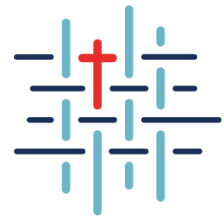


The Friendly Visitor

Newsletter of Grace Lutheran Church and Community
Christmas 2025 – January 2026 edition



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.*

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Submission deadline for the February newsletter: Tuesday, January 20

Office & Open Building Hours

- resuming January 5
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. Education Hour & Sunday School

Grace Lutheran Church
5201 Urbandale Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50310
515-276-6873
gracedm.org

Merry Christmas from the Staff of Grace Lutheran Church

Pastor Michael Schmidt

Vicar Lotegeluaki Lengai

Nichole Aubert

Kathy Bowermaster

Jessye Flannery

Todd Haugen

Mike Hilsabeck

Rich Snyder

Michelle Voelker

*Silent night,
holy night,
Son of God,
love's pure light.*

Worship with Grace through the holidays

All worship services will be livestreamed and available at www.gracedm.org, *with the exception* of Christmas Day at 10 a.m.

Sunday, December 21: Fourth Sunday of Advent Worship at 9 a.m.

No Education hour this morning. Please stay for coffee, donuts, and fellowship in the Gathering Hall after worship.

Wednesday, December 24: Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship, 5 p.m.

There will be a special treat for everyone in the Gathering Hall after worship.

Thursday, December 25: Christmas Day Worship, 10 a.m.

No donuts/coffeetime or Education hour this morning; however, there will be a special treat for everyone in the Gathering Hall after worship.

Sunday, December 28: Lessons and Carols Worship, 9 a.m.

Join us for a joyful worship of readings and singing! There will be an opportunity for an abbreviated fellowship with coffee and donuts in the Gathering Hall after worship.

Sunday, January 4, we return to our usual format of Sunday Worship at 9 a.m.

Fellowship/coffeetime and Education Hour return. We will all meet in Grace Hall to make cozy fleece hats for the Little Free Pantry to help our neighbors and visitors keep warm through the winter. No sewing skills needed for this activity!

Exploring Grace With Pastor Mike will also meet on January 4.

A warm invitation to learn about our community, faith, and life together. **Exploring Grace** is an opportunity for you to get answers about us and find out about what being a part of Grace might look like for you. Enjoy coffee and a donut hole after worship; then at 10:15 a.m. meet in the office on the main floor: just up the stairs and to the left from the main entry.



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



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Minister for Communications
Michelle Voelker
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Ext. 201

Office Assistant for Worship
Jessye Flannery
Jessica@gracedm.org

Piano Accompanist and
Music Ensemble Coordinator
Kathy Bowermaster
kathybowermaster17@gmail.com

Education opportunities in 2026

Elementary Sunday School returns Sunday, January 11, 10:15 a.m.

We meet across from the elevator just up the stairs from the Gathering Hall.

Confirmation Class returns Wednesday, January 7, 6:45 p.m.

Meet in room 102 with other middle schoolers on Wednesday evenings, with occasional service projects through the year.

Weekday Bible Study

Led by Pastor Mike and Vicar Lotegeluaki. Everyone is welcome — friends, neighbors, members, drop-ins. We offer two options:

- Tuesday mornings at 9 a.m. Meet in Grace Hall.
- Thursday evenings in Room 102 on the lower level.

With Sympathy

We hold the family of
Ernest Dostalík
in our prayers. Ernest
is the brother
of Marty Dostalík.

The family of
Barb Powers.



Star Tree Update

What a bonus year!!!! Especially with our 3 consecutive Saturday impacting Sunday weather events!

All Mosaic gifts were returned on time. Instead of 30 Walmart gift cards, there are 42. A special thanks to Mike H. for his coordination of purchasing Walmart Gift cards with the extra cash donated. Gratitude abounds. I can't use enough exclamation points!!!!
Joie Gronert



January LFP Request

We are collecting cereal and individual oatmeal packets for the Little Free Pantry in January. The [Grace LFP Amazon Wish List](#) is also available to have items shipped to the church. Donations can also be made online through the [GIVE](#) page or send a check payable to Grace Lutheran Church with "Little Free Pantry" in the memo.

