

DECEMBER 2025 • VOLUME 25, NO. 12



We light candles at home when the power goes out, so we can find our way around, and see enough of each other's faces when we play charades. We mark the uncertain disruption in our prior plans for that time and pretend we are gathered around a campfire for stories and games. We light candles in the absence of electricity to resist stubbing toes, to resist boredom, to resist dwelling in the worry of a loss of power.

In worship, we light candles around an Advent wreath to mark the weeks of waiting and watching, the drawing near of Christmas. On Christmas Eve we light candles as we sing of the silent, holy night, which marks the birth of Christ and a world about to turn. The baby born to resist the power of sin and death and evil, to resist the oppression of empire, Jesus reveals a light and life and resurrection resilience that cannot be overcome.

The candles on an Advent wreath and the weeks leading to Christmas are often paired with weekly themes, of hope, peace, joy, and love. Each of these faith practices are acts of resistance. Hope resists despair, or in the words of Star Wars' Rogue One, "rebellions are built on hope." Peace resists violence and reveals another way. Joy is an act of resistance, in the face of deep trial and sorrow, joy resists exclusive sorrow. Love proclaims God's claim for all of creation. We can choose to practice hope, peace, joy, and love, and we can receive these gifts from God to equip us for faithful living.

We remember now and always that Jesus, the light of the world, born among us, cannot be overcome. We light candles in this season as a reminder of God's promises. As we continue to witness non-violent action as protest to powers that oppress, as we see newness of life in Christ resisting old patterns of dominion, as we seek inclusion and belonging as resistance to isolation, God is drawing near.

I pray that Jesus' birth brings you good news of great joy, even and especially now. Emmanuel, God with us, remains ever present and active, ushering in God's active redemption and renewal of our lives and this beloved weary world.

Gather in worship, light candles, disrupt broken cycles, dwell in the word of God. Advent blessings, and Merry Christmas, beloved of God.

*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 Yehiel Curry, 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: Wayne Aavang (son of Joy Aavang and brother of Barb Aavang), Charlie Bell (friend of Jamielynn Wedoff), Butch Borchardt (friend of Barb Aavang), Marlene Botts, Barb Carmichael, Jim Davis, Patrice Dunn, Marshall and Paige (Behrens) Fink (great granddaughter of Joy Aavang and great niece of Barb Aavang), Connie Fischer, Kari Gippert, Robert Giron

(brother of Patty Kozlow), Tom Goggin, Marie Grob (family member of Kevin & Carrie Jarnecke), Becca Guenther (niece of Gretchen & Claude Hutchens), Tamasa Gutierrez (mother of Patty Kozlow), Cindy Hertrampf (sister of Tammy Hansing), Dan Hess, Gloria Holy, Denise Hoover, Wayne Japp, Anne Johnson, Nicholas Karasch (nephew of Jamielynn Wedoff), Tiffany Kurth (niece of Sue & Al Beckman), Elminster Lovejoy, Hudson May (great grandson of Karen Klabunde), 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), 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), Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Marilyn Vanskike, Mary Widmayer, Caitlin Wilcox (niece of Anne Johnson)

Sorrow:

Judith Koeller, Marilyn L. Rice, Dorothe Von Bergen

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)**.

Happy Holidays



Sewing Circle

Sewing circle meets Dec. 2 and 16 from 8:30 a.m.-noon in Grace Center. We also welcome new friends to join in the fun and fulfillment of this ministry. Any questions please contact Tammy Hansing at hansings1981@gmail.com.

--Sally Sheahan

--Tammy Hansing

Pinochle

Pinochle will meet as usual in room 101 on the lower level at 1 p.m. on the first Wednesday of this month, Dec. 3. On Dec. 17, we will gather for a holiday potluck at the home of Jim and Sally Sheahan at noon, followed by pinochle. You are welcome to attend either meeting, whether you are a regular or a newcomer. We are glad to have you join us for fun and Christian fellowship. Contact me for more information.

