

CONNECTIONS

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Volume 7
August 2025

What is your
dream for
Grace?



**“God can do anything, far more than
you could ever imagine or guess or
request in your wildest dreams!” –
Ephesians 3:20**

Dreaming with God

By Pastor Joanna Mitchell

“I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your young will see visions. Your elders will dream dreams.” Acts 2:17

This whole summer we have been reading through the book of Acts, following the adventures of the first apostles as they move from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria and onto the ends of the earth. They begin their journey after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit in chapter 2, following the Spirit wherever it may lead and to whomever it may lead. It leads them to many unusual places and challenges their understanding of who God is and who is a part of God's community. Their journey is filled with detours and side quests, and time and time again it seems as if God has a bigger dream than they ever imagined.

This fall we are kicking off a strategic dream team—a small team of people who are invited to come in and listen to God's word in scripture and prayer. We will be asking the questions: where and to whom is God inviting us to go, and what is God inviting us to do? The job description is to listen and dream.

In worship we will be reexamining the book of Genesis and taking a closer look at Jacob. Jacob has vivid dreams—one that is sung about and depicted in art. On a dark night, with a rock for a pillow, Jacob dreams of angels on a ladder only to hear God's voice standing beside him in promise declaring “I will be your God.” Jacob's life looks different on the other side of this dream. He moves forward no longer in fear but faith.

Our Journey of Transformation

For the last 5 years, we have had a vision of what we needed to do—we needed to remove barriers and make our building and our church a place of welcome and acceptance. We have made big changes to our worship, to our programming and yes to our space. The question now is where is God leading us to go next. Where might God be pointing God's flashlight and asking us to focus our attention?

I would like to invite you to pray for our dream team as they begin their work in October: Grace Weigert (youth), Lori Ackerson, Nancy Jenkins, Jeff Leach, Alan Price, Paul Stangl, Brook Vanderleest, Melanie Weixel, Pastor Maria Markman and Pastor Joanna Mitchell. We are young and old, new and long-term members and attenders and everything in between. Please know that we will be reaching out to you as well because your dreams and your voice matters too.



The question now is where is God leading us to go next. Where might God be pointing God's flashlight and asking us to focus our attention?

Join Us in Dreaming



I believe that God does invite us to dream. God invites us to be faithful in listening to scripture and to the world in which we live. What dreams do you have about Grace Lutheran Church? In the pages that follow you will find the five-year vision of our vision board members. They were asked to write a story about walking into Grace in 5 years and what they see.

This is the beginning of our dreaming together. Could you join us? I believe God's Spirit is being poured out upon us today—inviting us to dream and vision and follow.

For the Love of Grace

By Jan Anderson

Sung to the tune of Earth and all Stars (#731)

Looking back now well o'er six decades,
We now see Grace as a church that has grown,
Stemming from staff and well-planned programs,
Planting the seeds of faith that will grow,
Come as a family or come alone,
Let Grace now serve as your church home.

Grace is a place where all are welcome,
It doesn't matter where you have come from,
Making new friends while helping others,
Helps our mission heart to grow,
Join in the music and sing along,
Listen to the witness of others.

If you so choose to come on Wednesday,
You will find renewed energy,
Driven by kids learning 'bout Jesus,
During the service the kids take the lead,
As kids and parents then study in groups,
They will find deeper connection.

Grace in 2030 - Our Shared Vision

By Grace Lutheran Vision Board

A Living, Breathing Community

When our Vision Board shared their stories with each other, we found ourselves united in tears as well as laughter as we rejoiced in our kids and ourselves growing older and our community growing in connection and care. Some of these stories were personal, but all of them had an understanding that Grace would both change and remain the same. These stories were written in hope and faithfulness.



Wednesday Evening at Grace - 2030 ~ Chrissy Gast's Vision

The year is 2030. Our family walks through the doors of Grace on a Wednesday evening and are welcomed by the smell of garlic—spaghetti is being cooked by one of our congregants. Our kids run off to greet friends, play shuffleboard and eat dinner. As I look around the room, I see a diverse mix of people—young and old, tenured members and visitors, a spectrum of gender, ethnic diversity, abilities and gifts. As 6pm approaches, the kids and their friends head off to their rooms and the adults gather with their respective study/small groups—all led by members of the church. Kevin and I have joined a group of other couples doing a video study on marriage.

