ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

Sunday, November 1, 2026

9:30 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion



"Be and Make Disciples of Jesus Christ"

Grace Lutheran Church
111 Lutheran Drive, P.O. Box 86, Eaton, Ohio 45320
937.456.6258
Email: GraceEaton111@gmail.com
Website: www.gracelutheranofeaton.com
Pastor Dwight Hanson

WELCOME TO WORSHIP!

Please take a moment to fill out the "Attendance & Communion" Registration Cards (located in the pew racks). Pass your card to the end of your pew.

P - Presiding Minister; A - Assisting minister; **C - Congregation;**
* - Please Stand
LBW - Green Hymnal ***WOV - Blue Hymnal***

Please silence electronic devices.
+ + +

PRELUDE: ***"Built On a Rock the Church Doth Stand" (arr. Martin)***

***PROCESSION:**
P Please rise and face the processional cross at the entrance to the sanctuary.

***WORDS OF WELCOME:**
P We gather in the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

***RESPONSIVE READING:**
P Please join me in in a responsive reading from Revelation (22:1-5; ESV):

P Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city;
C also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

P No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.
C They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

P And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun,
C for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

PROCESSIONAL HYMN:** ***"Shall We Gather at the River" ***(WOV 690)***

***GREETING:**
P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
C And also with you.

***PRAYER OF THE DAY:**
P Let us pray: Beloved God, in Christ you have drawn all your people into one, holy communion. Grant that as we remember the saints who have gone before us, we are strengthened for lives of faithful service to you so that the world will know your blessed presence. Bring us all at the last to the feast which has no end where all will be one;
C through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

During the singing of "For All the Saints", the congregation is invited to come forward to the easels in front of the chancel railing to write the names of loved ones, who lived and died in the grace of Jesus Christ.

"For All the Saints"

1 For all the saints who from their labors rest, all who
by faith before the world confessed, your name, O
Jesus, be forever blest. Alleluia! Alleluia!

2 You were their rock, their fortress, and their might; you,
Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight; you, in the
darkness drear, their one true light. Alleluia! Alleluia!

3 Oh, may your soldiers, faithful, true, and bold, fight as
the saints who nobly fought of old
and win with them the victor's crown of gold. Alleluia! Alleluia!

4 Oh, blest communion, fellowship divine, we feebly struggle,
they in glory shine; yet all are one within your great design.
Alleluia! alleluia!

5 And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long, steals on
the ear the distant triumph song,
and hearts are brave again and arms are strong. Alleluia!
Alleluia!

6 The golden evening brightens in the west; soon, soon to
faithful warriors comes their rest; sweet is the calm of
paradise the blest.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

7 But then there breaks a yet more glorious day: the saints
triumphant rise in bright array;
the King of glory passes on his way. Alleluia!
Alleluia!

8 From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast, through
gates of pearl streams in the countless host, singing to Father, Son,
and Holy Ghost:
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Text: William W. How, 1823-1897, alt.

FIRST LESSON: Revelation 7:2-3, 9-17

A A reading from Revelation:

[2]I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, [3]saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

[9]After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb,

clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, [10]and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" [11]And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, [12]saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." [13]Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" [14]I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [15]Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. [16]They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. [17]For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

A The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

SECOND LESSON: 1 John 3:1-3

A A reading from 1 John:

[1]See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. [2]Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. [3]And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure**.**

A The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

***VERSE** (LBW1, pgs. 62-63)**:**



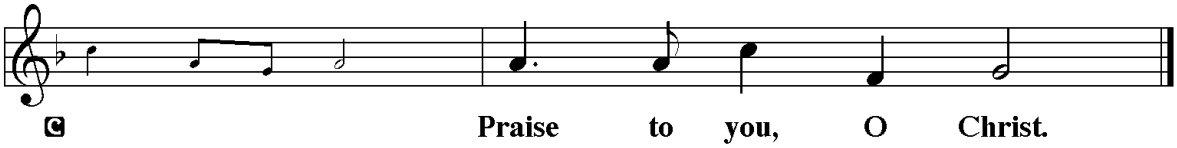
***GOSPEL: Matthew 5:1-12**

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the fifth chapter.



