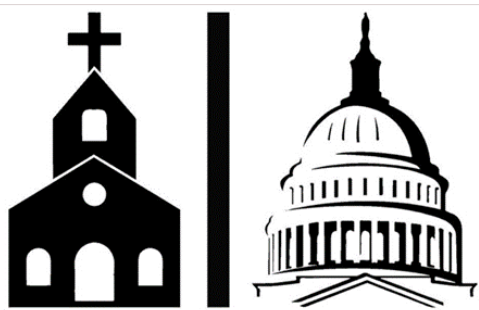


Grace *Connections*
Lutheran Church
Champaign, Illinois

Let's Talk About Church and State

Last fall, with a contentious presidential election looming, the Adult Sunday School at Grace studied the ELCA's draft social statement on Civic Life and Faith. The focus there was on how we as individual Christians should understand how our faith informs and shapes our responsibilities, rights, and opportunities as citizens.



Now in the first month of the new administration, in the wake of a flurry of executive orders on immigration, diversity, and our collective care for the vulnerable in our country, we are faced with the question of how we collectively as Christians, i.e. as the church, can be a faithful and helpful voice in this social and political moment.

Our Presiding Bishop, Elizabeth Eaton, is leading the way with her statement of January 28 (linked below) focused specifically on the executive orders regarding immigration. She gives us four action items in response: Prayer, Learning, and Personal and Public Witness. Prayer is something we have been doing and will continue to do as a congregation, and personal witness is something that I know is going on without prompting from church leaders. Learning is something that we have also been doing, particularly in our brief focus last fall on the church's history with our Native American sisters and brothers. But there are many more areas to focus on, for which the ELCA has resources that we have not yet tapped.

So I'm inviting you to stick around after church on February 2 to begin a roundtable discussion of recent events. We'll consider Bishop Eaton's statement, the Episcopal bishop's sermon at the inaugural prayer service, and a statement by the U.S. conference of Catholic bishops. You may know of other resources. Bring them along and let's talk. Our conversation and our learning can inform our prayer and our witness, and strengthen and encourage us as the body of Christ, for the sake of the world God loves.

+ Pastor Repp

[Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's statement on immigration executive orders.](#)

[ELCA Conference of Bishops Statement on Speaking Truth \(October 2024\).](#)

[Episcopal Bishop Mariann Budde's inaugural prayer service sermon.](#)

[U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishop's statement on executive orders.](#)

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God Connections

Faith, Worship, Music, Study, Prayer

February Faith Circle

Faith Circle meets on the third Tuesday evening of each month at 7 pm in the narthex. This month's Faith Circle is on Tuesday, February 18th. 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.

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!**

Brown Bag Bible Study

Our bi-weekly lunchtime Bible study resumed in January. We will meet on **Thursdays at 12:30 p.m. in the narthex**. We'll be studying the book of Romans.

Future dates are:

February 6 & 20; March 6 & 20; April 3; May 1 & 15 (and 29 if we need it to finish the book.)

Join us!

Adult Faith Formation: Worship (Save the Dates)

The spring Adult Faith Formation class on worship will be held March 9, April 12 and 26, and May 3 and 17 via Zoom. This class will also have an in-person session with options on May 18, May 24, May 25, and May 31 (if necessary). The class will be taught by the Rev. S. Blake Duncan. Additional details and registration are coming soon.

Parish Life Committee Meeting Reminder

The Parish Life Committee will meet on Thursday, **February 20th at 6:00 p.m.** on Zoom.



Adult Sunday School

From March 6 – April 6, the first five Sundays in Lent, Pastor Janet Lepp and Pastor Chris Repp will lead a 5-week study entitled “Making Sense of the Cross,” written and presented by Dr. David Lose, retired seminary professor and president. The participant book, found [at this link on Augsburg Fortress](#), can also be found used from various internet vendors. It contains a series of dialogs that explore the meaning of Jesus’ crucifixion and how it is good news for us. Although not absolutely necessary for participation in the class, it should help your immersion in the topic.

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

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/>

Community Connections

Fellowship, Fun, Congregation News, Intercessory Prayer



The Christmas Toilet-Tree

Thanks to the many generous contributions of toiletry items and monetary donations, the Social Ministry Committee was able to donate 71 toiletry bags containing shampoo, soap, lotion, and toothpaste to the Salvation Army's Canteen Run for distribution to people living without a home in our community. Your generosity also enabled us to donate 48 pairs of knit gloves and make a monetary donation of \$40 for miscellaneous needs to the Canteen Run.

