

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS 2025

ISSUE 2505

#GRACENOTES

GRACENOTES



A SEASONAL PUBLICATION OF
Grace Lutheran Church

SCATTERING THE PROUD & LIFTING THE LOWLY

And Mary said,

*"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.
Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name;
indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.
He has come to the aid of his child Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever." – Luke 1*



The Rev. Matthew Smuts,
Senior Pastor

Mary's Magnificat has a lower key profile in the lectionary this Advent. However, we will experience this classic passage in music through weekly arrangements. It just cries to be sung! The story of God coming among us as one of us, to a young woman on the fringe of society, to scatter the proud and lift up the lowly is a powerful word in this dark time of year.

In a time where Christianity is being promoted as a power over others, especially the marginalized, and mainstream Christians are warned about the dangers of empathy, it's clear that the message of the Gospel as articulated by Christ's mother and the wider church is at odds with a strident nationalist message. The darkness of this time of year adds to the heaviness of it all.

In the midst of the chaos of our world, we enter this season of Advent quietly, and with a breath of an ancient prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus." This Jesus that we know from scripture, including Mary's song above, is coming to scatter and lift up, and we are called to join in that work. Be skeptical of macho Christianity, or a Christianity that shuns empathy, or a Christianity that spends its time whining about persecution. Christ came among us as one of us, to scatter the proud, to lift up the lowly, and to show strength in service to the downtrodden.

Peace,

Pr Matt ❖

Sundays in Advent

Sunday School: 9:00 am
Worship: 10:00 am
Coffee & Treats: 11:00 am

November 30
 December 7
 December 14
 December 21

Christmas Eve

Wednesday, December 24
 *4:00 pm | *6:00 pm
**choral prelude begins 20 minutes prior*

Christmas Day

Thursday, December 25
 10:00 am

First Sunday of Christmas

Sunday, December 28
 10:00 am



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NEXT ISSUE:

Lent/Easter 2026

PUBLICATION DEADLINE:

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(end of day)

ADVENT WORSHIP: SINGLE SERVICE AT 10AM!

Last year it was a very successful and special season to mark Advent with a single Sunday Service at 10am. We moved Sunday School and Adult Forum to 9am and crafted a more robust coffee hour and it made the season particularly full and festive. Mark your calendars now! Sunday Worship on Nov 30, Dec 7, Dec 14, Dec 21, Christmas Day Dec 25, and Jan 4 will all be at a single time of 10am. See you there! Oh, and Christmas Eve is at 4 & 6pm! ❖

ADVENT SUNDAY FORUMS AT 9AM

On the Sundays of Nov 30, Dec 7, and Dec 14 our 9am Forums will focus on 'Sabbath as Resistance, Saying NO to the Culture of Now' by Walter Brueggemann. We would encourage you to pick this book up at your favorite book outlet and come along for the discussion or they will be available in the Narthex for a \$15 donation. Don't hesitate to reach out to Pr Matt to reserve one. It's an increasingly timely resource on healthy living in our frantic culture. ❖



JANUARY/FEBRUARY FORUMS

At the beginning of the new year, we will be engaging, as we did last year, with some of our ministry partners to share the stories and celebrate the successes of ministry being done in partnership with them. This is still being put together, but we are hoping for guests from Mt Cross Lutheran Camp, the Sierra Pacific Synod Office of the Bishop, Ecumenical Hunger Program, the ELCA's desk for the Middle East, and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary of California Lutheran University. More to come! ❖

WELCOME EMILY KING-NOBLES!

Our New Director of Children, Youth, and Young Adult Ministry!

We are so excited to have Emily on our team! She began in earnest on September first and hasn't looked back. For any questions you might have for her, or just to grab coffee you can reach her at emily@gracepa.org. ❖



STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

As we approach the end of the calendar/tax year, we wanted to provide a quick update on our operating budget year-to-date. We are running about 10% behind plan for the first four months, but continue to so grateful for the amazing giving on all fronts! That said, we are just a whisker behind last year's giving year-to-date and our goal is to roughly match that through the end of the fiscal year in June.

