

The Light

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
OAK RIDGE, TN

December 2025



Our Mission:





A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR ROSY

In the opening verses of John’s Gospel, we are reminded of a profound truth: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:1, 5).

These words are not just poetic—they are a declaration of hope. They remind us that no matter the obstacles we face, no matter the shadows that seem to linger, God’s light is stronger. The darkness cannot overcome the light of Christ.

Life brings challenges—illness, grief, uncertainty, and moments when the path ahead feels blocked. Yet John’s Gospel assures us that Christ entered into our world precisely to meet us in those struggles. The Word became flesh, not to remain distant, but to walk with us in the midst of our trials. Every obstacle becomes an opportunity for God’s grace to shine through, reminding us that we are never alone.

This text is filled with anticipation: the true light was coming into the world, and with Him came life and renewal. As we move through seasons of waiting—whether in Advent, in prayer, or in personal journeys—we do so with hopeful expectation. God’s promises are not empty; they are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who brings new beginnings and fresh possibilities.

At the heart of John 1 is the gift of grace: “From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” (John 1:16). This is not a one-time gift but a continual outpouring of God’s love. Grace meets us where we are, lifts us when we stumble, and carries us forward with renewed strength. It is God’s love that transforms obstacles into testimonies, despair into hope, and brokenness into healing.

As a community of faith, we are called to live in the light of Christ. Let us face our obstacles with courage, look to the future with hopeful expectation, and rest in the assurance of God’s love and grace. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us—this is our joy, our strength, and our peace. We have so much to be thankful for. As we prepare to wait in hopeful expectation for the celebration of Christmas, may the light of Christ shine bright within you and your families “so that others may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Happy Advent and Merry Christmas!

Always a servant of Christ,
Pastor Rosy <><

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Some notes from November Council Meeting:

A revised (and improved) Facility Use Policy & Fee Schedule was approved. The changes are meant to level the playing field for facility use, and to update fees charged to keep pace with rising costs. The new procedure will be implemented January, 2026.

Also, Larry Sparks and Janet Rawl were approved to serve as Treasurer and Financial Secretary respectively. The search for a new Bookkeeper is in progress, as Ken Joy is stepping down as of the new year. We are most blessed to have such conscientious and capable financial officers serving as volunteers. Take a moment to thank all of them!

As we enter the busiest time of the year, take some time each day to celebrate and participate in the season of Advent – a time of preparation, watchfulness and listening. Make use of an Advent devotional series, and Advent projects for children. And remember, Advent is not only a season celebrating what has happened, but is a season that looks ahead to Christ's return!

It is a shame that our church's constitution only allows a member to serve two consecutive terms as council president, as we have been most fortunate to have had Valerie Hansen's diligent and careful service as our president these last two years. Thank you, Valerie for a job well done, and for setting the bar quite high. Yet, we must persevere, and I ask your help and support as I begin serving in this capacity.

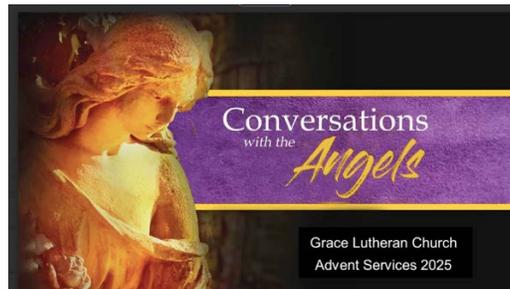
Your friend in Christ,
Mike Lorenz

MUSICAL NOTES



A highlight of Advent and Christmas this year is a piece David Ensley has written for us that makes a long-held goal of mine, and others, a reality: hearing Ringspiration, New Creation, and Chancel Choir all make music together. This will happen on **Sunday, December 21 at the 11:15 service. The cantata, "Joy Has Dawned,"** features glorious musical settings to mark the greatest story ever told. We will also feature a number of selections from the work during 11:15 offertories in January. Please join us December 21 as we unite to celebrate, with joy in music, this momentous season of the church year.

Thank you all for your continued love and support for worshipful music.



Wednesday evening Advent services will have the theme "**Conversations with the Angels.**" Come join us Wednesday evenings at 6:15pm, beginning December 3, as we hear imaginary conversations between Pastor Rosy and the angels found in the Advent and Christmas story.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

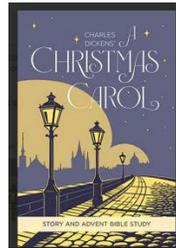


Children's Sunday School meets at 10:00 am on Sundays. Children meet in Jacob's Ladder for music and then go to their classes. We have both a Pre-school class and a

class for children in grades K-5. Youth in grades 6-12 meet upstairs. If you have any questions, please contact Joanne Daly.

