

GIFT of GRACE

LUTHERAN CHURCH

GRACE NOTES

July 2026

A Word from PT

I am addressing you this month with a question. What is God up to with Gift of Grace Lutheran Church?

We are not in the place where many of us hoped we would be. Numerically we are bleeding membership loss while at the same time not experiencing the joy of welcoming new members from the surrounding community. Even if much of the bleeding has been circumstantial and not due to provocation or fault, it is nonetheless disheartening.

By asking what God has in mind is not any attempt to absolve myself or any of the rest of us from responsibility. We always have much to confess. We are often deaf to God's call to serve others as Christ served us. We have misplaced priorities with an inordinate love for worldly goods and comforts. We do not pray as we should, study and meditate on God's Word as we should, and participate in corporate worship as we should. We often fail to commend to others the faith that is in us.

It is not that we are complete failures. We are not! At the same time, it is healthy to know our ongoing need of repentance and the need, with God's help, to do better. With the new nature

given to us in Baptism we can even dare to speak of striving!

I myself don't know what God is up to. We are certainly being tested and challenged. We know from Scripture that He desires the salvation of all the residents of Holmen and the surrounding area (cf. 1 Ti 2:4). We know that the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments bring people to saving faith in Him (cf. Ro. 1:16; Mt 28:19-20).

By the grace of God, Gift of Grace Lutheran Church offers faithful worship where the forgiveness of sins is clearly proclaimed to repentant sinners, where the Gospel is preached in its fullness, where the gift of the historic liturgy orders and guides worship that is reverent, Christ-centered, Word-centered, well-ordered, and is joined with the worship of all the saints, both here in time on earth and in heaven forever.

In our understandable discouragement we risk losing our joy in what God has so graciously given us. I look out every Sunday morning to a congregation of talented, gifted, personable, and dedicated members. There is an expectation that God will meet with us as He promised, and in

the ways that He guaranteed to give Himself to us. This includes where at least two or three gather in His name (Mt. 18:20), where the Faith is Confessed, the Gospel preached, and the Sacraments administered.

God will accomplish His purposes in the surrounding community. We may play some role in participating positively in His purpose if we are willing. We can and should plan for outreach the best that we can. That said, opportunities often come unexpectedly. We need to be poised and ready to recognize them and jump on them when we can.

More than anything else we need to stay faithful and find joy in our service. Scripture teaches that the joy of the Lord is our strength (cf. Ne 8:10). Joy is contagious. It is winsome. After all, we are called to choose joy as we are commanded to rejoice always (cf. Ph 4:4) and to "enter the joy of *our* Master" (Mt 25:21).

Even with disheartening news, amidst suffering, we are to "count it all joy" according to James 1:2. For this builds steadfast faith and redounds to God's glory. Rejoice brothers and sisters! God has a plan for us!

Calendar of Events

Friday, 7/3

7am Men's Breakfast Bible Study
10am Service at Onalaska Care Center

Sunday, 7/5 6th Sunday after Pentecost

9am Divine Service
10:15am Coffee Fellowship

Thursday, 7/9

6pm Council Meeting

Friday, 7/10

7am Men's Breakfast Bible Study

Saturday, 7/11

9am Walk for Life at SOTH

Sunday, 7/12 7th Sunday after Pentecost

9am Divine Service
10:15am Coffee Fellowship

Tuesday, 7/14

6pm Elders Meeting

Thursday, 7/6

10am Prayer Gathering

Friday, 7/17

7am Men's Breakfast Bible Study

Sunday, 7/19 8th Sunday after Pentecost

8:30am Divine Service
9:45am Coffee Fellowship

Tuesday, 7/21

6pm Ladies' Night Out at Riverside Park

Friday, 7/24

7am Men's Breakfast Bible Study

Sunday, 7/26 9th Sunday after Pentecost

8:30am Divine Service
9:45am Coffee Fellowship

Friday, 7/31

7am Men's Breakfast Bible Study

Announcements

We can anticipate some changes starting on Sunday July 19. This is due to our congregation's assistance to Faith Lutheran Church in lending Pastor Tim to serve as their Vacancy Pastor during their transition and interim period in calling a new Pastor. We will be gathering a half an hour earlier, at 8:30am, for our worship service starting July 19 so Pastor Tim can preside at Faith Lutheran's 10:30am service..

