

APRIL 2026 • VOLUME 25, NO. 4



“Lord, let my heart be good soil, open to the seed of your Word. Lord, let my heart be good soil, where love can grow and peace is understood.

When my heart is hard, break the stone away. When my heart is cold, warm it with the day. When my heart is lost, lead me on your way.

Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart be good soil.”

ELW 512

Beloved of God, we entered the season of Lent with the reminder that we are dust and to dust we shall return, and that God makes beautiful things out of the dust, God makes beautiful things out of us.

We began with an invitation, as followers of Jesus, to an intentional discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. And my goodness, does that take work: a concerted effort to resist despair at unraveling human decency and to resist a collective disregard for others, to persevere in doing what is right, compassionate, kind, and faithful.

There's a saying that 'you are what you eat,' and your AI chat tools are informed by what you feed them, too. This April, as we enter into Holy Week and the season of Easter, may we tend carefully to our hearts and faith in action. What are you feeding your heart? Bitterness, anger, prayer, faith?

In the words of the hymn above, we pray for God to let our hearts be good soil. We pray that God can break our hearts of stone, warm our cold and hardened hearts, and lead us in Jesus' way.

As our Easter celebrations pair with signs of new life bursting forth from the soil around us this spring — see how God is feeding you with good things. God in Jesus pours out life abundant — for you, for your neighbors, for all of creation. The light of Christ shines forth and cannot be overcome as God feeds us with the freedom of forgiveness. God nourishes with the simple meal and festive drink of Holy Communion, a foretaste of the feast to come where there is more than enough for all to be fed. God breathes newness of life into dry bones, weary beings, and our very hearts.

God is tending to your heart with good news of love and grace and life. May you dwell in God's goodness. May you be strengthened for faithful living. May your hearts rejoice this Easter and always.

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](mailto: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, Robert Giron (brother of Patty

Kozlow), Christy Goodman (sister of Jennifer Robbins), 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), Denise Hoover, Wayne Japp, Anne Johnson, Nicholas Karasch (nephew of Jamielynn Wedoff), Tiffany Kurth (niece of Sue & Al Beckman), Elminster Lovejoy, 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 Readel, 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 Sinnott (friend of Shirley Berna), Kathy Stone, Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahan), Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Marilyn Vanskike, Cindy Walters, Mary Widmayer, Caitlin Wilcox (niece of Anne Johnson)

**Sorrow:** the Rev. Jane Kunzie-Brunner

## 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](mailto: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**).

## 2026 Bulletin, Presence Light Sponsors

The 2026 Bulletin & Presence Light sponsor sheets are available in the white binder at the Information Desk.

A month prior to your sponsoring, a form will be sent to you requesting information and a donation of \$20 for the Bulletins & \$10 for the Presence Light. Thank you for helping us fund these weekly.

## Pinochle

Pinochle meets the first and third Wednesdays of the month. Our group will meet on Wednesday, April 1, and April 15, at 1 p.m. in room 101. An added treat will be the opportunity to play pinochle at the Grace Family Game Night on Sunday, April 12, from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Come alone or bring your friends. All ages and skill levels are welcome. For more information, contact Sally Sheahan.

—Sally Sheahan

## Birthday Card Shower for Borgie Stenoien



Members are encouraged to send a birthday card to Borgie for her 96th birthday on April 28.

Her new address is:

Park Gardens  
215 E. Skogmo Blvd., Apt. 125,  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537

She would love to hear from her friends at Grace.

Thank you.

—Marylee Steinwehe

**GRACE FOR TODAY**—The deadline for the **May 2026** newsletter is **April 15**. Please send articles to Kari Gippert at [kgippert@gracewoodstock.org](mailto:kgippert@gracewoodstock.org), or the church office. Questions: Call the office at **815-338-0554**.

## Worship this April

Beloved of God, gather in worship this Holy Week and throughout the season of Easter. We shout hosanna and wave palms, we



receive communion in remembrance of Jesus, we pray and reflect on cycles of violence as we remember Jesus' crucifixion, and we cling to the promise of Jesus' resurrection.

We gather for worship on **Easter Sunday, April 5 at 8:00 & 10:00 a.m.** and then return to worship on **Sundays at 9:00 a.m.**

Gather in community, or join in worship through the [YouTube livestream](#) or the posted worship videos on our website.

**Thank you** for being a part of Grace's worshipping community. We give thanks for your time and presence.

- Sign up here to serve as an [Usher](#), [Greeter](#), [Reader](#), or

[Communion Assistant](#). For additional questions, please contact Fay Wilson.

- If you'd like to join in sharing a children's sermon message, please contact Nyji Sirreayah.
- If interested in joining this A/V team rotation, please contact Bill Nattress.
- To learn more about participating in the altar guild to set up or clean up communion, please contact Karen Reinhard.
- Contact Jan Burns to learn more about vocal and handbell choirs, contemporary band, instrumentalist, soloists, and small group opportunities.