Thank you, *The Social Ministry Committee*

Council Corner February 2025

DECEMBER Action Items for Council

A) January Congregation Meeting Agenda

Resolved, that the January Congregational Meeting (Jan 29, 2025) agenda be approved. - motion passed with one abstained.

B) Grace and Unit 4 (Dr. Howard Elementary School) MOU

Whereas the Unit 4 School District (“District”) recognizes the need for an off-campus emergency evacuation site for children and employees of Dr. Howard Elementary School, and

Whereas Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church (“GELC”) is a short distance from Dr. Howard Elementary School and has safe and adequate space to serve as an emergency evacuation site, and

Whereas the District and GELC have agreed to the terms and conditions of a Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) for GELC to serve as the emergency evacuation site for practice evacuation drills and in an actual emergency,

Resolved that the GELC Council approve and sign the MOU.

--Motion made via email from Van - Russ seconded at the council meeting

--Motion passed Debbie will get document signed, scanned and send to Van to pass on to Unit 4 representative. Certificate of Insurance Liability is still needed.

JANUARY Action Items for Council

A) Motion: Set May Congregational Meeting

Be it Resolved, that the May Congregational Meeting will be held Sunday May 18, 2025 at 10:45 am. -- passed unanimously

B) Motion: Appoint Audit Committee

Be it Resolved, that Randy Laugges (to serve as Chair), Jim Anderson and Bruce Winter be appointed to the Audit committee for 2025.

-- passed unanimously

C) Motion: Funeral Meal - allow alcohol at Grace

Be it Resolved, that council waives the “No Alcohol Policy” at Grace to allow alcoholic beverages at Roger Yarbrough’s funeral on Sat Jan 25, 2025. . -- passed unanimously

D) Motion: Budget for 2025

Be it Resolved, that council approve the Budget for 2025 and send it to the Congregational Meeting on Sunday Jan 26, 2025.for approval.

Debbie walked thru the 52nd Draft of the 2025 budget. Finance Com reviewed this draft 4 at their meeting on Mon 13 JAN and added 2 line items.

Van moved to Remove the one line item from the budget

- **Planning Consultant – \$10,000** – Vote passed to remove it

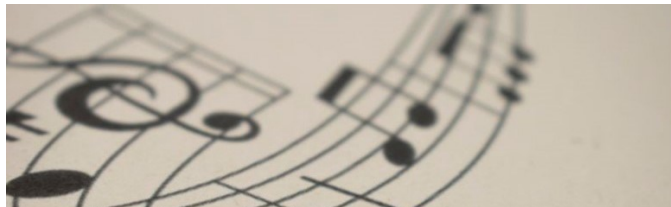
Council voted to accept the Draft 5 with the one change -

--passed

- The Draft 5 budget will be presented at the Congregation Meeting on Sunday Jan 26, 2025.

Community Connections

Fellowship, Fun, Congregation News, Intercessory Prayer



Greetings from the Music Ministry!

As we begin a new year, there is plenty to be thankful for and many wonderful opportunities to look forward to in 2025! Our ministry's Advent season was quite festive and invited musical offerings from all of our ensembles. We were particularly fortunate to prepare Antonio Vivaldi's *Magnificat* with community singers and instrumentalists from the university. Additionally, the ELCA choirs in the Champaign-Urbana area prepared and performed familiar holiday carols at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church for their annual Advent cantata. Through your generosity, over \$700 was raised, with most of the funds going to hurricane relief in North Carolina and Florida.

As many of you know, we look forward to celebrating the retirement of our organist, Dana Robinson. In doing so, the choir will prepare Bach's cantata *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit* to be presented on our Palm-to-Passion Sunday, April 13. Additionally, we will host an organ recital on May 4th at 3:00pm to continue our celebration of Dana and commemorate the 50th anniversary of the installation of our organ. We look forward to seeing you at both events!

We are pleased with the continued growth of our bell ensemble and choir. We have welcomed new singers and ringers into our program, and continue to pray for continual growth and prosperity. If you have an interest in participating in any of our music ensembles, contact Nick or the front office about possible opportunities.

Yours In Christ,
Nick Pierle
Director of Music Ministries
music@glccu.org

Grace Lutheran Church Membership Directory Updates

We will be updating the membership directory in the upcoming months. **Please send any corrections or new information that you would like to add to office@glccu.org by March 1, 2025.** Thanks!



LSSI Thank You

To the congregation of Grace Lutheran Church:

On behalf of the children and families served by Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, we would like to say "*THANK YOU*" to your congregation for their generosity in giving Christmas gifts and gift cards to our children in care this year. The foster parents who care for our children are also appreciative for the extra assistance in helping to give the children in their care, a much nicer Christmas.

