



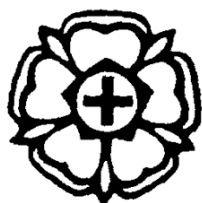
Grace Connections
Lutheran Church
Champaign, Illinois

*Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming as seers of old have sung,
it came, a flow'r so bright,
amid the cold of winter, when half-spent was the night.*

For some reason, this beloved Christmas hymn has been floating around my thoughts since the new church year started a month ago. Maybe it's because this is a go-to hymn for my immediate family that we invariably sing together whenever we are together at this time of year – or when the subject of our family singing tradition comes up and someone ask us to sing something for them. And maybe I'm thinking of this hymn particularly this year when for the first time since we have had children, we will not be together with any of them for the Christmas and New Year's celebrations.

But actually I think it might be something else that has me remembering and humming this hymn of late, and that is its evocation of the promise of light in the darkness, of a coming change for the better. I don't believe that I suffer from what is called "seasonal affective disorder" (SAD), a kind of depression that arises from lack of sunlight, but this year more than others in memory I have noticed the increasing darkness, the lengthening nights, and shortening days as we approached the winter solstice. And it has been particularly the ending of the first two stanzas of "Lo, How a Rose" that keeps coming to mind. Christ comes to us "when half-spent was the night," that is, when the night was farthest from the day, assuring us particularly in difficult times that we are the objects of God's concern, love, and care. I hope you will bear that in mind in this new year, in good times and in bad. God is with us and for us in Jesus Christ. And that's the best news there is.

*Isaiah had foretold it, the rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright,
she bore to us a Savior, when half-spent was the night.*



+ Pastor Repp

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God Connections

Faith, Worship, Music, Study, Prayer

Adult Sunday School

Join us at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings (after the service) in the Hoffmeister Room for our Adult Sunday School class!

January Faith Circle

Faith Circle meets on the third Tuesday evening of each month at 7 pm in the narthex. All are welcome. We begin the evening with refreshments (coffee and snacks provided by the hostess) and fellowship. The lesson leader presents the Bible study, beginning around approximately 7:30 pm.

This month's Faith Circle is on Tuesday, January 21st.

We collect an offering each month, which will support the ministries of WELCA (Women of the ELCA) as well as selected local and ELCA charities. We use the Bible study materials from *Gather Magazine*, a WELCA publication. Plan to attend and bring a friend!

First Friday Synod Prayer Group

Where and how is the Spirit moving? One way to find out is to gather together regularly for what Luther calls "The Mutual Conversation and Consolation of the Saints."

You are invited into a time of prayer on Zoom from 7:30 to 8:00 a.m. on the first Friday of every month. We will share what the Holy Spirit has laid on our hearts and then lift up those concerns and hopes to God in prayer.

This spiritual practice allows us to see Christ and be Christ for one another as the Holy Spirit builds up our communities of faith across the Central Southern Illinois Synod. Come join us as we share our hopes and concerns with God and one another for the sake of our shared life together. Sign up here:

<https://www.csis-elca.org/event/first-friday-prayer-group/>



Brown Bag Bible Study

Brown Bag Bible study will resume on Thursday, **January 23, 2025**. It will run every other week on **Thursdays from 12:30-1:30 pm** in the Narthex.

Central/Southern IL Synod Adult Faith Formation Class

Winter Class - The winter Adult Faith Formation Class will be "*Understanding the Hebrew Bible*," presented by the Rev. Dr. Fred Niedner, senior research professor at Valparaiso University.

Classes will be held via Zoom on Saturdays, from 9:00 - 12:00p.m. The dates are as follows: **January 18 & 25, February 8 & 22, March 8 & 22.** Registration is open now. Please click the link for more information. <https://www.csis-elca.org/event/aff-understanding-the-hebrew-bible-25/>

Bible Project Videos

We have been using videos from the Bible Project for several years now for council devotions, for Confirmation classes, and most recently for the Brown Bag Bible Study. I appreciate these videos for several reasons; for their grounding in modern biblical scholarship, for their accessible, conversational style, and for their conviction that the content of the Bible as it has been compiled, arranged, and edited over time is meant as a resource for creating and sustaining faith. I commend all of their videos to your attention. You will find them at BibleProject.org

+ Pastor Repp



BibleProject

Community Connections

Fellowship, Fun, Congregation News, Intercessory Prayer



Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting Sunday, January 26th

Dear Grace Community,

We will be holding our semi-annual Meeting of the Congregation on **January 26, 2025, at 10:45am**, (following the worship service), to approve the Annual Budget and vote on delegates for the Central/Southern Illinois Synod Assembly and the East Central Conference Assembly. We expect the meeting will be conducted in-person with a Zoom option to participate.