**What is your vision for Grace in 2030?
We invite you to dream with us.**

Timeless Yet Transformed ~ Anders Grafstrom's Vision

The church hadn't changed much from the outside. The red brick is still there, and the green facade is still standing tall—now all other buildings have green accents too. It is now officially the neighborhood staple. The welcome team still opens the door with a smile and offers a handwritten visitor card. This is a Lutheran church after all—the coffee pot is still on, and there are always treats that follow the service.

Instead of just the traditional children's message, the high school kids run the kids' message on certain occasions. Today is Nora's day (age 16) and she is center stage, sharing a message that sounds remarkably like what Pastor Joanna or Maria might have said five years ago. I smile and am reminded that no matter how much the world changes, the Bible remains the same. Church is still a gathering place where people want to find common connection and make their community a better place.



Breaking Down Barriers ~ Dan Johnson's Vision

I walk into Grace Where You Are service. The bank of monitors to the sides of the pews show those worshipping with us at our community partner sites. It's always a joy to see the faces of kids from African Children Today singing along with us or folks from Family Promise. This format reaches both young and old near and far, allowing everyone to worship in their own way.

A Community Hub ~ Deb Corey's Vision

In 2030 our building is used every day by community groups, scouts and members. Conversations in our doors span diverse, even taboo topics—honest and vulnerable discussions. When you enter the community, our members are there: at the Y, with the Lions, at restaurants, at sporting events, city council meetings, school board meetings, visiting care facilities and hospitals. We would be known for good.



An Intergenerational Community: A Place where Life Happens

~ Dave Jenkins' Vision

There is a new sign out front: "Grace Lutheran Church and Community Center." Mike Schaff plays soccer with our neighbor kids. He waves and encourages others to join in the fun. Youth are practicing parallel parking in our parking lot. Our garden continues to be filled with color and bringing vibrancy to our community. People can find a quiet place to pray and talk to God.

Inside the building, the great hall is buzzing with people. Jan Anderson is calling out bingo numbers to her farmstead friends. Someone just won a pie. People are using small tables for Bible studies. Church and community members are working on the Andover Family Funfest.

~ Alex Erickson's Vision

The involvement of youth has increased across worship and in small groups as we continue to expand our intergenerational ministry.

~ Hayley Seide's Vision

I'd like to see kids and older adults sitting together because they want to, not because they are told to. Some groups would cross generations for example: crocheting, knitting and crafting or woodworking/construction/handywork. Meeting times that work for kids either in the evenings or on Sundays.

All Are Seen, Welcomed and Valued

~ Chris Pace's Vision

Grace in 2030 is busy with children running and waiting to go to Sunday school. In the corner by the coffee station there are teenagers laughing and joking around. Everyone is engaged and welcomed.

~ Kristi Evanger's Vision

Grace has beautiful landscaping and diverse artwork. When you enter, you will find labeled fidgets, interactive puzzles, and headphones to make our church welcoming to a diverse community.

~ Sally McPhillips' Vision

The promotion of Wednesday evening at Grace as a 'date night' and 'family night' has been well received. Many are coming for dinner AND staying for worship. Everyone knows about the cookies after service. The halls between the Narthex and fellowship hall have pictures of the last talent show. This became such a big hit after the first one in 2025! Pastor Maria is even considering expanding to a musical, similar to the previous ones she's done out in the community. David has composed some new songs for worship and they are simply amazing! A third pastor has been brought on to help with Wednesday services so that Pastors Joanna and Maria can have a night off once in a while. Since the completion of the recreational area on the west side of the building, Will and our youth group has started a weekly corn hole league and hosts other churches in our area. There is a big match tonight after worship, with a bonfire following.

