

The Light

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
OAK RIDGE, TN

FEBRUARY 2026

God's
Love
Never
Fails



Our Mission:





A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR ROSY

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4: 7-8

If the writer of 1 John were submitting an article for our church newsletter, I suspect the editor would send it back with a note: “Beautiful theology. Could you maybe add a joke or two?” After all, “God is love” is a pretty unbeatable thesis statement, but it doesn’t exactly come with a punchline!

Fortunately, Lutherans have never been afraid to mix a little humor with our theology. We know that grace is serious business—but we don’t have to take ourselves too seriously while we live it out.

Love Starts With God (Good News for the Rest of Us)

1 John 4:7–8 begins with a gentle nudge: “Beloved, let us love one another.” It sounds simple enough—until you remember that loving one another includes loving the people who cut you off in traffic, the relative who brings up politics at Thanksgiving, and the neighbor who mows their lawn at 7 a.m. on a Saturday.

Thankfully, John doesn’t leave us with a self-help assignment. He roots the whole thing in God’s initiative:

“Love is from God... for God is love.”

In other words, we love not because we’re naturally good at it (Lutherans know better than that), but because God keeps pouring love into us like a coffee pot that never runs dry. Grace is the fuel; we’re just the mugs.

Relationships: The Holy Laboratory of Love

If you want to test the limits of Christian love, you don’t need a monastery. You just need relationships. Marriage, friendship, parenting, church committees/commissions—these are the places where love becomes less of an abstract concept and more of a daily practice.

Relationships are where we learn patience, forgiveness, humility, and the fine art of not saying the first thing that pops into our heads. They’re also where we discover that love isn’t a feeling we muster up but a gift God keeps giving, especially when we’ve run out of our own supply.

MESSAGE FROM PASTOR ROSY CON'T

Luther once said that God “masquerades” in our neighbors. That means every relationship—pleasant or prickly—is an opportunity to encounter the God who is love, showing up in ordinary people with extraordinary grace.

Love as a Lutheran Spiritual Discipline

Some Christians talk about spiritual disciplines like fasting or silence. Lutherans? We practice the spiritual discipline of potlucks, where love is expressed through casseroles, Jell-O salads, and the sacred ritual of asking, “Who made this?”

But beneath the humor lies a real truth: love is something we practice. We grow into it. We stumble through it. We return to it again and again because God keeps returning to us.

Love is not a performance—it’s participation in the life of God.

A Community Known by Love

Imagine if people described our congregation the way 1 John describes God:

“Those folks? Oh, they’re the ones who love. You can tell the moment you walk in.”

Not because we’re perfect. Not because we agree on everything. But because we trust that God’s love is big enough to hold us together, stretch us, challenge us, and send us out. When we love one another—imperfectly, persistently, humorously—we become living footnotes to John’s bold claim: “God is love.” And that’s a pretty good newsletter headline.

Believe it or not, Lent is upon us. **Mark your calendars for Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 6:15pm. This is Ash Wednesday.** The following Wednesday we will begin our Lenten service series entitled: “Beatitudes of Promise”—obviously, we will be learning about the Beatitudes. Come join us for a light dinner at 5:30pm followed by a short worship service each Wednesday during Lent and don’t forget to pick up your Lenten calendar for this season which will contain the 3 pillars of Lent: Prayer, Fasting and Service. I hope to see you all for Wednesday services. May the love of God embrace you with grace, mercy and peace.

God Loves You And So Do I,
Pastor Rosy <><

do everything
in Love

1 Corinthians 16:14



THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The new year is a time for reflection, looking both forward and back. A sense of history (especially our own) is an important part of understanding where we are, but keeping our eyes on the future helps keep us from being bound to our past. January 11 is often credited with being the average day New Year's resolutions are broken. But as followers of Christ, we know that each day is a New Day, offering new possibilities and yes, growth. *"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"* II Corinthians 5:17

As a congregation, we embrace the new year with our own corporate resolution, our 2026 budget. This is not the end of anything, or a conclusion, if you will, but rather a commitment to the many ministries of our church and the mission of Jesus Christ that we endeavor to carry out in His name. To this calling we should not be lazy... or squeamish... but eager to share the Good News of our Lord and Savior.

Some highlights of January's council meeting include:

Valerie Hansen has been chosen to be vice president of church council. She brings with her a wealth of leadership experience at Grace, strengthened by patience and desire for a level playing field for all.

A few changes and updates to our Personnel Policy was presented by our Personnel Task Force. Council will act on this at our February meeting.

Nurturing Commission has organized soup suppers to precede our Wednesday Lenten worship services (not including Ash Wednesday). Different commissions will be providing these meals. **Please come join us for supper and at worship during our Lenten season!**

With the retirement of Lorraine Huynh as nursery worker, we are currently searching for a new nursery worker to alternate Sundays with April Fritts.

