



What do
you fear?

FEAR DOESN'T STOP US



Grace Lutheran Church

Companion Congregation: Msindo Parish in Tanzania

Welcome to Worship Second Sunday of Christmas

January 4, 2026

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 Two Settings of the hymn "O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright" (LW 308)
P. Nicolai arranged by M. Reger and by V. Klauss-

Welcome

Poetry Prayer: Choices to Make

There was a funeral in Charleston, a funeral for nine people killed by one gun.

There was a funeral in Charleston because the world is a scary place.

A violent place, a place full of Herods with pistols and broken agendas.

People could have stayed home. They could have locked their doors, closed the curtains, buried themselves the way fear invites us to do.

We would have understood.

But instead, people came to the funeral.

They unearthed their hearts.

They carried the tenderest parts of themselves out into the world where the sun could reach them, along with their fear.

They crowded the pews with black hats and mourning cries.

They sang "Amazing Grace" when the worst had happened.

In a world full of fear, we have choices to make—

*bury ourselves and close the curtains,
or fill the church and choose to sing.*

*I'm not saying it'll be easy, but if you want to carry the tenderest part of yourself out into the world,
I'll begin to sing.*

Please rise in body or in spirit

Confession and Forgiveness

L: Friends, on this Epiphany Sunday we stand at the start of a new year, and there is nothing better about a new year than the chance to begin again. That is exactly what we do in the Prayer of Confession. We speak honestly with God and God surrounds us with grace. We are able to begin again. So may we start this new year, this new season, this new week with God's grace. Let us pray. Let us begin again.

C: Ever-loving God, we long for Christmas to usher in a season of peace and joy. However, we know that is not how the world works. Even just days after Christmas, we find ourselves face to face with fear once again. So today we pray—forgive us when we allow fear to stop us in our tracks. Forgive us when our own fear prevents us from following your call. Forgive us when fear is louder than love. Show us how to turn our fear into action. Show us how to live like the magi who searched for you in a fearful world. With hope we pray, amen.

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).

L: Family of Faith, whether you are brave and courageous or fearful and timid, God’s love for you knows no end. So join me in these words of forgiveness:

C: Whether fear inspires us to action, or stops us dead in our tracks, God’s love for us is boundless. We are seen. We are surrounded with grace. We are sent to serve. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Gathering Hymn “Rise, Shine, You People” ELW #665

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.

Prayer of the Day

L: God of the Stars,

C: like the magi, we come to this place searching for you. So today, just like every day, we ask that you would remove any barricades that keep us from your Spirit. Clear out the distractions. Wipe away the doubt. Open up our hearts, and speak to us through these ancient words. And as you do, we will keep walking. As you do, we will move toward you. With hope we pray, amen.

Please be seated

Reading: Matthew 2:1-12, 16-18

¹In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, ² asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage.” ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the

child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

¹⁶ When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the magi.¹⁷ Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God

Sermon

Please rise in body or in spirit

Hymn of the Day “Brightest and Best of the Stars” ELW #303

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

L: Creator of stars, Creator of sunsets and sunrises, Creator of big horizons and even bigger skies, today we bring you our prayers. Our prayers are small in comparison to the greatness you have created, but even so, we know that you are listening. So today, God, we pray for courage....

L: With hope, we choose to keep walking. And with that confidence propelling us, we lift our voices in prayer.

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.

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.

Offering: As Lutherans, we believe that Christian giving is about worship AND action. As an option to the offering plate, scan this QR code to access our secure digital offering plate.



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

L: God of glory,

C: great are your wonders among us and many are the blessings you bestow. Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world, that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace, through Christ our Savior. Amen.

Thanksgiving at the Table

L: It takes courage to come to this Table, to declare your belonging in God's banquet. So often the world tries to keep us away from the grace God so freely offers. So often the powers that be tell us that who we are at our core is undeserving. But our faith tells a different story. Our faith tells a story of God enfleshed, wiggling in a manger, whose first visitors were field laborers and foreigners. Our faith tells a story of a God who beckons us, over and over, into belonging. Family of faith, this bread and cup are for you. No king can dictate otherwise. No edict can declare you unworthy. Nothing—no, nothing—can separate you from the love of God. So don't let fear keep you from this Table. Let us gather for the feast.

L: Let us pray... Beckoning God, from every corner we have come looking for you. A thousand monsters reared their heads along the way, threatening to derail us. But we are here nonetheless. We have gone over, around, under, and through our fear. And when we faced fears we couldn't evade, we took that fear by the hand and dragged it along with us on the journey, because we will stop at nothing to follow you. Your star calls us forward, ever forward toward our convictions, toward our dreams, toward a world that reflects your justice, peace, and love, toward our belonging in the great family of creation. Your star calls us forward, and the gifts that await are too great to hand over to fear. In this communion we share, in the words we are about to receive, may we find courage and strength for the journey. When fear threatens to stop us, may we hold onto these gifts and remember what lies ahead. When the journey is challenging, lift our heads to see our companions on the journey and the shining star that lights the way. You go with us, and if you are with us, what shall we fear? Beckoning God, we follow you into the unknown, with heads held high or knees quaking in fear. When the way ahead is

unsure, we return to what we know: You are Emmanuel, God-With-Us.

L: In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me. Now with hope for a better tomorrow, we raise our voices together in prayer.

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: Family of faith, the bread has been broken and the cup has been poured, which means the feast is ready. Today you are invited to come to the Table to receive Communion along with a star word to guide you in seeking God this year.

Please be seated

Lamb of God



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: #752 (3x), #466, #479, #471

Please rise in body or in spirit

Prayer after Communion

L: Holy God, you always show up. Even in our fear, even in times of uncertainty, even when we can't seem to take the next step, you are with us. You are behind us, before us, and beside us, hemming us in with your love. As we sit with these star words, open our hearts to the wisdom they hold. Keep our minds nimble and flexible, awake to the constellation of meanings we may find in a single word. May they challenge us, comfort us, and call us forward. Let these words be a reminder of your presence with us. May they give us courage and guidance for the year ahead. Let them shine in the dark, pointing us toward you. And at the end of this year, may we look back at the paths we took and see how in every moment, you journeyed with us. Gratefully we pray,

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 "Jesus, the Light of the World" ACS #914

Dismissal

L: Glory to God in the highest!

C: And peace to God's people on earth!

L: Go in joy. Embody God's redeeming grace.

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude Setting of "Good Christian Friends Rejoice" (ELW 288)
Traditional German Christmas Carol arranged by W. Held