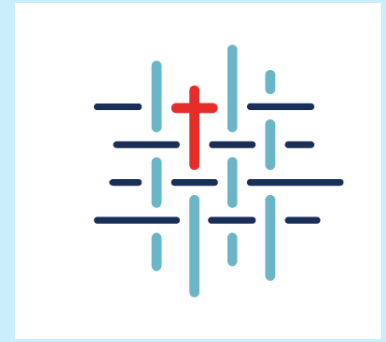


# The Friendly Visitor February 2025

Newsletter of Grace Lutheran Church and Community



## Grace Lutheran Church:

- *A community of faith, centered in worship, held in Grace, strengthened in love, sent forth in mission, in Jesus' name.*
- *Home of the Being New Spirituality Center.*

**Pastor Michael Schmidt**  
**Vicar Jesse Hershberger**

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### Office & Open Building Hours

9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Monday – Thursday  
Or by appointment

### Sunday Schedule

9:00 a.m. Worship: In Person & Online  
10:00 a.m. Fellowship & Coffee  
10:15 a.m. Adult & Youth Education

### Morning Prayer: Facebook

**Mondays & Fridays at 9:30 a.m.**

Search for Grace Lutheran Des Moines

Grace Lutheran Church  
5201 Urbandale Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50310  
515-276-6873  
[www.gracedm.org](http://www.gracedm.org)

## Nostalgia

It is Annual Meeting time and that is often a time to reflect on the "State of the Church." In soul searching about this, I find myself thinking about a movie. Last spring, I watched the sequel Inside Out 2 with my family. For anyone who is unfamiliar, the Inside Out movies introduce viewers to the complex emotions that happen inside each one of us. Joy, Fear, Disgust, Anger, and Sadness are introduced in the first movie, and then Embarrassment, Anxiety, Envy, and Ennui are introduced in the sequel. There is one other emotion that makes a brief entrance and then told to return after 10 years, two graduations, and a best friend's wedding. Her name is Nostalgia.

To the younger viewers, it seems confusing. What is nostalgia, and why would that wait until later? To the older viewers, the movie holds truth. In one's teenage years there is little need for nostalgia. The older we get, the more that we get caught up in times of nostalgia.

I find myself at such a time right now. We are just days away from the Annual Meeting. There is a sense of nostalgia as I think about my first Annual Meeting at Grace Lutheran Church. It was at that meeting that I made the announcement of my engagement to Jenie, which was met with cheers ... most notably from Bill Henderson. It was a beautiful moment.

In the years of serving at Grace there have been many highs and lows. I go through the folder with all of the funeral services, more than 120, and am filled with nostalgia and good memories. It has truly been an honor to walk with all of these families. I also think of the joys shared. These range from the baptisms and weddings to conversations about what is happening in your lives, and everything in between.

*Nostalgia, continued on page 3*



*We hold the families and loved ones of the following people in our hearts and prayers.*

*Norm Iverson*

*Mike Kamentz – partner of Kate Schaller*

*Vera Richardson – sister of Patty Allen*

*Evie Zimmerman – mother-in-Law of Pam Sample*

### **Lenten Soup Supper and Signup!**

Lent doesn't begin until March (March 5 for Ash Wednesday), but we want to give enough notice for the Soup Suppers. They will begin on Ash Wednesday and continue each Wednesday through April 9.

Supper begins at 5 p.m. and runs until 6:15 — come when you can during that time. Everyone is welcome. Not a Grace Member? Welcome! Neighbor? Welcome! Part of a group who meets here during the week? Welcome!

We are also looking for individuals, families, or committees who are willing to provide a crockpot or two of soup for one of the six Wednesdays. There is a signup on the bulletin board, or you may call the office. Everything you need will be in the kitchen: ladles, bowl, napkins, spoons, and the dishwasher, should you prefer to use non-disposables. The coffeemaker is always on and ready to brew.

