

The Light

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
OAK RIDGE, TN

JANUARY 2026



Love Jesus

AND HELP OTHERS LOVE HIM THROUGH
WORD AND ACTIONS

Our Mission:



A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR ROSY

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”
Jeremiah 29:11

Happy New Year! As we step into a new season of ministry together, Jeremiah’s familiar promise meets us like a deep breath. Many of us can recite this verse by heart, but its power grows when we remember the context: God spoke these words to a people living in exile, far from home, unsure of what tomorrow would bring. They were weary, disoriented, and longing for life to return to what it once was.

Into that uncertainty, God didn’t offer quick fixes or easy answers. God offered something better—grace for the present and mercy for the future. Grace for the present means that God meets us exactly where we are, not where we think we should be. God’s plans for our welfare begin not with our perfection but with God’s compassion. Even in seasons when we feel scattered or stretched thin, God’s grace gathers us, steadies us, and reminds us that we are held.

Mercy for the future means that God’s promises are not dependent on our flawless track record. The future God prepares is shaped not by our failures but by God’s faithfulness. Jeremiah 29:11 is not a guarantee of ease; it is a declaration that God’s heart toward us is good, generous, and steadfast. God’s mercy writes a future that is larger than our fears.

As a congregation, we live inside this promise. We make plans, we dream, we serve, we worship—but always with the awareness that God is already ahead of us, preparing a way marked by hope. Our ministries, our relationships, our acts of service—all of them unfold within the wide embrace of God’s grace and mercy.

So, as we move forward, may we do so with confidence. Not confidence in our own strength, but in the God who delights in giving us a future with hope. May we trust that even in uncertain times, God is weaving something good. And may we be a community that reflects this grace and mercy to one another and to the world.

God’s plans are not distant promises. They are present realities, unfolding even now. I look forward to share in that “unfolding” together in 2026!

Always a servant of Christ,
Rev. Rosalina Rivera (a.k.a. Pastor Rosy)

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



December is often a time of looking back over the past year and looking forward to the year ahead. Upon the passing of my cousin and fellow member of our church council, Tim Lorenz, our council member alternate Stacey Garrick has been welcomed into service on GELC council. Stacey is active in many ministries and programs at Grace including Stephen's Ministry, chancel choir, liturgist, a member of Stewarding Commission, etc. We are fortunate to have such willing and capable members who serve as needed without hesitation. Thank you, Stacey! Due to demands at work and a growing family, Nick Martin is stepping down as Vice President of council. We are all grateful that he will remain on council.

After 13 years of service as Bookkeeper, Ken Joy has stepped down. We thank Ken for his many years of dedicated service in this important position of responsibility. It is also with thanksgiving that Marla Weber has accepted and been approved to serve as Bookkeeper. Again, we are most blessed!

Other council actions included (unfortunately) the removal of a number of members from the Active Roll to Inactive. Council has tasked the Stewarding Commission to come up with some means of keeping contact with church members if their involvement at Grace wanes.

Council has approved a new Facility Use Policy with a new fee schedule. Members of the Administering Commission are thanked for all the work that goes into this. As this issue of *The Light* goes into publication, the much needed and anticipated repair work on our church pipe organ has begun! Many thanks for the gift that is making this possible!!

Please take note that our Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 25 at 11:45, preceded by a light lunch immediately following the 10:00 worship service.

As the new year of 2026 has begun, what should our emphasis be at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church be? This will certainly vary from member to member. On a personal note, 2025 presented some new challenges and opportunities in my life. I tried to meet these with a sense of gratitude and renewed commitment. I pray that 2026 will open some new doors for each and every member of Grace.

Blessings and peace, Mike Lorenz

MUSICAL NOTES



After a glorious Advent and Christmas season, in which all musical groups at Grace united to premiere David Ensley's wonderful music, we now look to 2026 and the many musical worship opportunities that lie ahead! Please prayerfully consider singing or ringing bells. I cannot stress enough that we are open to all, and it is the donation of time from volunteers that make the beautiful musical experiences at Grace possible. Please join us on this journey!