Please take time before the end of the calendar/tax year to make sure you are where you planned to be with your giving at this point. We know that for many, the stock market has been strong, so if you are in a position to give an additional gift it would be greatly appreciated and help us to begin 2026 in confidence. As we continue to grow and expand we want to make sure we can fuel this momentum appropriately. Let us know if you have any questions on how to give to Grace with stock or recurring automatic giving. ❖

KEY TAX/CONTRIBUTION NOTES FOR 2025

There are changes to the charitable deductions, particularly for those who itemize, that will take effect in 2026 under the new OBBB H.R.1 tax bill. You may want to check with your CPA to see if accelerating gifting into 2025 is advantageous. See Link: www.nptrust.org (Key Changes for Donors) ❖

GET YOUR LUTHERAN STUDY BIBLE!

NRSVue | New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

As you likely have learned recently there is a new translation of the Bible that we are using in worship and was studied in our October Forums. The New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition is now our go to text and we have purchased a few copies if you would like to get one. They are \$50 for a hard cover edition. Please be in touch with Pr Matt if you would like to reserve one. They will be available in the Narthex for a \$50 donation soon! ❖



EVERYBODY LOVES THE MIDDLE SEAT!

Perhaps you have seen the chairs in the last row of the forward section of seating? We have been experimenting with different ways to increase flexibility in our worship seating, particularly in the front, and to remove barriers to sitting in the center of our rows. While there are certainly exceptions, almost everyone sits on the aisle, and in most cases this leaves a lot of space in a 17' pew empty. So, we are continuing to wonder if we can increase access to our seating, increase flexibility for special events and services, and maintain a pew effect from a visual and experiential perspective. More to come! ❖

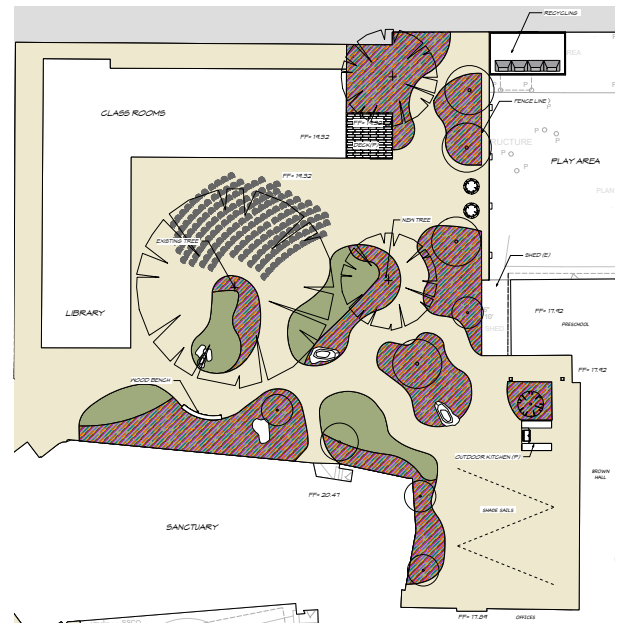


NEW MEMBERS CLASSES

We are really looking forward to our next new members classes in early 2026. This may be your first time formally joining a church, or your first time joining a church in the US and so you may have questions. Good news . . . questions are welcome! Joining Grace is about being intentional in being a part of the community here. It is not an ascent to a list of dogmas but rather an opportunity to do this life together in a community that seeks your wellbeing and hopes to make a difference in the world. Simply living in close proximity to others or only circulating in groups that are temporary or have high thresholds for belonging is exhausting and often not life-giving. Draw near to a place where you are known by name and where there is always a place for you. Come with your questions, and reach out to Pr Matt at pastormatt@gracepa.org if you have interest. ❖

COURTYARD LANDSCAPING UPDATE!

