ADVENT/CHRISTMAS/EPIPHANY 2026/2027 ISSUE 2701 #GRACENOTES

GRACENOTES

A SEASONAL PUBLICATION OF

Grace Lutheran Church

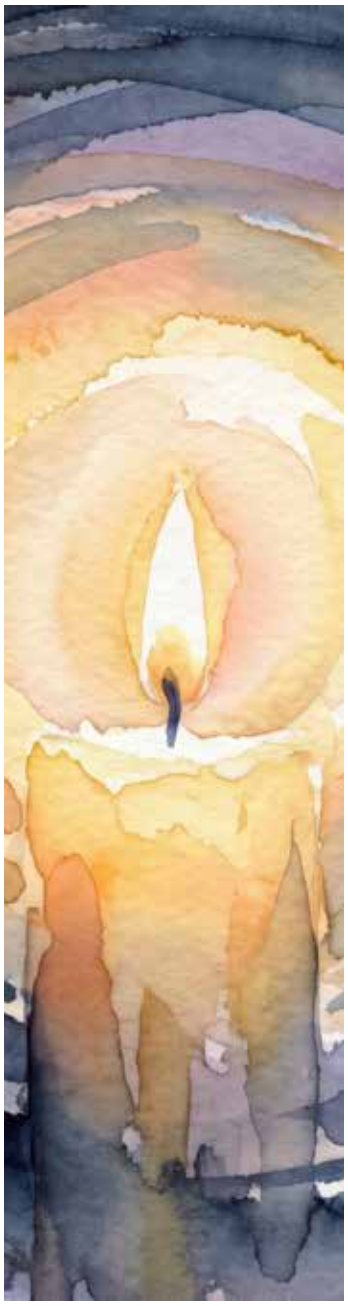
Palo Alto, California



FROM DARK TO LIGHT | FROM DEATH TO LIFE



What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. John 1:3b-5



I am the kind of person that experiences the fall time change in a fairly strong way. Once it happens, I start thinking at 4 p.m. that it's time for bed, and it takes an unreasonable amount of time for me to snap out of that. To be fair, I come from a long line of proud nappers, and any excuse for a little sleep is seen as valid! However, the shortness of the day, the fading light, and sometimes the gloom of the world can feel like a physical weight on all of us.

Perhaps it's because of this that Advent is one of my favorite seasons of the church year. For me, the growing darkness at this time of year resonates most strongly with our human condition, our frailty. When Winter and Advent/Christmas/Epiphany come together to remind us of the challenges of this life that wear us down, it can be deeply spiritually profound. Advent is a time of preparation, but we can get lost in a singular focus on the coming big 'holiday'…Holy Day…Christmas. It is important that we do not rush. We move one day at a time. A great joke I heard a while back is "The War on Christmas cannot end until Christmas stops its illegal occupation of November!" As a pastor…I would say "The War on Christmas cannot end until Christmas stops its illegal occupation of Advent!"

Advent is inherently a season of waiting. So, we wait. It is a season of darkness, and so we become quiet and mindful of the smallness of our lives in the great universe of stars so visible this time of year. It is a season of expectation, and so we begin to long for the light and warmth of the coming sun/Son.

In this time, do not rush, do not leap to Christmas, take a moment to be still and light a candle as we remember the promise of coming light. Our hope for years to come. Our hope from everlasting.

Peace,



Pr. Matt ❖

Cover photo: Christmas 2025









SENIOR PASTOR

Rev. Matthew Smuts

pastormatt@gracepa.org

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Rev. Friederike Wekel

pastorf@gracepa.org

MUSIC

Tim Getz

tim@gracepa.org

CHILDREN, YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS

Emily King-Nobles

emily@gracepa.org

ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER

Gretchen Rauch

office@gracepa.org

NEXT ISSUE:

Lent/Easter 2027

PUBLICATION DEADLINE:

January 21,2027

(end of day)


Pastor Matt & Mariel invite you to . . .
Christmas
Open House
AT THE PARSONAGE
Sunday, December 13
4–7pm


SUNDAY
DEC
13
Lantern Lit Labyrinth Walk at 6:30 pm | Evening Prayer in the style of Taizé at 7:00 pm


Please RSVP
SCAN with PHONE
lifetogether
WEDNESDAYS
Christmas Dinner
Wednesday, December 16 | 6-7pm
All are welcome!