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 Donna Gurecki.

Adult Sunday School: Adult Sunday School meets in Room 101 at 10:00 am. Classes will resume on January 11, 2026.

Do you like watching children?

After several years of service, Lorraine will be stepping down as our Lead Nursery attendant. April will be stepping into that role at the end of January. Therefore, we need another adult or a youth (at least 18 yrs old with driver's license) to serve with April on an alternating schedule. This is just 3-4 hours a week. It is a paid position. If you are interested, please contact either Pastor Rosy or Steve Johnson, from our Personnel committee. Please be advised that a background check will be required and a certification of CPR/First aid (which can be done online).

GRIEF CLASS

Journeying Through Grief is a set of four short books that our church sends to those walking through grief the first year after a loss. Author Kenneth C. Haugk writes in a warm, caring style, with short, easy to read chapters. He walks alongside the reader through the grief journey, sharing helpful insights about grief, biblical truths and stories that provide comfort and reassurance.

Pastor Rosy will lead discussion on each book. There is no need to purchase the books. Classes will be on Wednesday mornings at 10:30 am, beginning January 7, in room 101. There will be four sessions.

SYNOD NEWS



Southeastern Synod Assembly

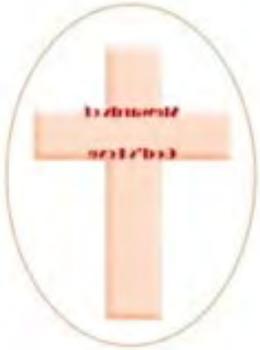
The Southeastern Synod will hold its annual assembly May 28-30, 2026, in Columbus, GA. If you are interested in serving as a delegate to the Synod Assembly, please contact Pastor Rosy or Council President Mike Lorenz for more information.

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.

STEWARDS OF GOD'S LOVE

FINDING GOD'S PURPOSE



We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28)

The Stewardship Theme for 2026 is “Finding God’s Purpose.” Finding God’s purpose is a deeply personal journey that involves seeking Him through prayer, studying His Word, and reflecting on your unique gifts. By aligning your life with His teachings and being open to His guidance, you can discover a fulfilling path that resonates with His divine plan for you.

Key steps to Finding God’s Purpose:

- Seek God in prayer
- Engage with Scripture
- Identify your gifts and strengths
- Look for signs of purpose
- Understand the bigger picture
- Embrace your journey

The Stewarding Commission will be using a Year ‘round planning calendar to help us grow stewards in our congregation. In January, our emphasis will be on how much God loves you.

Watch for signs around the building that will remind you that God loves you.

Donna Hoglund – Stewarding Commission

JANUARY EVENTS



ALEXA CAN'T TAKE DOWN THE DECORATIONS

We are planning on taking down the Christmas decorations on Sunday, January 4, after the late service. Please stay after worship if you are able to help.

SEMI-ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Our Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on January 25, 2026. We will have one service at 10:00 am on that Sunday and the meeting will begin at 12:00 pm. We will be voting on our annual budget at this meeting, so please attend if you are able.

The January Family Movie Night has been cancelled. This event is currently being re-evaluated. We will let you know if and when movie night resumes.

The next **Theology on Tap** will be January 16, 2026, from 6:00-8:00pm at **Woody's**
114 Union Valley Rd, Oak Ridge, TN 37830

Come join us for fun and interesting theological dialog, or at the very least to see if you can stump Pastor Rosy!



PUZZLES, PUZZLES, PUZZLES WITH JUDY JOY

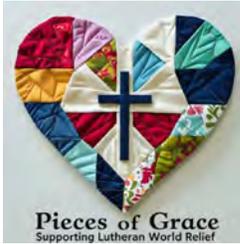
Join Judy Joy at her home to work on jigsaw puzzles on the second Thursday of each month from 10:00-2:00. Bring your lunch.



