Grace Lutheran Church Champaign, Illinois *Connections*

September 2026

Festival of Creation in Christ

Last April at the Institute of Liturgical Studies I learned of an ecumenical movement to create a new festival day on the liturgical calendar called Creation in Christ. This will be the first new festival day since the introduction of Christ the King a century ago (1925). I have since learned that this is not a new idea but has been percolating in the background since at least 1989, when the Orthodox Church issued an invitation to other world church bodies to observe September 1 as a day of prayer for creation. This coincides with the beginning of the liturgical year on the Orthodox church calendar when the creation of the world is the theme.

ELCA materials being developed for this festival note that this is still an evolving ecumenical discussion, and a single date has not yet been agreed upon. The first Sunday in September is currently the suggestion. Another is the Sunday closest to the fall equinox, when the days and nights in both hemispheres are in alignment, which may have been the earlier practice of the eastern church before the 5th century. Yet another option is the nearest Sunday to October 4, the commemoration of St. Francis of Assisi, known for his love and care for the creation. In addition to a single festival day, some faith communities (Episcopal, Roman Catholic, United Methodist) have been officially observing a Season of Creation from September 1 through October 4 for some time now.

Why this new festival, and why now? One of the most obvious reasons is the growing awareness of human-caused climate change, together with other ecological concerns like the destruction of natural habitats and the noticeable increase in extinction of species over the past century. These environmental crises have not gone unnoticed among Christians. In fact, one of the pioneers of environmental theology was Joseph Sittler, a Lutheran theologian who was still on the faculty of the seminary I attended when I started. This growing awareness is also reflected in ELCA worship resources, which added a regular petition for creation to the prayers of intercession. The default invitation to those prayers reflects this emphasis, inviting us to pray "for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation."

We're easing into this focus on creation at Grace this year, returning to setting 12 from the All Creation Sings hymnal supplement for the fall, and using one of its creation-themed communion prayers for the month of September. If you'd like to be involved in planning for observing a season of creation for next year, talk to me or worship chair, Ruth Anderson.

+ Pastor Repp

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GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God Connections

Faith, Worship, Music, Study, Prayer

Central/Southern Illinois Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Visit from the Bishop
Save-the-Date
Sunday, November 1st

Bishop Greg Busboom will be joining us for the Sunday Morning Service at Grace Lutheran Church, and will give a presentation in the Fellowship Hall following the service:

9:30am—Sunday Morning Service
10:45am—Presentation in the Fellowship Hall

Light refreshments will be provided after the service, in the Fellowship Hall. Please see the sign-up sheet in the Narthex if you would like to bring anything. Thanks!

Evensong at Emmanuel

The choir of *Emmanuel Memorial Episcopal Church* will present **a Choral Evensong on September 6, at 5:30 p.m.** The service of Choral Evensong is rooted in deep musical tradition from seventeenth century to present day. Music at this service will span from the Baroque era to present day by American composers: Amy Beach (Preces and Responses arr. by Ardrey-Graves) and Robert Lehman (Canticles after Croft and Purcell) and British composers: Henry Walford Davies (Psalm 130), John Goss (These are they which follow the Lamb), and Simon Lole (Jesu, the very thought of thee). **Emmanuel is located at 102 N. State St. in Champaign**. Free parking is available at the lot at the corner of Park and State Streets.

September 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, September 15th.** It is being hosted by Kathy Bowersox, with Mary Jo Erickson serving as the lesson leader. 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. You can sign up for the *First Friday Synod Prayer Group* here: https://www.csis-elca.org/event/first-friday-prayer-group/

God Connections

Faith, Worship, Music, Study, Prayer

God's Work: Our Hands

Sunday, September 13, 2026
at 10:45am in the Fellowship Hall,
following the Sunday morning service.

