GRACE NOTES

NOVEMBER 2026 VOLUME 78, ISSUE 11

Lead Pastor
Shane Koepke

Deacon
Jessie Camp

Financial Director
Marsha Smith

Music Director/IT
Aaron Bartz

Office Manager
Deb Attig

Building Supervisor
Darin LaFrance

Engagement Director
Jenny Campos

Office Hours
Monday - Thursday
9:00 am - 2 pm
507-373-6496

Worship Services
Sunday Morning
9:00 am

Sunday School
Sunday Morning
10:00 am
Sept. through May

www.gracealbert.org

www.facebook.com/GraceAlbertLea

Pastor Shane

The Apostle Paul, a follower of Jesus, the one who wrote a bunch of letters to churches in ancient times that became books of the Bible, was famous for saying the following: "Grace to you and peace." It's often combined with "from God our father and Christ Jesus" or some variation of that. My point is this: We don't say that anymore. We say "Hi" or "What's up?" We don't greet each other with peace. Maybe after a long time apart we greet each other with a hug or a long handshake, but that's about it. Grace to you and peace. I like that.

Those two things, by the way, are at the heart of the Gospel of Jesus. Grace, that undeserved gift of God that sees the misstep, the mistake, the foot in the mouth, and keeps walking along side you and me. Grace is, the life of Jesus in our own lives. It is the communion we share, the baptismal waters we wash in, it is the breath of our own lives. Grace is the gift of God that shows us that nothing is beyond the power of God.

In turn, peace is the product of God's grace. Christ's peace (and that's what Paul is sharing in these letters) is the peace that looks beyond borders, labels and differences. It's a peace that is shared only because Christ is at the center of all creation, all relationships.

If we think of Christ at the center of our lives, then we cannot encounter another without Christ in the midst of that encounter. And when we see Christ at the center, we can address the other as a child of God, deserving of God's love, grace and peace just as much as we are in need.

This can be difficult, but being a Christian isn't always happy go lucky easy work. Sometimes is the work of reconciliation, of hard conversations and tension that only prayer and Jesus can ease.

So friends, as you meet the people on your journey, I pray that you can (even if you don't say it out loud) share that Grace and Peace Paul shared so long ago. By doing so we not only live out our faith, but we also carry on a tradition started so long ago by one of our faith fathers. So as Paul would say: Grace and Peace to you all as you gather, live and work in the world.

Pastor Shane

Deacon Jessie

When I was young, my grandmother would always be on the phone with our family every Sunday afternoon. As grandmothers often do, she asked me about my day and how everything was going. In return, I asked her about her day, and she responded fairly casually that she had just come back from a funeral for her friend. I gave her my condolences. She took a beat, sighed, and told me, "That's what happens when you get older. The people that you love die."

Two years later, at her own funeral, I sat in the pews next to my family. That conversation played on repeat in my own head. She was right, I thought. As I get older, people I love died. Ever since then, every funeral I have ever attended, for family or friends, I think of this Sunday afternoon conversation with my grandmother.

Reflecting on it now, what strikes me most was her acceptance of the fact. A simple statement of reality. Not a threat. Not a "oh just wait until you get older and you'll see". It was content resignation to the fact that yes, indeed, we all die, and that just might be okay.

That's scary to think about. Death isn't something that we like to talk about in "polite" conversation. And yet, it is something all of us will inevitably experience. Death can be scary because it feels unknown. It can bring up emotions we'd rather not experience.

The Bible is pretty clear on its stance on death. Death is not a threat to life. It is a promise of new life. Christ promises us that the life we have here on earth will end. The things that make life unbearable or existing difficult: all of it will come to an end. But we are also promised that this life is not the end. That death will never have the final say. Because with death comes the spring of new life. A life where all can flourish. Where all can exist in beloved community with one another. Where Jesus's love is at the core of everything.

This is why we celebrate All Saint's Day: it is a way for us to remember those we love who have gone ahead of us. A time to remember that death does not have the final say, and we give thanks for the saints who remind us of this truth. On November 1st, I invite you to come together and give thanks for all the saints and celebrate the new life we have in Christ.

