



Grace Lutheran Church

Companion Congregation: Msindo Parish in Tanzania

Welcome to Worship

Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 22, 2026

9:00 a.m.

Liturgical worship with piano

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.

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, culture, or nationality. 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.

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.

Welcome Lenten meditation on “Jesus, Keep Me Near The Cross” (ELW 335) - W. Doane arranged by R. Loree

Poetry Prayer — The Things That Matter Most

L: I wrecked the family car, an old gold minivan that had traveled every inch of I-95. It had worn cushions and an old school map in the glove box. It held a folder full of mix CDs under the passenger seat and every memory of every family trip, and I wrecked it. I called the tow truck while the engine hissed and smoked. I called my dad, my own apologies tripping over themselves to get to the front of the line. I expected to be grounded. I expected a “How could you?” But when I got home that night, my dad held me close and said, “A car is just a car, but you are my child. The only thing that matters is that you are okay.” And I knew it for what it was. It was mercy. It was love. It was the thing that mattered most.

Please rise in body or in spirit

Call to Worship

L: Welcome to the weary and the worn.

C: Welcome to the wiggly and the eager.

L: Welcome to the skeptical and the seeking.

C: Welcome to the early risers and those still trying to wake up.

L: Welcome to the rule followers and the rule breakers.

C: Welcome to those hungry for justice and those desperate for mercy.

L: Welcome to the sinners and the saints.

C: This is God’s house.

L: You can make yourself at home here.

C: Let us worship our just, merciful, and faithful God!

Gathering Hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” ELW #733

Confession and Forgiveness

L: Jesus once said to a crowd, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.” Friends, none of us are without sin. None of us get it right all the time. None of us can get by without God’s grace. In the Prayer of Confession, we acknowledge this truth. We put down our stones and we turn to God for forgiveness. Join me in this act of transformation. Let us pray:

C: Holy God, we love to live our lives by the rules. We love clear answers. We love right and wrong. We love swift justice. We love to pick up stones, but you show us another way. You welcome shades of gray and nuanced conversation. You prioritize mercy over legality. You prioritize people over tradition. You prioritize love over everything. Forgive us for losing sight of what truly matters. Forgive us for clinging tighter to laws

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).

than to each other or to you. Forgive us. Soften our hearts. Root us in mercy, justice, and love. With hope for a better tomorrow, we pray. Amen.

L: Church family, Jesus saw a crowd ready to throw stones and invited them to choose another way. Jesus offered them grace, mercy, and compassion, and the same can be said for us. So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:

C: Our God is a God of mercy. Our God is a God of compassion. Our God is a God of grace. We are forgiven, loved, and invited to choose another way. Thanks be to God for yet another second chance. Amen.

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: Let us pray,

C: Holy One, when you speak, we don't want to miss it. When you bend down and write in the dirt, when you move through the trees, when you wake with the dawn, when you tug on our heart, or whisper into our dreams, we don't want to miss it. So today we pray, clear out the cobwebs in our ears. Quiet the steady stream of thoughts marching through our minds. Open up space in our hearts so that we can receive your word for us today. With hope we pray. Amen.

Please be seated

Reading: John 8:2-11

² Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and began to teach them. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and, making her stand before all of them, ⁴ they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. ⁵ Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. 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." ⁸ And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God

Anthem "Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song"
Chancel Choir

Reading: Matthew 23:23

²³ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint, dill, and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others."

L: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God

Sermon

Please rise in body or in spirit

Hymn of the Day "There's a Wideness In God's Mercy"
ELW #588

Affirmation of Faith

C: I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ. It sounds like welcome and feels like home. It sounds like laughter and feels like mercy. It sounds like love and feels like a seat at the table, so I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ. I have seen it alive in the world. And even when my heart aches, even when wars rage, even when mercy feels out of reach, I remember the one who welcomed the children and led with nonviolence. I remember the one who cared for the vulnerable and inspired those around him. I remember that the good news really is good news, for I have seen it alive in the world. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Prayers of the People

L: Hear us, O God,

C:

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."*

God wel - comes all, strang - ers and friends;

God's love is strong and it nev - er ends.

L: Maybe there will be a day when justice, mercy, and righteousness feel like a mighty flowing stream. Until that day, we will continue to look for your words in the dirt. We will continue to listen for your deep truth. Until that promised day, we will continue to bring you our unfiltered honesty. Until that promised day, we will 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

L: O God, maker of heaven and earth,

C: your steadfast love embraces all creation. You send rain and sunshine to nourish the earth and bring forth its bounty.

Through these gifts of bread and wine, draw us into the death and life of your Son, who calls us to bear witness to his saving work. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thanksgiving at the Table

L: God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, you have brought us this far along the way.

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.



L: In times of bitterness you did not abandon us, but guided us into the path of love and light. In every age you sent prophets to make known your loving will for all humanity. The cry of the poor has become your own cry; our hunger and thirst for justice is your own desire. In the fullness of time, you sent your chosen servant to preach good news to the afflicted, to break bread with the outcast and despised, and to ransom those in bondage to prejudice and sin.

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.

L: 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 all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

L: For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

C: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

L: Remembering, therefore, his death and resurrection, we await the day when Jesus shall return to free all the earth from the bonds of slavery and death. Come, Lord Jesus! And let the church say, Amen.

C: Amen.

L: Send your Holy Spirit, our advocate, to fill the hearts of all who share this bread and cup with courage and wisdom to pursue love and justice in all the world. Come, Spirit of freedom! And let the church say, Amen.

C: Amen.

L: Join our prayers and praise with your prophets and martyrs of every age, that, rejoicing in the hope of the resurrection, we might live in the freedom and hope of your Son. Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.

C: Amen.

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.**

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.

Invitation to Communion

L: Jesus, our neighbor, invites us and all of his neighbors throughout the world to come together at this table and feast in his presence. Be nourished by this holy meal that you might go forth with joy and love your neighbors as yourselves.

Please be seated

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

Centering Prayer

There will be two minutes of silence for centering prayer.

Please rise in body or in spirit

Prayer after Communion

L: Compassionate God, you have fed us with the bread of heaven. Sustain us in our Lenten pilgrimage: may our fasting be hunger for justice; our alms, a making of peace; and our prayer, the song of grateful hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

Benediction

L: As you leave this place, when you meet anger, speak with love. When you meet fear, speak with hope. When you meet pain, speak with gentleness. But no matter what, speak this good news. For the good news of the gospel is love and justice for all. It is joy that surprises, and nonviolence that transforms. The good news of the gospel is alive in the world, so go forth speaking. For if you won't, then who will? Thanks be to God for this good, good news.

C: Amen.

Sending Hymn

“Drawn to the Light”

ELW #593

Dismissal

L: Go in peace. Believe the good news.

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Setting of the gathering hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” (EWL 733) - W. Runyan arranged by F. Bock