

Volume 9

GRACE-ANDOVER.ORG

December 2025

CONNECTIONS

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH



“The true light that shines on all people was coming into the world.” ~ John 1:9

Star of Wonder



"I like the songs and wanted to do it because I like being in plays." - Eve, wiseman.



A KIDS CHRISTMAS MUSICAL OF HOPE

"I like getting to act like an old man." - Arthur, Northstar.

Performing
on Sun.
Dec. 21st

"It's AWESOME! I love being a star and the monologue that starts the show. And if I get a microphone, it's having a microphone." - Nora, Superstar.

"I'm in the Christmas program because my mom signs me up. And I like the music!" - Mylo, the moon.

8:30am &
10:15am

"I wanted to do it! The singing and the dancing!" - Haven, a shepherd.



Star of Wonder

By Tess Blossom

My name is Tess Blossom, and my husband, Joel, and I have three children—Hunter, Harper, and Haven—who have been attending Grace for several years now. From the beginning, it's been important to us that our kids feel a part of a faith-based community—a place where they feel welcomed, comfortable, and excited to learn about the Lord. For our family, Grace has been that place. Our kids are always eager to participate in children's activities and often ask, "Do we get to go to church today?"

Christmas time is no exception. The Christmas program brings a special kind of light and excitement to our home. My kids look forward to discovering their roles, learning new songs, and spending time with friends. I love watching them sing and dance around the house—almost unknowingly teaching themselves about Jesus. During a season when the anticipation of Santa and presents can easily take over, the Christmas program helps refocus our family on the true "reason for the season"—Jesus, the light of the world.

...the Christmas program helps refocus our family on the true "reason for the season"...

As a mom of younger elementary-aged children, I find the Christmas program and other Advent activities at Grace to be a meaningful way for my kids to connect with their growing faith. I love that the program is not only fun and engaging for the children, but also for everyone who gets to witness the story unfold.

This year, my youngest daughter is participating for the first time. I wasn't sure if she was ready to stand on stage and follow directions, but she asked me to sign her up—and how could I say no? Watching her last Sunday, singing the songs and trying so hard to follow the choreography, I was reminded once again that God's voice can be heard, and God's light can shine even through the smallest among us.

For my kids, the Christmas program might simply be a fun way to celebrate Christmas and spend time with friends. But for our family, it's so much more. It's a chance to grow in faith together and to share the true light and love of Christmas with the community we call home.



Surviving the Holidays

By Steve Martin

The holiday season can be especially challenging for those who have experienced the loss of a loved one. Traditions, gatherings, and festive celebrations often intensify feelings of grief, making it difficult to participate or find joy. Join us for a two-hour meeting on Dec. 7, 2025, at 12:00pm at Grace Lutheran Church. Everyone is welcome. During the gathering you will receive compassionate support and practical strategies to help cope and find comfort during the holidays.

Grief can manifest in many ways, particularly during the holidays when memories and expectations are heightened. It is important to recognize that grief is a personal journey, and there is no right or wrong way to feel. Allow yourself to experience your emotions without judgment, whether that means sadness, anger, or even moments of happiness.



Dreaming Forward with Grace

By Pastor Maria Markman

This fall, we began dreaming together—listening to your hopes and stories about Grace. It's inspiring to hear how deeply this community has shaped your lives! Now our Strategic Dream Team has formed to help guide our next steps as we listen for where God's Spirit is leading us—through one another, through scripture, and through our wider community.

Our discernment centers on three questions: Who are we? Where has God placed us? What is God calling us to do next?

We've grounded this journey in John 4—the story of Jesus and the woman at the well. Their honest conversation about life and faith, similarities and differences, transformed her, and through her, an entire community encountered God's love.

In many ways, Grace has been that kind of well—where lives are renewed and faith deepens. Now we're listening for where God's spirit is leading next.

As members of Grace, you'll be invited into our discernment process—through surveys, sharing your perspectives on priorities, helping select areas of focus, shaping goals, and joining in the work of planning and implementation. Keep your eyes, minds, and hearts open for more information in the months to come. Together, we'll listen, dream, and follow where God's Spirit is leading.



December Events

Wed. Nov. 26th

Thanksgiving Eve
6:30pm Pie Social
7:00pm Worship

Sunday Dec. 7th

Christmas
Campout
4:00pm

Wed. Dec. 10th

Shut-In Worship
2:00pm

**Seeds of Grace
Closed**

Dec. 24, 25 & 26th
Jan. 1st

Sunday Dec. 14th

Advent Cantata
8:30am & 10:15am

Wed. Dec. 17th

Blue Christmas
Worship
7:00pm

Friday Dec. 19th

Middle School
Christmas Party
6:00pm

Wed. Dec. 17th

High School
Christmas Party
8:00pm

Sunday Dec. 21st

Children's
Christmas Program
8:30am & 10:15am

Wed. Dec. 24th

Christmas Eve
Worship
2:00pm, 4:00pm
& 9:00pm

Thurs. Dec. 25th

Christmas Day
Worship
10:00am

Sunday Dec. 28th

Combined Worship
9:00am

**Church Office
Closed**

Dec. 25th
& Jan. 1st

Be the Light

By Will Weikle

I have in the Youth Room a giant coloring poster that says, “Be the Light - Matthew 5:14.” This is a big theme in our faith formation programming for our children and youth. What does it look like to be the light, to shine the light of Jesus? This is something that I believe the children and youth here at Grace already do well! So, I thought I would just share a few stories of moments where I saw the light of Jesus being shone by our Youth.