Christmas with Grace

Thursday, December 24

4:00 pm ***(music begins at 3:45)***

6:00 pm ***(music begins at 5:45)***

Friday, December 25 | 10:00 am

Sunday, December 27 | 10:00 am

ON COURAGE, HEROES, AND HOPE

The Rev. Friederike Wekel,
Associate Pastor



"Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." (1 Corinthians 16:13-14)

There is something about the words "Be courageous!" that makes me a little uncomfortable. Courage is something we admire in others, especially when we look back at history. We tell stories about people who stood up against injustice, who spoke out when others remained silent, who risked something for what they believed was right. And we like to think that, had we been in their shoes, we would have done the same.

During the last couple of weeks, running up to the midterms, I heard it again, the word I never hear in German politics: Hero. US-American culture has a particular fascination with heroes. The extraordinary individual who rises above everyone else, who stands alone against overwhelming odds, who saves the day, is celebrated. From superheroes on the big screen to the heroes of US-American national history, the focus of the society frequently gets taken up by stories of exceptional (usually male) people doing exceptional things. And perhaps that is part of what makes courage so intimidating. If being courageous means being a hero, most of us probably don't feel particularly qualified.

But I wonder whether the fascination with extraordinary heroes sometimes makes us overlook the courage of ordinary people. The person who speaks up when someone is treated unfairly. The neighbor who refuses to look away when someone is struggling. The friend who has a difficult conversation rather than remaining silent. None of these actions will make headlines. There may be no applause, no recognition, and certainly no guarantee of success. And yet, they require courage. Because courage looks a little different when it is asked of us, here and now. When speaking up might cost us something. When standing firm means standing against the opinion of others. When we don't know whether our actions will make any difference at all.

And then there is hope. Another word we use frequently, especially during Advent. We light candles, sing about hope, and wait for the coming of Christ. But what exactly are we hoping for? That things will get better? That the problems of our world will somehow resolve themselves? That God will intervene?

I wonder whether we sometimes confuse hope with optimism. Optimism is the expectation that things will turn out well. Hope, at least the Christian understanding of it, is something different. Hope does not require us to believe that everything will be fine. Hope allows us to see the brokenness of the world, to acknowledge the suffering and injustice around us, and still believe that this is not the end of the story.

And maybe that is where courage and hope meet: Hope allows us to believe that the world can be different. Courage asks us to act on that belief. Hope without courage risks becoming wishful thinking.

Let all that you do be done in love.



Courage without hope risks becoming a fight without direction. We need both. And perhaps that is what Paul is asking of us: not to wait until the world changes, but to find the courage to be part of that change, trusting that God is already at work.

The Christmas story offers a rather different picture of heroism than the one we are used to. Jesus is born into a world of political oppression, poverty, and fear. His family will become refugees, fleeing the violence of a ruler who fears losing his power. And yet, it is into this very world that God chooses to come. Not with an army, not with political power, not

as the kind of hero who conquers his enemies, but as a vulnerable child. And the people surrounding this child are hardly the heroes we would expect, either. A young woman who says yes to an uncertain future. A man who chooses to stand by her despite what others might think. Shepherds who leave their flocks to see what God is doing. Ordinary people who find themselves part of an extraordinary story.

During Epiphany, we remember the wise men who followed a star, not knowing exactly where it would lead them. They had to trust that the journey was worth taking. And when they encountered Herod, they chose not to cooperate with his plans. They went home by another road. I think there is courage in that, too. The courage to take another road, even when the familiar one might be easier. The courage to refuse to participate in something that is wrong, even when the person asking holds power. They did not overthrow Herod. They did not save the world in one heroic act. But they made a choice. And that choice mattered.

Perhaps we need to rethink what makes someone a hero. Not extraordinary strength or fearlessness, but the willingness to do what is right even when we are afraid. Not the ability to change the whole world, but the willingness to change something in the small part of the world entrusted to us.

Paul's words end with a sentence that I think we should not overlook: "Let all that you do be done in love."

Maybe that is the measure of both our courage and our hope. Not whether we are fearless, not whether we are certain of the outcome, not whether anyone will ever call us heroes, but whether love for our neighbor moves us to act.