2025 Summer Reflections

"The trip was renewing for my faith. It was a gift to spend time with our Grace youth and the Champlin group. Watching students form friendships and serve together was powerful. Their compassion and drive to make an impact, especially at the Free N' Deed market, was inspiring. Seeing our youth pray with those receiving groceries and witnessing the gratitude on people's faces really moved me. Our Ephesians devotionals sparked deep conversations about God and faithful service. I was privileged to witness God working through them—they truly were the hands and feet of Jesus." - Kayla Dean, Adult Chaperone to Chicago Mission Trip



"While I was in Chicago, I felt an overall sense of joy and it was so fun to be able to meet new people and get to know the others from Riverway. Traveling with Kennedy and Luke was so fun because I got to know them more personally and spiritually which I really enjoyed! During this mission trip I felt really close to the Lord when I was serving and just being around all the people that had the same goals and values as me. One of the memorable moments was when Luke bought a \$100 Lego set at Walmart 😊" - Calla Tanner, Chicago Mission Trip

"Chicago was the most fulfilling serving of my life." - Kennedy Seelen, Chicago Mission Trip



“Camp made me connect with God without the distractions of everyday life.” - Owen Wilkerson, BWCA Trip



“Going to the boundary waters was a life changing experience for me! It really helped me to disconnect from the outside world and focus on God’s creation for a week and grow a better relationship with him!” - Collin McCarthy, BWCA Trip

“I think that summer festival camp really made me feel good about myself, and it helped me connect with God more. I loved it.” - Kiley Seide, Summer Festival Camp



“I think summer festival camp is super fun! I felt God so many times during worship and all the activities we were able to do, my favorite being the messy fight.” - Ellie Schoenborn, Summer Festival Camp



“Something I loved about camp is that we do so many fun activities and we’re always busy. Another thing I liked is during small group time we would go to the education building and play sardines. Camp was just so much fun and I can’t wait for next year!” -From Izze Ringwelski, Summer Festival Camp



Women of the Word

We are excited to announce our ministry has a new name. Formerly known as W.O.W. (Women on Wednesday), we are now W.O.W. (Women of the Word). This name change came about due to our growing vision to offer Bible study opportunities beyond just Wednesdays and better serve women with different schedules.

Each week, women gather in small groups for Bible study, prayer, and meaningful conversation all while studying God's Word together in a safe space to wonder and question. We all come in with different life experiences and biblical knowledge, meeting as strangers or acquaintances but leaving as a bonded group, while uplifting each other through prayer and encouragement resulting in lasting relationships.

Throughout the year, we participate in connection activities, service projects, book studies, and focused times of prayer. These moments help us build friendships, live out our faith, and care for others. And yes—there are often snacks involved!

Looking ahead, we're excited about what the next five years may bring. 2024-25 was the startup of a monthly pastor-led book study, a time of shared fellowship, learning, and encouragement. These monthly gatherings offer not only an opportunity to learn and grow but also a chance for everyone to reconnect across groups and strengthen our community ties. Back again, join us for this year's Pastor-led study starting in October on the 3rd Wednesday of the month 9:30-11:30am, whether you are retired or have some flexibility in your schedule for a once-a-month appointment, open to all—no need to be a WOW member.

Additionally, in an effort to reach more women, we have scheduled a new evening study group which will open the door for greater accessibility and also created opportunities for our much-needed new small group leaders. We are hoping to offer more study time options in the future so that whether you are brand new or have been with us for years, there's a place for you here.

- Sept. 3 @ 11:30am WOW Reunion Pizza Ranch Andover
- Sept. 17 BIG WOW kick off
- Evening WOW Sundays @ 7pm and Mondays @ 6:30pm
- Pastor Maria study ALL are welcome 3rd Wed. of the Month (Oct. 15) 9:30am. No need to be a member of WOW.

Join us for pastor-led study on Wednesday, October 15th at 9:30am.



Men's Ministry

As I look back on what we have been doing as a ministry, I see the steps that we have taken to live up to our Mission Statement. They may be small steps, but they are step moving forward.

The men's ministry at Grace will:

- **Welcome** and encourage all men to engage in events that will develop and strengthen their relationship with God, their families, and other men.
- **Equip** all men with a variety of events that will meet their needs and support them as they explore and grow in their faith.
- **Send** them out as spiritual leaders and servants of Christ into their homes, communities, workplaces, and the world.

We are all in different spots along our journey, not one of us is perfect. But we are perfectly equipped to help one another.