Please be sure to avoid glass and canned items in freezing weather.

Your donations are greatly appreciated.



HAPPY Birthday

January Birthdays

- 1 Gumarito Marquez
Tana Friesth Perry
- 2 Andrew Allen
Nicholas Jessen
- 3 Jay Wangerin
Eric Weber
- 6 Julie Honsey
Tammy Denton
Amy Schmelzer
Paul Calahan
- 8 Kathy Roat
Catherine Lewis
- 9 Sandra Briggs
Michael Friesth
- 10 Caden Mendez
- 13 Jacqueline Villela
- 14 Tessa Fenimore
- 15 Nolan Irwin
Laria Preston
Cyrus Stammer
- 16 Daniel Robbins
- 18 Carli Stee
Lon Friesth
Lonnie Jessen
Stephen Kallenbach
- 19 Becky Selander
- 20 Tammi Simet
Samuel Speck
- 21 Mary Helt
Cheryl Wilner
- 23 Donald Peterson
Alice Kulzer
- 24 Garry Lenhart
- 26 Patricia Allen
Valerie Culp
Haley Honnold
- 29 Norman Trentmann
- 30 Elizabeth Prescott
Nayeli Rodriguez
- 31 Laura Irwin
Maryena Petty-Lee



9 Joie and David Gronert



Vicar's Voice

December arrives with expectation and anticipation, reminding us how quickly the year has passed. Throughout these months, God has remained faithful to me, my family, and our Grace Lutheran community, surrounding us with unending grace.

I am deeply grateful for the spiritual, tangible, and intangible gifts many have shared—often anonymously. Thank you for your generosity. I also extend sincere appreciation to the members of the Grace Lutheran Ladies Group for their continued support and to many others who have sent Christmas cards. Truly, *“in everything give thanks”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

As we move through December, let us remain prayerful—for one another, for our neighbors, and for a world affected by war, hunger, and disease. Even in these challenges, we hold fast to hope, trusting that *“He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds”* (Psalm 147:3).

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.
May God's peace sustain all of us in this holy season.

Vicar Lotegeluaki Ole L. Lengai



TeamGRACE

A little over a year ago, Amy Batten, Kelley Brown, Jessica Flannery, Mary Helt, Isaac McCleary, Jenny Rehder, and Amy Schmelzer met to shepherd the process of Grace becoming a Reconciled in Christ congregation with the common goal for everyone to know they are welcome at Grace. TeamGRACE is presenting this statement for consideration in advance of the annual congregational meeting in January 2026.

“Grace Lutheran Church commits to welcoming and celebrating all people; those in the LGBTQIA+ community, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and their allies.

We commit to the work of anti-racism, liberation, social and environmental justice for all of God's creation. We affirm the sacredness of all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

We affirm the sacredness of all those who have experienced exclusion because of race, ability, age, or culture. We affirm the sacredness of those who wrestle with addiction, physical or mental health, imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances, or anything that too often divides us.

No matter the labels others may place upon you, or the labels you may place upon yourself, here at Grace you will find a home among friends in need of a Savior. You are welcome here.”

If you would like to speak to one of the team members or council about this proposed statement, please reach out by contacting them directly through the Instant Church Directory app, or contact the office.

Important Dates

Church Office Holiday Schedule

- Monday, December 22: Open
- Tuesday, December 23: Open
- Wednesday, December 24 – Monday, December 29: Closed
- Tuesday, December 30: Open, last day for 2025 contributions
- Wednesday December 31 – Sunday, January 4: Closed
- Monday, January 5: We return to our normal office hours of Monday – Thursday, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.



Last Day for 2025 Contributions: Tuesday, December 30, noon

All contributions received after this will be counted toward 2026. This includes mailed items that arrive late. Please plan ahead, keeping in mind the heavy use of the postal system during the holidays. You may also use the online giving site on our website www.gracedm.org. Click on the word “Give” at the upper right corner of the page. Or go directly to <https://gracedm.org/give-to-grace/>. Then scroll down, click on the red “Donate” button, and follow the instructions from there.