There are 4 high schoolers who work together to lead the Wednesday evening children’s programming, Studio 45 and Kids Night Out. They have taken so much ownership over it and have been so dedicated to teaching the kids about God and Jesus and just having fun together. One of the many things that these high schoolers have done is they put on their own food drive. They created a goal for how much food they’d like to bring in, they advertised it and did everything they needed to do in order to make this happen. They made the decision to put in the extra effort to help feed the hungry.



Another place I see the light of Jesus being shone is in the prayer requests at Youth Group. I’ve written about this before, where I start every session of Youth Group going around and asking the high schoolers if they have any prayer requests, and then we pray together. Oftentimes, these prayer requests are for other people. For example, I had one student who was going in for a surgery, and another student who was getting her wisdom teeth taken out. Neither of these students were at Youth Group that week, but other students remembered them, thought about them, and loved them, so their prayer request was for their friend who was preparing for surgery. I see the light of Jesus in the thoughtfulness, and the community that is built by praying for each other.

A third place I’ve seen the light of Jesus being shone is at our movie nights. These are big events where we essentially babysit anywhere between 15-35 young children for a few hours while their parents go and do whatever they need to do. Youth are invited to come help out, and the way they show up brings so much joy to my heart. At the most recent movie night, we were having a balloon party at the end, and one of youth was playing a hilarious balloon battle game with a shy preschooler who often finds it hard to connect with other people. The belly laughs were a beautiful reminder of the joy of being in community centered around Christ.



So, as we enter into this Christmas season, I ask you to reflect on the places where you see the light of Jesus being shone. Where are you being called to be the hands and feet of Jesus, like the high schoolers doing the food drive? Who are you being called to pray for, like the youth do at Youth Group? Where can you create a space of love and joy like the youth at movie night? Go, and be the light!

Seasonal Giving




Holiday Wishes

Pick a snowflake off the tree and return the snowflake with your donation to the Donation Station by Dec. 10, 2025 (Gift cards & Monetary donations can be dropped off at the church office.)

Adopt a Sand Creek Family 2025

Share God's grace this Christmas by adopting a local Sand Creek Elementary family.

Register by scanning the QR code:




Helping Grace families who need support during Christmas.

*Giving Trees will be in the Narthex & Seeds of Grace

Year Round Giving



Fruits of the Spirit

"...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." - Galatians 5:22-23

Giving to Grace Lutheran


Food Shelf Donations Needed



Please no opened and/or expired food.


The food shelf/Grace Lutheran is unable to store items such as toiletries, wipes, paper products, and random items. Please use the list when you are purchasing items.

Please scan the QR code for the specific list of food items need.

HOPE 4 YOUTH

Providing Pathways to End Youth Homelessness



Birthday Bags!

An ongoing need for homeless youth.

Please scan the QR code for the list of needs.




Sand Creek Donations Needed

Grace is collecting items on a continuing basis for Sand Creek, including:

- Suggested snacks
- Emergency clothing

Please scan the QR code for the list of items requested.



Please drop off your donations in the Sand Creek bin at the Donation Station.

Christmas Wonder

By Jeanne Carls

Christmas has always been a source of wonder for me. My earliest memories include the wonder of seeing lights twinkling on the Christmas tree, the wonder of running outdoors on cold winter nights searching for the North Star above the barn on our farm (in my childhood I thought the North star was the Bethlehem star), the wonder of lighting the Advent Wreath, the wonder of singing Silent Night while lighting candles during a Candlelight Service.



The very first singing of Silent Night was on Christmas Eve in 1818, accompanied by a guitar (and from a guitarist point of view the instrument was a very good choice!) due to the church organ being broken. My earliest childhood memories of Christmas also include music and singing. Singing in our church Children's Program, of gathering around to sing carols. To me music has always been so much more than notes and words on paper - music has always spoken to my soul. Singing and music provides joy, a sense of belonging, and of wonder.



So why do we sing Christmas carols? Why lights on the tree? We sing to celebrate the birth of Jesus, to pass on traditions, to create a sense of community, to praise God, to spread light in the darkness of winter. The lights on the tree symbolize the birth of Christ being the light of our world – bringing hope, renewal, and joy!



This Christmas may you truly experience the joy, the wonder, the light of Christmas! The light that shines in our darkness, lights up our lives and illuminates our hearts.

Sing Christmas

By David Phelps

“Singing with others is an absolutely unique experience. It is one of the most important things in the world. Where else do you have everyone doing the same thing at the same time without the use of special equipment and for a greater purpose, and no one is sitting on the bench?” – Ian Loeppky.



