



2026

Grace Notes

Volume 78, Number 1



Grace
Lutheran Church

Lead Pastor

Shane Koepke

Deacon

Jessie Camp

Financial Director

Marsha Smith

Music Director & IT

Aaron Bartz

Office Manager

Deb Attig

Building Supervisor

Darin LaFrance

Engagement Director

Jenny Campos

Office Hours

9:00 am—2:00 pm
Monday—Thursday
507-373-6496

Worship Services

Sunday Morning
9:00 am
In-person & online

Sunday School

Sunday Morning
10:00 am
Sept. through May

www.gracealbertlea.org
www.facebook.com/GraceAlbertLea

Welcome Deacon Jessie

In the early church, people were called to different kinds of ministry for the sake of the gospel. Paul writes that “there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit” and “varieties of services, but the same Lord” (1 Corinthians 12.4–5). The church has always needed more than one kind of leader, because the work God calls us into is bigger than any one person can carry.

This month we welcome Deacon Jessie into a new role among us as a Minister of Word and Service. Many of you have already met her, and you have sensed the energy and steadiness she brings. Her work will focus on youth and family ministries and the mission we share beyond the walls of Grace. She’ll walk with young people, support families, build partnerships in our community, and help us embody Christ’s love in practical ways.

As Pastor, my call continues as a Minister of Word and Sacrament. My primary responsibilities remain preaching, presiding at communion and baptism, pastoral care, and leading the congregation in worship, vision, and teaching. Jessie and I will overlap in planning, leadership, and relationship building, but we will carry out different parts of that shared work. Think of it less like two separate job descriptions and more like two complementary roles in the same ministry team.

The early Christians lived this out all the time. Acts 6 tells the story of the apostles recognizing that the church needed leaders who could focus on service, community care, and meeting the needs of the people. Their response wasn’t to tighten control, but to expand leadership. They prayed, they blessed, and they sent new servants into the work. The result was a stronger, more vibrant church where “the word of God continued to spread” (Acts 6.7).

And...that’s what we’re aiming for here. In this faithful transition, we trust that God is very much at work. Jessie brings gifts that complement Grace (and mine). She has experience organizing, teaching, encouraging, and helping people find their place in the life of the church and beyond our walls. My hope is that together (her, me, and all of us) we can continue to build a congregation that is spiritually grounded, outwardly focused, and makes room at the table for all God’s people.

None of this works if it only happens on paper. The real ministry of Grace comes alive when people show up, participate, ask questions, volunteer, and share ideas. So here is the nudge from me: take a moment in the next few weeks to introduce yourself to Deacon Jessie, tell her something you love about this church, and ask her how you can be part of the ministry she’s helping lead.

God is working goodness here, and we get to do it together. ~PShane



Deacon Jessie

Grace and peace to you! I am honored and excited that you all have called me as your Deacon. I understand how difficult it can be to wait for a new minister. To sit in the weird in-between: being excited to begin something new, all the while sitting there and wondering when the wait will finally be over. The call process is like that. Whether or not we like it, the call process is purposefully slow. It forces us to sit and wait: to pray and take time to notice where God is calling us next. In a world where we can receive anything we want within seconds or minutes, taking the necessary time to prayerfully consider the next step is hard.

But we know God is continually at work. That much is very clear. This congregation is moving forward in some very new and exciting ways. Your faith and strong passion for God's ministry is ever present. The overwhelming love and support that stems from you all shows me how much God's love is present here.

In the next few weeks, I will be officially ordained in the ELCA as a Minister of Word and Service, then officially installed as your deacon. These rites are purely ceremonial, as I've already begun working with you all, but they are important, nonetheless. All are welcome to attend. The ordination will take place at Trinity Lutheran Church in Owatonna on January 10th, and the Instillation will take place during worship at Grace on January 11th.

And one more thing. Throughout the past few weeks, I've met many of you, but please do not be a stranger. I would love to get to know more of you and explore how we can do ministry together. Stop by my office, send me an email, or wave me down after worship. I greatly look forward to serving Grace.