Our Landscaping Team (Yvonne Baur, Julie Buckley, Mary Cravens, Gail Foelsch, Karl Littau, Holly Lucke, and Pr Matt) have now met three times with our landscape architect and are starting to get exciting about ideas coming together! On Sunday, November 23 at our Adult Forum in the Chapel we shared rough concepts for feedback and we anticipate a lot of excitement. Stay tuned for more exciting news! ❖



SPECIAL GIFTS & PROJECTS

We have received three special gifts over the last several months that are enabling projects that would not have happened otherwise. We are grateful to the significant generosity of three families that will impact our community for years to come! If you have been particularly blessed and would like to see how you might impact our ministry in a meaningful way, please be in touch with Pr Matt.

- \$100,000 for an overhaul of our Audio Visual system.
- \$90,000 from Don Zepp and family for the relocation of the organ console from the loft to the chancel.
- \$50,000 for a number of sanctuary related and other updates including an opportunity to explore pew chairs. (See the article on the facing page.) ❖

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

Keep your eyes open for our Grace Lutheran Church Advent devotional, "Draw Near," for the upcoming season. This year, it can be your companion from Advent through Epiphany. Gretchen created the design, and Pastor Friederike chose the texts, and added photos taken by Tilman. Enjoy your journey through Advent through Christmas and into the New Year and to Epiphany! ❖



CONNECTIONS CAFÉ

Looking back to the beginning of this programming year, we have had a lot of guest speakers: With Marjorie, we went on a trip to France and specifically Chartres Cathedral and talked about labyrinths. Andrew, taught us how to make the most of MyGrace. Our new director of Children, Youth, and Young Adult Ministry, Emily, joined us in early September and later that month, we went on a field trip to the Cantor Arts Museum on the Stanford Campus. October was the month of first responders: we talked about scamming with the Palo Alto Police and about fire (&) safety with the Palo Alto Fire Department. In November, we learned about the importance healthy mental aging and how we can influence it.

Our only meeting in December will be on December 11 when we sing Christmas Carols with Tim.

The New Year will start off with a purely social get together, to catch up, on January 8.

We are looking forward to seeing you there! ❖

IF POSSIBLE, LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL

The Rev. Friederike Wekel,
Associate Pastor



It is definitely not my strength to overlook things. When I come home in the evening, tired, and the trash is still filled to the brim as when I left the house this morning. When no one has emptied the clean dishes from the dish washer and the dirty ones are piling up on top. When shoes and socks are scattered everywhere, instead of where they should go... it drives up my pulse, and it sends my mood spiraling down to dangerous, infernal levels - and sometimes it takes a good while before I can face my co-inhabitants with a good willing spirit again.

I wish I could just go with the flow and shrug it off.

Living together with other human beings is the most challenging task we have. To make it agreeable for everyone, because everyone of us has different needs, wants, and agendas. For my son, playing and drawing are the most important things in the world. Chores, school, and homework are banalities that get forced on him, in his mind, only to demonstrate parental power. It must feel like dragging him down from his place of satisfaction into a cruel environment of have-to's and important-only-to-adults, just to spoil the fun of his life.

If I'm honest, part of what flares up in me isn't just the mess. It's the long history carried by so many women—the invisible, exhausting labor of holding a household together. Generations of women were told that peace in the home depended on their quiet endurance, their selfless tidying, their smoothing-over of frustrations. Even now, when we speak the language of equality, these patterns linger under the surface. Growing up that way, I feel them in my bones when I see the overflowing trash can: that old whisper that it's my job to keep things running, to hold the mood of the house, to be the thermostat of everyone's well-being. It is a fight within myself, too.

Romans 12:18 nudges me gently to reshape my thinking:

"If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

Not perfectly. Not single-handedly. Not silently absorbing everything so others can stay comfortable. Peaceably—with all. Peace is a shared responsibility.

Home is not a one-person production; it is a communal creation. Which also means I have to let go of my ideal of how clean the house is. It means initiating participation instead of doing it all myself, and letting go of the -also Christian- myth that love means martyrdom.