It's time to roll up our sleeves and breathe new life into our beloved community spaces. Our spring grounds cleanup will be Saturday, May 9, from 8 a.m.-noon. The rain date is set for May 16.

### Good Friday Prayer Vigil

Our Grace parlor will be available from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday, April 3, for our Good Friday Prayer Vigil. No sign-up is needed. Individuals and families are encouraged to come to pray during those hours.

Congregation members should fill out prayer requests on the slips available on the Information Desk and place in the designated box to be shared during the Prayer Vigil.

—Ann Metze & Mary Noe

### Conversation with the Council

Do you have questions, suggestions, or comments you would like to share with the Council President? This is your opportunity to be heard.

You are invited to attend Conversation with the Council on Sunday, April 19, 2026, at 10:10 a.m. in Room 102. This informal gathering provides a welcoming space to ask questions, offer feedback, and engage in open dialogue about matters important to our church family.

### SAVE THE DATE! Saturday, April 25

The Worship and Music Committee is planning another "Hymn Sing." Starting with a potluck supper at 6 p.m. in Grace Center followed by the Hymn Sing (accompanied by our organist, Jan Burns) in the sanctuary at 7 p.m. If you can't make the potluck, just join us at 7. All ages are welcome!

This is a great fellowship opportunity to gather together for a meal then sing familiar and loved hymns in community. Be thinking about your favorite hymns and remember that we can sing any hymn out of any of our hymnals because we won't be livestreaming the event.

There is a sign-up sheet for the potluck in the narthex so we know how many people to plan for.

—The Worship and Music Committee

### Volunteer Treasurer Wanted

If you have a background working with numbers or own/operate a business, could you find it in your heart to accept the volunteer position of treasurer?

Knowledge of QuickBooks is

useful but training will be provided. You do not 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 and would like to find out more, please contact a council member (as listed on the last page of this publication) or the church office.



	February 2026			2/28/26 Year-to-date		
<i>Operating</i>	Actual	Budget	Difference	Actual	Budget	Difference
<b>Income</b>	\$32,101.66	\$35,126.76	(\$3,025.10)	\$67,527.11	\$76,013.52	(\$8,486.41)
<b>Expense</b>	\$41,131.00	\$40,358.94	(\$772.06)	\$84,379.64	\$86,829.64	\$2,450.00
<b>Balance</b>	(\$9,029.34)	(\$5,232.18)	(\$3,797.16)	(\$16,852.53)	(\$10,816.12)	(\$6,036.41)

Quarterly giving statements will be sent by email in mid-April (or placed in the mail if we do not have your email address). Please contact the church office with

any questions (815-338-0554). Thank you for your financial offerings in support of mission and ministry through Grace Lutheran Church.

**Rooted & Renewed** is your monthly reset.

A space just for adults and parents to unplug, laugh, connect, and refill your cup. This isn't another meeting or responsibility ... it's a breath of fresh air.

Once a month — Wednesday, April 29, at 6:30 p.m. — we come together to ground ourselves, build real connections and enjoy genuine fellowship in a relaxed, welcoming environment. Think encouragement, community and good energy. All in one place.

Come as you are. Leave refreshed, renewed and reminded that you're not doing life alone.

This is your time. Join us.

If you have questions, contact Nyji.



Please remember to be aware of emails or texts that claim to be from Grace's pastor or staff. Pastor Amanda and church staff members will never ask you to provide gift cards or emergency funding.

Scammers will often create a sense of urgency, pretending to be someone in leadership who is unavailable to talk while in a meeting, but needs assistance in obtaining gift card codes or money to help someone in immediate need. Scam emails will often display a name you may be familiar with; however the actual email address is not connected to our staff.

Please do not respond to text messages or click any links in emails requesting this kind of funding and call the church office or talk with Grace's pastor or staff directly to confirm any confusing requests.

### SUNDAY BOOK CLUB

Grace Book Club will continue with the novel, "Under the Bayou Moon," each Sunday in April at 10 a.m. in the parlor, excluding Easter Sunday, and April 19,

when a council conversation has been scheduled.

Did you know that Cajun is a shortened version of "Canadian" and that these folks in Louisiana were actually exiled French Canadians? Take a step away from the familiar

and enter the shadowy waters of bayou country for an exciting story of risk and resilience, set in 1949, with plenty of room for Christian discussion and commentary.

For more information, contact Sally Sheahan. —Sally Sheahan



Applications are requested for the following part-time job:

• **Director of Worship & Music**

This job description is posted on Grace's website at <https://www.gracewoodstock.us/current-openings/>.

### First Communion

Grace will hold First Communion class April 12, at 11 a.m. & welcome to the table on April 26. Contact Ms. Nyji if interested.