~ Deacon Jessie



Kitchen Update

In less than a month, we have raised \$104,000 for the kitchen remodel. We are well beyond halfway of the total goal of \$170,000. Whether you are pledging a gift to be given over time or a one time donation, THANK YOU!!!!!! The church kitchen has long needed an update and we are glad that you are part of the efforts to make Grace a place of hospitality for years to come.

Right now we have a few things you can purchase to celebrate the remodel as well as have a gift from Grace. Mugs as well as aprons will be available soon. Each purchase will help fund the kitchen. Below are a few pictures of what the new space will look like. If you haven't already made a donation, please make one today so that we can start building soon! Thanks again for making this possible.



Coming
Soon!



Church Council Minutes

December 9, 2025

Present at meeting: Pastor Shane Koepke, Deacon Jessie Camp, Doreen Pontow, Robert Jacobson, Jerry Dahl, Erica Samp, Markey Samp, Jennifer Zoller, Philip Lonneman, Gerry Vogt, Dave Drommerhausen

Opening Devotions: Given by Pastor Shane. The devotional centered around an excerpt from the book The Art of Advent. Reflection focused on a painting of Christ's birth that includes two midwives, and it reminds us how important it is to keep telling the stories of what we have witnessed and what Jesus has done in our lives.

Open Forum: None

Review of Last Months Minutes: Some discussion about how to share feedback in public places, like the newsletter.

Motion made by: Jerry Dahl

Seconded by: Erica Samp

Approved

Approval of Today's agenda

Motion made by: Jerry Dahl

Seconded by: Robert Jacobson

Approved

Financial Report:

Current Year (through November)

- We are about \$8,400 behind expenses year to date.
- We expect to finish the year around a \$9,000 deficit, which is better than anticipated.
- Maintenance remains a pressure point, which is not surprising with an older building.

Motion to approve: Jerry Meyer

Seconded by: Jerry Dahl.

Approved

2026 Budget Highlights

- Overall, the 2026 budget is essentially flat to slightly down, about \$5,000 less than 2025.
- Payroll and benefits increase by about \$10,000, roughly a 3% increase, reflecting staff raises and benefit costs.

- Mission support to the synod remains at about 6.56% of giving, with an additional 0.5% designated for other mission giving.
- Insurance costs have decreased compared to last year's major jump. Utilities and maintenance are budgeted based on realistic projections for an aging facility.

Motion made by: Jerry Dahl

Seconded by: Robert Jacobson

Approved

Food for Backpacks:

- The second shipment of the year arrived and was successfully sorted for 10 local distributions.
- The program is financially healthy. Fundraising is covering about half of total costs, and partner churches are paying their shares.
- Several key ministries, including this one, rely heavily on a few leaders. Planning for backup and continuity is important going forward.

Council Membership & Nominations:

- Three council members will be going off council in 2026.
- All current members are asked to personally invite potential new candidates before the annual meeting early next year.
- We want people to know that council meetings are focused, shorter than they used to be, and that returning experienced members are very valuable for continuity.

Lead Pastor's Report Pastor Shane:

- Service of Hope & Healing is on Wed., Dec. 17 at 6:30pm
- Christmas Eve worship times are 3:00pm and 5:00pm as usual, with the addition of an 11:00pm service.

Committee Reports:

Altar guild:

- Altar Guild continues to look for more volunteers. Men & women alike are welcome and encouraged to participate.

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Church Council Minutes (continued from page 4)

- Time commitment is modest, at about 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after worship.
- We had a conversation about hand washing for ushers and communion servers. Clean hands keep exchange of illness at bay. Possible solution: place hand sanitizer where servers naturally pass (near ushers or sacristy entry.)