Marlys Scarbrough
Congregational President

Voting Delegates for the Synod Assembly

Calling for voting delegates for Synod Assembly! Synod Assembly will be Thursday June 5- Saturday June 7, 2025 in Bloomington, Illinois. This is the annual business meeting for the synod, but also a time for fun.

Grace Church is allocated 3 delegates (1 male, 1 female, and 1 youth) plus we need 2 alternate delegates (1 male, 1 female) in case one of the delegates is unable to attend.

If you are interested in attending as a delegate, please speak with Claire Vail, Meg Loven, Nancy Marshall, or Kathy Bowersox.

Time to Take the Decorations Down

On January 5th, we will be putting the Christmas decorations away until next year. Please lend a hand when you can! Many hands make light work. Please reach out to Claire Vail with questions .

LSSI Christmas Gift Update

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the LSSI collection of gifts for the children in the foster care program. We appreciate the many ways that people helped - whether it was shopping for gifts, providing gift cards or making a monetary donation.

Your generosity helped us go well beyond our initial commitment (39 children). In total, we provided gifts for 49 children and an additional monetary donation of just over \$250 that LSSI can use to supplement any gaps or last-minute needs for Christmas gifts.

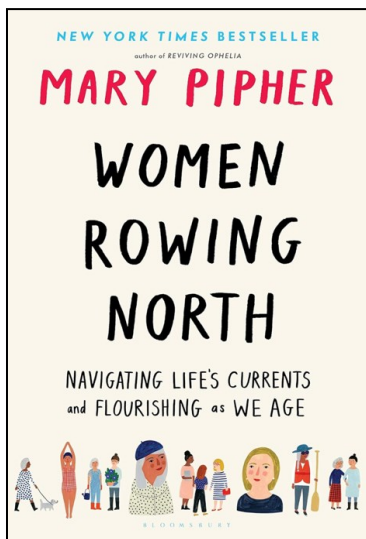
C-U at Home *One Winter Night* February 7-8, 2025

The One Winter Night Outdoor Challenge provides a powerful opportunity for our community to learn about homelessness, build empathy for the people we serve, and raise funds to support our mission.

Participants register to take the One Winter Night Outdoor Challenge and then encourage their friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors to support them in their cause. **Participants pledge to raise \$1000 for C-U at Home while they help raise community awareness of the issues surrounding homelessness.** They will be helping to support a vital ministry while experiencing the difficulties faced by homeless individuals on cold winter nights by spending the night outside in tents, cars, or makeshift shelters. Click the link below to find out how you can take the One Winter Night Outdoor Challenge! <https://www.cuathome.us/own>

Community Connections

Fellowship, Fun, Congregation News, Intercessory Prayer



Grace Book Club

Women Rowing North: Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing as We Age by Mary Pipher

The next book for the Grace Book Club has been selected. This book offers an illuminating, much-needed template for moving through advancing years with gratitude and grace – not through denial or rejection of what is broken and lost but by opening our hearts fully to everything our lives deliver. Although written by a woman and about women, much of the content applies equally to men, who are welcome to join the discussion.

The author, Mary Pipher, is a psychologist specializing in women, trauma, and the effects of our culture on mental health. Her work has earned her the title of “cultural therapist” for her generation. She is also the author of several New York Times bestsellers, including *Reviving Ophelia*, *The Shelter of Each Other*, and *Another Country*.

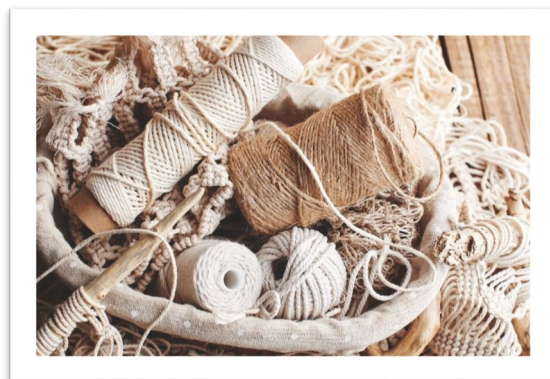
Discussion of the book will be held on Tuesday evening, February 4, at 6 PM in the Narthex at Grace Lutheran Church. Please bring your own sack supper. Beverages will be provided. We hope you will join us!

Note 1: For those who wish to read the book and attend the discussion, a limited number of free

copies are available, thanks to the generosity of Thrivent Financial through their Action Team outreach program. Please contact Janet Lepp or Eileen Herrstrom if you are interested in receiving one of those books. Otherwise, *Women Rowing North* by Mary Pipher, published in 2019 by Bloomsbury, is available through your favorite bookstore or public library.

Note 2: Our late sister in Christ, Jo Fleming, hovered in our thoughts as we read this book because she exemplified its message of aging with grace and accepting what life brings. We would like to dedicate this first book club meeting of the new year to Jo.