And maybe that is what it means to live as people of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany: to see the world as it is, to trust that God has not abandoned it, and to find the courage to be part of God's work in it. Not as extraordinary heroes, but as ordinary people who, with God's help, find the courage to do extraordinary things in everyday life.

Pr. Friederike

PS: Courage will be the topic of our Spring Women's Retreat at Mt. Cross from March 5–7, 2027. Keep your eyes peeled for signups!

Pr. Friederike ❖

UPDATE: ROSTERING PROCESS FOR THE ELCA

One of the results of my sabbatical was the intention to finally switch from being a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany to the roster of the ELCA. Grace had called me in 2019 under a letter of extended services.

This project is now well underway and requires theological essays, psychological forms and interviews, and a final assessment by the candidacy committee of the Sierra-Pacific Synod on February 5, 2027, in Fairfield. The candidacy committee will make a decision that same day, and—God willing—I will become a pastor on the roster of the ELCA. If that is the case, Grace Lutheran will have to extend a new call to me through the process of a congregational meeting.

I am very thankful for Grace to support me in this process through paying the rostering fee of $1,000 to the Sierra-Pacific Synod from the Seminary Scholarship Fund (Council just decided on that in November).

I really appreciate your prayers during this time.

Warmly,

Pr. Friederike

WOMEN'S NIGHT OUT

December – Favorites Party: It's been a while since our last one and it is time to repeat it! We are having a favorites party. How it works: Bring three identical items that cost between $5-8/item. What should you choose? Something you really like and want to share. You will go home that evening with three different items from three different women.



I am looking forward to this, our own small Christmas party. We will meet in the Emmaus Room (unless someone wants to host - please contact me!). **12/3, 7-9 pm.**

January – No Women's Night Out

February – Service Project for Covenant House: On February 4, 2027, when we meet for the first time in 2027, we are planning to do a service project for Covenant House. More information will be sent out as we get closer.



Each year we partner with Ecumenical Hunger Program (EHP) to provide Christmas presents for families who might not otherwise receive any.

To participate in the Angel Tree Project:

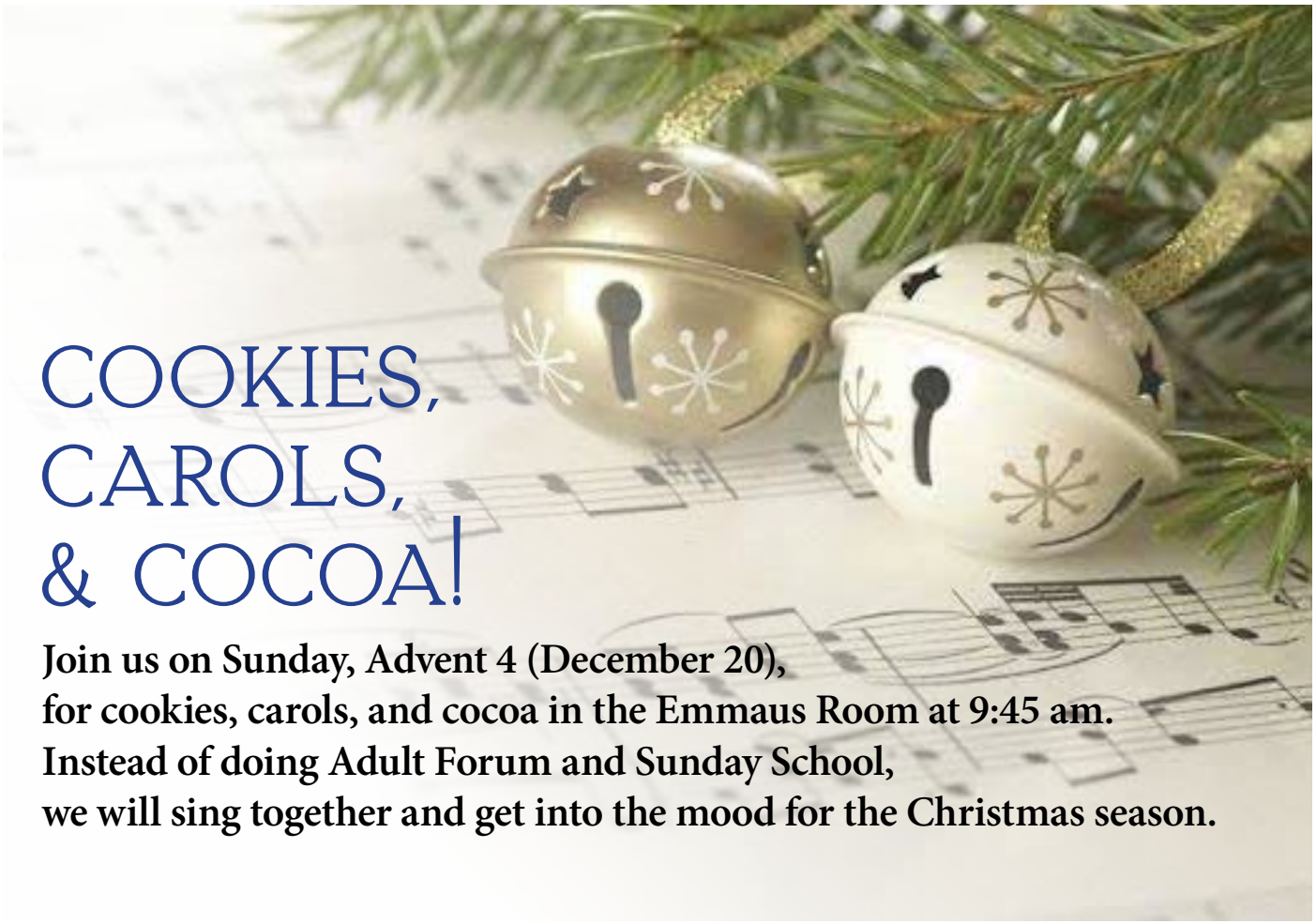
Sign up using the link on the GraceConnect page to select the people you wish to shop for. Please remember their names and numbers! Then follow the link to the gift suggestions for your choices.

