



2026

GRACE NOTES

Volume 78, Issue 5



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

Worship Services
Sunday Morning
9:00 am

Sunday School
Sunday Morning
10:00 am
Sept. through May

www.gracealbert.org

[www.facebook.com/
GraceAlbertLea](https://www.facebook.com/GraceAlbertLea)

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." Romans 6:3-4

Somewhere between Easter and Pentecost, we become a little blind to the season. The energy of Easter Sunday fades, the lilies are long gone, and the weeks that follow can feel like deep breath before summer kicks in. But! the church calendar tells a different story. We are still, right now, deep in the Easter season. And this entire stretch of weeks leading up to Pentecost are asking us: do you actually know who you are? We hear the answer in the baptismal waters.

Baptism is not a ceremony we complete and move on, it's a gift that blesses and walks with us into the world. In the ELCA (that is the Lutheran church), we celebrate Thanksgiving for Baptism as a moment when we gather around water and remember together that we belong to God. We do this, not because of what we have done, but because of what God has already done. We were buried into Christ's death. We were raised with him into new life. It's not a metaphor it's a declaration about who we already are.

This matters more than it might seem on the surface. Most of us live our lives from the outside in. We look to what we accomplish, how we are perceived, whether we are measuring up. But our baptismal life runs in the opposite direction. It moves from the inside out. You are already claimed. You are already named. The water and the word have already been spoken over you. Everything else in your life flows from that, not toward it.

The Easter season is about seeing new life, about re-orienting yourself to God's promise of abundant life. The resurrection of Jesus is not just a story about one man's body coming back to life. It is God's story that death does not get the final word, that God is in the business of making new things out of broken ones, and that every baptized person has been swept up into that reality. Pentecost will come and the Spirit will blow through, but right now, in these weeks, we are being formed by the resurrection. I pray that you (and me) can have the courage, audacity and faith to live like people who have nothing to prove because everything that matters has already been given.

So, when water is brought forward and prayers are spoken over it on a Sunday morning in May, I hope you don't see it as one more thing to do on Sunday. I pray you see yourself in those words, that you believe that you are swept up into that holy moment as we remember together, out loud, who we are and who we belong to, Jesus Christ.

Blessings for your journey,

Pastor Shane



Deacon Jessie

It's graduation season!

Whether you're graduating from preschool, high school, or your PhD, graduation is such an exciting time for all involved. For all graduates and their families: God's blessings be with you during this time.

On May 17th, Grace will be hosting a baccalaureate service for our high school graduates and their families. This service will be everyone's opportunity to give thanks to God for these graduates, as well as join in blessing them as they continue on their journeys. I invite you all to attend!

Baccalaureate (not to be confused with bachelorette, though in my mind they are equally as difficult to spell) is a time when we can come together as a congregation to celebrate the gifts God has given these students throughout their lives, as well as to ask God for guidance for their future.

It is important to note: a baccalaureate service is separate from a graduation ceremony. Graduation ceremonies provide us the opportunity to celebrate the students' accomplishments, but baccalaureate services are meant to remind us that God is, and always will be, at the center of all we do. They have similar yet distinct roles, and both are valuable and important.

Isaiah 43:18-19 says "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!" It can be easy to dwell in all the things that have happened in our own lives, thinking about how we could have acted differently, or reminiscing about things we no longer have. But God continually works in and through us to create something new. Life pushes us forward, toward the new. We will continue to live out our faith in new and different ways. God gives us knowledge, stamina, perseverance, and the ability to make this world better every single day. As we continue to make transitions, may we continually remember that God is always making new things possible.

Deacon Jessie



Music

What the Work Teaches

Most of what I know about music directing was learned the old-fashioned way: in rehearsal rooms, school auditoriums, at the piano accompanying excellent teachers, and on the drive home afterward. Experience has been both the test and the textbook. Books can explain cueing, diction, pacing, balance, and preparation. Rehearsal teaches the harder part: how to keep a room moving when people are tired, how to decide which problem needs attention first, and how to help a cast improve without letting frustration take over.

That is one reason Albert Lea Community Theatre's upcoming June production of *My Fair Lady* feels so right for this season. A show like that requires much more than learning lines and notes. The accents have to be consistent. The dialogue has to flow naturally into the music. The ensemble has to sound unified without losing individual character. And all of that has to happen in a way that helps the audience follow the story rather than admire the effort. ACT staged *My Fair Lady* back in the 1970–71 season, so bringing it back during the company's 60th season feels like a fitting nod to its own history.