The **Men's Breakfast Bible Study** at the McDonald's Restaurant off of County OT on Friday mornings at 7am continues through the summer

months. In the summer we usually take a look at one of the upcoming Texts of Scripture for the coming Sunday Divine Service

The **Ladies' Night Out** is shifting to a **Family Night Out** on Tuesday, July 22 from 6-8:30pm at Riverside Park, weather permitting, to hear the La Crosse Concert Band. You are encouraged to bring snacks. This invitation will also go out for members of Faith, Prince of Peace, and Shepherd of the Hills to join us.

The **Alliance Family Services** "Walk for Life" is scheduled for Saturday, July 11 at Shepherd of the Hills

Lutheran Church. Check in starts at 9am, with a Program at 10, and then the walk to begin at 10:30.

The **Designated Benevolence** for the month of July is the **Alliance Family Services**.

The Hansons will be cleaning the church the week of July 19. And currently we have no one signed up for the week of August 16. Please take a look at the signup sheet in the kitchen and please lend a hand for one of our months' cleanings. Thanks.

Worship Assistants

July 5 6th Sunday after Pentecost

Assisting Minister: Naomi Rislow
Reader: Jeremy Schoonover
Crucifer:
Acolyte:
Usher: Jeremy Schoonover
Counters: Jeremy S/Tom R
Comm Asst: Mike Meunier
Accompanist: Tom Rislow
Live streamer: Dan Molstad

July 12 7th Sunday after Pentecost

Assisting Minister: Jeremy Schoonover
Reader: Jessica Schoonover
Crucifer:

Acolyte:

Usher: Mary Bartos
Counters: Connie M/David B
Comm Asst: Jeremy Schoonover
Accompanist: Leslie Duesenberg
Live streamer: Jeremy Schoonover

July 19 8th Sunday after Pentecost

Assisting Minister: Mike Meunier
Reader: Karri Bjornstad
Crucifer:
Acolyte:
Usher: Dan Molstad
Counters: Dan M/David B
Comm Asst: Mike Meunier

Accompanist: Leslie Duesenberg
Live streamer: Dan Molstad

July 26 9th Sunday after Pentecost

Assisting Minister: Karri Bjornstad
Reader: Nikki Hanson
Crucifer:
Acolyte:
Usher: David Bjornstad
Counters: Jeremy S/David B
Comm Asst: Jeremy Schoonover
Accompanist: Leslie Duesenberg
Live streamer: Jeremy Schoonover

By Way of Humor

Sven buys four budgies from the bird section of the pet store. The owner puts the budgies into a paper bag as Sven pays for the birds. He then leaves the shop and Ole and Sven drive to the top of some big cliffs near Brainerd Lake.

At the cliffs, Sven looks down at the 1,000 foot drop and says, "Dis looks like a grand place." He then takes two birds out of the bag, puts them on his shoulders and jumps off the cliff.

Ole watches as Sven falls all the way to the bottom, killing himself dead. Looking down at the remains of his best pal, Ole shakes his head and says: "By ympin' yiminy, dis budgie ymping is too dangerous for me."

Vait! Dere's More!

Moments later, Knute arrives up at the cliffs. He's been to the pet shop too and walks up to the edge of the cliff carrying another paper bag in one hand and a shotgun in the other.

"Hey, Ole. Vatch dis." Knute says. He takes a parrot from the bag and throws himself over the edge of the cliff. Ole watches and halfway down, Knute takes the gun and shoots the parrot. Knute continues to plummet down until he hits bottom and breaks every bone in his body.

Ole shakes his head and says, "And I'm never trying dat parrotshooting either."

But Vait! Dere's more, you betcha!

Ole is just getting over the shock of losing two friends when Lars appears. He's also been to the pet shop and is carrying a paper bag out of which he pulls a chicken.

Lars grasps the chicken by the legs, holds it over his head, hurls himself off the cliff and disappears down and down until he hits a rock and breaks his spine.

Once more Ole shakes his head. "First der was Sven with his budgy ymping, den Knute parrotshooting, ... and now Lars, hengliding..."