Committee Reports Due: Wednesday, January 7

Our goal is always to assemble, format, print and mail the annual report in time for the Budget and Finance Forum on Sunday, January 19. Please email your reports to Michelle@gracedm.org



Conversation With Council: Sunday, January 11



Budget and Finance Forum, Capital Campaign Update: Sunday, January 18



Annual Meeting: Sunday, January 25, 2025

The meeting will take place in Grace Hall after worship. We will share in a potluck meal together after the meeting ends.

Worship Volunteer Needs

Please note that we have returned to two lines of communion, which means we now need 3 communion assistants for each service.

Each Sunday we are in need of several volunteers: Greeters, Lectors, Communion Assistants and Coffee/Donut Servers. Anyone can help — if you want to help but would like training, please reach out to the office! We'll be happy to walk you through what is needed for each position. Directions for making coffee (no measuring involved!), finding supplies, and setting out the donut holes are posted by the coffeemaker.

Sign up using the clipboard found on a Gathering Hall table, or go to 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](#).



A Community Growing in Depth, Courage, and Grace—Joan Fumetti

Recently, a fellow member of Grace offered an affirming nod to what is happening at Being New and said, “Now you’ll have to watch out that you don’t grow too fast!” The comment stayed with me. It helped me recognize that this ministry of Grace is not only established but is being received as *grace* by the many people who gather for what we offer.



A community is forming—people who feel called to go deeper. Each of us brings our own stumbling blocks, those well-worn patterns that can catch us up and sometimes cause harm. It takes courage to look honestly at ourselves, and the process can feel uncomfortable at first. But in a community of people doing this same inner work, we soon find ourselves able to laugh gently at our humanity. When judgment softens, space opens for grace to rush in. We begin to make peace with our own lives, and even with this dear, broken world.

At the center of this work are the Enneagram groups and individual coaching. Alongside them is the Wisdom stream of Christian spirituality. Through book groups, Wisdom Circles, and our current Wisdom School, we engage practices that shape us more and more into the likeness of Christ. Paul urges us, “Put on the mind of Christ!”—a daunting invitation. We cannot achieve it by sheer willpower. What we *can* do is cultivate a receptive heart so that the grace of such a profound gift can find its way in.

This is the ground of a more peaceful, vibrant, joyful life. And here’s the heart of it: we don’t do this work only for ourselves. Everything we practice is meant to equip us for greater service to the world.

On January 11 at 1:00 p.m., Grace will host the final gathering in the Dialogue Series of St. Catherine of Siena Parish of Des Moines:

Wisdom for the Long Haul in a World Falling Apart

Staying grounded amid the “poly-crises” of our current moment is no small task. Yet across spiritual traditions, practices exist that help us remain resilient, courageous, and compassionate—without sinking into despair or mirroring the very injustices we hope to heal. Several interfaith leaders will share perspectives and practices from their own wisdom wells, offering guidance for developing a strong and sustaining inner life.

We are eager to welcome participants from across the area—and we warmly hope you will join us too.

New Year's Centering Prayer Retreat

January 10, 2026, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Grace Lutheran Church, 5201 Urbandale Ave, Des Moines, 50310

Join us in welcoming the New Year by setting aside time to reflect on the year past and imagine the year to come. Bring magazines to share for a “vision board,” if you like. Time will also be devoted to contemplative practices including Centering Prayer. Sponsored by: Contemplative Outreach of Central Iowa and the Being New Spirituality Center

Cost: \$40 (includes lunch) – to be paid at the door.

For a detailed schedule and reservation, look follow the link: <https://www.centeriowa.org/new-years-centering-prayer-retreat> or contact Kathleen Schiltz at kathleengrace55@gmail.com

Ongoing Gatherings at Being New

Silent Prayer & Meditation for Peace (Hybrid meeting) – 3rd Mondays at 10:00 in the Center.

