allied for the Common Good” (SVACG) was founded in November of 2024 with Sierra Pacific Synod Bishop Jeff Johnson participating. We are a non-partisan network of civic associations, faith-based organizations and nonprofits that come together to effect change on a larger scale than we could alone. We identify shared issues affecting our communities, such as housing insecurity, mental health issues and closing the technology divide. We build long-term relationships across lines that often divide us. We help regular people have a seat at the decision-making tables of Silicon Valley.

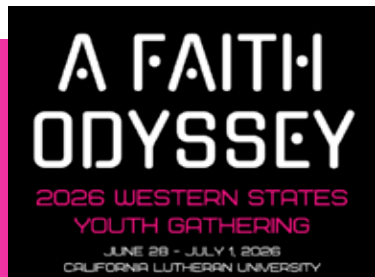


Two items we are currently working on:

- 1) Federal funding cuts are predicted to affect healthcare access for every resident of our county. SVACG has two upcoming Healthcare Safety Net Civic Academies to learn about the impacts and what we can do to make a difference. (Registration Link: <https://www.siliconvalleyallied.org/calendar>)
- 2) In several parts of the San Jose there are safety concerns, so SVACG has organized meetings with residents and the San Jose Police Department.

Grace’s Council has invited exploration of SVACG to determine if it is a fit for our community. To this end an Adult Forum will feature a session with Liz Hall our lead organizer. If you are interested in learning more, please phone me. I would be happy to meet with you. John Sullivan, +1 650-704-9658.

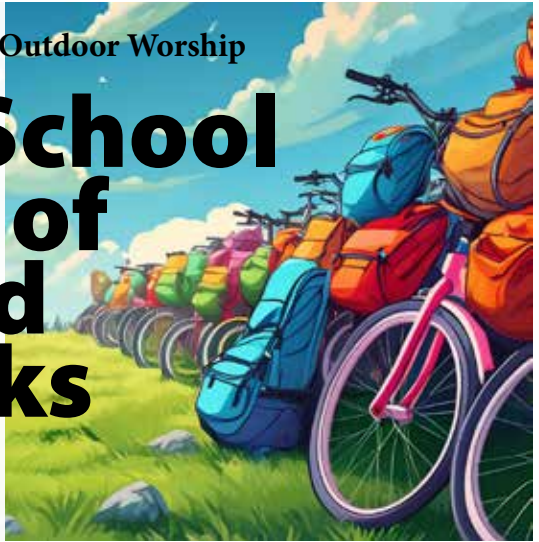
Support the summer youth trip by filling an envelope (in the narthex) with the stock amount shown and returning it to Grace by June 22 or by using the QR code to the right = = = = = > > > > > > Then, **save the date for our trip recap and stockholders lunch on **August 9** after the second service. Thank you!**



Sunday, August 9 | 10:45 am | Outdoor Worship

Back to School Blessing of Bikes and Backpacks

*NOT just for kids!



Annual Meeting of the Congregation

Sunday, August 23, 2026 | 9:30 am (between services)

Staff and Program Reports, Council Elections, 25/26 Financial Reports, 26/27 Budget Adoption, Nominating Committee Election



CONNECTIONS CAFÉ

Light refreshments (cookies, snacks, coffee, tea) & conversation

2-3pm in the Emmaus Room | **SECOND** and **FOURTH** Thursdays



After a summer pause, Connections Café will resume meeting on **Thursday, August 13**. Just two weeks later, on **Thursday, August 27**, Pastor Friederike will share a bit about her sabbatical adventures. Mark your calendar for August 13 and August 27—we can't wait to welcome you back!

COUNCIL

Dear Friends,

What a wonderful (church) year this has been.

As we move into summer, I want to take a moment to reflect on all that has happened at Grace these past months, and to share what is ahead.

First, our 75th year stewardship campaign: the response has yet again been humbling, and it is thanks to the generosity of this congregation that we can continue to offer the many programs that contribute to the vibrancy of our faith community. If you have not yet had a chance to pledge, I warmly invite you to do so. Every pledge makes a real difference as the Finance Committee and Council finalize the budget for the year ahead.

Alongside so much growth, we are also holding some bittersweet news: after 51 years, Grace Lutheran Preschool will be closing its doors following their last week in early June. The preschool has been a beloved part of our campus and our neighborhood, and we will take time to honor that legacy during the 10:45 service on June 7, with a small celebration to follow. Please join us if you can.

On the campus side, a lot has been happening. In the sanctuary, we now have a new projector and screen for video, a brand-new audio-visual system, and pew chairs on order as a partial trial for more flexible seating in the forward part of the sanctuary (expected to arrive in August). We have also been addressing various maintenance needs, including roof repairs and replacing a stained glass window to keep campus in good shape.

The Capital Campaign IV landscaping project continues to move forward. We are now into the construction drawing phase, which will refine the project scope and prepare us to submit to the city. We expect to break ground on hardscape construction this fall, with planting in spring. The goal being a beautiful, transformed courtyard in time for Easter 2026.

The Endowment Committee once again awarded grants to support our community this year. Recipients include internal grants towards our organs and the new folding rocking chairs, and external grants to Mt. Cross, ELCA Global Refuge, Manzanita Works, and First Place for Youth.

After a rich season that included confirming 10 confirmants, Pastor Friederike is now on a well-deserved sabbatical and will return in August. We look forward to welcoming her back refreshed.

Finally, a warm thank you to Barbara Larsen who has expertly managed our rental property on St. Claire with tremendous care over many years, we are deeply grateful. Gerrie Philipps is now taking over, and we are lucky to have her continue the good work - which includes welcoming new tenants to the property, with some timely upgrades made between tenancies that will serve us and future tenants well.

Enjoy the summer. We look forward to gathering again in the fall, starting with the Annual Meeting on August 23 between services.

Peace, Yvonne



Yvonne Baur,
Council President

Council:

Yvonne Baur
(President)

Joachim Klein
(Vice President)

Chris Dunlap
(Secretary)

Steve Baird

Eric Brudos

Tom Cutler

Barbara Erickson

Anna Girsén

Eric Mellum

Sumitha Pauli

Bradley Starleaf

Ilse Wiechers



Grace Lutheran Church

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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.



Broadcast on Cable 75

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



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