Please select and purchase one or two gifts per person. In order to ensure that family members receive roughly equivalent gifts, plan to spend about $30-$50 total, per person.

Wrap your gift and securely attach a gift tag with the # of your person . Gift cards can be placed in a sealed envelope, labeled with the gift tag number. Gift receipts are requested, as they facilitate exchanges, but are not required.

Please deliver your gift(s) to church NO LATER than Sunday morning, December 13, so that they can be delivered on time. Remember the name of the person you picked so that you can continue to pray for them.

Thank you for your generous demonstration of God's love!



COOKIES, CAROLS, & COCOA!

**Join us on Sunday, Advent 4 (December 20),
for cookies, carols, and cocoa in the Emmaus Room at 9:45 am.
Instead of doing Adult Forum and Sunday School,
we will sing together and get into the mood for the Christmas season.**





Tuesdays | 7:00 am | Palo Alto Café

Men's Breakfast

Thursdays | at 1:00 pm in the library

Bible Study

CONNECTIONS CAFÉ

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

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



On **December 10**, we will continue our longstanding tradition of **singing Christmas Carols** with Tim. If you have Christmas Cookies that you like to share (home made or store bought), bring them!

Our meeting on **January 14**, will be all about fulfilling your New Years resolution on eating better: **A nutritionist will be our guest** and answer all our questions about what we should and shouldn't eat.

Our second January meeting on **January 28**, will be with Marilyn Aden. She will share "**About my week in Oxford**" - an interesting class she took last summer. And on our last Connections Café before we start into Lent, on February 11, will be making and writing Valentine's Cards for guests at the "Heart & Home"-Project and homebound members of our own congregation ❖

SO MUCH TO SING ABOUT!



Tim Getz,
Director of Music

So much to sing about,
so much to praise you for,
so much I cannot live without,
and so much more:
at which display of majesty
the very stones are moved to shout.[1]

This text by the 20th century American Lutheran hymnwriter Jaroslav Vajda (1919-2008) has always resonated with me, and although it is not seasonally-specific, the Advent/Christmas/Epiphany season we are about to enter does seem particularly packed with songs and reasons to sing them!