~Janet Lepp and Eileen Herrstrom



Stitch and Craft

The Stitch and Craft meetings in January will be on **Friday, January 10th and Friday, January 24th at 7 p.m.** in the narthex.

Start 2025 off right by starting a new project. We can help each other to make the best articles, mittens, scarves, hats, chemo hats, blankets, or anything you choose.

~Carol Larson

January Parish Life Committee Meeting

The Parish Life Committee will meet on Thursday, **January 16th at 6:00 p.m.** on Zoom.

Community Connections

Fellowship, Fun, Congregation News, Intercessory Prayer

The Refugee Center Champaign-Urbana

The Refugee Center is a local, Champaign-Urbana, non-profit organization that has been serving refugee, migrant, immigrant families since 1980. We can help immigrants and refugees with orientation to the United States; document translation; immigration paperwork; public benefits access such as SNAP, WIC, TANF, SSI, Medicaid, and All-Kids; health care; legal referrals; know your rights training; family emergency plan preparation; and more. We offer our services in over 300 languages.

For more information or to put families or organizations in touch with us, please contact us at:

Office phone: (217) 344-8455

Website: <https://www.therefugeecenter-cu.org/>

Instagram: @the_refugee_center

Facebook: @TheRefugeeCenter

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How You Can Help

Ready to help? Great! Let's work together to make a difference. We often need volunteers to:

- Tutor a client in English
- Translate documents
- Serve as an interpreter at the Center
- Serve as an interpreter in the community
- Teach citizenship classes
- Tutor students one-on-one
- Monitor playtime on Saturday mornings
- Plan fundraisers and special events
- Provide office assistance
- Complete marketing and development projects
- Serve as a board members



St. Andrew's Campus Ministry Spring Meal Train

Hi, everyone!

Thank you to each of you who supported *Chat & Chow* this semester. *Chat & Chow* continues to be an opportunity to build relationship with current students and welcome new students into community.

Spring Semester will be our final semester at the YMCA, as we look forward to moving into our new space by August 2025. This semester we'll still be looking to do crock-pot meals, things that can be baked ahead of time, or catered meals from local restaurants. Thank you for your passion for feeding students on campus and for helping St. Andrew's create a space of belonging for young adults in Champaign-Urbana.

Grace + Peace,

--

Pr. Jon



Community Connections

Fellowship, Fun, Congregation News, Intercessory Prayer

Treasurer's Report

November 2024 Monthly Report	CURRENT MONTH	YEAR-TO-DATE
INCOME	\$27,063.30	\$222,812.40
EXPENSES	\$22,560.16	\$264,455.39
NET	\$4,503.14	\$-41,642.99



Food Pantry Updates

Thank you to the Grace Food Pantry! In **December**, the pantry reached:

- **December 5:** 78 households, 239 individuals
- **December 12:** 86 households, 340 individuals
- **December 19:** 107 households, 408 Individuals

That's **271** total families and **987** people in our community that have been served by this ministry during the month of **December**.

To support the work the Food Pantry does, you can donate online at <https://glccu.org/donate/>.

NOVEMBER Income was more than budgeted because of \$5,682 in CD interest. (Monthly budgeted income is \$24,000).

NOVEMBER Expenses were less than budgeted. (Monthly budgeted expenses are \$25,271.30)

NOVEMBER NET Year-to-date leaves us with a deficit of **\$- 41,642.99**

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Peterson
Treasurer

Pastor's Discretionary Fund

The Pastor's Discretionary Fund allows the church to offer financial assistance to people in our community. The office receives requests for help with rent, utilities, and other needs, and your donations make this important work possible!

To donate to this fund, you can give online at <https://glccu.org/donate/> or by mailing a check to the church office with "Pastor's Discretionary Fund" in the memo line.

Grace Meeting Zoom Link

Please see your email for the Grace Meeting Zoom link.

Using GLC Facilities

Our facilities are available for use by members and by outside groups. To use the space, please fill out a facilities use request form on the website and email it to office@glccu.org. Once the request is approved, it will be added to the calendar, and you can make arrangements to pick up a key if necessary.

Online Resources

Please see your email for the list of webpages and how to access them.

World Connections

Service, Advocacy, Ecumenism, Learning

Connecting to Our Community

The council has been reviewing Grace's strategic plan drawn up during COVID, and one of the specific goals on the list was to strengthen our community connection by attending the monthly meeting of the **Champaign County Community Coalition**. This was something that Caitlyn did when she was still with us, but our participation lapsed after she left. So we're looking for someone who might be interested in filling that role. Could it be you? Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month from 3:30-5:00.