After college, I had the opportunity to sing with the a cappella group “Marcoux Corner.” Just the four of us. Working, touring, and performing. Countless hours in a conversion van driving across the Midwest. One evening, after a performance, as we were driving back to our hotel, one of us started singing the song “In the Still of the Night.” We didn’t perform it regularly, but we all sang it at some point. Within a few measures, all four of us were singing our respective parts, and sang the whole thing. Just us, in the van, singing together. No audience, no rehearsal, just for fun.

I think of that experience often because, as a performing group, singing was our “job.” We rarely sang together outside of rehearsals or performances. This spontaneous singing in the van helped shape my view of music, and how wonderful it is to sing (and play) with so many talented people.

That is what led to our first collaboration with Lord of Life back in 2021. Two churches with music to share coming together and creating a unique experience for all. I am so grateful that it continues to this day, and this year marks our 5th annual Advent Cantata “Sing Christmas!” Come and share this experience with us, and maybe even join in on a familiar song or two. Just remember, all God’s children have a place in the choir.

God's Love and Light does Shine.

By Pastor Joanna Mitchell

We have been walking our dogs in the dark lately. The sun sets too early for us to be able to get them on their much-needed walks in the evening especially because the hour before sunset is filled with way too many dogs for our anxious and highly distractable dogs. The dark is a welcome friend. In the dark, the dogs can't see as far and so don't notice the dog that gives them anxiety a few blocks ahead. We can hide more easily behind cars. But other things are harder. In the dark we worry about getting hit by a car; it's also a lot harder to see the dog droppings we are committed to picking up.

Living in Minnesota, we know darkness well, especially in the winter months. Many of us in December will wake up in the dark and then leave work in the dark. The days are short, and the nights are long. And we learn to walk in darkness. We learn to use the reflection of the snow to find light even in the shadows. We start to pay attention to the stars that light up not only the night but the morning sky.

I cannot tell you how the light comes,
but that it does. That it will.

Jan Richardson writes in her blessing: How the light comes: "I cannot tell you how the light comes, but that it does. That it will. That it works its way into the deepest dark that enfolds you, though it may seem long ages in coming or arrive in a shape you do not foresee."

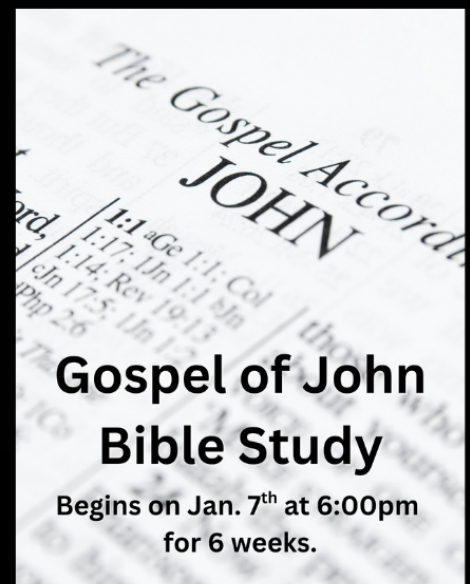
John 1:9 states: "...the true light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world." This is what we wait for during Advent. As the days grow shorter and the night grows longer, we light candles in hope and promise, knowing that the darkness will not last forever. Knowing that soon, the days will start to lengthen.

While creation tells us its own story of light and darkness, so does our world. We see the darkness all around us. Too often, our news is filled with stories of division, of hurt, of pain. We read stories of abuse and cry out for God to bring light to the darkness of those who have suffered. We hear statistics about the rising cost of food, and the housing shortage and feel the darkness of basic needs not being met. And we also light up that darkness. It doesn't take much light for darkness to start to transform. Just a spark, just a candle, just a flash. Bringing light into the darkness can be as simple as sitting by a grieving friend, dropping off food for the food pantry, or listening to someone who is feeling alone.

In the Gospel of John, the author shows us the deep contrast between light and dark. The darkness of sin and death. Those who hide their faith in darkness like Nicodemus who goes asking questions of faith to Jesus under the cover of night and those who are exposed in the daylight like the woman at the well who gets water at noon and isn't afraid to ask hard questions or tell her truth. We will be studying the Gospel of John starting in January. We invite you to a Bible study of John on Wednesdays starting January 7th at 6pm. Together we will consider how God invites us to not only wait for the light, but to receive it by growing in faith, and reflect it as we shine out with God's love in a world that too often feels consumed by darkness.

As we walk through these dark December days, may we trust that the light is coming—both the literal lengthening of days after the solstice and the true light of Christ that enlightens everyone. May we learn to walk confidently in the darkness, knowing we are never alone, and may we become bearers of light to a world that desperately needs it.

This Advent, I invite you to consider how you are reflecting God's light today and how you might invite others to join you. For indeed God's light and God's love does shine!



Grace Lutheran Church

13655 Round Lake Blvd. NW

Andover, MN 55304

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Anoka, MN 55303

Christmas Worship

Christmas Eve

2:00pm

4:00pm

9:00pm

Christmas Day

10:00am