Deacon Jessie

Church Council Minutes: October 13, 2026

Present at meeting

Pastor Shane Koepke, Deacon Jessie Camp, Doreen Pontow, JD Carlson, Erica Samp, Gerry Vogt, Adele Rosnow, Robert Jacobson, Jennifer Zoller, Philip Lonneman; Dave Drommerhausen

Opening Devotions: Adele Rosnow

Devotion centered around around Matthew 7:24-27, "The Wise and Foolish Builders." The message is to establish a strong foundation in life, maintain perspective on priorities, and put Jesus' teachings into practice.

Open Forum

Cards and gifts were presented to Pastor Shane and Deacon Jessie, from the congregation, in honor of Clergy Appreciation Month. A gift was presented to Philip Lonneman for their family, from the Council, in honor of the birth of their daughter, Petra.

Approval of October Council Agenda

Motion made by: JD Carlson
Seconded by: Gerry Vogt
Approved

Approval of September Council Minutes

Motion made by: Philip Lonneman
Seconded by: Erica Samp
Approved

Financial Report: Dave Drommerhausen

- The recent $8,500 expense for removal of trees will be paid using designated funds, rather than operating funds.
- Discussed the importance of using designated funds appropriately for eligible expenses, particularly toward year-end, to avoid unnecessary pressure on the operating budget.

Motion made by: Adele Rosnow
Seconded by: Gerry Vogt
Approved

Food for Backpacks: Dave Drommerhausen

- A donation has been received from the DAV (Disabled American Veterans).

Old Business: Pastor Shane

Kitchen remodel

- There is $3,500 left to raise for the Kitchen Campaign.
- The Grace Foundation has contributed a significant amount toward the project.

Stewardship of $500,000 Gift

- Approximately $6,000 has been spent on ramps (a stationary ramp in the fellowship hall [for stage and Sunday School classroom access] and a portable ramp for the sanctuary [for altar access, as needed]).
- The Mission Team has $50,000 of this amount to use, and both Pastor and Deacon feel these monies will be spent well.
- The committee will reconvene to finalize the previously-discussed establishment of a scholarship and scholarship amount from this gift.

New Business

None

Report: Pastor Shane

- Overwhelmingly positive comments have been received regarding the ramps, with just a few negative comments around their appearance.
- Pastor Shane and Deacon Jessie just returned from the annual Fall Conference, held in LaCrosse, WI. The conference speaker was a professor from Lenoir-Rhyne University in North Carolina. Topics included ecology, justice, and public discipleship.
- Annual staff reviews will begin soon. Pastor Shane plans to use narrative questions rather than numerical ratings to encourage meaningful conversations about staff performance and experiences. A member of the Personnel Team will participate in the reviews to provide an additional perspective and neutrality. Pastor and Deacon both expressed positive feedback about the staff and the overall working environment.

Continued on page 4

Church Council Minutes: October 13, 2026

Report: Pastor Shane (continued)

- **Grace Foundation:** the church owns approximately 180 acres of farmland north of town, between Albert Lea and Clarks Grove.
  - The property is currently rented for farming, generating approximately $19-20,000 annually. The Foundation is exploring windmill rights for the property. Estimated annual wind turbine revenue is approximately $24,000. Installation is tentatively anticipated in 2027, although the project has been under discussion for several years.
  - The Foundation is also discussing whether to retain ownership of the farmland or sell it and invest the proceeds. The property is currently valued at approximately $1.2 million. Financial advisors reviewed potential investment returns and indicated that income from the wind turbine and farm rental could be comparable to the interest earned from investing the sale proceeds, while retaining ownership of the principal asset.
  - The Foundation is expected to continue the discussion at its November meeting.