GRACE FOR TODAY—The deadline for the **January 2026** newsletter is **December 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 December

"You have cast the mighty down from their thrones,
and uplifted the humble of heart,
you have filled the hungry with wondrous things,
and left the wealthy no part.
Great and mighty are you, O Faithful One,
strong is your justice, strong your love,
As you promised to Sarah and Abraham, kindness forevermore."

-The Magnificat, Holden Evening Prayer

For the four Sundays before Christmas, we gather in hopeful waiting and watching. During the season of Advent, we light candles around a wreath, drawing nearer to the good news of Jesus' birth, dwelling among us, a light that shines in our lives and this world that cannot be overcome.

Center this season in worship, gather for an Advent evening prayer service, weekly worship, and the festive Christmas Eve worship services ahead. Be renewed in the gifts of God for the people of God. Invite friends and family and neighbors to share in Christian community as we worship God together.

See you soon, for worship together on Sundays **9:00 A.M.** in the sanctuary, or worship wherever you are via [YouTube livestream](#) or the posted worship videos on our website.

Worship Save-the-Dates This Month

Holden Evening Prayer- Sunday, December 7, 6:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve- Wednesday, December 24, 4:00 & 7:30 p.m.

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.
- If you'd like to join in sharing a children's sermon message, please contact Nyjiela Sirreayah
- 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.
- Make a joyful noise and consider trying a choir or music group (youth to adult choirs, adult handbell choir, and band)! Contact the group's director or Jan Burns for more information.
- To read a prayer and light a candle around the [Advent wreath](#), sign up online or through the church office.

Columbarium Survey Deadline Dec. 1

Thank you to the families who have already replied to our columbarium survey. We are collecting surveys no later than Dec. 1. To give the Columbarium Task Force direction, it is especially important to hear back from any families who are seriously thinking about having urns

placed in a potential Grace Lutheran Church located columbarium. Surveys are available online at <https://forms.gle/54cvLtaPd6LVgAqB6> or via paper copies found by the columbarium display board in the narthex. Questions, please call Mary Noe at 815-3347-5988.

Grace Needs a Volunteer Treasurer: Would You Be Willing?

Calling All Bean Counters:
Our congregation needs a Treasurer.

Do you have a background working with numbers? Or owning/operating a business? Would you like to work with dedicated staff and volunteers? Are

you willing to serve beyond the offering plate?

Knowledge of QuickBooks is useful, but training will be provided. You don't need to be a Council member or go to the meetings but will be required to prepare periodic

reports for the Council and congregation.

If you are interested in this volunteer position and would like to find out more, please contact a Council member or the office.

--Nancy Kreznor, council president

What We Can Do



Over the past month we have received financial commitments for ministry in 2026. Your response to God's generosity equips Grace Lutheran Church to live out our mission of sharing God's grace.

If you have not yet returned an Estimate of Giving Card, please return a card to the church office, or complete the electronic form in weekly Grace Notes email. Your communication equips our finance team to establish a responsible budget that supports our mission priorities. Thank you for your commitments that allow Grace to transform our potential into real action.

Nominations for Synod Assembly

As we look ahead to our Annual Meeting in early 2026, Grace's Nominating Committee invites you to prayerfully consider submitting a nomination form for Voting Members from Grace to participate in the Northern Illinois Synod's Synod Assembly (June 12-13, 2026, at Augustana College). Synod Assembly is a gathering of members and rostered leaders from across the synod for meetings, conversation,	and worship. We encourage anyone who has not had an opportunity to participate to consider this opportunity to connect and represent Grace. Please reach out to Pastor Amanda with questions about Synod Assembly. Completed nomination forms are due to the church office by Dec. 31, 2025. (Nomination forms are available in Grace Notes or pick up a printed copy at the Information Desk).
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'A Beautiful Year' Gathering

You are invited to join in reading a weekly devotional, from this Advent through the end of next November. "[A Beautiful Year](#)," written by Diana Butler Bass, features a weekly meditation on faith, wisdom, and perseverance that follows the liturgical church calendar.