July Birthdays and Anniversaries

July 3: Matt and Jackie Repaal (Anniversary)

July 15: Tim Betlach (Birthday)

Becoming More Familiar

Concerning the Significance of the Color Green during the Long Season after Pentecost? In the Christian liturgical year, the color green during the second half of the year symbolizes spiritual growth, hope, and new life. It reflects the season's focus on steady, daily discipleship and learning to apply Christ's teachings to everyday life, much like seeds quietly growing into a harvest.

Concerning the Significance of the Altar? In Lutheran worship, the altar serves as the primary focal point of

the sanctuary, representing both the place of Christ's ultimate sacrifice and the "Holy Table" where believers gather to receive His true body and blood in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Because God comes to His people with His very body and blood at the altar, we treat it with deep respect. It is appropriate to express this reverence by bowing or genuflecting toward the altar when entering or leaving worshiping.

Lutherans are among those who cover the altar with beautifully colored paraments that change according to

the liturgical season of the church year.

Lutherans process to the altar to receive communion and may kneel if there is an altar rail.

Concerning the Significance of the Pulpit? The pulpit symbolizes the authority of God's Word. As the central focus of worship, it highlights the Reformation belief that faithful preaching of Scripture is the primary way God speaks, calls sinners to repentance, and delivers grace. The pulpit and altar stand side-by-side to emphasize that hearing the Gospel and receiving Christ's body and blood are of equal importance

Stewardship

Go ... Sell All You Have?

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” asked the rich young ruler. Jesus said, “You know the commandments.” And he replied, “All these I have kept from my youth.” And Jesus said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Luke 18:18–22).

When we hear this story, this question comes to mind: is Jesus speaking to us also, or only to the rich young ruler? In other words, is Jesus telling us to sell all that we have and give it to the poor?

As good Lutherans, we answer, “No!” But why? Why should we not sell all that we have and distribute it to the poor? The simplest explanation is this: if we sold everything we have, our wife and our children would be neglected. In other words, to sell everything we have and give it to the poor would ignore, even abandon, those whom God has placed in our care. Our money, everything we have, is not to be used solely for the church. But that doesn’t excuse us from using our money for the purpose God intends.

Everyone has three stations in life, three spheres in which we live and are to be of service to our neighbors. These stations are the church, the family and society. We

are members of all three of these by birth. We are born into the church by water and the Word of God, and our duties to others in the church arise from our Baptism into the church. We are born into a family, and our duties to others stem from our birth into that family. Finally, we are born into society, which is simply a further extension of our birth into our family. The duties we have toward other members of society come from either our own birth or the birth of others into the same society.

All that we have and all that we are ought to be pressed into service for the church, the family and society. If we were to sell all we have and give only to one, the other two would be neglected, and we would falter in fulfilling our duties.

So, consider your life and all that you have in light of these three stations. You pay taxes to support and help those in society. You save for college for your children, and provide food, clothing and shelter for the members of your family.

But the station that is usually thought of last is the church. Since the needs of the family and society are more immediate, the church is often given what is left over. This is not how it should be. Rather, we are to give of our first fruits, from off the top, the best, even as Abel gave the best of his flock.

This requires forethought. It means that

you sit down and make a plan of what you will give from the beginning. It means sticking to it even when it seems that there are other more immediate and pressing things.

And this is all the more necessary now as we enter into periods of time where giving is low due to high unemployment or where restrictions on meeting in church limit opportunities to give. If we love God and His gifts of forgiveness given through the Means of Grace, which we receive at church and only at church, then we will support it, just as we love our country and our family. For all that we have and all that we are is given to us by our gracious God. He spared no expense for us and our salvation. He gave up His Son to death so that our sins are forgiven, and we will live. What’s more, He provides for all that we need for this body and life. And our lives in this world, among these three spheres of church, family and society are to mirror the generosity of the one who gave us life in all three at birth.

Don’t let the church, your divine family, be an afterthought or even ignored. It is nurturing you, bringing you up in salvation through Word and Sacrament.

- from LCMS Stewardship Ministry Website (published in July 2023)



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Services held at 9am at:
642 Western Avenue
A block north and then
a block west of King Furniture