1Seeing the crowds, {Jesus} went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came
to him. 2And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: 3"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for
theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
5Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive
mercy. 8Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9Blessed are the peacemakers, for
they shall be called sons of God. 10Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you
and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12Rejoice and be glad, for your reward
is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

P The Gospel of the Lord.



CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SERMON: Pastor Dwight Hanson: <u>His Future</u> (Please find the full Sermon as the end of this bulletin)

HYMN OF THE DAY: *"Holy God, We Praise Your Name" (LBW 535)

***NICENE CREED:**

C We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit

he became incarnate from the virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and Glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH:

A Heavenly Father, unite us with the whole Church on earth and in Heaven, praising the Lamb who reigns forever. When this present life becomes difficult and we do not feel strong, strengthen us by the power of the Holy Spirit, and remind us that Christ's Kingdom does not fade. Stir up memories of all the saints who have gone before us, as the lamp of faith is handed from generation to generation. And in this way reveal the blessings of being traditionally grounded. We lift up the name of our dear brothers and sisters in Christ, whom we have commended to your keeping:

Connie Coffman, Martha Grimme, Barb Goebel, Ruth Hardin

[*We pause in silence as a candle is lit and a bell is rung*.]

Be our rock and our fortress. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

A We pray to you, sovereign God, for the needs of the world. You know everything that happens on the earth. Renew us in all that is good and true. Put the hearts of servants into all who are elected to offices of responsibility. Grant them your wisdom so that they may serve the common good. Be with all who face war.
Draw every heart and mind to Jesus. Remind us of the Lord's words, "Blessed are the peacemakers." And in this broken world, we remember those who put their lives on the line to keep an earthly peace. Protect all who serve with honor, and their families. Lord, in your mercy,

C Hear our prayer.

A We pray for all who need healing of any kind: For *Kelly Coffman, Josh & Jaime Cummins & family, Jim Courtney, Tiffany Daugherty, Terry Good, Katie Morrison, Amy & Bryan*

Jackson, Richard Lehman, Allan Ludwick, Elizabeth & Emily McDade, Gary Pemberton, Sr., Barbara Perry, Beverly Proeschel, Tom Schamel, Iva-Laura Sherry, Dean & Mary Shetter, Jon Tucker, John Woesner, as well as those whom we name in our hearts (pause for silent prayer). Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray,

C Trusting in your mercy, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OFFERING

ANTHEM: ***"Now Rest, Ye Pilgrim Host"*** ***Choir***

OFFERTORY:** ***"Let The Vineyards Be Fruitful" (LBW1, pg. 66):



***OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

P Let us pray. Merciful Father,

C We offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

***CONFESSION:**

P Let us pray: Heavenly Father, we come before your throne of mercy, not because of any righteousness of our own, but only by the grace of Jesus. Through baptism into Christ, you have joined us to his death and resurrection. Make us die every day to sin. Wash away all that separates us from your will. Renew us again and again by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we may live as children of the promise, until that final day when we shall see our Lord and all of your saints face to face.

(*Silence for personal reflection*.)

P Restore us, O Lord.

C Make us instruments of your peace. Forgive us and use us for the glory of the Kingdom. Amen.

***THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION:**

P In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and
gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this
for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave
it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