My trips to Osage have taught many of the same lessons. I still think about *Curtains*. Early in the final week, the show was not where it needed to be, and everyone in the room knew it. That can be a discouraging place to start. But the students responded. They saw the gap, and they worked to close it. Each subsequent evening was exponentially better than the previous. By opening night, the anxiety was gone, the cast had settled in, and the students were clearly enjoying themselves onstage.

Right after Osage's production, Albert Lea High School opened *Chicago*. I rehearsed with them only a handful of times before opening, but it was obvious that the students rose to the level of what was asked of them. When young performers are trusted, challenged, and well prepared, they can do impressive work. Productions like that do more than entertain an audience for a weekend. They raise expectations for what students can accomplish and help build the next generation of performers, pit musicians, stage managers, and audience members.

That is also why I continue to value Cedar Summerstock in Osage. I will not be music directing there this year, but I will be playing drums for *Grease* while trying to make progress on some long-neglected house projects. I do not think of that as stepping away from the work. It is simply a different way of contributing to the same goal: helping a production run well and helping others do their best work.

The older I get, the more I think music directing is really a form of attention and service. It asks you to notice what a cast needs, what a scene needs, what to say, and sometimes what not to say. Even in a supporting role like playing drums or accompanying, upon recent reflection I realized these positions all check the boxes of a proper form of stewardship. I care deeply about music and theatre because it is one way a community learns to trust, support, and challenge one another. The most important contributions are often not the most visible ones. They are the ones that give everyone else the confidence to do their part well. ~ Aaron Bartz



Church Council Minutes

(continued on page 5)

April 14, 2026

Present at meeting:

Pastor Shane Koepke, Doreen Pontow, Jerry Dahl, JD Carlson, Adele Rosnow, Philip Lonneman, Erica Samp, Markey Samp, Dave Drommerhausen, Jennifer Zoller

Opening Devotions (Pastor Shane):

Devotion centered around the Hebrew translation of Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Hebrew is a consonant-based, historically complex, and visually meaningful language. The first word is Bereshit, pronounced (beh-reh-SHEET) בְּרֵאשִׁית. Because Hebrew is read right to left, the first letter is ב. It is shaped like a wall, to imply that the word of God is indeed the beginning. Nothing can come before it.

Open Forum: None

Approval of March Council Minutes

Motion made by: Jerry Dahl

Seconded by: Philip Lonneman

Approved

Approval of March Council Agenda

Motion made by: JD Carlson

Seconded by: Erica Samp

Approved

Reports:

"Council as Leaders" Retreat Recap:

- Held at St. Olaf in Austin on Saturday, March 14. Doreen Pontow and JD Carlson attended. Both reported engaging and rewarding sessions and camaraderie with leaders and Council members of other congregations. The event ended early due to weather.
 - Doreen Pontow is working with Jenny Campos (Engagement Director) to create a booklet for Grace Council members, explaining roles, committees, bylaw highlights, and operational norms
 - Discussion around holding a dedicated financial presentation to the Council, given by Dave Drommerhausen and Marsha Smith (Financial Director)

Financial Report (Dave Drommerhausen):

- \$34,000 short as of the end of March
- Speculation that some donors designated funds to the kitchen project rather than general giving, which temporarily reduced general giving figures
- A new property insurance bid will modestly lower costs while maintaining coverage

Motion made by: Adele Rosnow

Seconded by: JD Carlson

Approved

Food For Backpacks (Dave Drommerhausen):

- Program received a donation from Ventura Foods
- Yearly summary was that the program has gone well

Kitchen Remodel & Fundraiser (Pastor Shane):

- Kitchen is 90-95% complete
- Fundraising is about \$35,000 short of goal
- A new large table for the kitchen will be manufactured locally
- New basement hallway flooring will be completed before Sunday, April 19
- Final inspections will take place soon

Pastor Shane:

- Sunday, April 19: Adult Forum was Mason Buendorf, about his trip to Greece, Turkey, and the Holy Land (rescheduled from March)
- Sunday, May 31: Installation of Council Members and Blessing of the Kitchen
- Confirmation and Chew 'n' Chat: three Wednesday nights left this year
 - Contact Deacon Jessie if offering to provide one of the meals
- First Lutheran and Grace will collaborate on Vacation Bible School (VBS) this summer; host site TBD
- First Lutheran will host Summer Midweek Worship; host site likely Central Park
- Kudos to Grace staff for their dedication and extra efforts during Holy Week
- Easter Breakfast was a fun, successful, and well-organized event

Continued on page 5

Church Council Minutes

(continued from page 4)

Reports continued:

Volunteer Appreciation:

- On Sunday, April 19, Council served cake in the Chapel after worship.
- All who volunteer at Grace were invited and encouraged to attend!

