

*Living with Christ, Growing in Grace!*



Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

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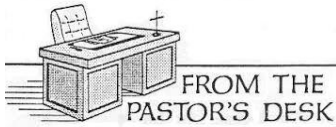
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*Rooted In Christ - Growing in Love -  
Branching out in Service*



# *Grace & Trinity Newsbites*

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2025



2025 has begun! Many of us received star words this past weekend as we celebrated the feast of the Epiphany. In some cultures, the

kings bring gifts that day; these words are gifts to contemplate and wander with; to see how the Spirit might be guiding and directing us through what the word represents. Mine is 'be' and seems appropriate given some plans for the year.

One of the gifts that pastors may receive is a time of sabbatical. Most denominations recommend that pastors have a sabbatical for rest, renewal, and sabbath time, every 4-8 years. Sabbatical time is not vacation but does utilize the annual continuing education time; and pastors receive their usual salary. I am grateful that Grace's council and Trinity's board have granted my request for a 6-week sabbatical this calendar year. Being a pastor is a privilege and a joy, and challenging, and being on call 24/7. My last sabbatical was in 2013; it is time for another. Sabbatical time is not a given in every profession; I am fortunate that pastors and congregations are expected to take this time. My sabbatical will be May 19-June 30. The joint councils have decided to have one service each weekend during this time; alternating between sites. This seems like a wise and practical decision. It is a chance for folks to get to know each other's worship space and style a bit more; and it is easier to find supply preachers. I hope that you will worship together, regularly, in the space that isn't 'yours' and the time that is 'different'. See what you learn and how we all might grow. What will I "be" during this time? A traveler! (Today) my plans include driving to Denali National Park in Alaska; a week to 10 days at Holden Village (a Lutheran retreat center)

in Washington state; and likely a few national parks along the way.

I hope that this year, individually and collectively, we are intentional in spending time learning and discerning how and where the Spirit is guiding us; how we make Jesus the center of our lives; how we enact justice and make peace in the world. Not in some future time, not when we're 'ready', not when we're not busy; but right now, in the middle of our busy-ness, our work, our play, our study, our daily life; here and now. Let's keep making, claiming, taking time to study and pray God's word in Scripture. Let's worship together, with joy and gratitude. Let's serve God and our neighbors with loving hearts and willing hands.

Traveling mercies,  
Pr. Priscilla

Thank you for the Christmas greetings, gifts and cards. Your kindness and generosity are appreciated. Pr. Priscilla

Thank you to all who gave such lovely Christmas cards, treats and gifts. I appreciate it all very much. Teala

Both GreatPlains UMC Conference and the Nebraska Synod ELCA have wonderful resources for learning and mission. Many online, so you don't have to travel too far 😊 Both have various mission trip opportunities for adults; once on the page, just put mission trip in search. Please check out the webpages: GreatPlains UMC— go to Ministries – then Congregational Excellence  
Nebraska Synod – go to Ministries – then Emmaus Lifelong Learning or Global Mission (Tanzania Vision trip 2026 is January 25-February 10. Registration is now open and the trip generally fills quickly. There is some financial assistance available through a Grace Endowment Grant.)

Some of our younger members are heading out to Milwaukee, WI in July for a mission trip adventure with Youth Works. Watch for ways to support this project!

Start practicing your soup and bread recipes for the Annual soup and bread cook off, scheduled for Wednesday, March 5 – Ash Wednesday – at Trinity. Don't forget there are trophies (not to mention bragging rights)!

We are planning a Mardi Gras party after our joint service at Trinity on Saturday, March 1. Want to be part of the planning? Let Pastor know as soon as possible so we can get moving on this.

Another project in the works is recycling plastic. Our goal is 1000 pounds so that we will receive a park bench (made from these recyclables) that we can then gift for one of the trails. Much more info to follow, but start saving those bags now. Information sheets for what to save and what not to keep will be emailed with the newsletter and posted on the bulletin boards at both locations. We haven't figured out all the details yet; so please collect **at home** for now.

**In Our Prayers this Month:**

**To see an updated list  
please contact the office.**

**Trinity News**

**January Birthdays & Anniversaries**

**February Birthdays & Anniversaries**

**To see an updated list  
please contact the office.**

**Trinity – December Financial Report – General Fund  
Council Minutes are posted on the bulletin board by the offices.  
The full financial report is available in the office.**

**To see the latest report please  
contact the office.**



In a land far away, on the other side of the world, lives a young man whose name is Akim. In 2005 Trinity Sunday School began a sponsorship program through Compassion International and was matched with a young boy, who just turned 15 on Dec 21<sup>st</sup>.