Adult Sunday School: Adult Sunday School meets in Room 101 at 10:00am. We will begin a three-week Bible study on the Meaning of Advent, starting December 7. (Since the first Sunday in Advent is a 5th Sunday, there will not be Sunday School on November 30.) We will read and discuss various Bible passages relating to the Advent focus each week: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

ADVENT BIBLE STUDY



Join us for Wednesday evening Bible study before each Wednesday service at 5pm in room 101. We will begin on December 3, 2025. This year's theme: "**A Christmas Carol**" Bible study. This is based, of course, on the famous book (& movies) by Charles Dickens. Don't be a Scrooge! Come join us for learning and fun!

SYNOD NEWS



SOUTHEASTERN SYNOD
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

2027 ELCA Youth Gathering! Save the Date!

The 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering will be held in Minneapolis, MN, June 28-July 2, 2027. Interested congregations may contact Pastor Michael Jannett for more information.



STEWARDSHIP

STEWARDS OF GOD'S LOVE

At the end of December, this year's stewardship theme comes to an end. In previous articles we have written about God's love coming **DOWN** and that everything we have comes from God. He has entrusted us to be faithful stewards of all that he has given us. When we look **IN**, we see that He has abundantly blessed us with more than we could ever imagine – time, talents, money, and so much more. We continue our practice of stewardship by looking **OUT** to see the many ways that God is calling us to love our neighbors near and far.

Grace reaches **OUT** locally in the following ways:

- The Food Pantry
- Holiday baskets & Angel Tree
- School supplies for Woodland School
- ESOL classes
- Ecumenical Storehouse

Grace reaches **OUT** globally through:

- **Lutheran World Relief** – quilts made by Pieces of Grace and school kits
- The sale of **Equal Exchange** coffee, tea, chocolate, and olive oil
- The support of missionary Pastor David Brondos
- **Mission Support.** Mission support is the portion of a congregation's offering that is shared with the ELCA synod and with the ELCA churchwide organization. Mission support is one of the best ways that our congregation can be a steward to our local and global community

There are other ways to reach **OUT** globally.

- Donations to **Lutheran Disaster Response** help provide help and supplies when disaster strikes an area.
- Donations to **ELCA World Hunger** which is a comprehensive and sustainable program that uses multiple strategies – relief, development, education, and advocacy – to address the root cause of hunger and poverty
- **ELCA Good Gifts** - My late husband and I started giving ELCA Good Gifts to our adult children many years ago and I continue doing that. The gifts support work in 86 countries. There is wide variety of gifts that you can give. The gifts of animals & fruit trees help give families a source of income. Other gifts that you can give are water filters, safe water access, school supplies, computers, food for orphans, hygiene kits, mosquito netting, vaccinations, and more. For more information, go to [ELCA.org/good gifts](http://ELCA.org/goodgifts).

May God continue to bless you as you prayerfully consider how you can reach **OUT** to those in our community and around the world.

Donna Hoglund - Stewarding Commission

DECEMBER EVENTS



There will be no Family Movie Night in December. Family Movie Night will return in January.

PUZZLES, PUZZLES, PUZZLES WITH JUDY JOY

Join Judy Joy at her home to work on jigsaw puzzles on the second Thursday of each month from 10:00-2:00. Bring your lunch.



New Members Reception

There will be a reception for new members who are joining Grace Lutheran Church on Sunday, December 7, immediately after the Contemporary service. Come and welcome the newest members of our Grace family.

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Grace Lutheran will hold a Blue Christmas or Longest Night service on Saturday, December, 6, 2025, at 3:00 pm. This service is a reflective and comforting worship service for those finding the holidays difficult due to grief, loss or other struggles. This will provide a space for individuals to honor their pain and find a sense of hope in the midst of their difficult circumstances. Communion will not be held.

All are welcome.



FRIENDSHIP POTLUCKS

By popular demand, we are going to try adding some potlucks to our fellowship opportunities. We're going to try this on single-service Sundays for anyone interested. This would include the fifth Sundays, as well as occasional others. The first opportunity will be Sunday, December 28, after the service of Lessons & Carols. Proclaiming is sponsoring this experiment with the purpose of fostering more fellowship and, very importantly, adding opportunities to invite others.