Report: Deacon Jessie

- Confirmation Sunday is scheduled for October 25, during 9am worship. (Pastor and Deacon decided to hold one worship service rather than the two services traditionally held on Confirmation Sunday).
  - Six of our Grace Youth will be confirmed.
  - Faith Project presentations will take place following worship. Council members and the congregation are encouraged to attend, to congratulate the confirmands.
- The Mission Team, Youth, and Sunday School will assemble homeless care kits on Sun., Nov. 1, following worship in the fellowship hall, which coincides with All Saints Sunday.
  - The congregation is encouraged to participate. Coffee and treats will be in the Fellowship Hall (not the Chapel), and there will be tasks available for people of all different ages, mobility levels, and abilities.

Report: Deacon Jessie (continued)

  - Congregation members may take kits with them to distribute to people they encounter, including while traveling over the upcoming holidays.
- Some church scholarship funds have been sitting in checking accounts and are not earning interest. Following conversations with the individuals responsible for the scholarships and donors, two scholarship funds will be moved into CDs to generate interest and help sustain future scholarship awards.

Atlar Guild

None

Building, Equipment & Grounds

None

Library

Doreen read the third-quarter report, submitted by librarian Melody Munden. The library is working with Sunday School students once a month during the school year. Activities include reading stories, introducing children to the church library, and providing books for the children to check out and read at home. The initiative is intended to encourage children's engagement with the church library.

Mission

See Stewardship and Deacon Jessie's reports above.

Music

Aaron Bartz is working on the Christmas program, to be submitted to Deacon Jessie by month-end for planning purposes. Special music (choir, bells, and/or Sunday School children singing) to take place in worship at least once per month.

Personnel

Committee will meet to discuss annual staff reviews, raises, and related year-end matters. Health insurance selections have already been completed.

Continued on page 5

Church Council Minutes: October 13, 2026

Scholarship

See Stewardship and Deacon Jessie's reports above

Sunday School

Meets weekly in the classroom behind the stage. No class Oct. 18 (MEA) nor Oct. 25 (Confirmation).

Ushers

None

Visitation

Meeting completed; report next month

Youth Ministry

- Youth Bible Study meets weekly in the Youth Room. No class Oct. 18 (MEA) nor Oct. 25 (Confirmation). Recent sessions included making cupcakes and packing "Birthday in a Box" kits for local food pantries, and a conversation about AI.
- The National Youth Gathering will be in Minneapolis, summer 2027. An informational meeting was held recently. Connect with Deacon Jessie if interested, as sign-ups will be happening soon.
- Care Packages for our 2026 graduates to be mailed Oct. 19.
- Friendsgiving, our annual Youth potluck, is Sunday, Nov. 15.
- Lefse Day is Saturday, Dec. 5. Sign up in the narthex - all are welcome.
- Youth Takeover Sunday will be during worship on Sunday, Dec. 6.

Prayers

Prayers for healing for family members of the congregation and a fellow clergy friend of Pastor Shane and Deacon Jessie who is recovering from recent injuries.

Prayers of joy and thankfulness for the birth of Petra Lonneman and for the health of mother and daughter.

Prayers of gratitude for our congregation and the greater community we have the opportunity to serve.

Roundtable

- Positive feedback regarding improved accessibility with the new ramps
- Positive feedback about the "Birthday in a Box" donations by the Youth to food pantries
- Positive feedback for Trivia (Adult Forum)
- The Bluetooth-based sound system setup developed by Aaron appears to be working well for people using compatible smartphones and Bluetooth hearing aids. Instruction sheets will be housed permanently in each pew.
- Questions/discussion around a potential homeless shelter in the community. First Presbyterian Church and a group associated with the Bridges of Hope initiative were mentioned in connection with ongoing discussions. Pastor expressed interest in connecting with the group so the Mission Team can discuss potential support, particularly given the $50,000 available for mission work. It was noted that homelessness can include people staying temporarily with others, living in vehicles, or staying in hotels, in addition to people sleeping outdoors.