Pick up your own copy at your local bookstore, or your preferred source for hardcover, e-Book, of digital audio. We also have copies available to pick up at Grace.

Then meet for conversation throughout the year to share reflections and conversation with others. The next Beautiful Year Meet Up will be **Sunday, December 14, 10:15-11:00 a.m.**



Christmas Flowers At Grace



Help provide decorations for our sanctuary this Christmas. Give a gift in "honor of someone" or in "memory of a loved one" or "to the glory of God."

Mail in or drop off your coupon below, along with your \$17 gift to Grace Lutheran Church, 1300 Kishwaukee Valley Rd., Woodstock, IL 60098.

Please **print clearly** on the coupon found in your weekly Grace Notes email as you want your gift to appear in the bulletin.

Payment is due in the office by **December 12, 2025.**

Welcome Our Newest Members

We welcomed several new members in October. Please learn more below about those who joined:

We welcomed Cara Schultz, Emma Patterson, Olivia Patterson, and Elliott Patterson.



(Pictured left to right:) Ryan, Ally, Theresa, & Orest Rychtytzkyj.

Theresa, Orest, & Ally Rychtytzkyj live in Woodstock and love to travel to Disney. They also head west to visit national parks. When home, they play Uno and other boardgames

Becky and Lilliana, Kali, Remington, and Fletcher Klay live in Woodstock. They enjoy cooking the kids' great grandmother's traditional dishes, which date back 100+ years. All enjoy reciting movie quotes, holding family movie nights on Fridays and playing outside with their "doggos."

Megan, Nick, & Jaden Skradski live in Woodstock. You'll find the Skradski family walking, playing games, reading & travelling. They also enjoy painting.



(Pictured left to right:) Megan, Nick & Jayden Skradski.

Sunday Book Club

The Sunday Book Club will meet all four Sundays in December. Join us as we read together the book, "Saving Grayson," by award-winning author Chris Fabry. He takes us into the world of love and loss, dementia and startling clarity, hope and despair. There is room for you at the table in the parlor on Sundays after church (or we will pull up another chair!) Contact me or Paul Lockwood for more information.

--Sally Sheahan

Christmas Family Sharing

The Christmas Family Sharing (CFS) Giving Tree is set up and ready for you to stop by right now!

On the tree and table, located in the narthex, there will be ornaments that highlight the needs of three different ministries that serve people locally and globally. You are welcome to choose as many ornaments as you would like and then return the items to the bins in the narthex.

Locally, we are again partnering with Turning Point and the Family Health Partnership Clinic. Both organizations have shared that their client needs have increased from last year.

Turning Point helps people who are affected by domestic violence. They are requesting donations of gift cards from a variety of local stores.

The Family Health Partnership Clinic provides health care to uninsured individuals in our County. We will be collecting food for their pantry, items which are used in the Clinic, and Walmart gift cards, which are shared to help obtain medications.

Globally, we partner with ELCA Good Gifts. Ornaments on the CFS Giving Tree for ELCA Good Gifts will have envelopes attached. You can choose from a wide variety of items – from chicks, to goats, to school uniforms—to help support people in need around the world. There will be a form to fill out which you can then return in the envelope with your payment. We will submit one group order from Grace. You may also access ELCA Good Gifts online at www.ELCA.org/goodgifts.

Items can be returned to the labeled bins in the narthex anytime with *all donations needing to be at Grace by December 14.*

Thank you for your ongoing support of the Christmas Family Sharing program! If you have any questions, stop by the table, or feel free to contact Mary Beth Martin-Bellavia (815-245-1242) or mbmartinbellavia@gmail.com.

November's Special Congregational Meeting

Grace Council would like to thank everyone who attended the Special Congregational Meeting, either in person or on zoom Nov.16. Your presence, patience, and vote during the meeting provided an answer to the Council on the future of the 10-acre parcel of land. We hope to sign the contract listing the sale of the property in the next few days. The Council will try to keep you informed of any progress. The conversations and forums about the 10-acre parcel were important and informative this year. Your participation in the discussions and decisions was appreciated.

