

MAY 2025 • VOLUME 24, NO. 5

I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Happy Easter, dear people of God. May these days be filled with joy in signs of new life emerging around us, and with the hope of Jesus' resurrection.

This Easter season, we give thanks to God for the gift of baptism — that we are named and claimed as God's beloved. We recently welcomed newly baptized siblings in Christ through the waters of baptism, and soon will witness our second-year confirmation students affirm their baptisms during worship.

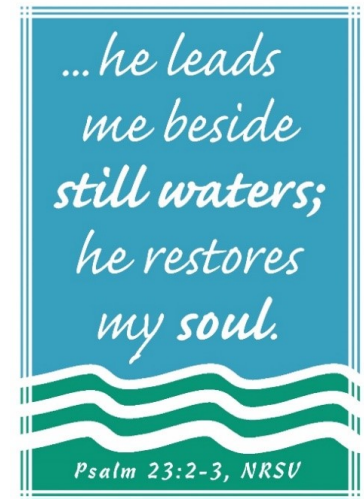
As God acts through word and water, we share in the promises of baptism. For young children, parents make these promises, and then each time we affirm our baptism, we publicly declare our intent to live into these commitments:

to live among God's faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

In worship, we respond to the invitation to continue in the covenant God made with us in baptism by saying, "I do, and I ask God to help and guide me." We say yes, *and* we call upon God's assistance and guidance.

This May, in the whirlwind of the endings and beginnings of this season, I invite you to consider each of these promises. Perhaps you'll add a daily review or maybe you will begin or end each week in prayerful reflection. Consider how you show up in community — giving and receiving care, encouragement, forgiveness, and support with others. When have you last dwelled in the word of God, and received Holy Communion? How do your words and actions share the good news of Jesus — so that others may see your good works and give glory to God? In what ways are you loving the way Jesus loves, in service to all? And how are you actively pursuing justice and peace in your life?

Beloved, we can't do this on our own. We cannot fully live out our faith without God's constant presence and the support of one another. Each of these baptismal promises are bold commitments that we trust will make a difference in our lives and in the world each time we strive to continue living into these promises. May God's leading and guiding be a blessing to you, and to all.



Peace,
Pastor Amanda

Prayers

Home Communion

If you are unable to gather for worship and would like communion to be brought to you at home, please reach out to the church office. Grace has a team of home communion ministers who visit and bring communion from worship to you.

Senior Phone Calling

If you are interested in joining the senior calling team or are a senior who would be interested in learning more about this ministry of conversation and prayer, please call the church office.

Prayers

Please lift up these petitions in your prayers—To become a praying member of the Friends in Prayer, please submit name and e-mail address to dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org.

World: Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, churchwide staff & their families, Bishop Stacie Fidler, synod staff & their families, those serving in military conflicts, Arusha Town Lutheran Parish in Tanzania (our companion parish)

Woodstock: Pastor Amanda Bergstrom & her family; Grace Staff; Grace Council

Health Concerns: Phyllis Aavang, Wayne Aavang (son of Joy Aavang and brother of Barb Aavang), Charlie Bell (friend of Jamielynn Wedoff), Katrina Black (daughter of Inez Schildt), Butch Borchardt (friend of Barb Aavang), Elaine Burcham, Barb Carmichael, Bob from Crystal Lake (friend of Kari Gippert), Jim Davis, Patrice Dunn, Patricia Erickson (friend of Carrie & Kevin

Jarnecke), Marshall and Paige (Behrens) Fink (great granddaughter of Joy Aavang and great niece of Barb Aavang), Connie Fischer, Robert Giron (brother of Patty Kozlow), Tom Goggin, Becca Guenther (niece of Gretchen & Claude Hutchens), Tamasa Gutierrez (mother of Patty Kozlow), Gloria Holy, Denise Hoover, Wayne Japp, Nicholas Karasch (nephew of Jamielynn Wedoff), Tiffany Kurth (niece of Sue & Al Beckman), Beverly Limbaugh (friend of Carrie & Kevin Jarnecke), Amanda McNally (grandniece of Diane Baker-Lockwood), Ben Miller (nephew of Mary Johnson), Natalie Miller (sister to Mary Johnson), Kem Moran (friend of Barb Aavang), Jenny Perrone (friend of Cindy Walters), Joe Pienschke, Dorothy Potoczky, Ila Randolph, Sheila Readell, Jayne Reicher (great niece of Barb & Wayne Japp), Herb & Bev Renner (brother & sister in law of Ken & Gladys Renner), Nick Resek (son of Tammy Resek-Goggin), Diane Rouse (cousin of Lisa Washkowiak), Nathaniel Shipp (family friend of Brian Meyers), Ann Sinnett (friend of Shirley Berna), Kathy Stone, Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahon), Janice Techmer (cousin of Mike Phillips), Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Doug & Carol Tobin (family friends of Kari Gippert), Marilyn Vanski, Caitlin Wilcox (niece of Anne Johnson)