***LORD'S PRAYER:**

C Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

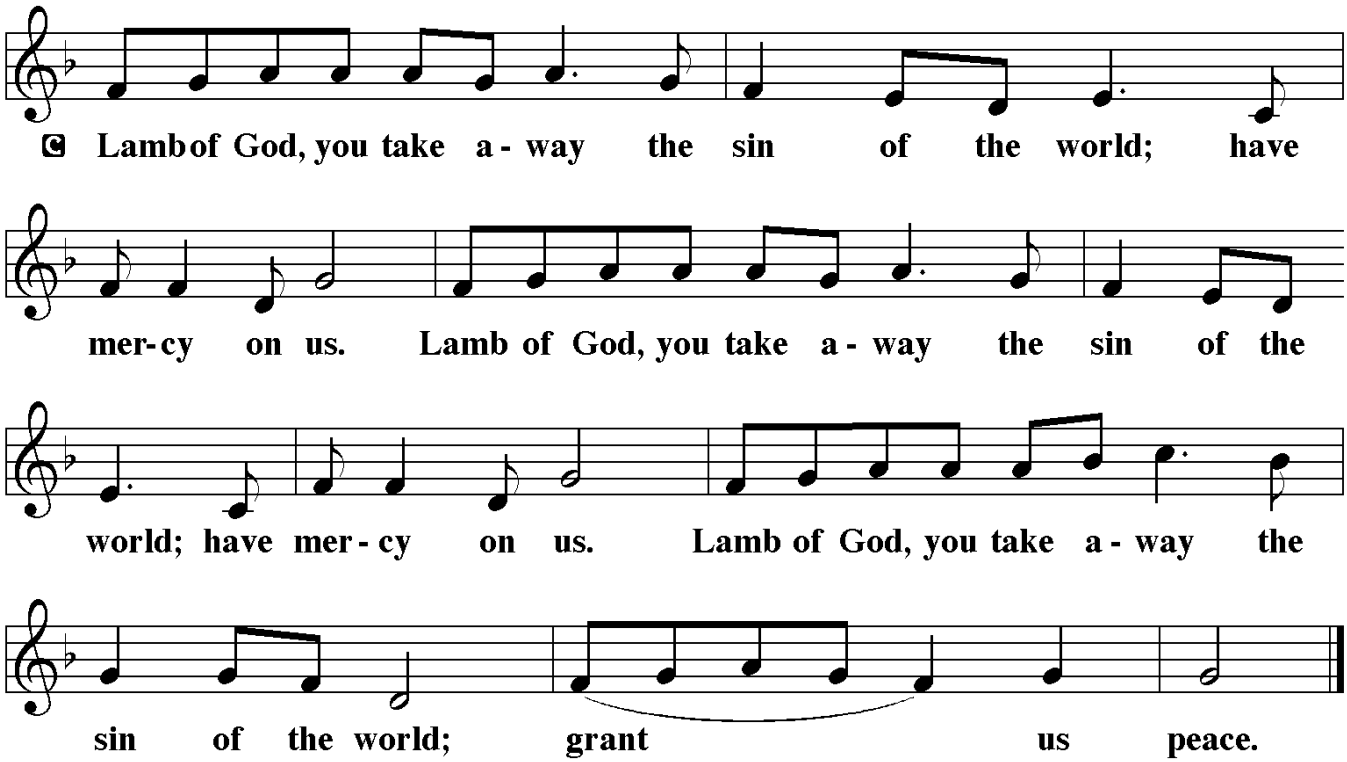
DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION & BLESSING OF CHILDREN

In Holy Communion our Lord Jesus graciously invites those who have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to repent of all that separates us from God, and to receive His sacred and real presence for the forgiveness of sins.

In addition to wine, grape juice is also offered. Children who do not yet receive Communion may receive a blessing.

Holy Communion will be received continuously.

COMMUNION HYMNS: ***"Lamb of God"*** (LBW1, pg. 72)



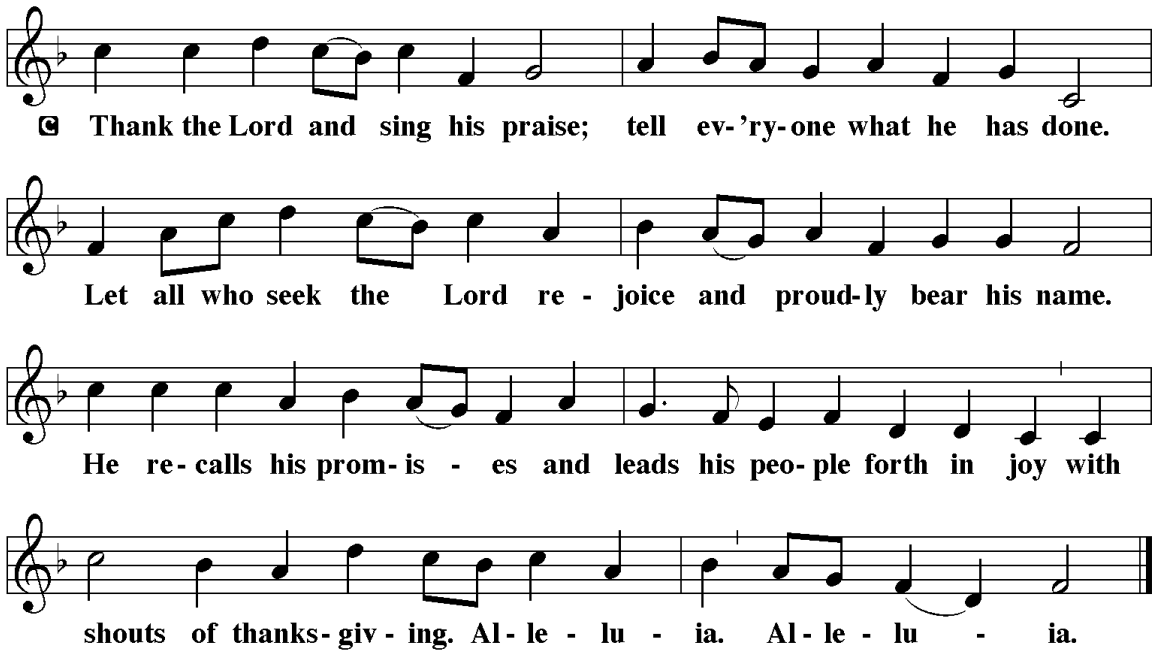
"I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry"
(WOV 770)