Christian life isn't about pretending we're not frustrated. It's about choosing love without erasing ourselves. It's about practicing peace that doesn't come

from swallowing our truth, but from sharing it. It's about honoring the divine image in myself and in the people I live with—yes, even the ones who step out of their socks like they're shedding a skin and leave the evidence wherever it falls.

And this is where the feminist and the Christian meet: in the insistence that dignity is shared, that labor is shared, that peace is shared. In my house that looks like small negotiations, reminders, re-reminders, and sometimes a deep breath before speaking. It looks like teaching all my children—not just to do chores—but to see themselves as part of a community where both their joy and their responsibility matter.

It's slow work. Grinding work. Holy work. Work that shapes us all a little more toward the peace God imagines for us. And on the days when the trash is still overflowing and my patience is thin, I try to hold onto this: peace in a household, just like peace in the world, is built one small, honest, shared step at a time.

Pr. Friederike ❖



Christmas Dinner

Church and Preschool
Wednesday, December 17 | 6-7pm

All are welcome! RSVP=>>



SABBATICAL NOTE

It is hard to fathom, but March 1, 2026 marks my 7th year as associate pastor at Grace Lutheran Church. What a blessing this time has been for me cannot not be measured.

To refuel my energy and spend more time with Tilman and my children, as well as my family and friends in Germany, council approved my request to go on a three-month sabbatical over the summer: May 17, 2026 will be my last Sunday, and I will return to the office on August 17, 2026. I promise, I will be back before you know it! ❖

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

On December 4, we will meet for our last Women's Night Out of 2025 in the Emmaus Room. We will do an ornament exchange and have a little festive get-together. How do you participate: Find a Advent/Christmas ornament that you want to pass on to someone else (can be, but doesn't have to be newly purchased; they can be funny, hideous, stunningly beautiful etc.). Bring it wrapped, in a package or bag.

If you can, bring a treat for our appetizer buffet.

I am very much looking forward to this Women's Night!

There will not be a Women's Night in January, as the first Thursday falls on January 1. Happy New Year! ❖

SPRING WOMEN'S RETREAT AT MT CROSS 3/13-15/2026

Mark your calendars for the Spring Women's Retreat at Mt Cross next March, as we once again head into the woods.

Women and those identifying as women from all over our synod are invited to come together for this weekend in March and work, think, and be creative around the topic "God's Image." What biblical images of God exist? What is or are your image(s) of God? How does it impact your faith?

Join us up there, under the Redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains. It is a chance to pause, grow, and connect with yourself and other women! ❖

PRESCHOOL & CHURCH CHRISTMAS DINNER 12/17

Please join us for our last Life-Together Dinner on Wednesday, December 17, where we celebrate Christmas together with the Preschool teachers, children, and families. At 6pm the preschoolers will show their Christmas Play, and we will then have time to enjoy a dinner cooked by Dale Loepp and each other. Invitations will be going out soon, please RSVP for a headcount for the cook. ❖

FINNISH LESSONS & CAROLS

THE GREATEST CHRISTMAS CAROLS | KAUNEIMMAT JOULULAULUT 2025

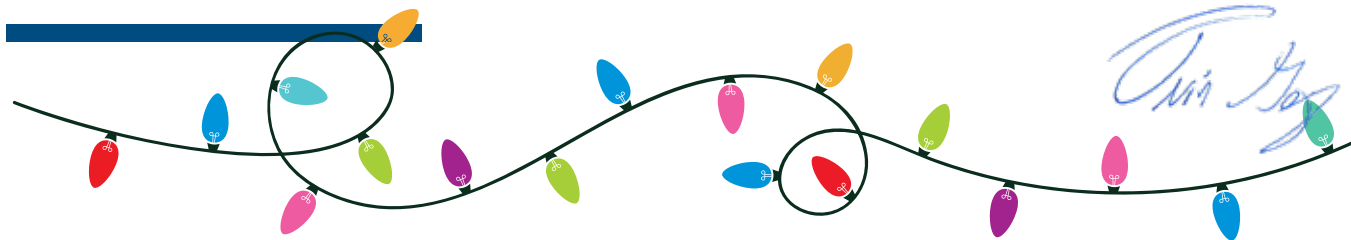
Join the Finnish Silicon Valley community again this year for their Finnish Christmas caroling on December 19, at 7 pm, followed by glögg and gingerbread after the concert. \$5 pre-purchase (finlandiasf.org), \$10 at the door (children 12 and under are free). ❖