You'll find a white board in the narthex for you to sign up. For this to work, we will need to have 2-4 people sign up to set up and some to sign up for cleanup, or they won't happen. Set up means making coffee, setting out other beverages, plates and silverware, napkins, and covering tables with paper or disposable plastic table covers. Clean up is self-explanatory.

Friendship Potluck con't

Our vision is for the setup crews to rotate so the same folks aren't doing it every time. The setup and cleanup crews will need to be subscribed to by the Wednesday before the date, in this case December 24, so we can confirm whether the potluck will happen or not and get that word out in the Thursday eNews.

To make it easy, food can be purchased rather than home-cooked. Of course, things that can be made ahead of time are fine also. This needs to be kept simple and easy!

We hope you'll avail yourself of this new fellowship time and invite friends and family. We're working on becoming a even more inviting church and so this is one more opportunity for you to do that.



Christmas Services

Grace will have several different services to celebrate the season. The Christmas Cantata, composed by David Ensley, will be on December 21 at the 11:15 am service. Christmas Eve Services on December 24 will be at 4:00pm and 9:00 pm. On December 28, there will be one service of Lessons & Carols at 10:00 am.

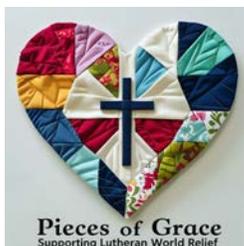


Grace's next Family Movie Night will be Saturday, January 3, 2026, at 6:00 pm. We will be showing *Monsters, inc.*. All movies are free and open to the public.



The next Theology on Tap will be January 16, 2026, from 6:00-8:00, place TBA. Come join us for fun and interesting theological dialog, or at the very least see if you can stump Pastor Rosy!

MINISTRIES OF GRACE



Those who attend Pieces of Grace (Blanket Workshop) make quilts for Lutheran World Relief. The group meets on the first, third, and fifth Thursdays of the month from 10 am to 2 pm. Everyone is welcome to join in, or just stop by to see what is happening. Sewing skills are not required. Bring your lunch.



Grace ESOL classes are blessed to have volunteer teachers, some of whom are Grace members, some are Altrusa members, and some are both. We offer daytime classes for beginner level, early intermediate, higher intermediate, and advanced levels. We currently have only one beginner class, on Tuesdays from 9:30-11:30. We'd like to reinstate Wednesday and Thursday classes when there's sufficient demand and teachers for those mornings. We're also looking for volunteers to be conversation partners or even just observers for the beginners, early intermediate, and higher intermediate levels. We have 3 teachers for the Friday advanced class and that's working extremely well. Please contact Nancy Munro if you're interested in volunteering or would just like to know more about these opportunities to enjoy interacting with our wonderful ESOL students.



FOOD PANTRY

The food pantry served 156 families in the three weeks that it was open in November. Of those, 57 were new. This number of new households is larger than in the previous month. Much of this is because of the cuts in SNAP and WIC.

A big thank you to all of you who donated in any way to the food pantry in November. Your donations of items for the shelves, bags, and money are very much appreciated. We purchase food from Second Harvest at about a third of what it would cost to buy at the grocery store. Your donations of food items help us keep the costs down. We use the donated food before we use the purchased food. In November, the cost of food purchased from Second Harvest totaled \$1,914.45. Purchased at retail, the cost would have been \$8,209.90.

Spaghetti Sauce was on the list of items needed for the food pantry and many of you brought in jars of spaghetti sauce. While we cannot put those jars in the bags with the other food items, we will use them in the bags that we make up for our large families. We do need canned tomato sauce. Nothing that is donated goes to waste and we are thankful for every donation.

If you have not been in the food pantry or would like to know more about what we do, feel free to stop by on a Wednesday afternoon when the shelves are being stocked or on a Friday morning when we are bagging the food and taking it to the cars.



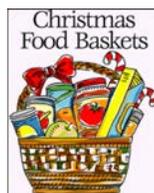
Calling all knitters and crocheters!

The Prayer Shawl Ministry resumed in-person sessions on September 6th and meets on the 1st Saturday of each month. We meet in the Fellowship Hall from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm. We will be working on prayer shawls, hats and various other projects. All are welcome, so invite friends to join us!