**Grace Lutheran Church Staff**  
5201 Urbandale Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50310  
515-276-6873

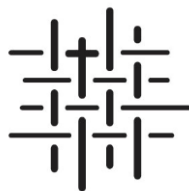
**Pastor Michael Schmidt**  
[mike@gracedm.org](mailto:mike@gracedm.org)  
Ext. 203

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**Bookkeeper Mike Hilsabeck**  
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**Jessye Flannery**  
[Jessica@gracedm.org](mailto:Jessica@gracedm.org)

**Piano Accompanist, Music Ensemble Coordinator**  
**Kathy Bowermaster**  
[kathybowermaster17@gmail.com](mailto:kathybowermaster17@gmail.com)



- 14 – Virginia and Jay Wangerin
- 17 – Deanna and Michael Hummel
- 19 – Linda and Jim Rundle
- 20 – Janet and Norman Trentmann
- 24 – Sally and Paul Thielking



- 1 Larry Cramer
- 5 Andrew Trentmann
- 6 Karri Brandsfield  
James Hoffman  
Larry Nordeen
- 10 Nancy Robbins  
Bonnie Swanson
- 12 Lenora Iverson  
Tyler Peeler
- 13 Timothy Hummel
- 14 Theodora Brown
- 15 Isaac McCleary
- 16 Heather Ashton
- 17 Gail Peterson
- 19 Ellen Mumm
- 20 Jessica Flannery
- 21 Allison Olson
- 22 Julie Stuckle
- 23 Barry Briggs  
Jenie Schmidt
- 24 Jonathan Rudisill  
Dana Johnson
- 25 Shane Artzer  
Melissa Young
- 27 Jerry Westercamp

### **Mark Your Calendars!**

Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday, March 9, 2025. We'll remind you in the next newsletter too. Sorry!

## Vicar's Voice: Happy February!

One of my favorite authors is Dr. Kate Bowler, a professor at Duke Divinity School. Alongside her scholarship on the history of Christianity in North America, she has written two memoirs and several books of blessings and devotionals. In the most recent meeting of the Internship Committee, I shared one of her blessings: "A Blessing for Stretching Your Heart". Part of it goes like this:

"So bless me,  
trying to live in between those two words:  
*yes ... and.*  
May I understand this is where the real work of life is found"



This is the season of the church year when I feel the tension of inbetweenness most deeply. We have passed Advent and Christmas but are not yet to Lent and Easter. We have celebrated Christ's birth and incarnation but his death and resurrection still loom.

Maybe this "yes ... and" flows into other areas of our lives as well — knowing that we have lots to be grateful for, yet mourning the way things used to be or how we hoped they would go. Relieved our loved ones are no longer in pain, but grieving their presence on earth. Trying to live boldly, but fearful of what the future has in store.

Wherever you are in the "yes ... and" of it all, know that you don't have to do it alone. As a community of faith, we celebrate the yesses, grieve the ands, and live in the tension together. Please reach out to Pastor Mike or myself if you are in need of support, prayers, or just someone to talk to. We are here for you.

In Christ,

Vicar Jesse

## *Nostalgia, continued from page 1*

I look with fondness on the memories of Grace Kids Care Care, while expressing gratitude for the blossoming work of the Being New Spirituality Center at Grace Lutheran Church.

During these same years I have seen a great deal of change in my personal life. I married the love of my life and gained two daughters. The same years have brought the death of both of my parents and a younger sibling. There have been incredible joys and times of deep and profound grief.

The truth is, nostalgia is quite powerful. It can leave one looking in the rearview mirror and hoping things could return to the way they were. I would give about anything to go back and see my parents or brother again. I would love to talk with any of the saints who have gone before us. There are times in Grace's past that felt really good, and it is tempting to want a return to such times. That is the way nostalgia works, and it is powerful.

I also know that the events of these last (nearly) 14 years have shaped me into the person that I am today. These events and memories have shaped who we are as a community of faith. There is no going back. As powerful as nostalgia can be, there is something much more powerful, presence. God is doing something here at Grace and I am so thankful to be a part of it. There will be times of nostalgia. Which is good. May we also continue to be truly present in the work of the Holy Spirit.

