

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church



Special Voters' Assembly

August 2, 2026

Following the Divine Service

GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH – DURHAM, NC
Special Voters' Assembly – August 2, 2026

Our Mission

Going with Good News, teaching, serving and sharing Christ with our neighbors

Our Vision

To be a people able to be Church wherever we are

A G E N D A

1. Opening Prayer – Pastor Brooks
2. Reading and Approval of Proxies¹
3. Presentation of New Voters²
4. Consideration of Grace House Task Force Proposals
5. Adjournment and Lord's Prayer - ALL

¹ Proxy voting must be submitted via special form to the Church Office 72 hours prior to the Voters' Assembly and cite extenuating circumstances. (Bylaw 4.9)

² Voting membership is to be renewed annually through a commitment to grow as a disciple, participate in a ministry, and give financially (Bylaw 1.3)

LINKS TO PROXY FORM AND VOTER COMMITMENT CARD ARE LOCATED ON THE HOMEPAGE OF OUR WEBSITE

WWW.GRACEDURHAM.ORG.

COPIES ARE ALSO AVAILABLE IN THE CHURCH OFFICE.

Grace House Task Force Report

As Presented at May 31, 2026 Voters' Assembly

Introduction

The Grace House Task Force was formed to evaluate potential future uses of Grace House and present viable options for consideration by church leadership and the congregation. Over the course of several meetings, the task force discussed community needs, congregational capacity, sustainability, logistical feasibility, and alignment with the church's mission and outreach goals.

The task force identified three primary options for consideration:

- A. Duke Host Homes Upstairs + LINKS Downstairs
- B. LINKS Upstairs + Rotating Community Space Downstairs
- C. Duke Host Homes Upstairs + Rotating Community Space Downstairs

Each reflects a different balance between residential ministry, community engagement, volunteer involvement, and long-term sustainability.

This report is intended to provide an overview of the options discussed, along with key considerations, benefits, and potential challenges associated with each.

Note: The upstairs apartment is currently used for Duke Host Homes. Two rooms downstairs are used for Early Head Start twice a month.

Congregational Capacity

One of the most significant distinctions between the proposed options is the level of congregational involvement required.

Ongoing/Background Ministry Models

Programs such as Duke Host Homes and LINKS function primarily as ongoing ministries that can operate with relatively limited day-to-day congregational management.

Active Programming Models

The rotating community space concept would require:

- Ongoing volunteer leadership

- Event planning and coordination
- Scheduling oversight
- Community outreach and communication
- Long-term volunteer engagement

The task force acknowledged that sustained participation in similar initiatives has historically been challenging and identified this as an important feasibility consideration.

The task force discussed the importance of selecting an option that is both meaningful and realistically sustainable over time.

Several members noted that although active programming models may create broader opportunities for involvement and visibility, they also require significantly more coordination and volunteer commitment.

Residential Privacy and Logistics

The task force discussed the importance of maintaining appropriate privacy and boundaries if residential use continues within the home.

Potential considerations include the following:

- Separate entrances for upstairs/downstairs residents
- Door locks and privacy measures
- Noise management
- Respect for residents' schedules and living space

Program Summaries

Duke Host Homes and Early Head Start

The Duke Host Home Program assists with lodging families of Duke inpatients for a nominal fee, although Grace House has typically been offered at no cost. Duke Concierge Services sponsors the program and coordinates referrals, which usually come from social workers, patient navigators, or patient resource managers.

In 2026, the upstairs apartment has been occupied over 50% of the time. Typical stays range from several days to several weeks while a loved one receives medical treatment.

Currently, Barbara Silvernail oversees the Duke Host Home portion of the ministry, including opening the home and preparing the upstairs apartment between guests.

Early Head Start

Early Head Start currently uses two downstairs playrooms at Grace House approximately twice monthly for 2–2.5 hours per session. Although enrollment includes approximately 20 children, average attendance is generally 4–6 preschool-aged children.

The current agreement provides a monthly donation of \$450 and includes flexibility for relocation into church facilities if Grace House space becomes unavailable.

The task force noted that the total time usage remains relatively limited and likely would not significantly impact most proposed future uses of the property.

LINKS Program

The LINKS program supports young adults ages 18–21 who are aging out of foster care by providing transitional support and temporary housing opportunities.

The program's goal is to foster independent living, education, and long-term stability through:

- Life skills training
- Educational planning
- Vocational support
- Transitional housing assistance

Tanza Moye, MS, Special Services Supervisor for the LINKS Foster Care 18–21 Program, would oversee screening, supervision, and ongoing support for any participant housed at Grace House.