I'd like to call your attention to just a few noteworthy musical moments that'll be coming up over the next couple of months:

Our usual service of evening prayer in the style of Taizé will take place on Sunday, December 13 at 7 pm. As an added feature this month, we will have a hosted labyrinth walk at 6:30, where you will also have the opportunity to create harmony with one of several handbells that will be placed around the labyrinth. The bells will be selected ahead of time in a scale pattern that harmonizes beautifully while the bells are being rung randomly… no special musical knowledge or talent required! I'll give a brief introduction before we begin. I think this meditative walk will provide a magical sonic environment under the twinkling lights that brighten our sanctuary during the Advent season.

I'm particularly excited about the music our choir is preparing for Christmas Eve this year! We will be singing *Carols and Lullabies: Christmas in the Southwest*, by California composer Conrad Susa (1935-2013). This is a collection of carols from various parts of the Spanish- and Catalan-speaking world, accompanied by a unique instrumental ensemble of harp, guitar, and marimba. It's utterly charming music, as the composer writes, "like a Southwestern piñata party for the new baby!" As the music comes to its conclusion, the infant's parents "must dandle and soothe him to sleep. Tired themselves, they drift off as the angels hover about them in protective adoration."[2] We'll be singing these carols in English translation and will be starting at 3:45 and 5:45 pm on Christmas Eve, Thursday, December 24. You won't want to miss it; come early to get a good seat!

Finally, the ever-popular Beer and Hymns will return on Friday, January 15 at 5:30 pm. It's nothing fancy, just a fridge full of beer and assorted soft drinks, a cart full of hymnals, and a room full of friends who enjoy this counter-cultural but super fun group activity: singing together! We typically gather and chat with each other for 15-20 minutes, then sing for about 45 minutes, and conclude with a delicious home-cooked meal, prepared by Dale Loepp. The evening ends around 7:30. The nights in January can be long and dark. Brighten one evening by giving Beer and Hymns a try!



Here's a hymn from our hymnal that hasn't been in our repertoire, by contemporary poet Susan Palo Cherwien (1953-2021). It's my Advent prayer for you and everyone we encounter during this holy season:

As the dark awaits the dawn,
so we await your light.
O Star of promise, scatter night,
loving bright,
till shades of fear are gone.

Shine your future on this place,
enlighten every guest,
that through us stream your holiness,
bright and blest;
come dawn, O Sun of grace.[3]

[1]Jaroslav Vajda, "So Much to Sing About," ©1989, Concordia Publishing House

[2]Conrad Susa, preface to *Carols and Lullabies: Christmas in the Southwest*, ©1993, E. C. Schirmer Music Company Inc., a division of ECS Publishing Group

[3]Susan Palo Cherwien, "As the Dark Awaits the Dawn" (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship* #261), ©1996, Augsburg Fortress

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Christmas with Grace

Thursday, December 24
4:00 pm ***(music begins at 3:45)***
6:00 pm ***(music begins at 5:45)***

Friday, December 25 | 10:00 am

Sunday, December 27 | 10:00 am



MAKING SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

Emily King-Nobles



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

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.
Isaiah 43:19

One of my favorite Christmas traditions is one that started back in 2020: a Zoom gingerbread house contest. Over the past six years, it has grown to include many of my extended family and friends. Since many of us cannot gather physically over the holidays, it has become a wonderful way to reconnect, tell stories, and create gingerbread houses together. My brothers and I usually team up to create a house. It truly is one of the most joyful parts of the season for me.

As I reflect on this tradition, I think about the process. We draft plans. Scavenge through the cupboards looking for supplies. Change our plans depending on what we find. Work on the house. And then change our plans again as we watch the gingerbread turn into something completely different. At the end of the allotted time, we can only hope that all the various candies and pieces have come together to create something beautiful. . .and that the walls will stay up.

Isn't this how life is, too? Plans we made at 16 look different by 25. Dreams change. The world breaks our hearts. But through it all, we have to start somewhere. One piece at a time. We do our best to turn our anger, fear, and pain into something beautiful, even when we cannot yet see what that beauty will look like.

As we navigate the unknown, may we hold space for all of our emotions. As the designs of our lives—and our gingerbread houses—change, we can hold sadness alongside optimism for what is to come. We can feel fear about the state of the world while also holding on to the faith we find in a baby born in a manger one winter night. We can experience joy during the holiday season while also carrying sorrow for those who are no longer present at our tables. May we become people who can befriend all of our emotions, trusting that we do not have to feel just one thing at a time.