Speaker, Beth Wendling, Director of the Orphan's Treasure Box Used Bookstore
Join us for a presentation as Beth shares the history and mission of the bookstore, which sells donated books online and through its retail outlet. Profits support and fund ministries that help children in need, locally and internationally. Hear about the unique mission and the impact of this faith-based organization and business.

Lutheran World Relief Kits
The Social Ministry Committee will once again be assembling School Kits and Personal Care Kits for Lutheran World Relief. They will be asking for your help in putting the kits together in the Fellowship Hall, during the **God's Work: Our Hands** event.

Last year the LWR School Kits we created and shipped helped children throughout the world. The Personal Care Kits we sent to LWR brought comfort to displaced people internationally and in the United States. We have set an ambitious goal of 50 School Kits and 75 Personal Care Kits this year, because the needs are great. **Thank you in advance for your continued participation and generosity!**

Coffee Hour refreshments, provided by Grace Lutheran Members, will be served in the Fellowship Hall, during the event.

Grace Lutheran Church

ORPHANS TREASURE BOX Bookstore

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

God Connections

Faith, Worship, Music, Study, Prayer

Click HERE to download the *REGISTRATION FORM*

Click HERE to download the *SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION*

Join the fellowship and fun! We are hosting our conference *Synod Day* on Sunday, October 4th

There are many opportunities for pitching in to help, beforehand and day-of:

- Set up on Thursday October 1st after food pantry
- Welcome table for registering and greeting participants
- Helping with dinner on October 4th (set up, serving, clean up)
- Readers during the worship services
- And any other tasks not specified

Many hands make light and joyful work!

Please contact Mary Jo Erickson (in person) or email Claire Vail (email available by contacting the Grace office) if you will be joining the team.

All are welcomed! Don't forget to register to attend the East Central Conference, information and link below!

Synod Days: East Central Conference

at Grace Lutheran Church

Sunday, October 4, 2026
2:00pm - 7:00pm

Registration:

The cost is $10 per adult (18 and over), $5 for youth (3-17), and free for children under 3, capped at a total of $25 per family.

Registration is open now at **CSIS-ELCA.org/synoddays26** and closes September 21, 2026.

For the work of ministry:

Living out our baptismal calling to…

- live among God's faithful people
- hear the Word of God and share in the Lord's supper
- proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed
- serve all people, following the example of Jesus
- strive for justice and peace in all the earth

A day of worship, learning, fellowship, and relationship-building for all generations in each of the six conferences of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod.

Each synod day includes:

- Cross-generational worship
- Activities for children and families
- Shared meal
- State of the Synod video
- Q&A with synod staff
- Mission moments from each conference
- Four "Spirit Labs" workshop options (each person may choose two)
- The Foolishness of Trying to Save Your Church: Letting Go So We Can Go! -- led by Bishop Greg Busboom
- Jesus Journeys and Faithful Field Trips, -- led by Deacon Jason Fisher, Director for Evangelical Mission
- Body Building with Love: Tools for Adaptability, -- led by Pastor Kristen Schmid, Assistant to the Bishop for Transformational Communities
- Here I Am, Send Me! A Vocational Workshop, -- led by Pastor Amy Ziettlow, Assistant to the Bishop for Transformational Leadership

Community Connections

Fellowship, Fun, Congregation News, Intercessory Prayer

2026 CROP Walk

Hunger and food insecurity continue to rise locally, nationally, and internationally. There are many ways that you can help:

1. By supporting our Grace Food Pantry with your money, donations, and time;
2. 2. By supporting ELCA World Hunger Appeal and ELCA Good Gifts; and
3. 3. By walking or supporting the annual CROP Walk.

Donations raised for the CROP Walk support Church World Services' hunger outreach programs. A percentage of the proceeds from the local walk stays in our community to support local programs addressing food insecurities.

This year's CROP Walk will be in Urbana, starting at the Unitarian Church on Sunday, October 4th at 2:00. If you are interested in walking or supporting this year's CROP Walk, please contact Sandy at (217) 621-9417 or Elaine at (217) 359-5421.