Joys: Baptism of Mabel Rose Sopko and Maxwell James Sopko (children of Madeline & Mitchell Sopko)

Celebrate Graduation at our Partner Schools in Honduras

Join Cindy Meyer and Andy Bellavia for a presentation on June 1 after worship to hear about our work in Honduras and an opportunity to attend graduation ceremonies November 12 - 15.

For more than 10 years Grace has partnered with a primary school in rural Honduras, adding a second school together with Peace Lutheran Church in Spring Hill, Tenn, in 2019.

Through an endowment grant administered by Lunches for Learning, a Georgia-based non-profit, we provide nutritious lunches to the schools to keep students in class instead of working menial jobs for meals. By completing their education, kids have a better chance to make a living wage and find happiness in their own country.

Nearly every year, members of

Grace have traveled there to celebrate graduation each November. Andy and Cindy attended last time. Andy will make his sixth trip this November.

Rural Honduras is not what you may see in the news; it's very safe and welcoming. Local Lunches for Learning staff look after us well and translates needed. It is a trip you will never forget.

Prayer Requests

If you wish to add a prayer request for the newsletter, please call the church office at: **815-338-0554**.

Your prayer concern will run for one month and may be renewed. Submissions to the *Friends in Prayer* email may be submitted by telephone to the church office or via email to grace@gracewoodstock.org.

Due to confidentiality laws, hospitals no longer notify churches or pastors when a member is hospitalized.

If you or a member of your family have a medical procedure planned or is admitted to the hospital, please call the church (**815-338-0554**).

Job Openings

Applications are requested for the following part-time jobs:

- **Director of Youth Education**
- **Director of Worship & Music**

These job descriptions are posted on Grace's website at <https://www.gracewoodstock.us/current-openings/>.

GRACE FOR TODAY—The deadline for the **June 2025** newsletter is **May 15**. Please send articles to Kari Gippert at kgippert@gracewoodstock.org, or the church office. Questions: Call the office at **815-338-0554**.

Worship this May

Alleluia! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia! In May we continue to rejoice in the good news of Jesus' resurrection as we gather for worship in the Easter season. Come and hear stories of the risen Christ who continues to call us into lives of faithful discipleship.

Please join in community for worship together on Sundays at 9:00 a.m., or wherever you are via [YouTube livestream](#) or the posted worship videos on our website.

Thank you to all who volunteer their time in support of weekly worship. If you have questions or would like to learn more, please reach out to people listed below, or call the office if you'd like assistance in signing up for an opening.

- If you have questions about volunteering as an [Usher](#), [Greeter](#), [Reader](#), or [Communion Assistant](#), - please contact Fay Wilson.
- There are currently four people who facilitate worship by being audible in the sanctuary and accessible via livestream. If interested in joining this A/V team rotation, please contact Bill Nattress.
- The altar guild teams are setting up before or cleaning up after worship, and there's room for you to join or form a team. To learn more, please contact Karen Reinhard.
- As youth and adult vocal choirs, handbell choirs conclude rehearsals and worship participation this month, please reach out to Jan Burns for instrumentalist, soloist, contemporary band or small group music opportunities this summer.

Conversations with Council

The council would like to thank everyone who attended one of the Conversations with Council meetings in March.

This was an opportunity for the council to share information and to listen to the congregation's ideas about the Zibell and Tower properties.

The meetings were well attended, and we appreciate everyone's ideas, concepts and interest in the property's future.

Here are a few of the suggestions discussed for the land usage on the parcels: native plantings, a Columbarium, a community farm, a wedding venue or walking path with prayer/reflection stations; selling it to the small farm association or to the Land Conservancy of McHenry County.

