



Grace Lutheran Church

Companion Congregation: Msindo Parish in Tanzania

Welcome to Worship

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025

9:00 a.m.

Liturgical worship with organ

OUR STATEMENT OF MISSION

Grace Lutheran Church is a community of faith, centered in worship, held in grace, strengthened in love, sent forth in mission, in Jesus' name.

Welcome! *If this is your first time worshiping at Grace Lutheran, we're glad you are here!*

You can learn more about our congregation

- *on our website at www.gracedm.org*
- *by asking a greeter or other members of the congregation*
- *picking up one of our brief brochures from the Visitor Center in the Gathering Hall, or newsletters in the Entryway.*

Worship Online: During times when you cannot be with us in person, you can participate in worship on our website or Facebook page @gracelutherandm

*We worship together in many ways: Standing, sitting, singing, speaking, listening. You are invited to worship in as many (or few) ways as you are comfortable and able. **When following along in the bulletin, the congregation is invited to read the items in bold (often marked with a C:) aloud.***

Large print bulletins are available from the ushers.

Children belong and are welcome in worship! *Children's bulletins are available from the ushers, and activity bags are available outside the doors to the sanctuary. If needed, the **Kids Corner** in the Gathering Hall has puzzles, books, coloring pages and Mega-blocks! This space is intended to offer a place for children to be and play if they need to step out of worship and during fellowship times.*

Communion – We welcome all people to the Lord's table *to receive Holy Communion. Children ages 3 and above are welcome at the parents' discretion, after meeting for instruction with the pastor. Children not instructed are invited to come forward for a blessing. If you are not able to come forward to take communion, please notify an usher before the service. Then try to sit by the aisle and the pastor will commune you in your pew.*

If you are interested in finding out more about membership at Grace, please contact Pastor Mike at Mike@gracedm.org, 515-276-6873.

Prelude Improvisation on the hymn “Wake, Awake, For Night Is Flying” (ELW 436) - P. Nicolai arranged by P. Manz

Welcome

Poetry Prayer: Tethered

*When we were children, we fell asleep
with walkie talkies tucked under our pillows.
All that separated us was a bathroom,
a hallway, a few feet of empty space,
but as children, even small distances can feel like miles.
So after the parents whispered prayers over our skinned knees
and spelling tests, after they kissed our sweaty foreheads
and tucked us into bed,
we'd pull the walkie talkies out from under our pillows.
We'd roll the dial on the top of the transceiver.
We'd sputter that invisible tether to life.
And with a few crackles in the quiet of the night,
you'd whisper my name.
I'd press down the button.
I'd promise I was close.
As an adult, I don't know what ever happened
to those blue-grey walkie talkies.
But I know,
that even today,
if the monsters in the closet feel too real,
and you whisper my name,
I promise I'll be close.*

Please rise in body or in spirit

Confession and Forgiveness

L: Friends, every day we are given choices—the choice to be a friend, to be an ally, to extend a welcoming hand. Some days we choose wisely, but from time to time, we inevitably get it wrong. That is one of the many reasons we need the Prayer of Confession. In this moment of prayer, we are able to practice the art of forgiveness. So join me in this transformative moment. Join me receiving grace. Let us pray.

L: When you were afraid, did I stay by your side? Did I offer my hand, or did I leave you alone? When you were afraid, did I choose solidarity? Did I see your fear, or did I only see mine?

C: Friend, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. Fortunately, God offers grace, and we do too. So take a deep breath, and let's start again.

L: Thank you. Your mercy is a gift.

C: Now we must ask—when you were afraid, did we stay by your side? Did we offer our hands, or did we leave you alone?

Gathering Hymn

We are a “singing church,” so we follow the advice of the apostle Paul to teach and admonish “one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).

When you were afraid, did we choose solidarity? Did we see your fear? Or did we only see ours?

L: Friends, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. Fortunately, God offers grace, and I do too. So take a deep breath, and let’s start again.

C: Thank you. Your mercy is a gift. We accept your grace and would love to start again.

L: May it be so, with God’s help.

C: Alleluia, amen.

Gathering Hymn “Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn”
ELW #242

Greeting

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

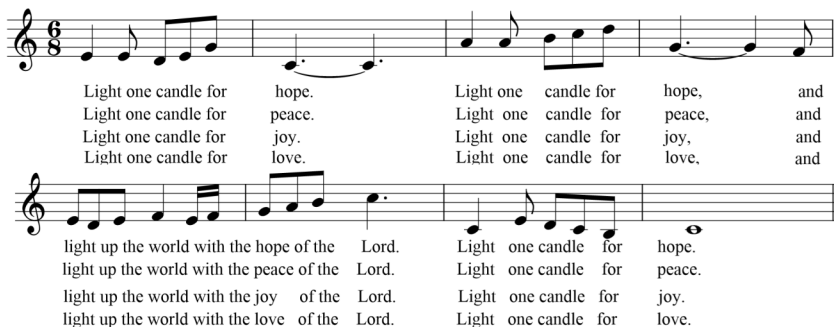
Lighting of Advent Wreath

L: In a world full of fear, where do you see the presence of love?

C: We see love all around us. We see love when people hold open the door. We see love in a warm embrace, a homemade casserole, a phone call after a long day. We see love in random acts of kindness and intentional acts of empathy. We see love all around us.

L: You are right. Even in a fearful world, love is all around us. Today we light the candle of love as a reminder of this good news. May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, love is here. Love is world-changing. Love is shining bright. We only have to look for it.