SoulCollage® – 1st & 3rd Mondays | 6:30 p.m. | \$15 Facilitator: [Cindy Schloss-Calhoun](#)
sinschloss@aol.com

Group Energy & Sound Healing

2nd Sundays 3:00 p.m.; Fourth Mondays 4 p.m. We meet in the carpeted room across the hall from the Center to allow those who wish to lie down. Yoga mats are provided. Bring blankets, eye pillows, etc. There are also comfortable chairs for those who prefer to sit.

Contact [Julie Good](#) or 515-306-4864 if you plan to attend so she can prepare the space. Julie is generously offering her time and suggests that instead of a fee, participants may wish to make a donation to the Center.

Recovery Café & Circle – Fridays at noon

Recovery Circle is for anyone navigating challenges like addiction, depression, life transitions—or simply seeking a healthier lifestyle or deeper sense of purpose. The circle offers a safe space to share without judgment, set goals, celebrate steps of progress and move forward.

Contact [Patrick Dahlen](#) 515-608-0913

The Way of the Rose – Wednesdays 6:30 p.m. Upper Room

The Way of the Rose is an open-hearted, inclusive community dedicated to the forgotten Earth wisdom of the rosary. We are not affiliated with any religious institution. We reflect on and pray 5 mysteries of the rosary. Traditional and non-traditional prayer forms welcome and no prior knowledge of the rosary is needed. Each meeting is a stand-alone circle that makes space for prayer, reflection and connection. Join us in the calming support available to all in the garden of prayer.

Contact: [Hannah Whetston](#) for more information

Grace Endowment Fund Applications Are Available

Endowment grants are awarded each year to groups both inside and outside of Grace. A certain percentage of the funds given each year must be awarded to community groups outside of the Grace community, so please share and promote this opportunity widely.

Requests for specific, finite projects are preferred. The Endowment does not fund operational expenses.

Applications are due January 31, 2026. Additional details and examples of projects can be found on our website <https://gracedm.org/support-of-others/grace-endowment-fund/>





HOOVER HIGH SCHOOL
DRAMA DEPARTMENT

HOSTING
Iowa High School Speech Association
District Contest

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Many Shifts and Jobs available
Contact Leanne Williams with questions

Saturday, January 24th





Building a Legacy

Our Commitment to the Merle Hay and Beavertdale Neighborhoods



Grace Lutheran Church was started as an outreach ministry in the northwest corner of Des Moines nearly 100 years ago. As the city of Des Moines has expanded into what are now known as the Beavertdale and Merle Hay neighborhoods, Grace Lutheran Church has remained committed to being a neighborhood presence. The original Parish House was designed with community in mind, placing a gymnasium on the upper floor. The expansion in 2001 had the neighborhood in mind, creating space for daycare and enough space to host neighborhood events.

2020

As the year 2020 approached, Grace Lutheran Church was preparing for a Capital Campaign for necessary infrastructure improvements. The addition in 2001 (Grace Hall, etc.) was starting to show age. There were heating and cooling problems, and we have had several minor roof leaks. This Capital Campaign was going to address these issues. Then, the COVID pandemic halted the campaign.

Current Campaign

"Building a Legacy" has built on the work of the 2020 campaign committee. This work started in 2018. Some of the needs listed in 2020 have already been accomplished. Other needs have become known in the years since. The Congregational Council and Capital Campaign Committee, supported by the tireless work of Brian Gerling and Nichole Aubert, have spent the last two and a half years preparing this plan of "Building a Legacy for the next 100 years." We have identified \$825,000 in anticipated repairs and renovations, adding \$75,000 for contingencies and unanticipated expenses and the remaining \$100,000 in debt to the Grace Lutheran Church Endowment Fund.

Prayerfully consider joining us in "Building a Legacy." We invite you to give a one-time gift or a pledge to help us meet our goal.

Campaign materials will be mailed during the first half of December. In the meantime, copies of the [12-page brochure](#) outlining the overall plans and priorities, general information, dates, and more can be found in the office and on our website.

On the website, you will also find [a trifold brochure](#) that can be shared with others, and a [pledge card](#). Both can be downloaded and printed. For those who enjoy delving into the details, we have copies of a very detailed 44-page project catalogue available to pick up in the office.