There was also discussion on getting the property rezoned to change the assessment. This was a great first step in hearing from the congregation on their vision for the future of the properties. The council will continue to gather information and explore our options. We look forward to having more conversational meetings with you in the future.

--Carrie Jarnecke, Council Member

NIS Civil Rights Trip

Join others from Northern Illinois Synod on an important journey! Jenny Ruff, trip coordinator, is an active member of Salem Lutheran, Sycamore.



Co-Led by Angela Baron-Jeffrey, Pastor at New Hope Missionary Baptist in DeKalb and Janet Hunt, retired ELCA pastor of Northern Illinois Synod.

Bishop Stacie Fidler, Northern Illinois Synod, will be part of this trip and invites members of Northern Illinois congregations to join her.

"As we commit to being an Anti-Racist church and Jesus' core command to love our neighbor, walking through this history of the civil rights movement is deeply important. This journey calls us to open our hearts and minds, and let the scales drop from our eyes about the realities of the past AND the present. This is an opportunity to learn, to be transformed, and to recommit to the work of racial healing."

Grace to Host Funeral Luncheons



Grace will begin hosting funeral luncheons starting May 1.

Grace Center will serve as a place for family and friends to gather after a funeral to eat and find comfort in each other's company.

We have formed a team to help facilitate this supportive gesture with food catered in for the meal. Men and/or women of the congregation are welcome to join us to help set up, wash dishes and clean up the area as needed. Contact Sally Sheahan to be added to the list of potential helpers.

--Sally Sheahan

Responding to Dementia-Related Behaviors

The Alzheimer's Association will offer an education program titled *Responding to Dementia-Related Behaviors* on Sunday, June 29 from 10:15 to 11:15 a.m. in Grace Center. The event is open to the congregation and the public and will provide a chance to learn about common dementia-related behavior changes and how they are a form of communication, non-medical approaches to behaviors, and recognizing when more help is needed.

Refreshments will be served. Email Carrie Steckl at Carrie.Steckl@gmail.com with any questions.

--Carrie Steckl

Hymn Sing-Along

Back by popular demand, the Worship and Music Committee is again sponsoring a Hymn Sing at Grace. It will begin in the sanctuary at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 3, followed by a dessert get-together in the narthex. We look forward to some fun congregational singing. That night, a box will be out for you to submit your favorite hymn.

--Judy Reilly



Hear Better with Our New Assistive Listening System

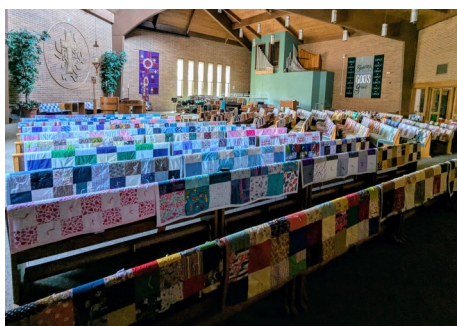
Do you have trouble understanding what is being said at worship? Learn how to use our new assistive listening system immediately after the service on May 4 in the sanctuary at 10:15 a.m. Andy Bellavia will share a few things about hearing in general, why it can be hard to understand speech in the sanctuary, and how our new assistive listening system can help you hear better whether you wear hearing aids or not. He will demonstrate the many ways it can be used, and you can try it for yourself. If you are unable to attend but still want to learn more, join via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/GraceHearing>.

--Andy Bellavia

Grace Sewing Circle



Sewing Circle members surrounded by their work in the sanctuary. Pictured above: (front row, left to right) Sally Sheahan and James Sheahan. (Back row, left to right) Tammy Hansing, Cathy Meyer, & Nan Behrns.



Last month Sewing Circle displayed its work on the pews in the sanctuary.

Thank you to Grace Sewing Circle members for all your hard work, and thank you to the congregation for sharing your gifts of sheets, fabric, pillow stuffing, batting, yarn, embroidery thread, sewing thread and Thrivent Action Team cards.

The majority of our materials are donated so if you have any closets to clean and come up with any of the above items, our group will put them to good use! Because of your generosity, Grace Sewing Circle continues to help many people in need.