Next Meeting

November 10, 2026 | 6:30 pm in the Fireside Room

Adjournment

7:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Zoller
Grace Lutheran Council Secretary

Grace Prays

Prayers of Healing

For those with new or ongoing health diagnoses

For **Danielle Wertman**, daughter of Doreen Pontow

For **Caleb Dahl**, grandson of Faith Ryan

Prayers for those Grieving

For the family & friends of **Mark Henschel**, son of Dex & Jan Henschel

Prayers of Joy

For the birth of **Petra Joanne Lonneman**, daughter of Philip & Erin & sister to Bethany

A Season of Remembrance & Gratitude

We give thanks for all who have gone before us and now rest in God's eternal care on All Saints Day.

We also give thanks for the many blessings in our lives and pray for grateful hearts as we celebrate Thanksgiving.

"O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."
~ Psalm 107:1

Grace Prays

We are honored to pray with and for you. To keep our list current, names (shared with permission) remain for two weeks and may be renewed. Please contact the office to add or remove a name. Thank you.

Pastoral Care

To assist the pastor in providing pastoral care for those hospitalized or homebound, please notify the pastor of pending surgeries, overnight hospital stays, or individuals who would like a home visit.
Please call: 507-373-6496

November

(Remember to pray for our Grace family on these dates.)

1. **Stuart & Christie Ness**
   - **Travis & David**
2. **Jackie Groeneweg & Connor**
3. **Matthew & Kristin Larson**
   - **Ryley, Brekyn & Adler**
4. **Michelle Love, Brooke & Tenley Tufte**
5. **Preston Robeck, Jacy & Brennan**
6. **Greg & Marsha Smith**
7. **Philip & Erin Lonneman**
   - **Bethany & Petra**
8. **Wynnette Flores**
9. **Bruce & Maureen Haugsdal**
10. **Janell Johnson**
11. **Christy Crom & Eliana Lopez**
12. **Jay & Amy Cichosz**
    - **Gavin, Campbell, Burke & Mika**
13. **Dann & Carol Hustoft, April**
14. **Amanda Hird**
15. **Holly Miller**
16. **Susan Westland, Tara**
17. **Chuck Zoller**
18. **John & Tammy Bryand**
    - **Anthony, Jesse, Jordan & Paris**
19. **Riki Esse & Dylan Johnson**
20. **Robert Gade, Hunter & Nicholas**
21. **Richard & Pamela Hanson, Brett**
22. **Barry Dahl**
23. **Marilyn Anderson**
24. **Becky Freden & Riley Knoss**
25. **Travis Westcott**
    - **Amanda, Cassandra & Colton**
26. **Tara Yotter**
    - **Isabella & Dylan Peterson**
27. **Kristin Kilian**
28. **Beverly Evans**
29. **Talora Grosland**
30. **Karizma Hamberg**

November

Caring and Sharing

Chairperson needed

Bill Barber
Mary Beese
Marlene & Gary Bergeson
LaJean & Roger Bjorklund
Jessica & Nick Bremer
Jane & William Buege
Mary Carlson
Dolores Gavle
Adrienne & Phillip Gehring
Natasha Grove
Tammy Hamberg
Joyce & Ross Hansen
Angie & Alex Johnston
Kimberly & David Moen
Stacie & Philip Neal
LeAnn Olson
Doreen Pontow
Diane & Lester Shaunce
Lynn & Randy Stay
Jessica Waters

Thank you Doreen Pontow for being the chairperson & to everyone who helped in October! We're grateful for all who volunteered.

If you're looking for a way to get involved, there's still time to sign up as a co-chair, your support makes a real difference.

Study Opportunities for Adults at Grace

We invite you to join any of our regular Bible study groups at Grace Lutheran.

Tuesday Morning Women's Bible Study

10:00-11:00 am
This study for women offers fellowship and great discussion.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

7:30-8:30 am
Consider joining this group for an opportunity for great discussion & fellowship.

Grace WELCA Women's Circles

Mary Circle meets every 1st Monday of the month at 4:30 pm in the Fireside Room.

New members are always welcome!

Call the church office for more information at 507-373-6496.