Potential residents would sign agreements outlining:

- Behavioral expectations
- Program participation requirements
- Curfew and visitation guidelines
- Safety expectations
- Communication requirements
- Grounds for early discharge

The program would also provide transition planning toward permanent housing.

Estimated length of stay would typically range from 3–6 months, generally with one resident at a time.

Potential Benefits

- Serves a vulnerable population with limited housing options
- Greater opportunities for relationship-building and mentorship with congregation members
- Potential integration into church life and activities
- Existing oversight and support structure through LINKS
- Close proximity to public transportation

Potential Challenges

- May require volunteers willing to mentor or support residents
- Cleaning and turnover responsibilities may require additional coordination
- Some minor facility modifications may be needed
- Residential use downstairs would require relocation of Head Start programming

Janet Dickmader has expressed willingness to serve as liaison with the LINKS program if this option is pursued.

Rotating Community Space

The rotating community space model would use part of Grace House as a flexible, community-oriented ministry space.

Potential programming discussed included:

- Resume and cover letter workshops
- Parenting or life-skills classes (e.g., finances, AI, scams, etc.)
- Small support groups
- Community resource events
- Partner organization programming
- Early Head Start use

The task force emphasized that this model would need to remain intentionally small-scale, sustainable, and well-organized.

Important Considerations

The task force discussed several limitations regarding use of Grace House as an event space.

Although larger events such as sports viewing parties or movie nights were suggested during discussion, concerns were raised regarding:

- Noise levels, particularly during evening hours
- Potential disruption to residents living upstairs
- Physical limitations of the building
- Parking and space limitations
- Licensing requirements for public movie screenings or similar events

The task force generally agreed that Grace House is better suited for:

- Workshops
- Classes
- Small group gatherings
- Community support programming

If there is interest in hosting larger or higher-energy events, the task force believes those activities would be more appropriately held within the main church facilities rather than Grace House.

Volunteer Requirements

Unlike the Duke Host Homes or LINKS models, the rotating space concept would require substantially greater congregational participation.

This option would require:

- Volunteers willing to lead programming
 - Scheduling and oversight coordination
 - Community communication and outreach
 - Ongoing leadership or committee structure
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Proposed Options

Option A

Duke Host Homes Upstairs + LINKS Downstairs

This option would continue the existing Duke Host Homes ministry in the upstairs apartment while utilizing the downstairs portion of Grace House for LINKS transitional housing.

Benefits

- Maintains current Duke partnership
- Expands housing support ministry
- Provides ongoing service to vulnerable populations
- Lower day-to-day programming burden on congregation
- Existing support structure through LINKS

Challenges

- Requires privacy and logistical planning between floors
- Short-notice turnovers may require rapid cleaning and preparation
- Some minor facility modifications may be needed
- Communication and coordination with Duke representatives can occasionally be inconsistent • Limited opportunities for direct relational ministry

Option B

LINKS Upstairs + Rotating Community Space Downstairs

This option would transition the upstairs apartment space from Duke Host Homes to LINKS housing while utilizing the downstairs for rotating community programming.

This option could also provide flexibility for future transition to full-house LINKS use if rotating programming becomes unsustainable.

Benefits

- Combines residential ministry with active community outreach
- Increased visibility and opportunities for congregational involvement • Flexible use of downstairs space

Challenges

- Requires sustained volunteer leadership and coordination
 - Potential noise and privacy concerns
 - Greater operational complexity
 - Higher risk of volunteer fatigue or inconsistent programming
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Option C

Duke Host Homes Upstairs + Rotating Community Space Downstairs

This option would maintain the Duke Host Homes ministry upstairs while utilizing the downstairs for rotating community-oriented programming.

Benefits

- Preserves existing Duke ministry partnership
- Creates opportunities for community engagement
- Flexible programming opportunities
- Allows congregation to participate more directly in ministry efforts

Challenges

- Requires significant volunteer coordination and oversight
 - Sustainability concerns regarding long-term participation
 - Potential disruption concerns for upstairs residents
 - Scheduling and communication demands
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Conclusion

The Grace House Task Force believes each option presents meaningful opportunities for ministry and service while also carrying different operational demands and sustainability considerations.

The primary distinction between the proposed options centers on the desired level of congregational involvement and the congregation's long-term capacity for active programming and leadership.

The task force respectfully submits these findings to the Grace Advisory Board for review and further discussion.

Voting Procedure

Preferential (Ranked Choice) Voting: Following discussion of the options and call of the vote, please rank Options A, B, and C in order of preference. Write 1 beside your first-choice option, 2 beside your second-choice option, and 3 beside your third-choice option. Please rank all options.