"Great is Thy Faithfulness"
(WOV 771)

"Blest Are They" (WOV 764—Best Sung, from the blue hymnal***)***

***POST-COMMUNION BLESSNG:**
P The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.
C Amen.

***POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE** (LBW pg. 72):



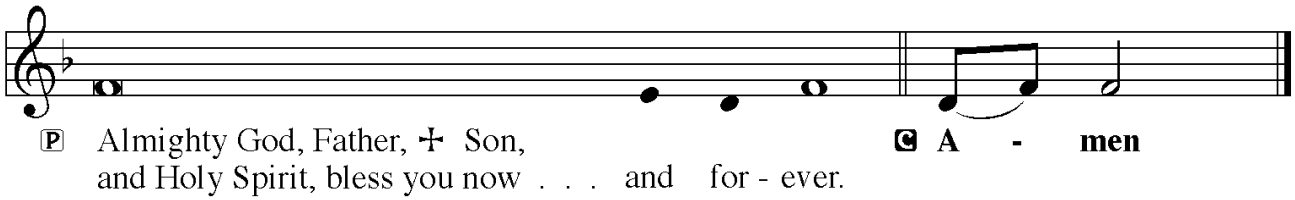
***POST-COMMUNION PRAYER:**

P Let us pray:

C Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of those whom you have fed with one Heavenly food; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***BLESSING:**



SENDING HYMN:** ***"Rejoice, O Pilgrim Throng!" vss. 1-2, 6-7 (LBW 553)

***DISMISSAL:**

A Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

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The flowers on the altar this morning are given to the Glory of God by: The Good Family in Honor & Celebration of Terry's Birthday!

The additional Flowers on the altar this morning are given to the Glory of God by: Elaine Fudge in honor & celebration of Birthdays on November 3rd.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Grace Lutheran Sunday School Fall Schedule

Friends or drop ins welcome!

Regular Classes and Special Events for kids:

November 8: Thankful Breakfast/Pageant Practice

November 29: No Sunday School (Thanksgiving weekend)

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES -- FELLOWSHIP / EDUCATION

On Sundays

- **After Worship -- Refreshments** for all in the Fellowship Hall.
- **Youth Sunday School classes** meet after worship in the Music Room (Education wing). Bring a friend! Parents/grandparents are always welcome.
- **Adult Education** – After refreshments in the Fellowship Hall.
- **Sunday S'mores @ 6:00 p.m.** Every other week – Middle School & High School-aged Youth. Friends are welcome. Tina Ebright is the moderator, and she can be reached @ 937-472-5663

During the Week

- **Phoebe Women's Bible Study** 2nd Monday of each month – 6:30 p.m. "Discerning the Voice of God". Contact Kelly Mt. Castle (937-336-1223 or Kelly.mtcastle@gmail.com.
- **Moms Group** the 2nd Tues. of each month – 5:30 p.m. Contact: Veronica Forney 1-910-581-8646.
- **Wednesday Morning Prayer & Bible Study –** 9:00 a.m.
- **Graceful Fiber Guild** The 3rd Thursday of each month – 2:00-4:00 p.m. Bring a craft or just come to learn a new one
- **Family Game Night** – once a month.