Pastoral Act for October

None for October

Gifts of Love

Altar Guild

Bread & Wine Given In Memory Of:

Mary Lou Jacobson given by Bob Jacobson

Bread & Wine Given In Honor Of:

Connor Groeneweg on his confirmation given by Ed & Julie Groeneweg

Building Fund

In Memory Of:

Donnie & Pat Johnson given by Debbie Christensen

Food for Backpacks Program

In Memory Of:

Verne Lunde given by Sandy & Tom Norby
Verne Lunde given by Steve & Cindy Merfeld
Donnie & Pat Johnson given by Debbie Christensen

Gift Given By:

Joe & Julie Johnston
Dale & Dorothy Baldwin
Daniel & Heather Harms
Charles & Belinda Alkula
Kent Jasperson
First Lutheran Church - Glenville

Kitchen Remodeling Fund

In Honor Of:

Donna Oakland's 90th birthday given by Wayne & Sharon Jahnke

In Memory Of:

Ron Holtan given by Rex & Lois Stotts
Vern Lunde given by Steve & JoAnn Bracker

Gift Given By:

Jean Bergo
Carroll & Mavis Hanson
Kent Jasperson
Larry & Lanae Thorstad
David & Sally Skrlin

Ball Scholarship

In Memory Of:

Crys Hammer given by Bob Ball & Laura McKibbin

Love

Gift Given By:

Richard & Darlene Jordahl
Ed & Julie Groeneweg
Mark Jacobson

Memorial

In Memory Of:

Vernon Lunde, father of Ginny Loberg, given by Hazel Spiering
Loved ones given by Mary Harriman
Greg Morfitt given by Barbara Throng
Greg Morfitt given by Mary Throng & Amy Allan
Ron Holtan given by Al & Pat Arends
Gladys Gulbrandon's birthday given by Eric Gulbrandson & Michelle Thompson

Music Ministry

Gift Given By:

Mary Harriman

Mission Ministry-Homeless Kits

Gift Given By:

Ginny Loberg
Pat Arends
Roger & Markell Vogt
Lanae Thorstad
Daniel & Heather Harms
Mark Rasmussen

Prayer Garden

In Memory Of:

Bob Moreau given by David & Sally Skrlin

Gift Given By:

Richard & Darlene Jordahl
Mary Harriman
Kent Jasperson

Gifts of Love

Quilters

In Memory Of:

Mark Henschel, son of Dexter & Janet Henschel given by Virginia Sorenson

In Honor Of:

Bernice Moreau given by David & Sally Skrlin

Gift Given By:

Dale & Dorothy Baldwin

World Hunger

Gift Given By:

Richard & Darlene Jordahl

Youth Ministry

In Memory Of:

Ron Holtan given by Dorothy Field

Gift Given By:

Mary Harriman

Please Note

Any additional "Gifts of Love" recorded by the church office after **October 19, 2026** will appear in the next issue.

If you have given a gift and your name has not been recorded, please call 507-373-6496.

Fair Trade Coffee

FAIR TRADE CERTIFIED

We will be selling coffee before and immediately following worship service on Sunday, **November 1, 2026**.

Noisy Offering



Remember your coins each Sunday!

Generosity at Grace

September 2026	Average **Attendance** in person was: **144 per worship**	**Giving** $37,971.40	**Expenses** -$54,149.78	**Year to Date Giving vs Expenses:** $438,313.67 – $463,222.78 **-$24,909.11**

Thanks for your attendance In Person or Live Streaming as we continue to be the church apart and together.

The Finance Ministry Team and Church Council appreciate your generous support. Your faithful Stewardship is essential for us to continue to support our ministries at Grace Lutheran.