Building and grounds: There was a small electrical fire in one of the hoists for an Advent wreath in the sanctuary today (Dec. 9). Staff happened to be in the sanctuary and noticed the fire right away. The fire department responded quickly. The fire was contained to the motor and plastic housing. Damage was limited to some melted plastic, debris from the fire extinguisher, and minor smoke residue. No one was injured. Darin LaFrance (building superintendent) used the fire extinguisher and was later checked out and cleared at the ER. Estimated damage is below our insurance deductible.

Grace Youth:

- The Youth-led Worship service on Nov. 16 was well received.
- About 20 youth attended Friendsgiving Potluck on Nov. 16 and it was a fun event.
- Lefse Day on Nov. 22 was a big success.
- Cookie-decorating planned for Dec. 13 was cancelled due to low numbers.
- Christmas Caroling is on Dec. 17 at 4:45pm, with a walk to Thorne Crest to carol, followed by a supper back at church.
- The Confirmation Christmas party is also on Dec. 17.

Grief Share & 2nd Wind:

- Grief Share at Grace concluded December 1 with a strong, engaged group.
- A follow up social group, "Second Wind," now meets monthly in different locations at 5:00pm, welcoming widows, widowers, and divorcees. The goal is ongoing community and for participants to form their own connections beyond the formal meetings.

Kitchen Campaign: The 35,000 dollar match goal has effectively been met. This included the 2025 Grace Foundation support and pledges received so far. Early estimates place us around \$87,000 raised, only three weeks into active fundraising. Contractors are planning in the background. No work will begin until timing and funding are fully aligned.

Library: None

Mission team:

- The mission team is discerning a change in one of our mission partners, the "Five Sisters" in Wells, who are choosing not to renew in the same way.
- A possible new mission connection is through local chiropractor Dr. Joe Nelson's work in Costa Rica, where they bring suitcases filled with clothing and shoes. The greatest need is for large suitcases that people are willing to donate.
- A "blessing box" idea was floated, for school supplies and other non-food essentials. That conversation will continue with more congregational input.
- Deacon Jessie will be working closely with the Mission Team as part of her role.

Music: None

Usher: None

Visitation Group: None

Tasks for next council meeting: None

Prayer Intercessions: Specific prayers requested for family and friends who are dealing with health concerns, both new & ongoing, and upcoming surgeries. Prayers of thanksgiving were shared for Deacon Jessie's call to Grace, the joy of Lefse Day, and for the firefighters, police, EMTs, and staff who all responded quickly to the fire.

Next meeting time and date: January 13, 2026, 6:30pm

Adjournment: 7:36 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Zoller (sub. for Adele Rosnow)

Grace Lutheran Church Council Secretary



Grace Prays

Prayers of Grieving

For the family and friends of **Muriel Hoeg**

Prayers of Healing

For Greg Henderson

For Siglind Kleih, daughter-in-law of
Gerhard & Irmi Kleih

For Betty Anderson

For Jerry Vogt

For Wynnette Flores

Prayers of Joy

With grateful hearts, we celebrate the
election of Jessie Camp as our new
deacon. We give thanks for her call and
the gifts she brings!

Prayers of Thanks

Thank you to Duane Lonneman, Philip
Lonneman's father, for using his gifts to
build and donate our new bulletin box!

GRACE PRAYS: We are honored to pray with
and for you. To keep our list current, names
(shared with permission) remain for two weeks
and may be renewed. Please contact the church
office to add or remove a name. Thank you.

PASTORAL CARE

To assist the pastor in providing pastoral care for
those hospitalized or homebound, please notify the
pastor of pending surgeries, overnight hospital
stays, or individuals who would like a home visit.

Please call 507-373-6496

January

(Remember to pray for our Grace family on these dates.)