GRACE CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL – November 18th Meeting Minutes

Meeting came to order November 18th, 2025 at 6:12 pm

Members in attendance – Brian Gerling, Pastor Mike Schmidt, Greg Boeschen, Tom McCleary, Vicar Lotegeluaki Lengai, Linda Moravec, Pam Palmer, Valerie Culp

Meal – Val

Call to order

Adoption of agenda –moved Brian, seconded Linda, motion approved

Devotions – Linda

Approval of previous meeting's minutes – moved Val, seconded Pam, minutes approved

“Ideas that will get you fired”

Staff Reports – reviewed – nothing of note

Review/Acceptance of Finance report – moved to approve Brian, seconded Val, council approved

Unfinished Business

2026 Budget – (tentative) Waiting on Stewardship numbers.

Capital Campaign Update – getting estimates, tours, temple talk, kickoff, discuss initial project priorities – close to ready to launch on Sunday 11/23. Tours were held on 11/16 and were attended well. Council needs to review priorities as funds come in. Work on critical infrastructure before putting into endowment with priorities being A4, A1, A2, A7 and A3. Funds will be made up to endowment after these are completed.

Internship for 2026-2027 – Pastor will submit application that is due 12/1/2025.

How we might reach out and engage younger adults – No update.

Reconciling in Christ update to our Welcome statement – A poll will be taken on December 14th after service about the statement.

New Business

Online selling of unused furnishings & equipment – review list of items and discuss possible percentage compensation for Nichole (managing the effort on her own time) Motion was made that moved Brian, second Linda, motion approved – Nichole will receive 25% of the monies with 75% going back to Grace that she sells of approved Grace property.

Nominating Committee – will need names by the week of January 12th

C13.02. A Nominating Committee of three voting members of this congregation shall be appointed by the Congregation Council in September to prepare nominees for the next annual meeting.

C13.02.01 The Nominating Committee shall nominate at least one person for each open council seat to be filled. Consent of the nominee to serve if elected shall be obtained prior to the time the nomination is made.

Reminder – we have moved December meeting to the 3rd Tuesday (12/16).

Adjournment – moved Pam, seconded Linda, approved. The council adjourned at 8:00pm.

Our next meeting is 12/16/25 Tom will provide the meal.

Your 2025 Grace Lutheran Church Council members are:

Valerie Culp, Linda Moravec, Pam Hellman-Palmer

Exec. Team

Greg Boeschon – President; Tom McCleary – Vice President; Mike Hilsabeck – Secretary;
Brian Gerling – Member at Large

Finance Report – Nov Results

Financial results for November YTD are as follows:

- Income – Actual \$376,356, Budget \$395,346, Prior Year \$414,750
- Expenses – Actual \$388,368, Budget \$401,025, Prior Year \$425,482
- Net activity – Actual (\$12,012), Budget (\$5,679), Prior Year (\$10,732)



The variance is primarily due to lower pledged offering than budgeted. Lack of Vicar and Property Manager positions during the summer caused these expenses to be below budget.

As we get close to year-end, we encourage members to be sure they are current with their pledge commitment. If you are unsure of your status, please contact the church office.

During the year significant expense has occurred for repairs of the boiler and the elevator. Additionally, Capital Campaign monies were used to fund \$11,200 for gutter replacement, \$42,400 for tuck-pointing of brickwork and \$123,050 for boiler replacement. Certain monies from memorials were transferred to the Capital campaign to help fund these costs, however the Campaign reserve has a negative balance of \$25,246 due to the large amount of activity. Monies from the upcoming Capital campaign will fund this deficit.

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.

- 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](#). Sermons and Worship videos are posted approximately 24 hours after each worship. We tend to only keep six months' worth of worship material and video links on our pages.

Other helpful links:

Altar Flower Signup — The current year sponsors are filled. We will publish the link for 2026 sponsorships on the Worship Volunteer page of the website when it is time. Watch the e-news and Sunday announcements as well.

Online Giving — Use our secure site and decide where you want to donate: the general church budget, the Little Free Pantry, the Mission Action Fund, youth, etc. Make a one-time donation or set up a recurring gift.