So, this Advent season, as you decorate cookies or gingerbread houses, may you remain open to the ways your designs might change.

Blessings,
Emily ❖

UPCOMING:

Children, Youth, & Family

- **November 29, 11 am:** AdventFestival
  Stay after our single 10am service for activities, crafts and Lefse! Single 10am services will continue throughout advent.

Youth

- **December 4, 8-10 pm:** Winter Lodge Ice Skating (open to 6-12th graders).
- **December 9, 7-8:30 pm:** Special High School youth group night! Gingerbread House competition
- **December 16, 7-8:30 pm:** Special High School youth group night! White elephant Gift Exchange Christmas Party.
- **June 27-July 2:** ELCA National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis.
  The most epic week of Summer 2027! For all current 8-12th graders AND young adults. Contact Emily asap if you have not yet registered.

Young Adults

- **December 9, 3pm-7 pm:** Young Adults cooking Life Together dinner.
- **December 19, 12-5 pm:** Synod-Wide Mt Cross Retreat featuring a potluck lunch, Dungeons and Dragons, Christmas games and outdoor adventures in the beauty of the redwoods. ❖

PAST EVENTS:

What a wonderful fall it has been at Grace! We kicked off the programming year with Rally Day, welcoming everyone back to Sunday School and celebrating with a cookout and bounce house. Our Life Together evenings have continued to grow in both size and enthusiasm as we introduced a new children's choir, a children's after-dinner program (Kids Zone!), and an adult fellowship hour. Confirmation, High School Youth Group, and Adult Choir have also continued their regular schedules. It has been such a joy to see so many of you throughout the week, in addition to Sundays.

In October, we welcomed many families to Grace for an evening of Trunk or Treat and Halloween fun. We also enjoyed a wonderful fall retreat at Mt. Cross for elementary and middle school students, with 15 kids and two adults attending from Grace! Our young adult events this fall included a game night, boating trip, Halloween escape room, and Friendsgiving.

I have loved watching connections continue to form throughout all of our intergenerational programs. Our Children, Youth & Family Team (CYFT) is instrumental in doing a lot of work behind the scenes and planning for all of these wonderful events. Team—thank you for all you do!



Photos (clockwise from top left):
Rally Day fun with the bouncy slide! (x2); Children's choir meets in the Chapel; New Kid Zone activities on Wednesday nights; Trunk or Treat!; Mt. Cross Elementary/Middle School Retreat; Young Adult Fun x2!

Celebrating 75 YEARS of GRACE

Rooted and Rising













December 19 | 6:00 - 8:00 pm

KAUNEIMMAT JOULULAULUT - THE GREATEST CHRISTMAS CAROLS 2026

Join the Finnish Silicon Valley community again this year for their Finnish Christmas caroling on December 19, at 6 pm, followed by glögg and gingerbread after the concert. $10 pre-purchase (finlandiasf.org/events/), $15 at the door (children 12 and under are free).



For more inforrmation contact Gerrie Phillips:
gphillips@interorealestate.com
650-346-1022



LANDSCAPING PROJECT UPDATE!



As I write this article, we have come to the key decision moment. We are largely through the City of Palo Alto Planning Department and so have a better understanding of what they are requiring of us. This has two immediate implications.

First, the timeline now is dovetailing with this year's El Niño weather system. Avoiding the rain while installing pavers, in particular, is key. The consequence of this is that we will want to now wait likely until immediately following Easter to begin work. The good news is that we will have all city approvals in hand soon and can simply begin work. Also, this gives all of us individually a little time here before year-end to make sure our pledges to the capital campaign are up to date! We'll want as many resources as possible available when we start work! **Please let us know in the office if you have any questions about your pledge.**

Second, the city has requirements on our plans, as you might imagine. Making sure that our hard surfaces (nearly 11,000 sq.ft.) are permeable pavers and not simply concrete is great for water absorption, but is definitely more expensive. Our $400,000 vision from nearly two years ago will now meet the reality of inflation and the city-driven plan changes. We will need to sharpen our pencils and find the right path to maximize the project while making sure we have the resources necessary to accomplish it.

This is happening…and soon!