St. Andrew's Chat & Chow Meals

The Grace Social Ministry Committee will be providing two Sunday evening meals this semester – called Chat and Chow – for St. Andrew's Lutheran Campus Ministry. One of the important aspects of Campus Ministry is the opportunity for building relationships through meal-time hospitality. Our fall dates are: **Sunday, September 27th and Sunday, November 8th.**

September 27:
Lois Wilken will coordinate this meal.
We are looking for volunteers to assist. A sign-up sheet for food donations can be found on a table in the narthex.

Note: Watch for sign-up for the November 8 meal in a few weeks.

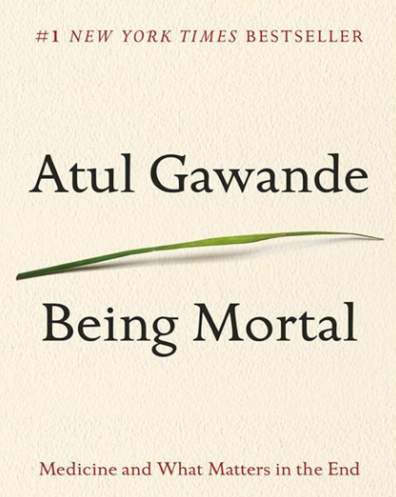
Worship: The Sunday meals are followed by worship at 7:00 pm, another important aspect of St. Andrew's Campus ministry. Members and friends of Grace Lutheran are invited to attend worship.

Pastor Jon Fry writes: ***We are getting excited to welcome students back to Champaign-Urbana and build new relationships with students on campus. Thank you for your support of our Chat & Chow ministry.***

Be sure to contact me if you have questions,
Janet Lepp

Community Connections

Fellowship, Fun, Congregation News, Intercessory Prayer



Adult Sunday School & September Book Club

Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End

By: Atul Gawande (2014)

Author of three other best-selling books, Atul Gawande is a surgeon in Boston, a professor at Harvard Medical School, and a writer for The New Yorker. He also works actively in the public health field.

"Through vivid storytelling and thoughtful observation, Gawande explores the gaps between the compromised, isolated lives we've resigned ourselves to in old age and a few more-hopeful alternatives."
– Bookforum

"For anyone who has struggled to navigate… end-of-life care with a loved one, [this] book is a reminder… of the positive change that comes from the power of purpose."
-Hospitals and Health Networks

Please note these changes in schedule and location! The Grace Book Club will meet on ***two*** **Sundays, September 20 and 27, at 11 AM (during the Adult Sunday School hour) in the Hoffmeister Room.** The sessions are open to everyone, and we hope you will join us!

-Eileen Herrstrom and Janet Lepp

Game Night at Grace

Gather with friends and enjoy an evening together! **Every 2nd & 4th Thursday of the month, from 6:00-8:00pm,** a group will meet for Games in the Narthex. The group will gather to enjoy each other's company and engage in card and board games. **The dates for this month are August 13th & 27th.**

If you are interested, please let Jim Fleming know. *Come and join us, and feel free to bring along your favorite game!*

Community Connections

Fellowship, Fun, Congregation News, Intercessory Prayer

Treasurer's Report

JULY 2026 Monthly Report	CURRENT MONTH	YEAR-TO-DATE
INCOME	$ 30,211.56	$ 145,855.45
EXPENSES	$ 24,028.04	$ 174,845.67
NET	$ 6,183.52	($ -28,990.22)

JULY Income was more than expected this month mainly because the quarterly CD interest was recorded. (Monthly budgeted **$20,833.33**)

JULY Expenses were a little less than expected. (Monthly budgeted **$27,200.25**)

JULY NET is **$6,183.52**

Year-to-Date Actual Deficit is **($ -28,990.22)**

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Peterson, Treasurer

Food Pantry Updates

The Grace Food Pantry has been busy!
In **July 2026**, the pantry reached:

- **August 6:** 101 households, 368 individuals
- **August 13:** 82 households, 289 individuals
- **August 20:** 90 households, 355 individuals
- **August 27:** 71 households, 275 individuals

That's **344** total families and **1287** people in our community that have been served by this ministry during the month of July.