CONFIRMATION

Confirmation class this Fall has been a steadily growing bunch of Middle Schoolers. We are at 20 confirmands right now, who participate at online and in-person class on Wednesdays and/or Sunday School including our Mentor Program. They are a lively bunch - and it is the highest number of confirmands I ever taught at Grace. It is a great joy to see the interaction between all of them! On Wednesdays, we talked and worked on Christianity in general (What different Christian traditions are there?) and Lutheranism more in detail (Who was Luther? Who are these Lutherans and what is important to them?) including an Escape Room where they had to solve riddles to save Martin Luther and bring him to the Wartburg. In November, we were exploring our thoughts and imagination of what life after death might look like (created in legos or as a collage) and learning about biblical theories on the afterlife. ❖

EXCITING THINGS!

Tim Getz,
Director of Music



I can't believe the holiday season is upon us again! And it's been one year already since I returned from my sabbatical. This fall I've been reviewing photos each morning of what I was doing "one year ago today." The memories are incredible, but it's been great to be home and the past year at Grace has been really invigorating.

Some exciting things are going on in our music ministry!

Our organ console was refinished, rewired, and moved to the front of the sanctuary this fall. It has now been in its new home for one week and I am utterly delighted. The finished wood looks beautiful, and I love being able to hear the sound of the organ from the main floor. The sound that you all hear and sing to on Sunday mornings is really very different (and much better!) than what can be heard when you're sitting right next to the pipes in the loft. I'm looking forward to these next several weeks of living into this new perspective and discovering how we interact with each other musically in subtle new ways.

After a year off last year due to my sabbatical, our annual Messiah singalong (and playalong) is returning, Saturday, December 6 at 3:00 pm! As usual, with no rehearsal but only a spirit of adventure, we will sing the Christmas portion of Handel's Messiah together. Come to sing, to play your stringed instrument, or just to listen! Admission is by free-will offering and proceeds will benefit Grace's music program. If you wish to play, please do let me know (tim@gracepa.org) so that I will have enough chairs and parts ready. Scot Hanna-Weir will again be our unflappable conductor, and we have our usual stellar array of soloists: Angelique Zuluaga, Malin Walrod, Eric Mellum, and Mark Tendall. The event lasts about an hour and we'll enjoy some holiday treats in the narthex and on the patio afterward.

This is always a jubilant good time and a most memorable part of the holiday season. Bring friends!

I'm also really excited with what we have planned for you for Christmas Eve! Since October, our choir has been working on "The Seven Joys of Christmas," composed by Bay Area composer Kirke Mechem, who celebrated a happy and healthy 100th birthday this year! It's filled with a number of recognizable carols, and has a beautiful, virtuoso harp accompaniment. We'll be presenting this piece as an extended prelude to our 4:00 and 6:00 pm services on December 24, so **plan to be in your seat by 3:40 or 5:40...** you won't want to miss it!

Then, in January, when your Christmas decorations have come down and you're looking for a way to warm up a winter evening with music and friends, Beer and Hymns will be back! Our first two events have been wildly successful and I'm looking forward to the next one already: Friday, January 23 at 5:30 pm! We'll have both beer and non-alcoholic beverages available. I choose the first three or four hymns to get us started, and maybe share a brief story or fun historical fact about the music in our hymnal. Then it's just an open sing: you call out the hymn numbers and we'll enthusiastically sing YOUR favorites! Dale Loepp will feed us (I think it's going to be a variety of soups and breads this time!) and we'll end at about 7:30, full and happy. A free-will offering is collected to defray the cost of the food and beverages. All ages welcome; bring only yourself (and friends), and be ready to sing!