CHRISTMAS FOOD BASKETS and ANGEL TREE GIFT DISTRIBUTION

Helpful hearts and hands are needed! Christmas Food Baskets and Angel Tree gifts will be distributed to 30 families on Saturday, December 20. Volunteers are needed for Christmas Baskets to help unload non-perishable food at the church after 3:30 pm on Wednesday afternoon, December 17 and place it on tables in the Fellowship Hall. Volunteers are also needed to unload perishable food at the church on Saturday morning December 20 from 8:30-12:00, to fill baskets and place the baskets in families' vehicles. If you have questions or would like to help, contact Phil Stumbo at (865) 482-3048 or pstumbo@comcast.net.

We will follow a similar schedule for the Angel Tree gifts. The Angel Tree is set up in the narthex with the children's name tags attached. You may select the tags and purchase gifts. The gifts are due back to the church and placed under the tree by the end of the day on Thursday, December 18. The gifts will be placed in the families' vehicles along with the food baskets on December 20.



Angel Tree is Here!



The members of Grace are invited to participate in the Angel Tree ministry this year. The Angel Tree is set up in the narthex. Each child has two tags on the tree: one for clothes and one for toys. You are welcome to choose either or both tags for a child. Please write your name in the notebook on the stand by the tree in the space corresponding to the tags you've adopted. You are asked to spend \$40-\$50 per tag (so \$80 - \$100 if you have chosen both tags for a child). Gifts need to be returned under the tree in the narthex by Thursday, December 18th so that they can be distributed along with the Christmas Food Baskets on Saturday, December 20th. If you have questions, please contact Ingrid Busch. If you want to participate in the ministry, but would rather not shop yourself, you can contribute to the Angel Tree fund, and we will do the shopping for you. Thank you for sharing God's love with the children in our community!

LIFE EVENTS

Condolences to John Gunning and the Gunning Family on the passing of Susan Gunning on November 8, 2025. Susan's funeral was held on November 15, 2025 at Grace. Interment will be held at a later date.

Lorelei Frey celebrated her First Communion on Sunday, November 23, 2025.



NUTS! NUTS! NUTS!

The Clinton Lions Club is selling a variety of nuts again this year, they are Plain Pecan Halves, Plain Pecan Pieces, Praline Covered Pecans, Cashews, Mixed Nuts (no peanuts), Milk Chocolate Amaretto Covered Pecans, Chocolate Covered Peanuts and English Walnuts. These are all one pound (16oz.) bags. The cost per bag is \$12.00. You may contact Neal Vaughan by e-mail at neallion@comcast.net.

REFLECTIONS ON THANKSGIVING AT GRACE

Betty Anne Domm

Once again, as has been the tradition for many years now, the congregation of Grace Lutheran gathered on Sunday, November 16, to enjoy a wonderful meal of turkey, mashed potatoes, and too many side dishes to name. Joining our congregation this year were almost 50 men, women, and children, who are strangers to this country and its traditions. Many have been here only a short while, and this was their first time experiencing an American Thanksgiving. They brought traditional dishes from their native countries to share with us. Our visitors came from across the globe: Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, India, Bangladesh, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Russia and Ukraine.

As I watched my friends and church family reach out and make these strangers welcome, I experienced much gratitude and hope for the future. Jesus commended his followers for loving and serving the stranger. Leviticus 19:34 says "You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you in your land as the native among you and you shall love him as yourself."

Most of our visitors are not in any danger, but a few are here taking refuge from war-torn countries and autocratic leaders. We have offered them a place to come to learn our language and make new friends. We have included them in our activities. They may never come to worship at Grace (most are not Christian and those who are Christian are Catholic or Orthodox in their worship), but they appreciate very much the welcome we give them. One of my favorite modern hymns is "Let There Be Peace on Earth" written by Jill Jackson and Sy Miller. The words "and let it begin with me" seem especially appropriate this Thanksgiving. In a world filled with strife and hate, there seems little that any individual can do to make the world more peaceful. Welcoming the strangers in our midst to share the bounties God has bestowed on us seems like an excellent first step and I thank God for leading me to a church that does this so well.

*You can see pictures of Thanksgiving at Grace under Recent events.