--Grace Lutheran Church Council

Before Worship: Children Sing in Recital or Participate in Orchestra

Children are invited to participate in a Christmas Eve recital *before* the 4 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service. We seek individuals, duets, trios or small groups for vocal, keyboard or instrumental arrangements. Your selection must be sacred & must be three minutes or less. This will be open to any child through high school age. The deadline to sign up is Dec. 7.

The sign up sheet is in the activities binder at the information Desk.

A mandatory practice session will

be Sunday, Dec. 14, at 6 p.m.
Grace Orchestra

Any string player from 5th grade through high school is invited to join the Grace Orchestra to play in the Christmas Eve recital *before* the 4 p.m. worship service! We will have one mandatory rehearsal on Dec. 7 at 10:15 a.m. & a mandatory run through on Dec. 14 at 6 p.m. Please let Jan Burns know by Nov. 30, if you have a child interested in joining the orchestra for Christmas Eve.

Sunday School

Sunday School children gathered last month to Craft Ornaments, courtesy of Youth Standing with Jesus (High School youth) led by Kirsten Green. These ornaments will be displayed on the Grace Lutheran tree at the Woodstock Opera House. You are invited to see the tree on Opening Day during the Woodstock Lighting of the Square: Nov. 28, from 4 - 8 p.m.

This month, Sunday School meets on:

Dec. 14--A child called Immanuel and

Dec.21--Intergenerational Christmas Gathering (We invite everyone to join our Sunday School children for a special Intergenerational Christmas Gathering filled with fun, games, crafts, and fellowship for all ages.)

Come celebrate the season as one Grace family—bringing together children, parents, grandparents, and friends to share the light and love of Christ.

Youth Standing With Jesus

This is Grace's High School Youth Group. Kirsten Green has served with other volunteers as adult leaders for Grace's high school youth group and is looking for 1-2 new adults to join the coordinating team. YSJ has gathered for service opportunities, Wednesday night drop-ins, and summer trips such as the ELCA Youth Gathering. *Please let Kirsten Green or Pastor Amanda know if you'd be willing to learn more about supporting high school youth group at Grace.*

Confirmation

Grace's 7th & 8th grade confirmation students continue to gather around stories from the Old Testament this semester, as we welcome guest teachers in sharing and learning together. Thank you for sharing in worship, service, and prayers for our students and families.

Presence Light Sponsors:

December 7:

- In recognition of World Soil Day, December 5; given by Bill & Nancy Kreznor.

December 14:

- In memory of John Sorensen; given by his family.

December 21:

- In memory of our grandson, Alex; given by Ken & Kathy Zank.

December 28:

- In memory of Bob Unglaube; given by his family.

Bulletin Sponsors:

December 7:

- In memory of Loved Ones; given by Mary Johnson.

December 14:

- In honor of Roger Long's Birthday; given by Beth & Mark Miller and Carole & Brian Gerloff.

December 21:

- In memory of Marlene L. Teuber and in honor of Robert W. Teuber; given by Robert B. Teuber.
- In memory of Don & Carol Phillips for their wedding anniversary; given by Mike Phillips.

December 24:

- In memory of Marlene L. Teuber; given by Robert B. Teuber.
- In honor of Robert W. Teuber; given by Robert B. Teuber.
- To the glory of God; given by Marylee & Don Steinwehe.
- In memory of our grandson, Alex; given by Ken & Kathy Zank.

December 28:

- In memory of Bob Unglaube; given by his family.

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 church office four business days in advance of a scheduled contribution.

*Please contact the church office (815-338-0554),
if you have any questions.*

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

GRACE STAFF & COUNCIL

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Brian Gerloff, Carrie Jarnecke,
Nancy Kreznor, Luigi Licastro,
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