Grace Hikers

We are planning a New Year's hike January 3 at 10:00 am at the UT Arboretum. We will be walking to the Holly area. Dress warmly in something warm and waterproof. Our rain/snow date will be January 17. Keep an eye on announcements for changes.

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.

LOVE OFFERING

The January Love Offering will go to TORCH (Tennessee Out-Reach Center for Homeless).



FOOD PANTRY

The Food Pantry served 97 households the three Fridays that it was open in December. There were 224 individuals in those 97 households which means we had more large families in December. We were able to give out milk in December due to the food rescue program in which Kern Methodist Church participates. They have been given more milk than they have space for, so they have shared it with us.

The Food Pantry thanks everyone who has donated money and food to the pantry. We also thank all of those who help in so many ways.



Calling all knitters and crocheters!

The Prayer Shawl Ministry meets on the 2nd 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!



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.

LIFE EVENTS

Our condolences to the Lorenz family on the passing on Tim Lorenz on November 29, 2026.

On December 7, 2026, Laura Kile joined Grace Lutheran Church. Welcome, Laura! We also celebrated the baptism of Landon Weber on December 7. Congratulations, Landon!





Priscilla L	5 th
Holly N	5 th
Shenedoah W	7 th
David J	8 th
Rachel L	12 th
Heidi M	12 th
Wyatt B	13 th
Donna G	21 st
Sarys A	22 nd
Christy G	22 nd
Vicky M	27 th
Phil S	29 th

WOODLAND ART SHOW

The Woodland Art Show is now available for viewing in the Fellowship Hall. The artwork will be up until early January.

The artwork, titled “Inside, Out: How We See Ourselves,” was created by the students in Mary Katherine Chinn’s third grade art class. The artwork demonstrates two ways student see themselves, through self-portrait and abstract art. Visitors to the art show are invited to vote for their favorite. **Come out and support these young artists.**



RECENT EVENTS

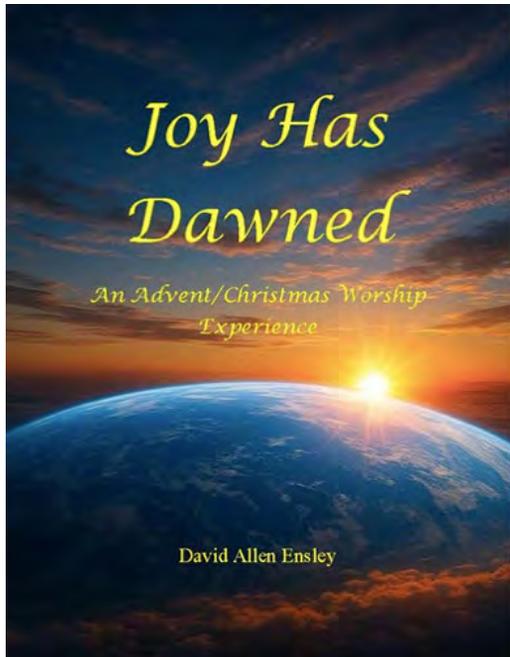


On December 5, Grace held its first Blue Christmas service. This service is designed to provide a reflective and comforting worship experience for those who find the holidays difficult due to grief, loss or other struggles. About 15-20 people attended the service and during the service worshippers were given the opportunity to place an angel with a prayer or the name of a loved one.



A big Thank You to everyone who helped with the Angel Tree this year! Your generosity helped to give a very happy Christmas to children from Woodland Elementary whose families received our Christmas food baskets. A special thank you to Ingrid Busch for coordinating this event again this year and to Santa's helper Janet Rawl for helping to wrap the extra purchased gifts! Thank you also to the Pilot Club of Oak Ridge for donating helmets and protective gear for those receiving bikes and skates.





On December 21, 2025, the musical groups of Grace performed the Christmas cantata *Joy Has Dawned*. It was composed by our own David Ensley and featured Ringspiration, New Creation and the Chancel Choir. Janet Allen played flute and Christine Lau played violin.



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



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