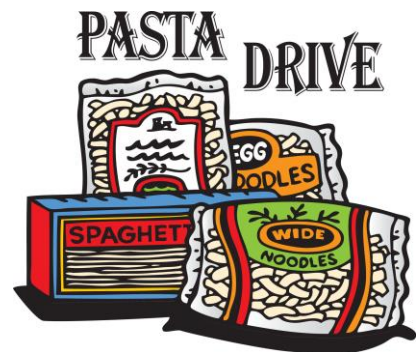
Pastor Mike

## February Little Free Pantry Request of the Month:

This month, we will collect boxes of macaroni and cheese and pasta for the Little Free Pantry. You can also provide donations online through the [GIVE](#) page or provide a check payable to Grace Lutheran Church with "Little Free Pantry" in the memo.

There is also an [Amazon Grace Wish List](#) available where items will be shipped directly to the church.

***Thank you for your donations.***



## TeamGRACE

We began as part of the Being New Committee assigned by the Congregational Council to study, pray, and seek the path of our church. At one point, we came to the realization there were at least two paths to address. The mission of TeamGRACE is to examine our congregational goals in our neighborhood and write a new mission statement with an attitude of Jesus. We read the Bible and other books to define what that means; we studied and prayed, and now, want to bring our congregation into the discussion of the possibilities.

We show our goals in our name: TeamGRACE

G – growing R – reconciling A – allying C – celebrating E – empowering

These Bible verses began our thinking:

Micah 6:8. He has told you, O mortal what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Mark 12:29-33. When asked which was the first commandment, Jesus said, "The first is, 'Hear O Israel: the Lord, our God, the Lord is one, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these. "The response was "this is more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

John 8:7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."

These verses tell us justice, kindness, and humble behavior doing God's work clearly are our start; further instructions — love God, love your neighbor, love yourself — NOTHING is more important. Judging and harming others is just wrong.

**Reconciling in Christ** is a program for Lutheran communities that publicly welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. It is a way for faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church.

Siblings in Christ, this a congregational journey, led by TeamGRACE, to decide what shape our ministry will take. Reconciling in Christ is a process whereby a congregation decides how to become a welcoming and affirming congregation that accepts and supports all people — or not. It is a congregational decision, affirmed by a Lutheran organization, announcing that this congregation welcomes and supports all people.

## Listen God is Calling: Loving Our Global Neighbors

Join Bishop Amy Current and leaders from across the synod for a short presentation and discussion. Register once and attend any one or all of these events. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/70Yi2cSdi96JQbveZzkw#/registration> If you are reading this on paper, you can type this into your browser window or scan this QR code to access the signup.

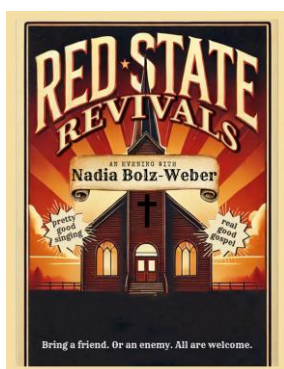
- February 6: Loving our Neighbors by "Preaching and Teaching with Love and Respect for the Jewish People."
- February 13: Loving our Neighbors through Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities.
- February 20: Loving our Neighbors in partnership with the Pare and Mwanga Dioceses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania as global companions.



**Lutheran Day on the Hill**  
**Tuesday, March 11, 2025**  
**9 a.m. – 3 p.m.**

**Join LSI and the three Iowa synods of the ELCA for Lutheran Day on the Hill in Des Moines in 2025!**

Lutheran Day on the Hill is LSI's biggest advocacy event of the year. Over 150 participants gather at a local downtown church to learn about critical issues Iowa children, adults and families are facing. After learning about advocacy and LSI's mission in action, the group heads to the Iowa State Capitol to talk directly with legislators.



## Red State Revival

Nadia Bolz-Weber is coming to Des Moines April 4 as part of her Red State Revival! From the website: "I want to gather with you, laugh with you, and sing with you. I want a couple hours of actual life that is free from despair and free from self-righteousness."

"I want us to remind each other of what's most important and least popular right now. Namely: humility, curiosity, mercy and hope – the things Jesus of Nazareth yammered on about and that were as difficult to embrace then as they are now."

"In other words, I do not want to be afraid and I do not want to be alone."

"So let's gather in the good and holy flesh and revive our weary hearts."