Akim lives with his mother in Burkina Faso, a very poor country in West Africa, with has been war torn and has had much civil unrest the past few years. Akim and his mother

have moved a couple of times to try to remain safe and are currently at their home village.

Compassion International works to end child poverty by connecting vulnerable children with local churches who care for them by fighting malnutrition, delivering medical care and sharing the hope of the gospel, which changes everything.

Our monthly sponsorship for Akim is \$43. A small price to pay to help break the cycle of poverty by providing access to education, health care and necessities.

Please help us keep Akim's sponsorship going by signing up for a month. A sheet can be found in the Fellowship Hall, or you can put a check in the offering with a notation that says, "compassion international".

We wish Paula well as she settles into her new apartment.  
Paula French

**Grace News**

**January Birthdays & Anniversaries**  
**February Birthdays & Anniversaries**  
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**Grace Lutheran Church - Financial Report**  
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**General Fund – December 2024**

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There will be several opportunities through the winter to do some sorting and clearing various closets and cabinets around the building. You might be surprised how many there are! The first phase will be a brief labor intensive emptying out the closet on the southside of the fellowship hall on **Sunday, January 19**. After service and time to enjoy a snack; we invite as many people as possible to take most everything out of that closet. The follow up to that will be **Tuesday the 21<sup>st</sup>**, beginning around 4 pm when we will sort through the many items and decide what to do with them. Items no longer needed will be available to be rehomed after church on the 26<sup>th</sup>.



Friendship Circle – December 9, 2024

Attached is a copy of the photo Julie Johnson took of our group on Sunday at the Bing Bed and Breakfast. Thank you to everyone who participated in the Special Friends home visits. I have received several messages of appreciation.

This was a text message I received from Donna and Lance Peterson:” We enjoyed the carolers yesterday, good of them to brighten other people's day.”

Sometimes, I think we view our visits and our caroling as a way of blessing our Special Friends, -only to find out we're the ones being blessed as we see their reactions. They eagerly welcome us into their homes and are genuinely moved by the singing of the carols. They love hearing those familiar melodies and words in the carols. Looking at their faces, you can see how those carols connect them (and us) to some precious memory. Sometimes it brings tears, but more often, there is joy. Thank you again, for bringing that joy to our Special Friends.

We who are baptized are members, not of a club, but of the body of Christ. I wonder what temptations we face in our callings – to be unfaithful, to create idols, to be someone other than who God created us to be? What temptations in our vocations – to take the easy road, to work and live according to cultural standards rather than Gospel ethics? What does it mean to be baptized? To be washed and set free? To repent and turn our lives around? To be children of God in this century, in this year, on this day?

How does our faith show up and impact our day to day life; and how are we supported by and supporting others in these daily choices? The structure and organization and faith practices of the church are meant to be in support of discipleship and evangelism – following Jesus and proclaiming the Gospel. The church is us, with God's help, living, breathing, loving, working in this world; and all of us are essential bits and pieces of the whole. Sure, it could limp along without some of us, sometimes; but never what it could be with all of us functioning together – the living, loving, growing, changing body of Christ for this day and time.



A vital faith community, and communal worship, the Word and Table, are essential for forming and sustaining faith; for helping families and individuals say yes to being who God calls us to be and to doing what God calls us to do. How we accomplish this changes over time. Think of the earlier immigrant communities in this country – the Germans, Swedes, Norwegians who built ethnic churches, and worshiped in their native tongue – for years. They served their purpose and are part of our heritage, but not our future. Think of lines once drawn so tight that marrying outside of ones' denomination was practically forbidden. Where are we being led in this century, in this year, in this season? The Holy Spirit is up to the challenge of guiding us today; let's be bold and fearless, listening and growing together.

Something to think about:

Christian Ed classes for children are at best 40-50 hours a year (for 8 -12 years that is 400 to 600 hours total). Even if children go to a religious school, K-12<sup>th</sup> grade, that's still perhaps 10 hours a week or 360 a year, 4680 total. Adults – how many hours a year do you spend in reading the Bible, in wrestling with faith questions?

Community worship gathers us together to remember who we are and who God is, and sends us out to 'serve the Lord'. It takes up perhaps 80 -100 hours a year. That's of the 8760 hours in a year!

Faith formation, conditioning and strengthening our hearts and minds for discipleship are life long. We all know that forming healthy habits take work and time. How healthy is our faith life and religious training if we spend only 600 (or 4680) hours of our entire life in education and 100 hours per year in corporate worship?

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