ENDOWMENT UPDATES

The Endowment Committee will be announcing the grant request process for 2027 in mid-January. Details to follow at that time but the process will be similar to last year.

The Endowment Committee has been updating the Endowment Fund's governing documents including the Charter, and various supporting investment and gifting policies. These have been presented to the Church Council and are currently under review. The Charter document will be presented to the congregation for final approval once the Council has recommended it.

Barbara Erickson

Chair, Grace Lutheran Church Endowment Committee

GRACE OUTDOORS

1. **December 5, 9:00 am:** (Rescheduled)

Russian Ridge Preserve Hike

Our longer hike option (6 mi, ~1,100 ft. elevation) will combine several trails at the beautiful Russian Ridge Preserve. Look for wildlife such as wild turkeys, vultures, hawks, coyotes, foxes, and deer.

Our more accessible path will take the beautiful Ancient Oaks trail out to the Ridge Trail for a gentler climb and a total hike length between 3.5-4 mi.

Both options begin and end at the **Mindego Parking Area on Alpine Road**. We'll grab a bite afterwards at **Alice's Restaurant in Woodside**



2. **January 23, 9:00 am:**

Huddart Park Hike

Grace Outdoors will experience this local gem for the first time as one group takes on the 7.3 mile Crystal Springs/Summit/Chinquapin loop with 1,440 ft. elevation gain, while a more accessible option along the Richards Fire Road (4.1 miles, 740 ft. elevation) will be available; the groups will stick together for the first two miles or so. **Because the trailhead is near Skyline Drive, we will meet at the Purisima Creek Redwoods Roadside Parking area**.

Lunch options TBD 1-2 weeks before the hike: Legendary Alice's Restaurant is a 10-minute drive away, whereas Freewheel Brewing Co. in Redwood City (30-minute drive, plenty of food options) would put hikers back near highways back to Peninsula destinations.

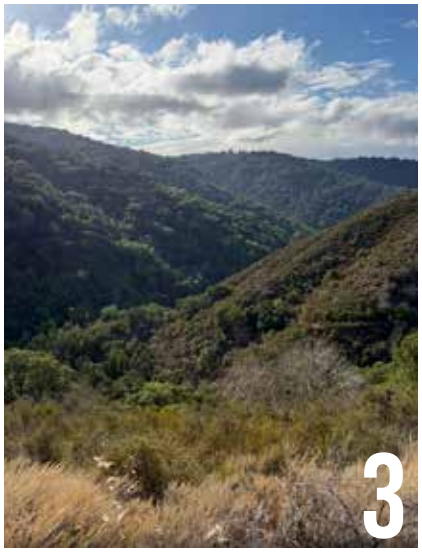


3. **February 20, 9:00 am:**

Rancho San Antonio Preserve Hike

A Grace Outdoors favorite – but we'll be taking a new set of trails this time, at least for our group! One group will follow the Rhus Ridge and Creek Trail Loop (7 miles, 1,574 ft. elevation) while a more accessible option including parts of the Hidden Villa trail (5.1 miles, 807 ft. elevation) starts at the same location. **We will meet at Rhus Ridge parking, and NOT the main parking lots for Rancho San Antonio**.

Those able to stay for lunch are welcome to join us at State of Mind Pizza, a downtown Los Altos institution located approximately 10-15 minutes from the Rhus Ridge Trailhead parking



Heart + Home collaborative

Help support our mission partner this December!

H+H serves local women without shelter by providing overnight sleeping space and meals at Palo Alto churches during the winter months. The host site during December is Covenant Presbyterian Church on East Meadow Drive. H+H is reaching out to the members of Grace to help in a couple of ways:

- **Provide a warm cooked meal for 10-15 people any night in December or**
- **Serve as a lead volunteer for four weeks (all Mondays, for instance). This includes serving the meal, distributing shelter resources to participants, and helping other volunteers to learn how the shelter works. Shifts are from 5:45 pm to 8:15 pm. Heart and Home will provide lead volunteer training on everything you need to know.**

You can see the available dinners slots online and you can learn more about becoming a lead volunteer by speaking with Bruce FitzGerald (650.245.6446) or emailing volunteers@hhcollab.org

NEWS FROM THE SOUTH SUDAN LUTHERAN CENTER



Through Grace's past Capital Campaigns, we have supported the Reconciliation Lutheran Church and Primary Health Care Clinic located in the capital Juba. Our gifts total more than $100,000 and were directed to equipment and improvements for the clinic, laboratory, and pharmacy.