All we need to do is connect people who have been through it with those that are going through it, you are not alone. Whether it is marriage issues, money, job, kids, health or just life we need to stand together.

We have branched out from our regular meetings on the 1st Tuesday (Beef O'Brady's) and 3rd Saturday (Bakers Square) of the month for conversations and a meal. We have been supplying funds to the Haven for Heroes, a veteran-based shelter in Anoka. Assisting Scott Christenson with cooking and serving at the Stepping Stone homeless shelter in Anoka.

Our logo is the word **ENGAGE** - **E**veryone **N**eeds **G**od **A**nd **G**race **E**very day.

Are you interested in joining us, have an idea for a service project or Bible study for the men of Grace? Reach out to the church office and they will connect us.

Be Grateful,
Mike Schaaf

Fall Preview

As we swap lake days for backpacks and routines, we're excited to welcome familiar faces back to worship and programming—and to launch into a season of fresh opportunities. Some things will feel comfortably familiar; others will invite you to try something new, to listen, grow, and serve in fresh ways. Whether it's a brand-new program or just new to you, there's a place for you here. Let's dive in! -Pastor Maria Markman

New things to look out for:

- Women of the Word (formerly Women on Wednesday) now has evening study options throughout the week; Sundays at 7pm & Mondays at 6:30pm;
- New Wednesday night Bible Study Series, every 5-6 weeks we will focus on a new topic;
- Studio 45 is back by popular demand, our 4th and 5th grade faith formation program now every week on Wednesdays;
- Own Your Faith is our 9th grade faith formation leading to confirmation, its taking on new a new form. We will be confirming this group not in May but next fall: Reformation 2027;
- Faith and Neighboring Practices, you heard a lot from our team's learning through the Minneapolis Area Synod and now we want you to join once a month on the second Sunday evenings at 6:30pm starting Sept. 14th.

Registrations are now open in Realm!





W.O.W.

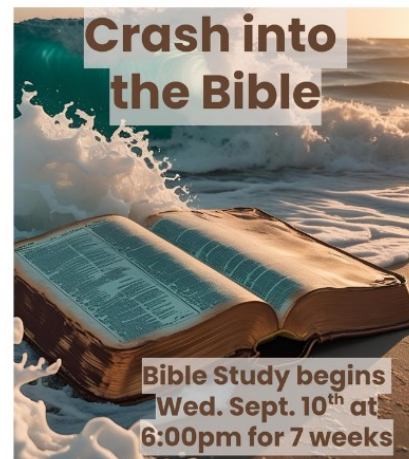
Women
of the
Word

Begins Wed. Sept. 17th



Faith & Neighboring Practices

Come practice faith and
neighboring with us! The 2nd
Sunday of the month at 6:30pm.



**Crash into
the Bible**

Bible Study begins
Wed. Sept. 10th at
6:00pm for 7 weeks

Thursday Morning
ZOOM
Bible Study
10:30-11:30 am



SUN. SEPT. 28TH AT 11:30AM

OR

WED. OCT. 8TH AT 5:30PM



**First
Communion
Class**

**Sunday, Sept. 28th
at 11:30am**

First Communion
Celebration
Sunday, Oct. 5th at both
worships.



Grace Choir

Rehearsals begin
Tues. Aug. 26th at 7:15pm



Grace Praise
Team

Rehearsals are on
Tuesdays at 6:00pm



Symphonic
Ensemble

Seasonal between services
(contact Joe Jackson for
more info)

Pet Blessing
Sunday, Oct. 5th
11:45am - 12:15pm



WEDNESDAY, OCT. 29TH
5:00PM

Love of Grace
Bazaar

13655 ROUND LAKE BLVD NW ANDOVER MN 55304

Saturday, Nov. 8th
9:00am - 3:00pm



Handmade
Crafts & Food



Grace Lutheran Church
13655 Round Lake Blvd. NW
Andover, MN 55304

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RALLY SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 7TH
WORSHIP 8:30 & 10:15AM
MINISTRY FAIR 9AM-12PM

**Join us on Sunday,
Sept. 14th!**



God's work. Our hands.



Join us for a
day of service

9:00am - Worship (one service only)
10:00am - Service Projects