Committee Reports:

Altar Guild:

- None this month

Building, Equipment & Grounds:

- A building walkthrough with Darin LaFrance (Building Supervisor), Pastor Shane, and JD Carlson will be scheduled, to list priorities and match items against the budget

Library:

- None this month

Mission Ministry:

- None this month

Music:

- None this month

Personnel Committee:

- None this month

Scholarship Committee:

- None this month

Sunday School:

- None this month

Ushers:

- None this month

Visitation:

- None this month

Youth Ministry:

- Saturday, April 18: "The Escape Challenge" escape room event + lunch in Rochester
- July 27-31: Summer Youth Trip to Duluth and the North Shore
 - Adult Leader needed; contact Deacon Jessie if interested

Roundtable:

- Many compliments on the kitchen renovation have been received
- Positive feedback on how well Deacon Jessie has stepped into her role at Grace

Prayers:

For healing for Grace members dealing with recent diagnoses and upcoming surgeries; prayers for peace for those grieving recent losses; thank you to the Council for leadership and leaning in with eagerness and curiosity, to best serve our church community together.

Next meeting:

May 12, 2026, at 6:30 pm in the Fireside Room

Adjournment:

7:22 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Zoller

Grace Lutheran Church Council Secretary

Committees:

Goal: Council member(s) will connect with committee(s) at Grace and bring quarterly reports to Council meetings

<i>Altar Guild</i>	Doreen Pontow	<i>Scholarship Committee</i>	Deacon Jessie
<i>Building, Equipment, & Grounds</i>	JD Carlson	<i>Sunday School</i>	Deacon Jessie
<i>Library</i>	[submitted report]	<i>Ushers</i>	Jerry Dahl
<i>Mission Ministry</i>	Gerry Vogt	<i>Visitation</i>	Pastor Shane & Doreen Pontow
<i>Music</i>	Adele Rosnow	<i>Youth Ministry</i>	Erica Samp & Jen Zoller
<i>Personnel Committee</i>	[only as needed]		

Grace Prays

Prayers of Healing

For **Sue Barber**

For **Richard Diaz**

For **Jim Wildeman,**

son of Sandy Fredrickson
and

For those with new or ongoing health
diagnoses

Prayers for those Grieving

For the family & friends of **Melissa Cichon**

For the family & friends of **Diane Skelley,**
Hazel Spiering's daughter

Prayers of Joy

With grateful hearts, we lift our graduates
in prayers of joy.

May the Lord bless them and keep them
as they go forth.

Numbers 6:24-26

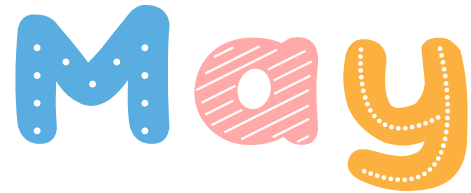
Grace Prays

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 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



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

1. Richard Diaz
2. Ronald & Patricia Holtan
3. Jeffery & Tammy Johnson
 - Jesse, Heather & Ally
4. Mark & Sharon Christian, McKinzey & Andy
5. Mike & Julie Dandrea, Broc & Alyssa
6. Ronnie & Linda Bryan, Brendon & Lance
7. Matthew Cichon, Cody
8. Barbara Thron
9. Michelle Ehrich
10. Randy & Nicole Harig
 - Addison, Lucas, Garrett, Paige & Joshua
11. Judy Gulbrandson
12. Linda Crom, Andrea
13. Brian & Melissa Johannsen, Kaitlyn
14. Richard & Pamela Hanson, Brett
15. Matt & Tina Kermes
16. Jeffery & Amy Kelley, Paige & Austen
17. Dennis & Teresa Raatz, Megan
18. Bill King
19. Dennis & Helen Hamberg
20. Betty Hoffman
21. Todd & Christma Lange
 - Henrik, Jens & Solveig
22. Chad & Erica Samp, Markey & Scarlett
23. Stacy Adams, Jaxson & Hannah
24. Dustin & Kim Rafdal, Mason & Gavin
25. Ronald & Betty Mathews
26. Rick & Debra Madson
27. John Penley
28. Jeffrey & Angela Carson, Chelsey & Cayley
29. Rochelle Kirsch
 - Alexa, Peyton & Cooper
30. Craig & Becky Loehr
31. Stanley & Debra Opdahl



MAY

Caring and Sharing

Chairperson available

Marilyn Anderson
Shari & Bill Anderson
Jernelle & Chris Baas
Angie & Keith Flatness
Pierrette Gavle
Julie & Ed Groeneweg
Linda Hanna
Elaine & Milan Hart
Charlotte Haukoos
Carol & Dann Hustoft
Randi Kelly
Kristine & Steve Lee
Debra & Ricky Madson
Angela & Matt Moller
Kari Oman
Elisa Peterson
Julie & Terry Stahl
Terri Wichmann
Marsha Wolfgram

Thank you to **Jane Smith** for chairing Caring & Sharing in March. And thank you to everyone who helped! We're grateful for all who volunteered. If you're looking for a way to get involved, there's still time to sign up as a co-chair, your support makes a real difference.