C: Thanks be to God for a love like that! Amen.



Light one candle for hope. Light one candle for hope, and
Light one candle for peace. Light one candle for peace, and
Light one candle for joy. Light one candle for joy, and
Light one candle for love. Light one candle for love, and

light up the world with the hope of the Lord. Light one candle for hope.
light up the world with the peace of the Lord. Light one candle for peace.
light up the world with the joy of the Lord. Light one candle for joy.
light up the world with the love of the Lord. Light one candle for love.

L: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

L: Immanuel,

C: we turned off alarm clocks. We poured cups of coffee. We slipped shoes onto our feet and combed back fly-away hairs. We traveled to this room and settled into this space, all in hopes of drawing closer to you. So as we hear your Word read aloud, help us to feel your presence in our midst. For we are reaching out our hands. We are reaching out our hearts. Speak to us now. With hope we pray, amen.

Please be seated

Reading: Isaiah 41:5-10

⁵ The coastlands have seen and are afraid; the ends of the earth tremble; they have drawn near and come. ⁶ Each one helps the other, saying to one another, "Take courage!" ⁷ The artisan encourages the goldsmith, and the one who smooths with the hammer encourages the one who strikes the anvil, saying of the soldering, "It is good," and they fasten it with nails so that it cannot be moved. ⁸ But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; ⁹ you whom I took from the ends of the earth and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant; I have chosen you and not cast you off"; ¹⁰ do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God

Anthem

"People, Look East"
Grace Bells

Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel

of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son,^[b] and he named him Jesus.

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God

Sermon

Please rise in body or in spirit

Hymn of the Day “Gentle Joseph Heard a Warning”

ACS #1060

Affirmation of Faith

C: We have seen the valley. We have seen a sky without stars. We have seen the longest night, and still we believe. We believe in a with-us God. We believe in the hope of tomorrow. We believe that good news is louder than fear. We believe this good news is for all people. So even when our knees shake, even when our voice trembles, even when fear is all around us, we will hold onto that good news. We will reach for each other. We will look for God in our midst. We will sing songs of joy. We will proclaim: Unto us, love is born. We have seen the longest night, and we have seen unimaginable love. So still, we believe. Amen.

Prayers of the People

This prayer in the service follows the directive of the Apostle Paul to young Timothy, a pastor: “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.

Prayers of the People

L: Ever-reaching, with-us God, we don’t always know the words to pray. We stumble over our words. We meander in our thoughts. We fail to be eloquent when we try...

... As you do, like Joseph, we will do our best to walk each other home.

L: With hope for a better tomorrow, we continue to pray.

C: Amen

All: God of love, have mercy on us. Pour out your Spirit upon us. Center us in worship. Hold us in grace. Strengthen us in love. Send us forth in mission. In Jesus’ holy name. Amen.

Passing of the Peace

L: The peace of the Lord be with you all,

C: And also with you!

Please be seated

Announcements

Please rise in body or in spirit

Offering Prayer

Offering: *As Lutherans, we believe that Christian giving is about worship AND*

L: Nourishing God,

C: you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Through this meal, satisfy our parched places, that we may rejoice and be for the world signs of your kingdom come. Amen.

Thanksgiving at the Table

L: With-us God, We live in a fearful world. If we're honest, we come to this Table today with the taste of fear on our tongues. We come to this Table carrying our anxiety. We come to this Table asking for guidance. We come to this Table with all of life's "what-ifs." ...

L: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

Invitation to Communion

L: Here at this Table, you are wanted and welcomed. You are safe and loved. Here at this Table, you belong. There is no need for fear here, for this is a joyful feast. Come. All are welcome.

Please be seated

Lamb of God



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have



mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the

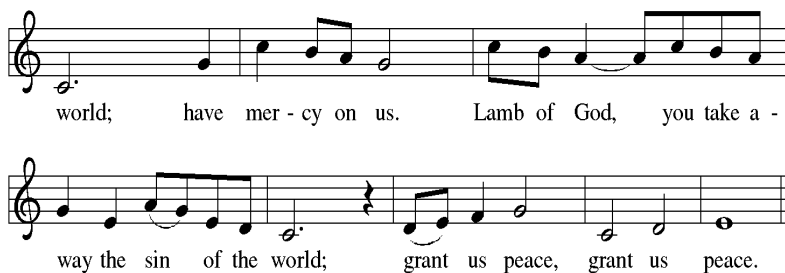
action. As an option to the offering plate, scan this QR code to access our secure digital offering plate.



Communion

Today we will receive Holy Communion through wafers and pouring chalice. Two lines will form from the front pews to the back. Please use the hand sanitizer provided and take a cup from the tray. Then proceed

to receive the gluten-free wafer. Both wine and grape juice will be available. Please place your cup in the basket by the side aisle as you return to the pew.



Distribution Hymns: #642 (3x), #518, #777, #522

Please rise in body or in spirit

Prayer after Communion

L: God our host, at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus.

C: Amen

Benediction

L: In a fearful world, may you look for God's spirit. May you reach for each other's hands. May you choose courage whenever you can. And in all things, may you remember that good news is louder than fear. In the name of the one who calls, the one who sends, and the one who journeys with—go in peace and be not afraid.

C: Amen

Sending Hymn

"All Earth is Hopeful"

ELW #266

Dismissal

L: Go in peace. Keep awake.

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude Hymn tune and choral prelude on "From Heaven Above" (ELW 268) - M. Luther arranged by J. S. Bach