In April, Lutheran World Relief received 107 quilts from our group, while eight local nursing homes received the following items: 84 lap quilts, 50 crocheted blankets, 75 cell phone bags, 255 walker bags, 60 wheelie bags, 180 poly bags, 24 neck pillows and 18 small pillows.

We meet on the first and third Tuesdays of each month from 8:30 - noon in Grace Center. Come when you can, leave when you must! *(And if you can't come join us, we have jobs for you to do at home.)* We always welcome new members. We could use more sewers but even if you cannot sew, we can find you something to do to join in this rewarding ministry. Call Tammy Hansing with questions.

--Tammy Hansing

Pray & Play

Please join in fellowship on May 18 for an all-congregation time to Pray & Play. We'll gather after worship on the lower-level church grounds for coffee hour, games, and conversation to celebrate community and the conclusion of the education year.

+++++

Celebrating a Graduation?

Are you or someone in your family celebrating a graduation this spring? If so, we would love to include you in our prayers. Please contact the church office (email dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org or call 815-338-0554) by May 11 to share your name and upcoming graduation.

+++++

Sunday Book Club

On May 11, the Sunday Book Club will conclude its reading of "The Shape of Illusion," by William Barrett. We will celebrate with a potluck that day and vote on our next book. Please feel free to join us for lively discussion and Christian fellowship in this small group. If you have any questions, please contact me or Paul Lockwood.

--Sally Sheahan

+++++

Bulletin/Presence Light Sponsors

The Grace 2025 Bulletin & Presence Light sponsor sheets are available in the white binder at the Welcome Center. A month prior to your sponsorship, a form will be sent to you, requesting information plus a \$20 donation for the Bulletins or a \$10 donation for the Presence Light.

+++++

Summer Equals Break for Coffee Ministry

The Coffee Ministry will take the summer off. Thank you to those who provided snacks (Bev Unglaube, Marylee Steinwehe, Robin Gibbs and Mary Beth Martin-Bellavia). It is a pleasure providing this ministry. We hope you've enjoyed it.

--Bill & Nancy Kreznor

YSJ News

Youth Standing with Jesus!" **FUN OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY PUTTING YOUR FAITH IN ACTION!**

Wednesday Drop-In Nights - YSJ meets EVERY 2 WEEKS during the school year for refreshments, fun connection, meaningful conversation, activities, service planning and more! (No RSVP necessary and you can even bring a friend) YSJ WELCOMES ALL HIGH SCHOOLERS...this is YOUR SPACE! Join the fun from 7:30- 8:30 p.m.

Upcoming Events and Opportunities-

- **Wednesday, May 14 from 7:30 -8:30 p.m.** Next year's incoming high school freshmen are invited and encouraged to come to our last Drop-In night of the year to meet an awesome bunch of high schoolers and learn about what we do in YSJ! We can't wait to see you!
- **TBD - THIS SUMMER** Information about a **UNIQUE SERVICE EXPERIENCE** and **SUMMER FUN** is coming your way in the next few weeks ~ check your inboxes as we get closer to May for details!
- **HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH LEADER(s) NEEDED!!** Please contact Kirsten Green or the Church office if you are interested in learning more about this fun and meaningful mission to provide a safe space for our teens to spread their wings and share their gifts with the Church and Community.

Any RSVP's or Questions, contact Kirsten Green at 815-236-6904 or stylin1020@gmail.com.

YOUR YSJ Co-Leader - Kirsten Green

Vacation Bible School

Registration is now open for Vacation Bible School (VBS). Sign-up by May 18 at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeNQQ0v4SVCxPHIaBYscib-DFd5bLl-pKR05ajAVySfmAt5tQ/viewform>.

This summer, VBS will launch to **Mars and Beyond** with children ages Pre-K through sixth grade.



Our space fight will explore God's universe with Mission Control Music, Cosmic Crafts, Galactic Games, Big Bang Bible Stories, Space Station Snacks, and Celestial Science.

Mission Day 1: Liftoff; Monday, June 9; 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Mission Day 2: Continue spaceflight; Tuesday, June 10; 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Mission Day 3: Carry on with our orbit; Wednesday, June 11, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Mission Day 4: Splashdown; Thursday, June 12, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

(More volunteers would be welcome. Please email Nancy Kreznor: nkkreznor@gmail.com.)