In the past year, the Clinic has remained a lifeline for refugee families fleeing the conflict in neighboring Sudan. Due to the clinic's trusted reputation, doctor consultations rose 43% to 16,011. The clinic also administered 22,262 childhood vaccines, recorded 6,410 antenatal visits, and welcomed 1,284 babies in its 12-bed maternity.

In addition, the clinic hosted three fistula camps funded by Lutheran Disaster Response, providing free surgery and comprehensive care to 125 women referred from across South Sudan and neighboring regions. The camps reported a success rate of more than 90% and provided an opportunity to raise awareness about obstetric fistula and the need to treat women with dignity and compassion.

NEWS FROM DAL AL KALIMA UNIVERSITY



During the season of Advent as we turn our attention toward Bethlehem, Grace's Social Ministry Team asks that we keep our Palestinian mission partner Dar al-Kalima University (DAK) in our prayers. Founded in 2006 by the Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb and Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem, DAK was the first institution of higher education in Palestine focused on the performing arts, visual arts, and cultural heritage. Grace has been a steadfast supporter over the years through gifts to their U.S. non-profit, Bright Stars of Bethlehem.



While the main campus is located in Bethlehem, DAK also supports those living in Gaza by providing art therapy to children, families, and artists. Amid ongoing conflict, Gazan children face significant challenges that impact their emotional and psychological well-being. Art therapy serves as a vital tool for healing, enabling children to express their experiences and emotions creatively. This holistic approach not only helps them cope with trauma but also fosters personal development and resilience.

COUNCIL



Council:

Joachim Klein, President

Anna Girsen, Vice President

Chris Dunlap, Secretary

Eric Brucos, Treasurer

Kristin Andruska

Steve Baird

Barbara Erickson

Eric Mellum

Sumitha Pauli

Max Siegel

Bradley Starleaf

Jared Trubenstein

Joachim Klein,
Council President

Dear Friends,

Church Council started its new year this fall with some new faces. Please welcome **Kristin Andruska**, **Max Siegel,** and **Jared Trubenstein**, and welcome back **Barbara Erickson** for a second term. They join Steve Baird, Eric Brudos, Chris Dunlap, Anna Girsen, Eric Mellum, Sumitha Pauli, Bradley Starleaf, and me. Anna serves as Vice President, Chris as Secretary, and Eric Brudos as Treasurer. Our thanks go to Yvonne Baur, Tom Cutler, and Ilse Wiechers, who finished their terms this summer.

Here is an update on what Council has been working on this fall.

Updating the endowment charter. Council is currently reviewing the Endowment Fund's updated charter and policies, the result of careful work by the Endowment Committee. Once Council recommends the charter, it will come to the congregation for final approval. Barbara Erickson's update in this issue has more.

Building on the Annual Meeting. Your questions and ideas at this year's meeting were a gift, and we're putting them to work. Next year, we want to allow more time for input and conversation before the budget comes to the Annual Meeting.

Financial transition and strengthening processes. Good stewardship includes the work behind the scenes. Council member Max Siegel, a CPA, is working with Gretchen Rauch in the office and the Finance Committee to review how our financial processes work today, so that with Gretchen's retirement in June, we are prepared for transition and can keep our systems simple and efficient for the years ahead.

Staying connected. Council members serve as liaisons to ministry teams and carry ideas in both directions. This year Jared works with the Children, Youth, and Family Team, Chris with Social Ministry, and Barbara with the Endowment Committee.

A full fall at Grace. It has been a wonderful season. From our 75th anniversary celebration to Rally Day and Reformation Fest, our campus has been full of people of all ages, and Wednesday evenings are busier than they have been in years. It is a joy to see so much life at Grace.

As we look ahead to 2027, we do so with real hope. Grace begins its next 75 years with growing ministries, new faces, and a strong foundation, and we look forward to all that God has in store for us together.

On behalf of the Church Council, thank you for your faith, generosity, and partnership in God's work at Grace.

Peace,

Joachim Klein, Council President ❖

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 75

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