I wish you a holy Advent, a blessed Christmas, and a very happy New Year! ❖

Saturday, December 6, 2025 | 3 pm

JOIN US FOR THE GRACE ANNUAL

Messiah Singalong (& Playalong)

with string ensemble accompaniment!



Directed by **Scot Hanna-Weir**

Conductor of the the choirs at Santa Clara
University and the Santa Clara Chorale

Suitable for the whole family!

A free-will offering will be accepted.

Treats in the narthex to follow!



CHRISTMAS EVE PRELUDE

December 24 | 3:40 & 5:40pm

SEVEN JOYS OF CHRISTMAS

featuring the Chancel Choir and
harpist Anna Maria Mendieta



BEER AND HYMNS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23 AT 5:30 PM



Evening Prayer in the style of Taizé

Second Sunday of each month

at **7:00 pm**



TRADITIONS

Emily King-Nobles,
Director of Children, Youth & Young Adult Ministry



Emily

Many of us have Christmas morning traditions. For me, it was skipping to my brother's room to wake him up early in the morning. We would scheme ways to wake our parents while simultaneously having a pillow fight and dreaming about what would be under the tree. I'd say, "Josh, do you think Jesus is ready to be born yet?" I couldn't wait to celebrate his birth and for magic to be spread around our sweet little house.

At 24 and 26, Josh and I still throw Jesus a mini-birthday party at 6am every year. It's one of my favorite parts of the day. I still feel like a child waiting for Jesus to finally be born.

As much as I love the Hallmark movies, hot cocoa, and holiday lights, there's something so much more for us in this season.

The magic of Christmas is that the most earth-shattering, life-changing event of our existence happened in a stable with shepherds and cows surrounding. Jesus invites us in to celebrate the simplicity of his stable birth every year. He invites us to be part of the story where he flips the world upside down through his birth, life and resurrection.

We so often miss the miracle of the story. Herod certainly did. Life gets busy and suddenly it's December 31. I challenge us all to not miss it this year. May there be space in your home to light the calendar wreath, open advent calendars, construct a nativity, and give to others.

One of my favorite ways to stay centered during the season is with The Sparkle Box—a children's storybook that comes with a small "sparkle box" to place under your tree. Throughout Advent, you fill it with notes reminding you of gifts you've given to Jesus—perhaps a donation to the Angel Tree, a meal shared with a neighbor, or time spent volunteering. On Christmas morning, the box becomes a beautiful reminder that giving is at the very heart of this season.

However you celebrate, may love, joy, and peace fill your home this Christmas.

Emily ❖

Thanks for all the support and conversations during the past few months of getting settled in. It has been great getting to know you all and join this community! ❖

SOME IMPORTANT DATES TO SAVE:

Children & Youth

- November 30: AdventFest & Angel Tree Kick-Off
- December 14: Christmas Play during Worship
- March 6–8: High School Retreat at Mt. Cross Camp
- June 27—July 1: Summer High School Trip, Western States Youth Gathering at Cal Lutheran (dates are approximate as we finalize travel schedule)

Young Adults

- December 12: Festive evening in Santa Cruz
- December 23: 10:00 am Brunch at Pastor Matt's (Invite your college student home on break!)

Parents

- April — Adult Forum series about The Anxious Generation ❖

Christmas Play Practice



Trunk or Treat



Crayon Initiative



Young Adult Game Night



Mt. Cross Elementary/Middle School Retreat



High School Youth Group



High School Youth Group



PROPERTY COMMITTEE



UPDATE NOVEMBER 2025

It's been a very busy fall 2025 for the property committee! Lots of positive improvements and fortunately no surprises (so far!). You've probably seen the ongoing work and here is a list of recent activities.