Tickets will go fast but are still available. There is also an opportunity to join with other local attendees as part of choir, with a short rehearsal with Nadia prior to the doors opening. Learn more and reserve your tickets here: [nadiabolzweber.com/revival/?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://nadiabolzweber.com/revival/?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

## Sunday Text Summaries

If you are someone who likes to ponder the texts in advance, or if you are signed up to lector in the coming month, we've provided a short summary of each week's readings as well as the specific verses. If you are contemplating being a lector, we encourage you to sign up online, on the clipboard in the Gathering Hall, or by calling the office.

### February 2: Luke 6:1-16

*The Pharisees condemn Jesus and his disciples for "working" on the sabbath. Jesus points out that he, himself, is Lord of the Sabbath, not they. This is not well-received by the powers that be.*

### February 9: Luke 7:1-17

*Jesus heals a Roman centurion's slave, then takes things up a notch and raises a man from the dead, so that his widowed mother might have a chance in life.*

### February 16: Luke 7:18-35

*The people are wondering if things are ever going to change. John, not having an answer, sends men to ask Jesus for himself. Jesus reminds them of all he has already done and points out to those gathered that no matter how they go about things, someone will always find fault.*

### February 23: Luke 7:36-50

*Jesus visits a Pharisee's house, and the Pharisee thinks nothing of it. But a woman, who everyone gathered knows is a sinner, cannot stop caring for Jesus's feet.*

### March 2: Luke 9:28-45

*The conversation about Jesus' suffering and death is enclosed in a dazzling foreshadowing of the resurrection. God affirms Jesus' identity, the disciples are stunned speechless, and Jesus resumes his mission with a demonstration of his power over evil.*

## February 2 All-Ages Service Project

On Feb 2, we will work together to make Blessing Bags to support the work of the Urban Bicycle Food Ministry of Des Moines. We will learn about the vital work this group does every week to practice "radical hospitality" with people in our community who are cold, hungry and marginalized.

*We are also collecting new or used blankets and XL or larger winter coats, sweatshirts, sweatpants, boots, hats and gloves.* Please bring these items to the display in the Gathering Hall before February 10.



## Have a GREAT Summer at Lutheran Lakeside!

You can spend your summer as a counselor — they're hiring!

You might enjoy the camp during one of the Friends and Family Camp sessions.

Onsite Day Camps, Explorers, Cultivator Camp, Trailblazer Camp, Leader Camp, Little Lakers, Voyager Camp, Celebration Camp, or new offerings Table Top Gamer and Pathfinder!

Scholarships are also available. Learn more about all the options and sign up at [www.lutheranlakeside.com](http://www.lutheranlakeside.com)





### **New Member Classes with Pastor Mike**

Do you want to become a member of Grace? Maybe you're unsure because you have a bunch of questions you're afraid to ask? Maybe you're just visiting for the first time or at the church for another reason and just checking out what we're about.

Welcome! A new member class with Pastor Mike is where you can start getting answers about us and about what being a member of Grace means.

The next opportunities will be held on Sundays February 23, March 30 and April 27. Choose one, get some coffee and a donut hole after worship; then at 10:15 a.m. meet in the office on the first floor – just up the stairs and to the left from the main entry.

*You don't need to RSVP, but you can by contacting the office at 515-279-9283 or by emailing Pastor Mike [Mike@gracedm.org](mailto:Mike@gracedm.org)* You are also more than welcome to contact Pastor Mike to set up a time to meet during the week.

### **Sunday Education Hour: 10:15 a.m.**

#### **Monthly Service Projects**

Once a month (September – April) we all meet in Grace Hall for a service project (see page 6 for an example). Dates vary and upcoming projects can be found on the website calendar as well in all our publications.

The rest of the year we have opportunities for:

**Adults** and **middle/high school students**, who meet together in Grace Hall. They are currently beginning a study on the Book of Acts.

**Elementary students**, who meet in the Sunday School room across from the elevator on the office level.



### **Bible Study: Two weekly options!**

Bible Study is open to everyone, not just to members or someone who has been attending Grace for a long time. We welcome everyone; bring a friend along if you're feeling shy! We offer two meeting times: Tuesdays in Grace Hall at 9 a.m., and Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. in room 102 downstairs. We are currently working our way through Genesis.