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 great discussion & fellowship.

Grace WELCA Women's Circles

Mary Circle meets every 1st Monday of the month at 4:30 pm in the Fireside Room.

New members are always welcome!

Call the church office for more information at 507-373-6496.



**CARING
& Sharing**

Co-Chairs Needed:

**May • June • July • November
• December**

**Sign up today in
the Narthex**

Pastoral Act for April

Funeral for Melissa Cichon

Gifts of Love

Altar Guild

Communion Bread & Wine In Memory Of:

Sharon Meyer given by Jerry Meyer

Backpack Food Program

In Memory Of:

Donnie & Pat Johnson given by Debbie Christensen

Julie Drommerhausen given by Jim & Mary Steele

Thayne Nordland given by Barbara Tullberg

Brady Hanson given by Kenny, Kris, Adam & Nicole Hanson

Gift Given By:

Kent Jasperson

Dale & Dorothy Baldwin

Grant Given By:

Western Star Lodge #26 AF & AM

Don Gross Scholarship

Gift Given By:

Kent Jasperson

Ecumenical Food Pantry

Gift Given By:

Mike & Karen Hendrickson

Roger & Markell Vogt

Alex & Angie Johnston

Ross & Shelly Peterson

Daniel & Heather Harms

Larry & Lanae Thorstad

Kitchen Remodeling Fund

In Memory Of:

Thayne Nordland given by Margaret Schow

Diane Skelly, daughter of Hazel Spiering, given by Margaret Schow

Kitchen Remodeling Fund

In Honor Of:

Pastor Ost given by Kent Jasperson

Gayle Poland on her 90th birthday given by Sharon & Wayne Jahnke

Gift Given By:

Laura Ayers

Mike & Karen Hendrickson

Dale & Dorothy Baldwin

Dexter & Janet Henschel

Lester Perschbacher

Jen Zoller

Kent Jasperson

Steve & JoAnn Bracker

Jessica & Jared Gordon

Steve & Julia Thompson

JD & Mindy Carlson

Larry & Lanae Thorstad

Doreen Pontow

Dennis & Sandy Fredrickson

LOVE

Gift Given By:

Rex & Lois Stotts

Ed & Julie Groeneweg

Mary Harriman

Gerhard & Irmigard Kleih

Martin Luther

Gift Given By:

Albert Lea Community Theatre – The Story Show



**Remember your coins for
Sunday's noisy offering!**

Fair Trade Coffee

We will be selling coffee before and immediately following worship service on **Sunday, May 3, 2026.**



Gifts of Love

Memorials

In Memory Of:

Thayne Nordland given by Rick & Ginny Loberg

Thayne Nordland given by Barbara Thron

Diane Skelley, daughter of Hazel Spiering, given by Marge & Joe LaFrance

Music Ministry

Gift Given By:

Mary Harriman

Music Ministry (Bells of Praise)

Gift Given By:

Robert Hoeg

American Legion Auxiliary 404, Alden

Parish Nurse

Gift Given By:

Mary Harriman

Prayer Garden

In Memory Of:

Donnie & Pat Johnson given by Debbie Christensen

Butch Harves given by Kent Jasperson

Marvin Gulbrandson, a wonderful husband & dad, given by Judy Gulbrandson, Eric & Dawn Gulbrandson & family, Michelle Thompson, Justin Wagner & Jayden Wagner

Gift Given By:

Mary Harriman

Kent Jasperson

Prayer Shawl

Gift Given By:

Kathy Knutson

Undesignated

Gift Given By:

Randy & Lynn Stay

Youth Ministry

Gift Given By:

Mary Harriman

PLEASE NOTE that any additional "Gifts of Love" recorded by the church office after **April 20, 2026** 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

**March
2026**

Average
Attendance
in person was:
103 per worship

Giving
\$46,904.25

Expenses
-\$52,003.61

**Year to Date
Giving vs
Expenses:**
\$134,003.45
- \$168,359.75
-\$34,356.30

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.



Announcements

Adult Forum Schedule

Fireside Room | 10:00 AM

May 3rd Communal Joy

May 10th



May 17th Connected Community Services

May 31st Kitchen Blessing & Celebration

Give blood.