- New roofs for the Education Wing, the offices, and the Brown Hall roof facing the courtyard. These are major achievements: all 23,000 sq/ft of our campus will have had a new roof in the last ten years!!!!
- Parking lot repairs to fix a few areas where there has been subsidence. We are planning a resurfacing slurry in the spring when the weather is warmer and drier.
- The 50 year old furnace in the office was replaced and—a drumroll please—air conditioning added!
- Refurbished office bathrooms including—another drumroll please—hot water for the office bathrooms!
- Organ console refurbishment and relocation to a mobile platform in the altar area.
- New paint for the sanctuary, office, and Brown Hall.
- The labyrinth celebrated it's 14th birthday with a refreshed pattern laid onto it.

We should be in great shape for this winter and in the spring we are looking forward to addressing the courtyard landscaping as well as additional small (but important) improvements around campus. Thank you everyone for your support!





PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

Grace Lutheran Preschool

growing together in grace

Grace Lutheran Preschool enjoys celebrating the holidays in different ways with traditional events and songs, as well as including cultural family celebrations. In September, the children decorated and mailed each grandfriend a card. Our grandfriends were delighted to receive a postcard from the children, and a few of the children even received a thank-you response from their grandfriends. We also invited our friends to a snack-and-share day. What a phenomenal day! Ms. Mary, founder of Grace Lutheran Preschool, taught us a song she wrote; Ms. Jan shared a poem from her very favorite childhood book, and Ms. Marie shared a toy truck she played with as a child. Story time with Pastors Matt and Friederike and Ms. Emily, and music with Mr. Tim, is always a warm and welcoming experience.

We started this year's holiday celebrations with Halloween. The children enjoyed a variety of art and craft projects and explored different shapes, sizes, and textures of various pumpkins and gourds. This year, we created our own pumpkin patch in the preschool play yard. The children were joined by their families as they chose their own pumpkins to take home. Everyone also enjoyed sitting on the haystacks and posing for some adorable pictures. For our Halloween party, we invited our Grandfriends to join us. Each grandfriend and child brought in a piece of fruit, and together we made a special friendship salad. We also invited the preschool children, families, and alumni to join us at the Grace Lutheran Church Trunk or Treat evening. It was a huge success, with 100% attendance from our current preschool families and several of our former families.

November is always a busy month. It starts with our annual Preschool Fair and Open House. Ten local preschools signed up and joined us in Brown Hall, where each program set up a table to showcase its school. Families and grandfriends will join us at our annual Friends-giving Brunch. It is a special time to spend time with all of the special people in our lives.

We are practicing Christmas songs and preparing for our annual Christmas performance and dinner. This year, we have also invited the grand-friends to come up and sing along with us.

When we return from winter break in January, we welcome a few new children to the group. Growing our program is a priority, and we love welcoming new families to Grace Lutheran Preschool.

We look forward to inviting our grandfriends for cookie decorating in February as a Valentine's activity..

Felicity and G ❖

Felicity Taylor and Gina Rogge,
Preschool Co-directors





GRACE OUTDOORS

• January 24, 2026, 9:00 am: Windy Hill Preserve Hike

Level: moderate/strenuous (~7 MILES, 1000-1200 FEET ELEVATION)

Leader: Lee Taubeneck

Join us for a hike at beautiful Windy Hill Open Space Preserve in Portola Valley. We'll hike up through mixed forest and past meadows to the top of the preserve's twin peaks, which offers a spectacular 360 degree view of the ocean and the Bay. This hike is moderate to strenuous, appropriate for people who have comfortably hiked at least 7 miles and over 1000' at a 2/2.5 mph pace in the recent past.

Leashed dogs are welcome at this preserve. Those interested can head over afterward to Sand Hill Kitchen, 2400 Sand Hill Rd Ste 203, Menlo Park, CA 94025. We will meet by the trail sign past the end of the main parking lot off Portola Road. If the lot is full, you can park along Portola Road so long as you don't block the bike lane. Stay hydrated, and please feel free to bring friends!