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

- **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.**

- **Online Resources**

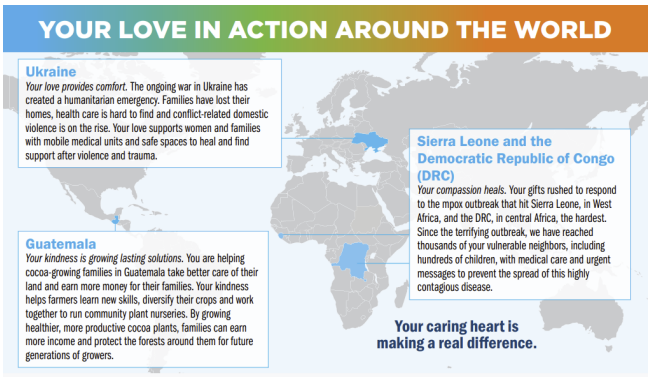
Please see your email for the list of webpages and how to access them.

- **Grace Meeting Zoom Link**

Please see your email for the Grace Meeting Zoom link.

World Connections

Service, Advocacy, Ecumenism, Learning



Click the Image 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.

See Use Again

"A shop and community hub focused on creative reuse. We help recirculate art supplies (and more!) in the local Champaign-Urbana/Central Illinois community."

See Use Again will pick donations up in the Champaign-Urbana area, or you can drop them off at their space in the Brookens building. Call or text them to coordinate at (765) 299-8331. They are currently looking for used (or new) art supplies of all kinds, and many other things like tools, sewing supplies, vases, vinyl records and more. A full list can be found by clicking here!

Worship Support for September 2026

	September 6	September 13	September 20	September 27
Assisting Minister	Eileen Herrstrom			
Reader	Paul Tessene	Kathy Bowersox	Janet Lepp	Van Bowersox
Deacons	Jim Anderson and Gail Hug	Dan Lepp	Kathy Bowersox	Van Bowersox
Greeters	Jeff & Tina Fehrenbacher	Brian & Amy Nicely	Bev Kieffer & Jim Fleming	Dennis & Allison Archer
Ushers	Dave & Carol Larson	Jim Fleming & Andy Grichnik	Joe Meyer & Erika Bilger & Family	Bruce & Alicia Winter
Livestreamer	Dave Brown	Jim Anderson	Michael Miller	Meg Loven
Coffee Hour	Karen & Doug Krusa	Worship & Music		
Flowers	Grace Schoedel	Nancy & Rodney Marshall	Kathy & Jim Eckstein	Carolyn Pater
Dedication	To the Glory of God	In memory of our parents, Mary & Keith Marshall; and Nick, Marie & Jeanne Nicholson	For loving families & friends	In memory of my mother-in-law, Myrna Boe

Grace Office Schedule:

The Grace Lutheran Church office is open Monday—Friday from 9:00am to 2:00pm. Exceptions will be announced in our GraceNotes or in the monthly newsletter.

Grace Lutheran Staff:

Pastor— Chris Repp
Office Assistant—Karen Maher
Director of Music—Kyle Schrage
Organist—Mike Keeley

Grace Council Officers:

Council President—Marlys Scarbrough
Council Vice President—Dale Herrstrom
Council Treasurer—Debbie Peterson
Council Secretary—Kevin Vail

Grace Council:

Liaison to Finance
Dennis Archer

Liaison to Property
Van Bowersox

Liaison to Parish Life
Dee Ehler

Liaison to Social Ministry
Tina Fehrenbacher

Financial Secretary
Gail Hug

Member-at-Large
Leanne Wichus

Alt. Liaison to Social Ministry
Alicia Winter

Grace Committee Chairs:

Worship & Music—Ruth Anderson & Carolyn Pater
Finance Committee—Debbie Peterson
Parish Life Committee—Kathy Bowersox
Property Committee—Rotating Chairpersons
Social Ministry Committee—Lois Wilken

Ministry Coordinators:

Altar Care—Ruth Anderson
Assisting Ministers—Pastor Chris Repp
Deacons, Greeters—Karen Maher
Flowers—Gloria Rainer & Shirley Traugott
Readers—Carolyn Pater
Sound Technician, Livestream—Ruth Anderson
Ushers—Dave Larson
Wedding Coordinator—Claire Vail

September 2026 Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 •4:30pm Executive Committee Meeting (P) •6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families (CH) •6:30pm Sweet Adelines (FH)	**2** •7:00pm Choir Rehearsal (CR)	**3** •10:00am Food Pantry (FH)	**4** ***no events scheduled***	**5** •1:00pm Dada Bhagwan Vignan Institute (FL, K & N)
6 •9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream (S) •11:00am Adult Sunday School (H) •12:00pm Women's AA (H)	**7** ***Labor Day— Grace Office Closed*** •7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal (CL)	**8** •6:00am Food for Seniors (FH) •6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families (CH) •6:30pm Sweet Adelines (FH) •7:00pm Council (H & Zoom)	**9** •7:00pm Choir Rehearsal (CR)	**10** •10:00am Food Pantry (FH) •6:00pm Game Night (N)	**11** ***no events scheduled***	**12** ***God's Work; Our Hands Set-up***
13 ***God's Work; Our Hands*** *Grace Food Pantry Sunday* •9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream (S) •11:00am Adult Sunday School (H) •12:00pm Women's AA (H)	**14** •10:00am Food for Seniors (FH) •6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting (H) •7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal (CL)	**15** •6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families (CH) •6:30pm Sweet Adelines (FH) •7:00pm Faith Circle (N)	**16** •7:00am Food Pantry Truck Delivery (FH) •10:00am Comrades in Art (N) •7:00pm Choir Rehearsal (CR)	**17** •10:00am Food Pantry (FH) •2:00pm Rotary District 6490 District Grant Committee Meeting (H) •6:00pm Parish Life Committee (Zoom)	**18** *Fellowship Hall & Narthex RESERVED ALL DAY/EVENING for Funeral Luncheon Set-up*	**19** •10:00am Visitation for Carol Shupp •11:00am Funeral Service •Luncheon in the Fellowship Hall Following the Funeral Service
20 *Newsletter Copy Deadline* •9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream (S) •11:00am Adult Sunday School: Grace Book Club (H) •12:00pm Women's AA (H)	**21** •7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal (CL)	**22** •6:00am Food for Seniors (FH) •6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families (CH) •6:30pm Sweet Adelines (FH) •7:00pm Social Ministry Committee (N)	**23** •7:00pm Choir Rehearsal (CR)	**24** •10:00am Food Pantry (FH) •6:00pm Game Night (N)	**25** ***no events scheduled***	**26** •5:00pm Dada Bhagwan Vignan Institute (FL, K & N)
27 *World Hunger Sunday* •9:30am Worship - In Person & Live Stream (S) •11:00am Adult Sunday School: Grace Book Club (H) •12:00pm Women's AA (H)	**28** •10:00am Food for Seniors (FH) •7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal (CL)	**29** •6:00pm Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families (CH) •6:30pm Sweet Adelines (FH)	**30** •7:00pm Choir Rehearsal (CR)			

(S) Sanctuary
(CL) Choir Loft
(N) Narthex
(K) Kitchenette
(P) Pastor's Office
(CH) Chapel

(H) Hoffmeister
(CR) Class Rooms
(N) Nursery
(FH) Fellowship Hall