Every 2 seconds someone
in the U.S. needs blood.

American Red Cross

Blood Drive Grace Lutheran Church

Fellowship Hall
918 Garfield Ave
Albert Lea, MN 56007

**Monday, May 18, 2026
12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

**DONATE
NOW**



[111] - Order ID: 1941329 - Item ID: 9927613 - Qty: 8 of 10 - 457462 - 2026-APR-0383 - AR17 - 254768

Please call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter: GraceAL to schedule an appointment.



Get summer ready! Come to give blood May 18-31 for
an exclusive Red Cross beach towel, ltd. qty!



Scan to schedule
an appointment.

Scan to be directed to
RapidPass®

1-800-RED CROSS | 1-800-733-2767 | redcrossblood.org | Download the Blood Donor App

©2016 The American National Red Cross

Congratulations **2026**

Hanna Austinson	Avery Mauer
Axel Calderon	Greta Moller
Brent Dahl	Mayzie Paulson
Payton Earl	Danica Prestorious
Adylan Gilliam	Markey Samp
Taylor Klocke	Claire Stockwell
Brekyn Larson	Brooke Tufte

Class of 2026 Baccalaureate Worship

Sunday, May 17th
during worship
9:00 am

Congratulations Scholarship Recipients

Hanna Austinson:

Gertrude Hanson Memorial Scholarship &
Vern Jahnke Memorial Scholarship

Axel Calderon: Godtland Scholarship

Brent Dahl:

Lindsey Loehr Diemer Memorial Scholarship,
Delores Ost Scholarship, &
Lu Ryan Memorial Scholarship

Payton Earl: Grace Foundation Scholarship &
Janice M. & Henry J. Guse Scholarship

Vanessa Enriquez-Flores: Jeanie Godtland Scholarship

Avery Mauer: Grace Foundation Scholarship

Greta Moller: LuVerne Godtland Scholarship

Markey Samp: Laurence McGill Memorial Scholarship

Easton Schewe: Donald Ball Memorial Scholarship

Brooke Tufte:

Donna Ball Memorial Scholarship,
John & Alma Matthews Memorial Scholarship,
& Delores Ost Scholarship



MAY

2026



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
3 8:30 am Fair-Trade Coffee 9:00 am Worship 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:00 am Sunday School Last Day!! 10:00 am Adult Forum Communal Joy	4 9:00 am Staff Meeting 1:30 pm SAIL 5:00 pm Mary Circle	5 10:00 am Tuesday Morning Bible Study	6 9:00 am Quilting	7 7:30 am Early Morning Bible Study 1:30 pm SAIL	8 Building and Office Closed	9 Building and Office Closed
10 MOTHER'S DAY 9:00 am Worship 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:00 am Adult Forum 	11 9:00 am Staff Meeting 1:30 pm SAIL	12 10:00 am Tuesday Morning Bible Study 6:30 pm Council Meeting	13 10:00 am Thorne Crest Communion	14 7:30 am Early Morning Bible Study 1:30 pm SAIL 5:00 pm 2 nd Wind Thirsty Fox	15 Building and Office Closed	16 Building and Office Closed Albert Lea Art Center Architecture Tour
17 9:00 am Worship & Baccalaureate 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:00 am Adult Forum Connected Community Services	18 Newsletter Deadline 9:00 am Staff Meeting 12-6:45 pm Blood Drive 	19 10:00 am Tuesday Morning Bible Study	20 9:00 am Quilting	21 7:30 am Early Morning Bible Study 1:30 pm SAIL	22 Building and Office Closed	23 Building and Office Closed
24 9:00 am Worship 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 31 9:00 am Worship 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:00 am Adult Forum Kitchen Blessing/Celebration	25 Building and Office Closed 	26 10:00 am Staff Meeting 10:00 am Tuesday Morning Bible Study	27	28 7:30 am Early Morning Bible Study 9:00 am Grace Notes 1:30 pm Mail Prep SAIL	29	30

Grace Lutheran Church
918 Garfield Avenue
Albert Lea, MN 56007

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

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Albert Lea, MN
Permit No. 208



Worship Schedule

Sunday Worship Service

Time: 9:00 am
Options: In person and online
Watch: Facebook (facebook.com/gracealbertlea)
Youtube (youtube.com/@gracealbertlea)

Wednesday Worship Service

Watch for an announcement
Will be held at First Lutheran

Sunday School

Time: 10:00 am
Last day: May 3, 2026

Vacation Bible School

Hosted by Grace Lutheran & First Lutheran Church
Watch for more announcements
Dates: June 15, 16, 17
Time: 1:00-5:00 pm
Location: Edgewater Pavilion