We are confident that the gifts you provided brought the children joy on Christmas morning! In December, our caseworkers were quite busy like Santa--excitedly delivering all of the gifts to the children. Without the help from churches like Grace Lutheran Church, we at LSSI would not be able to give all the children in our program a joyous and happy Christmas.

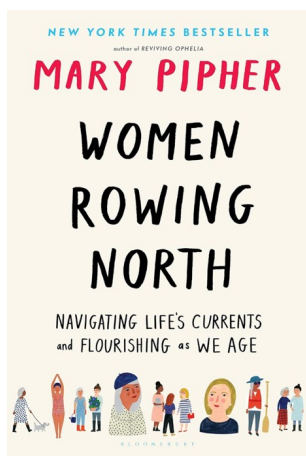
We are grateful and appreciative for the kindness and thoughtfulness. Thank you for your continued and generous support; we couldn't do it without you! Many blessings to your congregation!

Sincerely,

**Amanda Carpenter, LSSI Program Director,
and all staff**

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*.

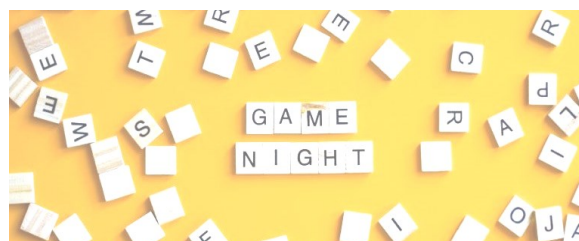
Discussion of the book will be held on Tuesday evening, February 4, at 6 PM in the Narthex at Grace Lutheran Church. Please bring your own sack supper. Beverages will be provided. We hope you will join us!

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



Games and Fellowship Evenings at Grace

There is a new opportunity to gather with friends and enjoy an evening together! **Beginning on Thursday, February 13, at 6 pm in the Narthex**, a group will meet for Games and Fellowship. The group intends to gather twice monthly (watch the Grace Notes for specific dates) to enjoy each other's company and engage in card and board games.

If you are interested, please add your name to the sheet in the Narthex or let Jim Fleming know Come and join us, and feel free to bring along your favorite game!

Stitch and Craft

The Stitch and Craft meetings in February will be on **Friday, February 14th and Friday, February 28th 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

Community Connections

Fellowship, Fun, Congregation News, Intercessory Prayer

Treasurer's Report

December 2024 Monthly Report	CURRENT MONTH	YEAR-TO-DATE
INCOME	\$77,450.77	\$300,263.17
EXPENSES	\$38,235.58	\$302,690.97
NET	\$39,215.19	(\$-2,427.80)

DECEMBER FAR exceeded what was expected for the end of the year --\$77,450.77. (Monthly budgeted income is \$24,000).

The CD interest recorded for 2024 was a total of \$26,195.02 which helped greatly to reduce the deficit that we have been running.

DECEMBER Expenses of \$38,235.58 were much more than budgeted. (Monthly budgeted expenses are \$25,271.30)

DECEMBER NET Year-to-date leaves us with a deficit of **\$- 2,427.80.**

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Peterson, Treasurer



SPECIAL EVENT HOSTED BY THE FOOD PANTRY BOARD!

Come help us celebrate 40 years of the Grace Pantry! On **Sunday, February 9th**, *Grace Food Pantry Sunday*, the Pantry Board will host a brunch.

Please join us after the service!



Food Pantry Updates

The Grace Food Pantry has been busy! In **January**, the pantry reached:

- **January 2:** 65 households, 257 individuals
- **January 9:** 68 households, 273 individuals
- **January 16:** 57 households, 208 individuals
- **January 23:** 56 households, 202 individuals
- **January 30:** 58 households, 250 individuals

That's **304** total families and **1190** people in our community that have been served by this ministry during the month of January. To support the work that the Food Pantry does, you can donate online at <https://glccu.org/donate/>.