### **Bulletins, announcements, and sermons are all online!**

For those of you who look for Grace worship materials online, we've now moved everything onto the Bulletins Resource Page. Go to the website [www.gracedm.org](http://www.gracedm.org):

- Find the word [Resources](#): On a laptop or desktop screen it is in the upper right-hand corner. If on your phone, click the 3 lines in the upper right corner; then find Resources, Give, and Volunteer at the bottom of the drop-down menu that appears.
- Once on the Resources page, look for the red bubble that says Bulletins, Announcements, Sermons. Click to open that page.
- Once you have the [Bulletins](#) page open, locate the date of the worship you are looking for. You can now open any of the bulleted links related to that date. You may read these online, download to your device, or print as you wish.

Videos currently remain available on a separate page in the Resources section here: [Worship Videos](#). Each worship video is also posted to Facebook after the service. Sermons and worship videos are posted to the website approximately 24 hours after each worship. We tend to only keep between three and six months' worth of worship material and video links on our pages.

## Sacred Gazing as a Spiritual Practice – Cindy Mackey



When the crowds demanding Jesus' attention grew, we read in Luke Chapter 5 that He would withdraw to deserted places to pray. Today our "deserted places" are the quiet spaces we must fashion in the midst of the everyday routine of our lives. Although nature can provide a wonderful setting for building our awareness of the Divine, as with Centering Prayer, Sacred Gazing can be done anywhere when we withdraw our attention from our thoughts and from the activity around us. "If solitude is to be life-giving we must find our way through the labyrinth of our distractions right into the heart of God," Macrina Wiederkehr explains in *A Tree Full of Angels*.

Mystical experiences, as described previously in the Contemplative Corner, are prompted by things that cause a momentary letting go of one's self-identity to enter into a sense of being part of something larger. Such is the felt sense of Sacred Gazing.

Describing gazing as a form of prayer, Richard Rohr says, "Gazing without judgment, without analysis, without critique, is a form of prayer that lets things having no right to draw forth awe leave us awestruck. I experience this awe on my walking path through the trees, and from my window seat during the winter for example. Noticing the way the morning sunlight illuminates a simple flower or a light breeze caresses the trees, my simple awarenesses recognize and honor Nature as pure revelation of the Divine."

In the same way that daily Centering Prayer builds our spiritual muscle to focus only on God, gazing through softened eyes strengthens our ability to attend to the world **with the heart**. Cynthia Bourgeault says that this seeing with the eyes of the heart contributes to our sense of shared oneness. As such, Spiritual Gazing is a gift to ourselves AND also to the world, as we open our hearts to empathy, positive intent and gratitude.

In the words of author Victoria Looz in *Church of the Wild*, 'We long to feel the presence of the Sacred with all of our senses and our emotions, and in that longing forget to look outside our window and engage in conversation with **a world that is already sacred**, just waiting for our attention.'

In the way that listening to music touches our hearts or sacred chanting vibrates in our core, Sacred Gazing with softened eyes allows us the space to be receptive and open to God in all of our surroundings.

## Being New Spirituality Center

We believe that contemplative insight and practice are key to the transformation of our spirits, touching that deep place of heart and of being that lives in each of us, whether we are part of a faith tradition or not. We are a resource for Central Iowa: creating events to which all are welcome as well as opening space for offerings that others bring. You can request their newsletter: email [beingnew@gracedm.org](mailto:beingnew@gracedm.org).

There is no fee for the offerings that come from the center. Donations to cover our expenses are thus received with special gratitude! There is a basket in the center. Checks may be made out to Grace Lutheran Church with Being New in the memo line. You may also donate online through the church's website. Follow this link and choose Being New from the drop-down menu:

[https://tithely.give\\_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2854737](https://tithely.give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2854737)

The Center is located in the lower level of Grace Lutheran Church.