### Game Night

Join us for Grace Family Game Night on April 12, from 4:30-6:30 p.m. for an evening of fun, laughter and community! Enjoy Mahjong, Pinochle, and a variety of other exciting games while connecting with friends old and new. Refreshments will be served, so bring the whole family and come ready for a great time together.



This month Sewing Circle meets Tuesday, April 7 and April 21, from 8:30 a.m.-noon in Grace Center.

Everyone is welcome. The group needs sewers and non-sewers alike.

Contact Tammy Hansing at [hansings1981@gmail.com](mailto:hansings1981@gmail.com).

—Tammy Hansing

## Sunday School

This month, we're exploring stories from the New Testament to learn all about the life and ministry of Jesus. Children will celebrate on April 5, Easter Sunday, for Worship at 10 a.m. followed by the Easter Egg hunt.

This month they'll learn in class about how Jesus fed 5,000 people, and his greatest commandment of all.

Classes gather on April 12 and 26 following 9 a.m. worship. Bring your friends! We look forward to seeing you soon!



It's official! Mark your calendar: Grace Lutheran Church hits the Vacation Bible School road June 1-4, 8:30-11:30 a.m. each day.

**Join us for — Road Trip: On the Go With God.** It will include Big fun. Big faith. Big adventure. \*\*\*\*Registration opens soon!\*\*\*\*

If you are interested in being part of the planning team, contact Nyji.

We need: daily registration, group leaders, Bible story/lesson team, crafts team, games team, snack team, decorations & setup team, security, prayer team, music & worship team, & floaters. High school & confirmation class are encouraged to volunteer.

The first planning meeting is Sunday, March 29, at 10 a.m. after worship.



Ages 8-13 are invited after worship April 19, from 10-11:30 a.m.

to participate in Faith & Flavor Kids' Kitchen. Text 773-875-2578 to register your child. Limited spots are available.

Attention families of all ages!

Grace Lutheran Church's next Faith Factory Fridays will take place Friday, April 24, from 5:30 -7:30 p.m., and is open to all ages. You must be registered to attend. Faith Factory

Fridays is a fun, faith-filled evening with games, activities, and Bible exploration where kids can play bold, love big, and grow in faith. Friday Faith Nights will be held on the last Friday of every month. We hope to see many



of our families there! To register, click [here](#).

## Confirmation



Grace's 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade confirmation students continue to gather around stories from the New Testament this semester, as we welcome guest teachers to share and learn together. Thank you for sharing in worship, service, and prayers for our students and families. Pictured above, the students are running to the ends of the earth.

Pictured at right, youth work together to solve puzzles and challenges within a set amount of time, taking part in an escape room.



## Attention: High School Youth, Parents

We are excited to launch a new high school ministry designed to help students grow in faith, develop leadership, and serve both the church and the community. Through intentional gatherings, service opportunities and student-led initiatives, high schoolers will be empowered to live out their faith in meaningful ways. If you have a high schooler this year, or even next year, who would benefit from this program, please fill out the interest from [here](#).

## Summer Camp Scholarships

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

## Presence Light Sponsors:

### April 5:

- In memory of Jerry Johnson; given by Mary Johnson.

### April 12:

- In memory of Jerry Johnson; given by Mary Johnson.

### April 19:

- In honor of our 42<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary; given by William & Nancy Kreznor.

### April 26:

- In honor of our grandson Jakob's birthday; given by Ken & Kathy Zank.

## Bulletin Sponsors:

### April 2:

- Given to the Glory of God.

### April 3:

- In memory of Marlene L. Teuber and in honor of Robert W. Teuber; given by Robert B. Teuber.

### April 5:

- In memory of Carol Phillips; given by Mike Phillips.

### April 12:

- In memory of loved ones; given by Mary Johnson.
- In honor of Thaddeus & Otto Meyer, our grandsons; given by Paul & Cindy Meyer.

### April 19:

- In memory of my parents, Arnold & Linda Holman; given by Mary Johnson.
- In honor of Dan's Birthday; given by Janette Hess.

### April 26:

- In honor of our grandson Jakob's birthday; given by Ken & Kathy Zank.
- In honor of Andy's parents 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary; given by Andy & Mary Beth Bellavia.

## 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](http://gracewoodstock.org)**

## GRACE STAFF & COUNCIL

### Lead Pastor

Rev. Amanda Bergstrom  
[abergstrom@gracewoodstock.org](mailto:abergstrom@gracewoodstock.org)

### Office Coordinator

Kim Smith  
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### Financial Secretary

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### Communications Coordinator

Kari Gippert  
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### Director of Youth Education

Nyji Sirreayah  
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### 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, Michael Liedtke,  
Mary Noe, Adele Petersen,  
Jeremy Schaaf

### Treasurer

Jane Gerloff