Announcements

ADULT FORUM

Fireside Room | 10:00 AM

November 1st	Homeless Kit Event
November 8th	TRIVIA
November 15th	After the Election: We Are Still Neighbors
November 22nd	Christ the King: A Political Statement
November 29th	Wilson Strike of 1959 Presented by Zach Luther















November 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 Youth Gathering Registration 8:30 am Fair Trade Coffee **9:00 am Worship** 10:00 am Coffee Fell. 10:00 am Adult Forum **Homeless Kit Packing** 10:10 am Sunday School 10:20 am Youth Bible Study	**2** Youth Gathering Registration 9:00 am Staff Meeting 1:30 pm SAIL 2:00 pm Grief Share 4:30 pm Mary Circle	**3** Youth Gathering Registration 10:00 am Women's Bible Study 7 am-8pm Election Location for Ward 3	**4** Youth Gathering Registration 9:00 am Quilting Grp. 5:45 pm Chew & Chat 6:00 pm Bell Choir 6:30 pm 7th/8th Grade Confirmation 7:00 pm Adult Choir	**5** Youth Gathering Registration 7:30 am Early Morning Bible Study 1:30 pm SAIL	**6** Youth Gathering Registration **Building and Office Closed**	**7** Youth Gathering Registration **Building and Office Closed**
8 Youth Gathering Registration **9:00 am Worship** 10:00 am Coffee Fell. 10:00 am Adult Forum  10:10 am Sunday School 10:20 am Youth Bible Study	**9** Youth Gathering Registration 9:00 am Staff Meeting 1:30 pm SAIL 2:00 pm Grief Share	**10** Youth Gathering Registration 10:00 am Women's Bible Study 6:30 pm Council Mtg.	**11** Youth Gathering Registration 10:00 am Thorne Crest Communion 5:45 pm Chew & Chat 6:00 pm Bell Choir 6:30 pm 7th/8th Grade Confirmation 7:00 pm Adult Choir	**12** 7:30 am Early Morning Bible Study 1:30 pm SAIL 5:00 pm 2nd Wind Main Street Restaurant	**13** **Building and Office Closed**	**14** **Building and Office Closed**
15 **9:00 am Worship** 10:00 am Coffee Fell. 10:00 am Adult Forum **After the Election: We Are Still Neighbors** 10:10 am Sunday School 10:20 am Youth Bible Study **5-8 pm Friendsgiving**	**16** Newsletter Deadline 9:00 am Staff Meeting 1:30 pm SAIL 2:00 pm Grief Share 	**17** 10:00 am Women's Bible Study	**18** 9:00 am Quilting Grp. 5:45 pm Chew & Chat 6:00 pm Bell Choir 6:30 pm 7th/8th Grade Confirmation 7:00 pm Adult Choir	**19** 7:30 am Early Morning Bible Study 9:00 am Grace Notes Mail Prep 1:30 pm SAIL	**20** **Building and Office Closed**	**21** **Building and Office Closed**
22 **9:00 am Worship** 10:00 am Coffee Fell. 10:00 am Adult Forum **Christ the King: A Political Statement** 10:10 am Sunday School 10:20 am Youth Bible Study	**23** 9:00 am Staff Meeting 1:30 pm SAIL 2:00 pm Grief Share	**24** 10:00 am Women's Bible Study	**25** 6:30 pm Thanksgivng Eve Worship at First Lutheran 7:00 pm Pie Social at First Lutheran	**26** **Building and Office Closed** 	**27** **Building and Office Closed**	**28** **Building and Office Closed**
29 **9:00 am Worship** 10:00 am Coffee Fell. 10:00 am Adult Forum **Wilson Strike of 1959**	**30** 9:00 am Staff Meeting 1:30 pm SAIL 2:00 pm Grief Share					

Grace Lutheran Church
918 Garfield Avenue
Albert Lea, MN 56007

Phone: 507-373-6496
Email: office@gracealbertlea.org

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Worship Schedule

Sunday Worship Service

Time: 9:00 am
Options: In person and online
Watch: Facebook (facebook.com/gracealbertlea)
Youtube (youtube.com/@gracealbertlea)

Sunday School

Sundays at 10:10 am
(Now - May 2)
Fellowship Hall

Music

Wednesdays
(Now - May 5)
Bell Choir - 6:00 pm
Adult Choir - 7:00 pm

Confirmation

Wednesdays
(Now -May 5)
6:30 pm | Fellowship Hall

Chew & Chat

Wednesdays
(Now-May 5)
5:45-6:15 pm | Fellowship Hall

Youth Bible Study

Sundays
(Now - May 2)
10:20 | Youth Room