More information can be found at <https://champaigncommunitycoalition.org/>. If you are interested in this opportunity, please speak with Marlys Scarbrough or Pastor Repp.

2025 ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative

We will continue our practice of meeting online once a quarter to organize our Indian boarding school work, build relationships, and deepen our understanding about church complicity. Save-the-dates - then watch for details and a request for RSVP a few weeks prior to each gathering. Thank you for your faithfulness to this work.

Thursday, January 16, 7:00-9:00pm (CST)

Saturday, April 12, 10:00am-12:00n (CDT)

Thursday, July 10, 7:00-9:00pm (CDT)

Saturday, October 25, 10:00am-12:00n (CDT)

Please email me with any suggestions you have for the quarterly gatherings - content, process, etc.

We have set a 2024-25 goal for each of us to invite others in our congregations, synods, schools, etc. to learn about Indian boarding schools, our complicity, and the impacts. We're eager to document what you're doing, so once you conduct an activity, please use this simple **REPORT FORM** to share what you did and reflect on the experience. Thank you!

Please Contact: **Liz Andress**, Co-lead, with any questions at lizandress312@gmail.com



Click the Image Above For More Information on Ongoing Lutheran World Relief Projects

Lutheran World Relief was founded in the United States after World War II. LWR tackles global poverty by helping people adapt to challenges that threaten their livelihood and wellbeing. LWR works with people based on need, regardless of race, religion or nationality, and they do not evangelize.

LWR provides aid in emergencies and helps families restore their lives using decades of experience and partnering with local communities. The mission of LWR is to affirm God's love for all people, working with other Lutherans and partners around the world to end poverty, injustice, and human suffering.

You may know LWR as the agency that hands out the school and health kits. LWR kits offer a tangible way to offer comfort and support when a natural disaster strikes or war drives families from their homes. These kits are designed to help people coping with poverty, disaster conflict, and more. Whether helping someone to maintain basic hygiene or keep education going during a crisis, LWR kits provide dignity and hope in the direst of situations.



January 2025

Sunday Worship Support

	January 5	January 12	January 19	January 26
Assisting Minister	Helen Repp	Claire Vail	Marlys Scarbrough	Kathy Bowersox
Reader	Dave Brown	Jeff Fehrenbacher	Nancy Marshall	Meg Loven
Deacons	Van Bowersox	Susan Monte	Dan Lepp	Nancy Marshall
Cantor				
Greeters				
Ushers	Bev Kieffer and Mary Jo Erickson	Doug & Karen Krusa	Bruce & Alicia Winter	The Grigorescu & Thackery Families
Livestreamer	Kevin Vail	Kevin Vail	Kevin Vail	Kevin Vail
Coffee Hour	Janet & Dan Lepp	Gloria Rainer and Grace Schoedel	Gail Hug and Mary Jo Erickson	Claire Vail
Flowers	Poinsettias--no additional flowers	Grace Schoedel and Gloria Rainer	Cindy & Vlad Grigorescu & Family	Mary Jo Erickson
Dedication	✎	In memory of our mothers, Ruth Grace Cool & Florence Louise Evans, who were both born on January 12, 1908	In Honor of Edward & Jeanette Yewdall's Anniversary	In Loving Memory of My Parents, Jo & Paul Erickson

January 2025 Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream 11:00am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA	30 6:30pm Wood Carving Group	31 6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics	1 <i>Grace Office Closed</i> New Year's Day	2 10:00am Food Pantry	3	4
5 9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream 10:45am Property Committee 11:00am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA	6 6:30pm Wood Carving Group	7 4:30pm Executive Committee 6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics 6:30pm Sweet Adelines	8	9 10:00am Food Pantry 5:45pm Community Choices	10	11
12 Grace Food Pantry Sunday 9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream 11:00am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA	13 10:00am Food for Seniors 6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting 6:30pm Wood Carving Group	14 6:00am Food for Seniors 6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics 6:30pm Sweet Adelines 7:00pm Council	15 7:00am Food Pantry Truck Delivery 10:00am Comrades of Art	16 10:00am Food Pantry 6:00pm Parish Life Committee	17	18
19 9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream 11:00am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA	20 <i>Newsletter Copy Deadline</i> 6:30pm Wood Carving Group 7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	21 6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics 6:30pm Sweet Adelines 7:00pm Faith Circle	22 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	23 10:00am Food Pantry 12:30pm Brown Bag Bible Study	24	25
26 World Hunger Sunday 9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream 10:45am Congregational Meeting following the Service 11:00am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA	27 10:00am Food for Seniors 6:30pm Wood Carving Group 7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	28 6:00am Food for Seniors 6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics 6:30pm Sweet Adelines	29 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	30 10:00am Food Pantry 4:00pm Mutual Ministry	31	1