1. Wynnette Flores
2. Todd & Ann Kriewall
3. Alex & Angie Johnston
Hayden, Adler & Bryant
4. Jay & Debbie Flink, Preston
5. Mary Gilbertson
6. Steve & Kristine Lee
7. Jared & Kristan Bowman, Carson & Carley
8. Dave & Jane Smith, Kyra
9. Brad & Jody Kirchner
Landon & Kaedyn
10. Ray & Joyce Langerud
11. Kent Jaspersen
12. Jennifer Swenson, Laynee
13. Kathe Grodhaus
14. Paul & Cheryl Citurs, Tyler
15. Rev. Joel Erickson
16. Orrion & Barbara Roisen
17. Brandi Schroeder
18. Marsha Wolfgram
19. Joan Zabel
20. Paula Wire, Keiffer & Kallee
21. Chris & Laura Thomas
22. Brad & Cynthia Haugen
Benjamin & Nicolas
23. Richard & Betty Anderson
24. Todd & Paula Bachtle
25. Kenneth & Geraldine Breamer
26. Philip & Stacie Neal, Ashlyn
27. Kenneth & Kristine Hanson, Brady
28. Colleen Ingvaldson
29. William & Rita Olson, Brian
30. LeAnn Olson
31. Kathryn Peterson





Caring and Sharing

Chairperson: Available

Janice Anderson
Jackie & Alan Attig
Deb & Joe Attig
Nicole & Jay Austinson
Jessica & Nicholas Bremer
Debbie Christensen
Kathe Grodhaus
Kristine & Joel Hantelman
Trudy & Mark Harig
Krystle & Bobby Hutchinson
Tina & Matthew Kermes
Tara & Dean Ketterling
Kathy Knutson
Carol & David Larson
Ashley & Leif Martinson
Carol & Jeffrey Olson
Rita & Bill Olson
Carol & Terry Perkins
Nicole Peterson
Teresa & Dennis Raatz
Lisa Rippentrop
Peggy & Cary Williamson

STUDY OPPORTUNITIES for Adults at Grace

We invite you to join any of our regular Bible study groups at Grace Lutheran.

Tuesday Morning Women's Bible Study 10:00-11:00 am

This study for women offers fellowship and great discussion.

Thursday Morning Bible Study 7:30-8:30 am

Consider joining this group for an opportunity for good discussion and good fellowship.

Grace WELCA Women's Circles

Mary Circle (meets every 1st Monday/5:00 pm)

New members are always welcome! Call the church office, 373-6496, for more information.

Caring & Sharing

**The new signup sheet is in the
narthex!**

**We are in need of
co-chairs for 2026!**

**Choose a month that
works for you!**

Thank you to Jane Smith for chairing December! We're grateful to all who helped or provided food. There's still time to sign up as a co-chair, your support makes a difference!

Pastoral Act for December

Funeral for Muriel Hoeg



Gifts of Love

Altar Guild

In Memory Of:

Dewain Thompson, father of Deb, given
by Joe & Deb Attig

Backpack Food Program

In Memory Of:

Barbara Nelson given by Ross & Joyce
Hansen

**Terry Gilbertson, brother of Sue Barber &
Lanae Thorstad**, given by Dale & Dorothy
Baldwin

Mark Schow given by Hazel Spiering
Sharon Meyer given by Jerry Meyer

Gift Given By:

Father Henry Doyle
Kent Jasperson
Dex & Jan Henschel
Debbie Christensen
Dale & Dorothy Baldwin
Tuesday Morning Bible Study
Domestic Engineer Study Club

Chew & Chat

Gift Given By:

Pam & Greg Henderson

Don Gross Scholarship

Gift Given By:

Kent Jasperson

Food Shelf

In Honor of:

Pastor Ost's 90th birthday given by Ron &
Betty Matthews

Kitchen Remodeling Fund

In Memory of:

**Terry Gilbertson, brother of Sue Barber &
Lanae Thorstad**, given by Bill & Sue Barber &
family

Gift Given by:

Kent Jasperson
Matt & Tina Kermes
Deb & Joe Attig
Kenn & Gerri Breamer
Proceeds from Pastor Milt Ost's book, **Stone
Theologians**
Jen Zoller
Dave Drommerhausen
Stuart & Christie Ness
Corrine & Vince Tims
Nancy & Rollin Hoium
Jerome Meyer
Grace Foundation
Mary Carlson
Steve Bracker
Dex & Jan Henschel
Jessica Waters
James & Judy Munyer
Mary Harriman
Robert & Marion Bergemann
Carlyn Tufte
Robert Jacobson
Orrion Roisen
Barbara Roisen
Dale & Dorothy Baldwin
Wayne & Sharon Jahnke
Jane Madson

Continued on page 9



Gifts of Love

LOVE

In Memory Of:

Cliff Engebretson, Merry Christmas dad,
given by Jason & Dayna Saltou

Gift Given By:

Roger & Markell Vogt
Richard & Darlene Jordahl
Ed & Julie Groeneweg
Shirley Olsen

Martin Luther

Gift Given By:

Richard & Darlene Jordahl

Memorial

Gift Given By:

Richard & Darlene Jordahl

Music Ministry

In Honor of:

Pastor Ost's 90th birthday given by Dale &
Charlotte Elvebak

Prayer Garden

Memory Of:

Cliff Engebretson, Merry Christmas dad,
given by Jason & Dayna Saltou

Gift Given By:

Kent Jasperson
Debbie Christensen

Undesignated

Gift Given By:

Shirley Olson

PLEASE NOTE that any additional "Gifts of Love" recorded by the church office after **December 14, 2025** will appear in the next issue. If you have given a gift and your name has not been recorded, please call 507-373-6496.

Generosity at Grace

**November
2025**

Average
Attendance
in person was:
143 per worship

Giving
\$62,658.10

Expenses
-\$46,426.04

**Year to Date
Giving vs
Expenses:**
\$510,277.57
- \$518,687.71
-\$8,410.14

Thanks for your attendance In Person or Live Streaming as we
continue to be the church apart and together.

The Finance Ministry Team and Church Council appreciate your
generous support. Your faithful Stewardship is essential for us to
continue to support our ministries at Grace Lutheran.

FAIR TRADE COFFEE

We will be selling coffee
before our worship service on
Sunday, January 4, 2026.



Remember your Coins
for Sunday's Noisy
Offering!



Announcements

BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE CALL OF THE CHURCH

Jessica Ann Camp

WILL BE ORDAINED TO THE MINISTRY OF WORD & SERVICE IN THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA

ALL ORDAINED MINISTERS ARE INVITED TO VEST AND PROCESS. THE COLOR OF THE DAY IS RED.

10 January 2026 | 1 PM. Reception to follow
Trinity Lutheran Church
609 Lincoln Ave, Owatonna

Chew & Chat Volunteers Needed

You do not need to be a confirmation parent, and all expenses can be reimbursed.

Thank you for supporting our youth!

You can:

- Make a meal
- Drop off food
- Serve students
- Or donate toward a meal



Scan the QR code to sign up to prepare & serve a meal or go to:
<https://gracelutheranchurch2.flocknote.com/signup/221589>

ALTAR GUILD

We'd love to have you join the team that has a role in preparation for our church services which includes altar environment, communion, baptism, flower care and decorating i.e. Christmas and Easter.

Training is provided; we work in pairs and scheduling is flexible.

Call the church office if you're interested.

The Church Cookbook!



- January's theme: Main Dishes
- February's theme: Soups

- Please place your recipe in the basket in the narthex OR
- Email it to Jenny at connect@gracealbertlea.org OR
- Visit www.gracealbertlea.org/contact-us to send your recipe

Please include your name with the recipe that you submit!

Grace Lutheran Church Open Doors. Warm Ovens:

Make room. Make meals. Make community.

- Our vision is to create a welcoming kitchen and gathering space where meals are shared, neighbors are served, and community is built.

Plans are ready!

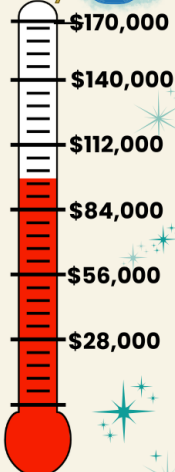
- Funding is needed before construction can begin.