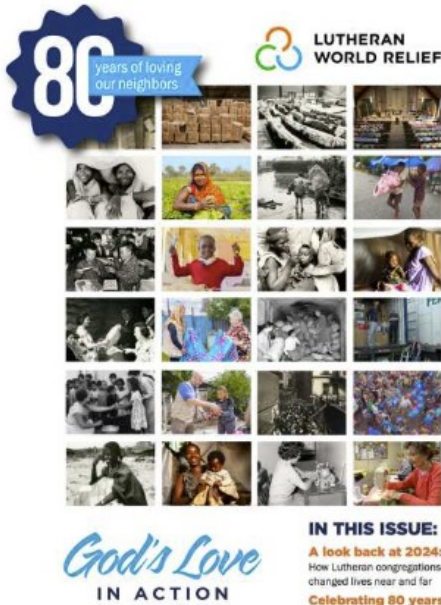


You are Invited to One Winter Night

Friday, February 7 at The Venue CU in downtown Champaign 7:30-9:00pm - Program of Celebration, Education, and Advocacy. Learn about our Pathways to Progress program and the services available to our clients. Hear the incredible stories of transformation and learn what we do to break the cycle of homelessness and inspire hope in our community. MC - Amanda Brennan, WCIA Multimedia Reporter; Music - Chris Jacobson-Chism, Copper Creek Church in Champaign. This event is free, but donations are always welcome!

World Connections

Service, Advocacy, Ecumenism, Learning



CONNECTING LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS AROUND THE WORLD | WINTER 2025

Click the Image Above For More Information on Ongoing LWR 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.



CHAMPAIGN COMMUNITY COALITION



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.

February 2025 Sunday Worship Support

	February 2	February 9	February 16	February 23
Assisting Minister	Eileen Herrstrom	Claire Vail	Helen Repp	Marlys Scarbrough
Reader	Paul Tessene	Maddie Thackeray	Eileen Herrstrom	Janet Lepp
Deacons	Art Traugott	Kathy Bowersox	Jim Anderson	Gail Hug
Cantor	Erica Ancell	Claire Vail	Helen Repp	Marlys Scarbrough
Greeters	Dennis & Allison Archer	Joe Meyer & Erika Bilger & Family	Mary Jo Erickson and Russ Dankert	Bob & Emily Dorsey & Family
Ushers	Dave & Carol Larson	Jim & Kathy Eckstein	Brian & Amy Nicely	Dave & Carol Larson
Livestreamer	Dave Brown	Jim Anderson	Kevin Vail	Michael Miller
Coffee Hour	Karen & Doug Krusa	Marlys Scarbrough	Kathy & Jim Eckstein	
Flowers	Leanne & Ray Wichus	Debbie Peterson	Karen & Doug Krusa	Alicia & Bruce Winter
Dedication	In Celebration of Carly Wichus' Birthday	In Memory of My Mother, Madeline Wojcik	In Honor of Our Anniversary	Glory to God, for February Family Birthdays

• 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 ([click the link to the form here](#)) 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. For more information please visit the website at <https://glccu.org/facility-use/> or call (217) 356-6232.

• 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.

• Online Resources

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

• Grace Meeting Zoom Link

See your email for the Grace Meeting Zoom link.

February 2025 Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26 <i>World Hunger Sunday</i> 9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream 10:45am Congregational Meeting following the Service 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
2 9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream 10:45am Property Committee 11:00am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA	3 6:30pm Wood Carving Group 7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	4 4:30pm Executive Committee 6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics 6:30pm Sweet Adelines	5 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	6 10:00am Food Pantry 12:30pm Brown Bag Bible Study	7	8 8:00am Guitar Service Set-up
9 <i>Grace Food Pantry Sunday</i> 9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream 11:00am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA	10 10:00am Food for Seniors 1:00pm Worship & Music Committee Meeting 6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting 6:30pm Wood Carving Group 7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	11 6:00am Food for Seniors 6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics 6:30pm Sweet Adelines 7:00pm Council	12 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	13 10:00am Food Pantry 5:00pm Game & Fellowship Night	14 7:00pm Stitch & Craft	15
16 9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream 11:00am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA	17 6:30pm Wood Carving Group 7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	18 6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics 6:30pm Sweet Adelines 7:00pm Faith Circle	19 7:00am Food Pantry Truck Delivery 10:00am Comrades of Art 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	20 <i>Newsletter Copy Deadline</i> 10:00am Food Pantry 12:30pm Brown Bag Bible Study 6:00pm Parish Life Committee	21	22 12:00pm Amasong Rehearsal & Meeting
23 <i>World Hunger Sunday</i> 9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream (Bell Choir Service) 11:00am Adult Sunday School 12:00pm Women's AA 2:30pm ECIYO String Sectionals	24 10:00am Food for Seniors 6:30pm Wood Carving Group 7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	25 6:00am Food for Seniors 6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics 6:30pm Sweet Adelines	26 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	27 10:00am Food Pantry	28 7:00pm Stitch & Craft	1 9:00am Audit Committee Meeting