Pinochle

Pinochle meets twice on Wednesdays this month in Room 101 at 1 p.m. They'll gather on May 7 and 21. Enter through the lower level. Contact Sally Sheahan for more information.

Sunday School

In April, Sunday School students welcomed guests and friends in class to learn more about Holy Week and then gathered on Easter Sunday for a joyful Easter Egg Hunt.

We give thanks for congregational generosity in candy donations, and Scout Troop 153's time in stuffing the eggs.

In May students gather for the final month of this school year on May 4 & 18 following worship, for a lesson on the Holy Spirit and to celebrate the education year with the whole congregation.

Affirmation of Baptism



Grace's confirmation students will conclude their Lutheran theology and living confirmation class year as we rejoice with our eighth grade confirmation students affirming their baptism during worship on May 4.

Please join in worship as we give thanks together for the gift of faith and God's love as we encourage and pray for one another.

Elementary Summer Camp Scholarships

Right now we have eight confirmation students preparing for confirmation camp at Sugar Creek Bible Camp, and eight elementary-high school students registered for a couple different weeks at Lutherdale this summer!

Sunday School families have received information about financial support for registration fees if your elementary student is interested in a week or half week of summer camp this year.

Contact Pastor Amanda with

questions about summer camp opportunities and consider options at two local ELCA camps, Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center (<https://lomc.org>) in Oregon, IL and Lutherdale (<https://www.lutherdale.org>) in Elkhorn, WI.

Presence Light Sponsors:

May 4:

- In memory of Marie Spencer & Lee Unglaube, given by Bev Unglaube.

May 11:

- In memory of Mary Figard, given by Terry Figard family.

May 18:

- In memory of my mother, Mollie Beardsley, given by Charlotte Beardsley.

May 25:

- For blessings received in 40 years of marriage, given by Janice & Bob Laird.

Bulletin Sponsors:

May 4:

- In memory of Marie Spencer & Lee Unglaube, given by Bev Unglaube.

May 11:

- In memory of Mary Figard, Hazel Postma, Frank Holy, given by Terry Figard Family.
- In honor of Pamela Gerloff & Lisa Gerloff-Banker, given by Jane Gerloff.

May 18:

- In memory of my mom, Gladys Martin, given by Mary Beth.
- In memory of our parents, Joan & Stan Russell and John & Susan Meyer, given by the Conover family.

May 25:

- Given to the glory of God.

eGiving Options

In addition to weekly offering envelopes, Grace provides electronic giving options. Please give in the way that is most convenient for you and let us know if you have any questions.

Give Online at our website or via our QR code



Give by Text by texting **877-698-3604**

Enter the 10-digit number (877-698-3604) and the amount you wish to donate, then press send, and follow the prompts to complete your donation.

Give through Vanco Mobile App by downloading the app

- Go to the App Store or Google Play and search “**Vanco Mobile**” to quickly find and download the app for free.
- Search “**Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church**” to select Grace in Woodstock, IL, then select Give to select an amount, General Operating Fund, and frequency, and the app will prompt you through completing your donation.

Give through automatic withdrawal program. To participate, please complete an enrollment form and return to the church office to schedule pre-authorized electronic funds transfer (EFT) from your bank account. You can change, stop, or temporarily hold your giving by contacting Grace’s

Visit the Grace website for the most up-to-date information for all that is happening at Grace! gracewoodstock.org

GRACE STAFF & COUNCIL

Lead Pastor

Rev. Amanda Bergstrom
abergstrom@gracewoodstock.org

Administrative Secretary

Denise Klabunde
dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org

Financial Secretary & Asst. Administrative Secretary

Carrie Fiorina
cfiorina@gracewoodstock.org

Communications Coordinator

Kari Gippert
kgippert@gracewoodstock.org

Organist & Interim Coordinator of Worship & Music

Jan Burns

Music Group Directors

Terry Aavang, Jon Bergstrom,
Carrie Filetti, Cindy Meyer

Building Supervisor

Ken Zank

Custodians

Chris & Kim Ethridge

Council

Carlos Acosta, Michelle Anderson,
Brian Gerloff, Carrie Jarnecke,
Nancy Kreznor, Luigi Licastro,
Michael Liedtke, Mark Miller,
Mary Noe, Adele Petersen

Treasurer

Jane Gerloff