

JUNE 2025 • VOLUME 24, NO. 6

God's word near & beyond



“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, *so shall my word* be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

Isaiah 55:10-11

Somehow you've nearly made it — through the rapid pace of May — we're so close to June. We're nearing a different schedule and rhythm for some, a time of renewal or recreation for many, a season of opportunities to reconnect with loved ones, and/or a summer of more of the same, where the routines in daily living remain steadfast in all times and places.

God's word, the good news of God's love in Jesus, is one of the constants in our lives. Always with us, we trust God is near to us in all things and beyond all expectations and understanding.

I invite you to take time this summer to dwell in God's word. Perhaps it's a few spare minutes before you leave for the next thing, or the moments you are waiting — center yourself in scripture, reflection and prayer.

For God's word comes to us and does not return empty. We trust God is speaking to us, and I hope we'll be intentional about listening, wrestling, and being formed by God's word.

Take a few deep breaths. Pay attention to your breath and imagine the Spirit's presence in the air you breathe and the movement within and around. Quiet yourself a bit, releasing thoughts, and settle in to read a passage of scripture. Notice a word or a phrase that catches your attention. Reflect on how you may be hearing God through that word or phrase. Spend time in prayer. Then read the passage again and pay attention to how else you may be hearing God's word anew.

This summer some of our youngest members will be growing in faith as they discern together at Vacation Bible School how God equips us to go beyond with faith, boldness, kindness, thankfulness and hope. And at different summer camps other students will be learning together how God's word comes near in trusting, blessing, listening, serving, and following.

Perhaps you will spend time in reflecting on VBS and camp theme verses, as you, too, receive God's word, and God's word works in you to make a difference in your life and the world.

“Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us!” – Ephesians 3:20

“The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart.” – Romans 10:8

God's peace, traveling mercies, and blessings on your hearing and dwelling in God's word this summer.

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), Charlotte Beardsley, Charlie Bell (friend of Jamielynn Wedoff), Butch Borchardt (friend of Barb Aavang), Elaine Burcham, Barb Carmichael, 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, Anne Johnson, 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 of 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), Orest Rychtytzkyj, Ryan Rychtytzkyj, 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), Marilyn Vanskike, Caitlin Wilcox (niece of Anne Johnson)

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/>.

Setting the Table for City Band Concert June 4

Are you ready to pick a theme and design a tablescape?

On Wednesday, June 4, join others from Grace on the southeast lawn of the Woodstock Square for the first City Band Concert of the season. Music starts at 7 p.m. Arrive

as early as 6 p.m. to decorate your table and chairs. Bring your own food and drinks. Everyone present from Grace gets to vote for the best decorated table.

Enjoy some fellowship, fun music, and a little friendly competition. The

winning table design gets bragging rights in the next "Grace for Today."

The concert music theme - *Planes, Trains, Automobiles & Beyond*.

Ice cream will be sponsored by Groundhog Days.

GRACE FOR TODAY—The deadline for the **July 2025** newsletter is **June 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 June



Join us in worship this summer as we rejoice with children receiving their first communion, give thanks for the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday (June 8), hear about Vacation Bible School and Confirmation Camp adventures, and gather around the good news of Jesus.

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 with 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 audibility in the sanctuary and accessibility 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.
- This summer, please reach out to Jan Burns for instrumentalist, soloist, contemporary band or small group music opportunities.

Celebrate Graduation at Our Partner Schools in Honduras

Join Cindy Meyer and Andy Bellavia for a presentation Sunday, 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 in 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 as needed. It is a trip you will never forget.

--Andy Bellavia

Pinochle

The Pinochle group will meet at room 101 in the church lower level as usual at 1 p.m. on the first Wednesday, June 4. We will celebrate summer with a potluck at noon prior to the June 18, Pinochle Party. Contact Sally Sheahan for that location and more information.

--Sally Sheahan

Sunday Book Club

Because the Book Club voted on its new book in May after the deadline for this publication, there is no news to report. Stay tuned via the weekly church email for information about the Sunday Book Club in June!

--Sally Sheahan

Sewing Circle

If you would like to donate your old sheets (any kind), Grace Sewing Circle can repurpose them. The group also could use more fabric if anybody wants to clear out their sewing stash. Other items it continues to use are quilt batting, pillow stuffing, thread, yarn, rotary cutting blades and Thrivent Action Team cards. The group meets on the first and third Tuesdays from 8:30 a.m.-noon and always welcomes new faces. Contact Tammy Hansing with questions.

Woodstock Family Fun Day

The city of Woodstock will hold a Family Fun Day on the Square, Sunday, June 22.

Grace plans to have a booth there but is in need of a couple extra volunteers from noon-2 p.m., and 2-4 p.m.

If you are interested and available, give Nancy

Kreznor a call or text at 815-245-0645, or email nkkreznor@gmail.com.

If you can't assist, please stop by and say Hello.

Hope to see you there.

Leadership Nomination

As we look ahead to our Congregational Meeting in August, you are invited to prayerfully consider submitting a nomination form for positions of leadership on Church Council, Endowment Board, and Nominating Committee. Please consider how you might be called to serve in our faith community and return a completed nomination form by June 22 to the church office (printed copies at the Information Desk or electronically through *Grace Notes* weekly email).

- **Church Council** members are elected to a three-year term,

(three positions of 10 are up for election this year). Council members meet monthly, typically on the third Thursday evenings and as needed, serve as a liaison to a committee and tend to the mission and leadership, finance and property matters, and general oversight of the life and activities of the congregation.