ECUMENICAL STOREHOUSE

Contact us at 865-481-0274; See us at <https://www.ecumenicalstorehouse.org/> or Facebook
We are a 501(c)(3) public charity

November 3, 2025

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
131 West Gettysburg Ave.
Oak Ridge, TN 37830

Dear Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church,

Thank you for your generous donations to the Ecumenical Storehouse this year:

3/26/25	\$2,000.00
5/13/25	\$200.00
7/29/25	\$1,000.00
10/16/25	\$255.00

Your donations help provide used furniture, household goods, and appliances to families in crisis in Anderson, Roane, Morgan, Campbell, and Scott counties of Tennessee. We couldn't do what we do without donors like you.

No goods or services were provided by the Ecumenical Storehouse in exchange for these donations.

We are now over three quarters into 2025 and have had a good year to date. So far we have managed to serve more clients than last year. Here are some projections for the end of the year:

- We will have picked up and distributed an estimated \$200K worth of used furniture, household goods, and appliances to 321 families in need. The families we helped will consist of 473 children and 509 adults.
- ESI volunteers will work an estimated 4000 hours to serve clients and pick up used furniture.
- For every \$1 spent on our operations we will distribute an estimated \$4.50 worth of furniture, household goods, and appliances.
- We continue to be all-volunteer in 2025 with our main operating expenses being rent and utilities for our warehouse, fuel and maintenance for our box truck, and the purchase of goods for clients.

In addition to serving clients on Tuesdays and Thursdays we are now serving clients on Saturdays. This has increased the number of clients we are able to help.

Thanks again for your support,



Bill DeVan

ESI Treasurer

“Providing Household Goods to those in Need”



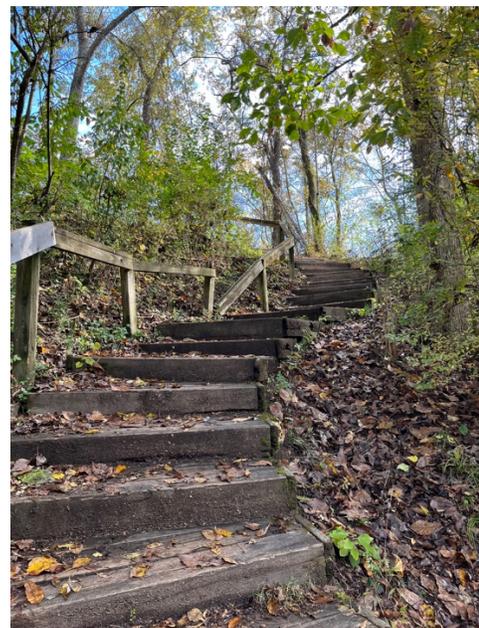
Carol Hulsey	1 st
Ingrid Busch	3 rd
Chris Bauman	5 th
Lisa Burtis	6 th
Danny Joy	6 th
Sarah Bafford Chitwood	9 th
Ken Joy	11 th
Debbie Weight	14 th
LaDonna Meyer	16 th
Heidi Peterson	26 th
Rachel Johnson Switzer	31 st
Janet Rawl	

RECENT EVENTS

Our own Judy Joy was interviewed on WATE about our food pantry! If you would like to see Judy's interview, click here <https://www.wate.com/news/top-stories/food-pantries-in-east-tennessee-see-surge-in-demand-ahead-of-potential-snap-delays/>.



On November 1st, Stacey Garrick led Barbara Storaasli, her son Brian Spencer, Christy Gipson and Nancy Munro on a Grace Hike on the Songbird Trail along the Clinch River below Norris Dam. It was a delightful hike.





Arissa Garden Club met on November 4th to put together Christmas greenery. They meet monthly.



Girl Scout Troop 20040 donated birthday kits to the Food Pantry in honor of the birthday of Juliette Gordon Low (1860-1927), founder of the Girl Scouts. The kits included cake mix, frosting, candles and a foil pan. Lorelei Frey is a member of Troop 20040.



On November 16th, Grace held its annual Thanksgiving dinner. Approximately 100 members and ESOL students gathered to share food and fellowship. It was definitely something to be thankful for.





On November 29th, Grace members decorated the church for the Advent and Christmas seasons. Children enjoyed Cookies, Cocoa and Christmas fun with Judy Goans. Lunch for all was provided by the Nurturing Commission.



mmm



Grace Lutheran Church
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Email: office@graceor.org

Website: www.graceoakridge.org



You can now donate to Grace with PayPal

Scan this QR code with your phone camera and open the link.
You can donate once, weekly or monthly.



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