Following the late service on Sunday, March 1, all interested members are encouraged to attend a discussion on "Welcoming Our Neighbors" to be led by Synod staff member Rev. Justin Eller. Stay tuned for information concerning this event.

And last, but certainly not least, the Southeastern Synod is leading a workshop entitled **Synod Revival Days** on Saturday, March 14, from 9:00 to 3:00 at Messiah Lutheran Church Knoxville. This important event and opportunity for growth will offer 3 workshops during the gathering, snacks, lunch, and worship. The offered topics are: Reviving Worship, Reviving Discipleship (from surviving to thriving), and Reviving Hospitality (new ways of welcome). All people in leadership positions at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, as well as all members who participate in the above named areas of discipleship are encouraged to attend. The cost is \$15.00. More information will be forthcoming, and please consider yourself invited to participate!

Blessings and God's peace, Mike Lorenz

MUSICAL NOTES



As we begin 2026, the season of Lent will come somewhat earlier this year. Though rightfully regarded as a time of somber solemnity, this time can also be a time of reflective beauty. Ringspiration, New Creation, and Chancel Choir are all working on musical numbers to exhibit this quality.

I also emphasize that we welcome ALL to join us to make music. We would love to have more members participating in our musical undertakings. Please prayerfully consider this!



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. The Adult class is currently studying “The Bible for Grownups” video series by Andy Stanley. There are 2 sessions remaining in this course. They will then be looking at the New Testament using materials from The Bible Project.

All Sunday School classes will end on **May 17, 2026.**

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.

Synod Revival Days

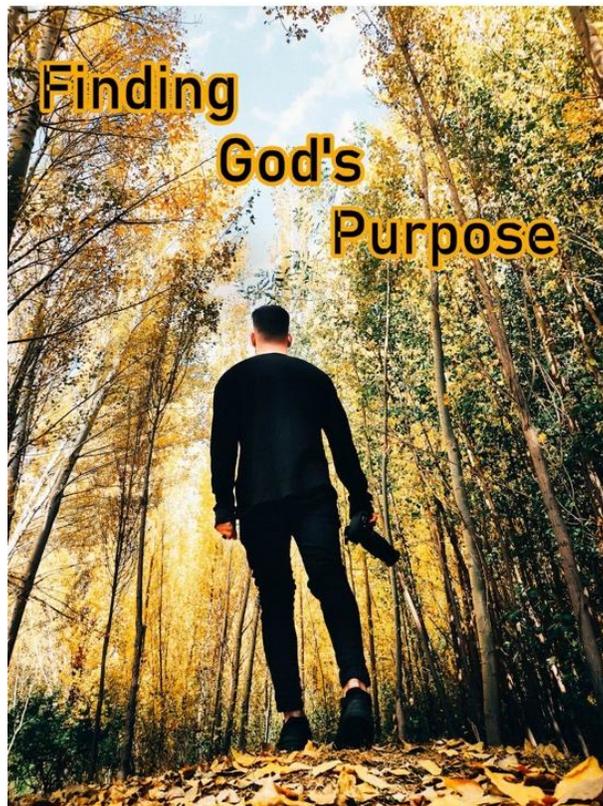
The Synod is offering congregations a chance to jump start a revival, through the church, for the life of the world. *A Synod Revival Day will be held March 14, 2026, at Messiah Lutheran Church in Knoxville.* The Synod's goal is to have at least 5 people from each congregation attend. This event is open to members, lay leaders, pastors, young adults and confirmed youth. Learning Labs will offer programs on reviving worship, discipleship and hospitality. The cost is \$15/person. To register, scan this QR code.



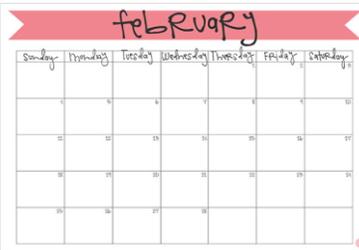
2027 ELCA Youth Gathering! Save the Date!

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



FEBRUARY EVENTS



GAME DAY

Our next Game Day will be February 7, from 3:00-6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Childcare will be available.



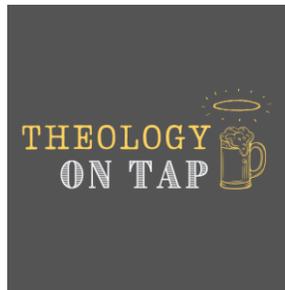
PUZZLES, PUZZLES, PUZZLES WITH JUDY JOY

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.



SINGLE'S VALENTINE CELEBRATION

Calling all singles! We will have a Valentine celebration for all singles on February 14, from 6:00 – 8:00 pm. There will be sandwiches, games with prizes and lots of fun!