• February 21, 9:00 am: Castle Rock/Goat Rock Loop Hike

Level: moderate (6.6 MI, 1,350 FT ELEVATION)

Leaders: Paige Collins and Chris Dunlap

Join us for a hike at beautiful Castle Rock State Park west of Saratoga. We'll hike along the ridge toward the San Lorenzo Headwaters, then turn to start a gradual climb to the gorgeous Goat Rock Overlook. The last half of the trail will afford beautiful views of the Bay.

This hike is moderately difficult, and features 1,354 feet elevation climb over comfortably maintained trails. 6.6 miles; navigate to Saratoga Gap Trail for directions and park at Castle Rock State Park parking on the south side of Skyline Blvd.

Those who can join us for lunch are welcome to do so at Big Basin Burger Bar, 14413 Big Basin Wy, Saratoga, CA 95070, a 15-minute drive from the trailhead. Please feel free to bring friends...and plenty of water!

Chris Dunlap for Grace Outdoors ❖



December 13, 2025 | 9:00 am Purisma Creek Long Loop Hike

Strenuous 10-mile hike will wind down through a redwood forest, and climb back up again past a babbling creek until we break through to sweeping ocean views. Those who wish can gather for lunch afterward at Alice's Restaurant.

GRACE OUTDOORS

COUNCIL

Dear Friends,

I can't believe it is fall already! As we move through this season, I would like to take a moment and highlight Council's recent and upcoming activities. In September, we started a new church council year and voted in new council officers: Yvonne Baur as president, Joachim Klein as vice president, and Chris Dunlap as secretary. And we added new council members; I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new council members Sumitha Pauli and Eric Brudos! Coupled with a heartfelt 'thank you' for departing council member Lee Taubeneck and our long-term secretary and council president Susan Choquette.

Fall has been busy with our Rally Day, Apple Fest, Trunk or Treat, and Reformationfest celebrations, bringing the congregation together around these cherished traditions. It has been great to see so many of you at these events, and also to witness the energy and positive contribution of Emily, our new Director of Children, Youth, and Young Adult Ministry. Welcome Emily, what a wonderful addition to our staff! We also had great success with a new event thought up and organized by Tim: Two Friday nights (and counting) of 'Beer & Hymns'. A lot of you showed up on a Friday evening in the Emmaus Room to sing hymns together, followed by a shared meal. Singer or not, mark your calendars for the next Beer & Hymns happening in January (January 23 to be precise).

We kicked off the season with a lot of activity around our buildings and grounds. We upgraded our heating and added air conditioning to the office, just in time for the last hot early fall days. We then moved to long-overdue bathroom refreshes for the office, and paint refreshes on the sanctuary walls, Brown Hall, and the labyrinth. We replaced the final parts of our roof on Brown Hall, the office, and the ed wing, and are now ready for the rainy season. And best of all, all parts of the roof now have a matching color for a more uniform look across campus. Inside, you will notice our organ moved to the front, next to the altar, with a digital connection to the organ pipes. This is a major change that will allow Tim to more seamlessly move between instruments. Next up is of course our big capital campaign landscaping project: We have formed a landscaping committee and have started meeting with the landscape architect, reviewing and refining her excellent initial ideas. We look forward to sharing the ideas with the broader congregation soon, and to making the courtyard even more inviting and versatile for our many activities.

Let me conclude with an exciting endowment update: This fall for the first time, our endowment passed a value of one million dollars! This is unbelievable, especially when you consider that we started the endowment with just \$25 in the bank less than twenty years ago.

Exciting times to be part of this congregation.

Peace,
Yvonne ❖



Council

Pictured above:

Yvonne Baur (President) – center
Joachim Klein (Vice President) – left
Chris Dunlap (Secretary) – right

Steve Baird
Eric Brudos
Tom Cutler
Barbara Erickson
Anna Girsén
Eric Mellum
Sumitha Pauli
Bradley Starleaf
Ilse Wiechers



God's work. Our hands.

Livestreamed on the Grace YouTube channel. Links at gracepa.org

Christmas Eve

December 21