## Grace Congregational Council Meeting January 26

Attendees: Pastor Mike, Valerie Culp, Tom McCleary, Vicar Jesse, Brian Gerling, Mike Hilsabeck, Greg Boeschen, Linda Moravec, Stuart Mitchell, Emma Stammer, Pam Hellman Palmer

1. Call to Order
2. Introductions
3. New Business
  - a. Meeting Schedule
    - i. Executive Committee: 2nd Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m.
    - ii. Council: 4th Tuesday of the month. Dinner at 5:45 p.m., Meeting at 6 p.m.
  - b. Executive Committee Duties (see chapter 11 of Constitution)
    - i. President – Lead council and congregational meetings. Determine agendas with Executive Committee.
    - ii. Vice President – Fill in for President when President is absent.
    - iii. Secretary – Take minutes of all council and congregational meetings.
    - iv. Member at Large – Attend Executive Committee meetings.
  - c. Executive Council Elections
    - i. President – Greg Boeschen
    - ii. Vice President – Tom McCleary
    - iii. Secretary – Emma Stammer
    - iv. Member at Large – Brian Gerling
4. Adjournment
5. Next Meeting: February 25 at 6 p.m., 5:45 p.m. Dinner provided by Pam. Devotions provided by Vicar/Pastor.

## Annual Meeting Recap

Thank you to all who were able to attend the Annual Meeting and church potluck. The Congregational Budget was adopted as presented. Congregational Council: Mike Hilsabeck, Pam Palmer, and Emma Stammer were elected to three-year terms. Endowment Committee: Kevin Drury was elected to a three-year term. Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly: Rita Stackhouse and Jessica Flannery were elected as voting members.

The Annual Report is available [on the website here](#). For those not reading this online, go to [www.gracedm.org/resources/reports/](http://www.gracedm.org/resources/reports/) and open or download the 2024 Annual Report. Copies with the full Budget and Finance report and spreadsheets are available to members. Please contact the office and let us know if you would like a copy, and whether you would like that by email or sent through the U.S. Postal Service.

## Grace Garden Help Needed!

We are at a crossroads with the garden, wanting to continue sharing with local food pantries and the Little Free Pantry but needing more help. We are reaching out to different community groups as well as the neighborhood, looking for one-week commitments in caring for the gardening during the growing season. We are asking that you share this volunteer opportunity with friends, neighbors, and community groups. Julie Honsey and Michelle Voelker will help with planning, spring planting, guiding volunteers, final harvest, and fall cleanup, as well as taking one week during the summer to care for the garden. Those committed to the garden for 2025 will meet in early April to decide how to proceed, how much of the garden to plant, and what perennial foods that require less frequent care can be added this year. Contact [michelle@gracedm.org](mailto:michelle@gracedm.org)

### Worship Volunteer Needs:

Each week we are need of a Greeter, Lector, Communion Assistant, and Coffee/Donut Server. During Lent we will need additional help on Ash Wednesday, Lenten Wednesday evening worship, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday.

A little unsure what each duty entails? The names of the volunteers are listed in the bulletin each week: Reach out to them through the directory, or call the office during the week and we'd be happy to answer your questions so you can decide where you feel most comfortable.

Sign up using the clipboard found on a Gathering Hall table, or go to [gracedm.org](http://gracedm.org), and click on the word "Volunteer" in the upper right corner of your screen; then follow directions on the page. If reading this online just click here! [Online Worship Volunteer Signup.](#)

Not looking for such a visible role? Altar Guild and Tech Crew are also happy to share what they do each week in case one of those roles interests you.

### All-Ages Fleece Hat Service Projects

You made 112 Fleece Hats at the All-Ages Service Project Day on January 5! These are currently being shared in the Little Free Pantry. Some hats were pre-sewn and just needed tassels cut and tied while visiting with friends. Some of our younger folks had fun using the sewing machine with Jill.



### Stay informed!

**Weekly enews:** Sent every Tuesday with weekly updates, activity reminders, occasional community news. By signing up you will also receive other occasional emails, such as funeral notices and special requests. Sign up on our website home page, [www.gracedm.org](http://www.gracedm.org) — just scroll down until you see "Get the Good News," enter your email, and press enter.

**Optional:** If you have never received our Tuesday electronic newsletter, the office can sign you up. Because of anti-spam laws, the software requires us to enter your email address **and** ZIP code. You can email those to us or fill out one of the white pew cards on Sunday. If you have received the electronic newsletter in the past and have cancelled it — whether by accident or to pause while on vacation, etc., those same spam laws will not allow **us** to sign you up again. If this is the case, go to the website directions listed above, or come see one of us in the office.