Come join us for thought-provoking conversation about tough theological questions. Our next gathering will be February 20, from 6:00-8:00 pm at Woody's on Union Valley Drive in Oak Ridge. Come see if you can stump Pastor Rosy!



VIA DE CRISTO WEEKEND. SAVE THE DATE APRIL 16-19, 2026

Would you like to experience an amazing weekend of God's wonderful Grace? Have an opportunity to be fully immersed in His love? Laugh, sing and fellowship with other Christians? Then the upcoming Via de Cristo weekend is the place for you!

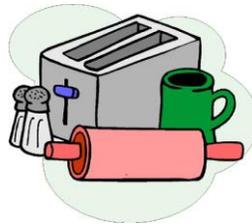
Contact Pastor Rosy for more information.



The next Grace Lutheran Coffee House will be Friday, March 27, 2026, from 6:00-8:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

Ecumenical Storehouse

This March will be Grace's turn again to provide volunteers to work the Ecumenical Storehouse. Grace performs this function jointly with Kern Methodist. Volunteers are needed on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 10 am until noon. Volunteers are needed to help man the phones and assemble various household furnishings as needed by the clients. This includes gathering towels, sheets, and other household needs. Furniture is moved by a few full-time men that work the Storehouse. However, any and all help with this task is always welcomed. For more information contact Larry Sparks or Kathy Olsen.



ORICL CLASS

'Art at Grace Lutheran Church" will be held at Grace on Sunday, March 1, 3:00-4:15 pm. The tour, led by Ruth Smiley, will proceed from the front entrance to the narthex, sanctuary, and fellowship hall. Church members have been asked to tell about specific pieces of art. To date, 14 ORICL members have signed up for the class.

SAVE THE DATE – SPRING PICNIC

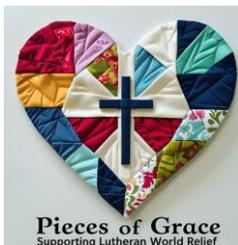
The Grace Spring Picnic will be April 12, 2026, at Frozen Head State Park. The dinner will begin at 5:00. Please bring the meat you want to grill and a dish to share. There will be a hike before the picnic to see the wildflowers. Come and enjoy fresh air and fellowship!



MINISTRIES OF GRACE

FEBRUARY LOVE OFFERING - CHRISTMAS IN FEBRUARY

The February Love Offering will be the first of two offerings go to Christmas Food Baskets. Baskets will be distributed to families in mid-December along with Angel Tree gifts for kids. The date will be announced later. Volunteers are needed as well as donations to purchase the food for the baskets to make this happen.



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.



FOOD PANTRY

The food pantry was open three Fridays to date. The number of households served those three weeks were 107. There were 276 individuals in those families, which meant we had a larger number of large families than usual. There were 16 new families served. Only 29% of those served in January were SNAP recipients

At this time, the food pantry is in need of a new refrigerator. The one we had been using is no longer working like it should and cannot be repaired. A new one will be purchased with the funds that are in the food pantry account. At this time, any financial donations to the food pantry will be greatly appreciated.

ALTAR FLOWERS

These may be taken after the late service to someone in need of cheer because of illness or sorrow--a church member, friend, or neighbor. Please sign the sheet in the narthex and insert a Grace card in the flower arrangement.



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 family of Pastor Steve Damos who passed away on January 8, 2026. A Celebration of Life was postponed due to impeding weather.





| | |
|------------|-------|
| Pam W. | 02/03 |
| Vickie K. | 02/05 |
| Emilie D. | 02/06 |
| Ruth S. | 02/13 |
| Evan W. | 02/13 |
| Terry D. | 02/14 |
| Valerie H. | 02/14 |
| David B. | 02/18 |
| Gabriel W. | 02/20 |
| Janet A. | 02/21 |
| Marla W. | 02/25 |
| Steven M. | 02/26 |

WOODLAND ART SHOW

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

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

In January, the Grace Hikers braved the cold and hiked to the Hollies.



GRACE HIKES

Believe it or not, Spring is coming and the Grace Hikers are making plans. Our March hike will be held March 14 and we are looking at possible trails at local state parks. There is a hike included as part of our April 12 Grace Picnic and we plan another hike May 2 that the Gureckis will be leading. Stay tuned for more information on our upcoming outings!



GROW WITH GRACE

This was a motto we used during our efforts to add the sanctuary here at Grace. How can we do this now? Invite a friend!

Saylor Hummel invited Laura Kile and the rest is history!

So invite someone – maybe a new neighbor or acquaintance. Or maybe someone who hasn't been active for a while. Maybe you could invite them to Game Day, on a hike or to a Lenten supper and service. We have a lot of great events coming up!

Good things can happen when you say "Come and see."

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You can donate once, weekly or monthly.



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