Goal: \$170,000

- We are making progress towards our goal: **Open Doors and Warm Ovens.**

- Your support helps turn vision into action and created a space for hospitality, fellowship, & Service.

Donate or Pledge today!



Happy New Year

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

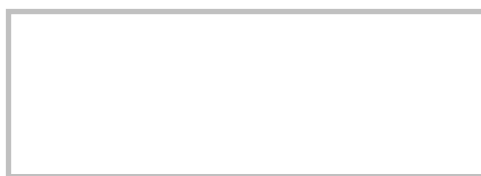
JANUARY 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 Building and Office Closed 	2 Building and Office Closed	3 Building and Office Closed
4 8:30 am Fair-Trade Coffee 9:00 am Worship 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:00 am Adult Forum (Enneagram, Personality framework)	5 1:30 pm SAIL 5:00 pm Mary Circle	6 9:00 am Staff Meeting 10:00 am Tuesday Morning Bible Study	7 9:00 am Quilting 5:45-6:15 pm Chew & Chat 6:00 pm Bell Choir 6:30 pm 7 th & 8 th Grade Confirmation 7:00 pm Adult Choir	8 7:30 am Early Morning Bible Study 1:30 pm SAIL	9 Building and Office Closed	10 Building and Office Closed Deacon Jessie Camp Ordination Service Trinity Lutheran Church 609 Lincoln Ave Owatonna, MN
11 9:00 am Worship and Installation of Deacon Jessie 10:00 am Celebrating Deacon Jessie's installation 10:00 am Sunday School	12 1:30 pm SAIL	13 9:00 am Staff Meeting 10:00 am Tuesday Morning Bible Study 6:30 pm Council Meeting	14 10:00 am Thorne Crest Communion 5:45-6:15 pm Chew & Chat 6:00 pm Bell Choir 6:30 pm 7 th & 8 th Grade Confirmation 7:00 pm Adult Choir	15 7:30 am Early Morning Bible Study 1:30 pm SAIL	16 Building and Office Closed	17 Building and Office Closed
18 9:00 am Worship 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:00 am Adult Forum (Trivia)  10:00 am Sunday School	19 Newsletter Deadline 1:30 pm SAIL 	20 9:00 am Staff Meeting 10:00 am Tuesday Morning Bible Study	21 9:00 am Quilting 5:45-6:15 pm Chew & Chat 6:00 pm Bell Choir 6:30 pm 7 th & 8 th Grade Confirmation 7:00 pm Adult Choir	22 7:30 am Early Morning Bible Study 1:30 pm SAIL	23 Building and Office Closed	24 Building and Office Closed
25 9:00 am Worship 10:00 am Annual Meeting 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:00 am NO Sunday School	26 1:30 pm SAIL	27 9:00 am Staff Meeting 10:00 am Tuesday Morning Bible Study	28 5:45-6:15 pm Chew & Chat 6:00 pm Bell Choir 6:30 pm 7 th & 8 th Grade Confirmation 7:00 pm Adult Choir	29 7:30 am Early Morning Bible Study 9:00 am Grace Notes Mail Prep 1:30 pm SAIL	30 Building and Office Closed	31 Building and Office Closed

Grace Lutheran Church
918 Garfield Avenue
Albert Lea, MN 56007

Telephone: 507-373-6496
Email: office@gracealbertlea.org

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Worship Schedule

hello
winter



 flocknote

Sign up for updates from
Grace Lutheran. Receive
announcements via text
or email. Scan QR code to
sign up for FlockNote!

Sunday Worship Service

Time: 9:00 am

Options: In person and online

Watch: Facebook (facebook.com/gracealbertlea)

YouTube (youtube.com/@gracealbertlea)

Sunday School

Time: 10:00 am

Confirmation

Chew & Chat: Serving from 5:45 - 6:15 pm Wednesdays

7th & 8th Grade: Wednesdays, 6:30 pm