- **Endowment Board**

members are elected to a five-year term (one position of five to be elected this year), to administer the Grace Mission Endowment Fund per the Endowment Fund Investment

Policy and Guidelines. The Endowment Board meets quarterly.

- **Nominating Committee**

members are elected to a one-year term (all three positions to be elected annually) to prepare the slate of names for elections for the Congregation Council, Grace Mission Endowment Fund Board of Trustees, Nominating Committee, and the Northern Illinois Synod Assembly voting members. The Nominating Committee meets to prepare nominations before the Annual & Congregational Meetings.

PrideFest & Parade on June 15

Join Grace Lutheran Church and neighbors for the upcoming Woodstock PrideFest parade and events. We hope you can join us in sharing God's grace and love.

- **Parade, 11 a.m.:** to walk in the parade, check "Grace Notes" for a final meeting time (~10:30 a.m.) and meeting spot, then join Grace Lutheran Church in walking the route from Dean Street School to & around the Square and back. Contact Michelle Anderson with questions.

- **Fest, 12-5 p.m.:** following the parade is a festival on the Square with community participants. Grace Lutheran Church again is partnering with local ELCA congregations in McHenry County to support a booth. Stop by "ELCA Lutherans for Inclusion and Justice" to say hello, and/or contact Pastor Amanda to sign up for one of the shifts at the table alongside members of local congregations.

2025 Synod Assembly

The 37th Annual Northern Illinois Synod Assembly will be held on Friday, June 13, and Saturday, June 14, at Augustana College in Rock Island. The theme for this assembly, as well as the theme for all of 2025, is Growing Disciples. We will be focusing on practices that we can do as individuals, congregations, and communities to grow in faith.

Please pray for Grace's voting members Janette Hess, Luigi Licastro, Carrie Steckl, Bob Teuber, and Pastor Amanda who will be traveling to participate in this year's synod assembly. For more information, or to follow along, visit: <https://www.nisynod.org/programs/2025-synod-assembly>.

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 -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

Grace Scholarship Funds

Scholarship applications for both the Readell and Allen Funds are due to the Grace Lutheran Church office by July 1, 2025.

The Endowment Committee reviews all scholarship applications and votes during its quarterly meeting in July. Payments are made

in August. For more information about the scholarships, visit the Grace website at <http://www.gracewoodstock.us/education/scholarships/>.

Obtain applications from the website or through the church office.

Congratulations 2025 Confirmands



Six youth affirmed their baptisms on Sunday, May 4. Pictured front row (Left to right): Josephine Arana, Elena Ayala and Grace Schaaf. Back row (left to right): Pastor Amanda, Bresden Shutt, Kendrick Thomas & Audrey Wedoff.

Celebrate With Our 2025 Graduates

Congratulations to our high school graduates: Edgar Arana, Karson Boal, Emilee Devinger, Emily Figard, Owen Fiorina, Sean Fiorina, Jack Freeman, Brandon Noe, Abby Sarelas, & Samuel Tafoya.

Congratulations to our college graduates: Evan Fiorina and Benjamin Noe.

Congratulations to our post graduate school graduate: Maggie Gatto.

First Communion

First grade and other interested families are invited to participate in first communion class on May 29, 4 p.m., before receiving first communion in worship on June 8, 9 a.m. If you are interested in attending or would like to learn more, please contact Pastor Amanda

(abergstrom@gracewoodstock.org)

Summer Camp

You are invited to keep Grace's elementary, middle school, and high school youth in your prayers as they grow in faith and share camp experiences this summer!

Several elementary students and high school students are attending different program weeks at Lutherdale this summer, and Grace's confirmation students will be at Sugar Creek Bible Camp for confirmation camp this June.

If your elementary student is still considering summer camp, there's still time to sign up. See Sunday School materials or reach out to Pastor Amanda for more information about financial support for registration fees.

GO TO MARS & BEYOND WITH US

We Launch Vacation Bible School (VBS) "To Mars and Beyond," June 9-12, from 8:30-11:30 a.m. Don't forget to register as we're a week away: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeNQQ0v4SVCxPHlaBYscib-DFd5bLI-pKR05ajAVySfmAt5tQ/viewform>. The registration fee is \$10 per student (cash or check made payable to Grace Lutheran Church). Thank you to those who have taken the time to register.

Our space flight will explore God's universe with music, crafts, games, stories, snacks and science.



Drop-in Decorating Days

Please mark your calendar for VBS Drop-In Decorating Days on Thursday, June 5, and Friday, June 6, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., along with a final decorating day after church on Sunday, June 8, to set up the sanctuary and stairway.

Supply Donation Requests

Donations for June's spaceflight would be appreciated, guaranteeing the youth have an out-of-this-world VBS experience. Requested items can be found on the bulletin board in the narthex -- anything from Graham crackers to creamy peanut butter to paper cups. Sign your name under the item(s) you plan to supply. Thank you for your support.

Presence Light Sponsors:

June 1:

- In memory of Mom & Dad; given by Anne Panos

June 8:

- In honor of Elana's birthday (granddaughter); given by Paul & Cindy Meyer

June 15:

- Given to the glory of God

June 22:

- Given to the glory of God

June 29:

- Given to the glory of God

Bulletin Sponsors:

June 1:

- In memory of Sheri's dad on his heavenly 95th birthday; given by the Conover family

June 8:

- In memory of Jim Reinhard; given by Karen Reinhard

June 15:

- In memory of my dear friends, Marcia, Gayle, and Shelley, given by Marylee Steinwehe

June 22:

- In honor of Ryan Miller's birthday on the 25th; given by Mark & Beth Miller

June 29:

- In memory of my parents, Robert & Eleanor Eckert Gerloff; given by Jane Gerloff.

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

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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