These opportunities are open to all. Bring a friend,

THIS WEEK AT GRACE

OFFICE HOURS:
Monday -Friday: 10—1, 2—5

TODAY November 1, 2026—All Saints Sunday—Daylight Saving Time Ends
9:30 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion
10:30 a.m. Fellowship Time & Youth Sunday School
10:45 a.m. Adult Education—Studying the Lessons of the day
6:00 p.m. Sunday S'mores

Monday November 2
Pastor's Day Off
9:45 a.m. "Choose to Lose"

Tuesday November 3 – Election Day
10:00 a.m. Worship Committee meeting

Wednesday November 4
9:00 a.m. Bible Study
3:15 p.m. Confirmation Class
6:30 p.m. Choir

Thursday November 5
7:00 p.m. AA Meeting (FH/Shelter)

Friday November 6
12:30 p.m. Bulletin Production

Saturday November 7
7:30 a.m. Men of Grace @ Bob Evans
10:00 a.m. Making Christmas Cards
1:00 p.m. Mt. Castles in Fellowship Hall/Kitchen

UPCOMING EVENTS:
Sun. 11/8— Thank Offering Sunday, Youth SS Thankful Breakfast/Pageant
Mon. 11/9—Pastor off, Choose to Lose, Phoebe Bible Study
Tues. 11/10—Mom's Bible Study
Wed. 11/11 –Bible Study, Confirmation, Choir
Thurs. 11/12 – Council & Exec. Comm, AA Meeting
Fri. 11/13 – SWOMD Council Meeting, Bulletin production

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

Altar Guild for November: Wanda Winter, Carol Perry
Offering Counter for November: Karen Schaeff

Sunday, November 1—All Saints' Sunday
9:30 a.m.

Greeter: Becky Lenk & Tiffany Ingram
Usher: Gary Pemberton
Lector: Nancy Childs
Communion: Elaine Fudge, Patty Barnes
Acolyte: Jessa Barnes, Sophia Steiner

Sunday, November 8, Pentecost 24
9:30 a.m.

Greeter: Marti Good-Ernst
Usher: Jeff Kiracofe
Lector: Tiffany Ingram
Acolyte: Bechor Bischoff

Sunday, November 15 – Pentecost 25
9:30 a.m.

Greeter: Nancy & Scott Parkinson
Usher: Scott Parkinson
Lector: Mary Shetter
Communion: Barb Myers, Jane Coggin
Acolyte: Jessa Barnes

Attendance & Stewardship ($4,187 needed wkly)

10/25/2026	82	$14,299.50

Grace Lutheran Mission Endowment Fund: The purpose of this fund is to extend the ministry of Grace Lutheran Church, apart from the general operation of the congregation. To learn more about our Mission Endowment Fund, please contact the church office and we'll give your question to the appropriate person.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Please help us by giving an update on the back of the "Attendance & Communion Registration" form. Names will appear for 4 weeks unless we are notified otherwise.

URGENT PRAYER LIST:

HEALING: (In Alphabetical Order)

- ***Kelly Coffman***: (Undergoing more heart tests with an adjustment to heart medications)
- ***Josh & Jaime Cummins & family:*** (Friends of Karen Schaeff – They ask for prayers of strength & comfort)
- ***Jim Courtney:*** (A young father battling Stage 4 melanoma)
- ***Elizabeth & Emily McDade:*** (Terry & Evelyn Good's daughter & grand-daughter – prayers as they deal with many issues including grief)
- ***Tiffany Daugherty:*** (As she undergoes testing)
- ***Terry Good:*** (In the ICU at Kettering Hospital after a fall)
- ***Katie Morrison:*** (Niece of Mary & Dean Shetter – prayers for God's healing as she deals with very difficult health issues)
- ***Amy & Bryan Jackson:*** (for comfort and healing)
- ***Richard Lehman:*** (Rehabbing at Vancrest)
- ***Allan Ludwick:*** (From Darryl & Teresa Leyes)
- ***Gary Pemberton Sr:*** (Dealing with health issues)
- ***Barbara Perry:*** (Carol Perry's step-daughter – as she prepares for a stem cell transplant to help treat multiple myeloma)
- ***Beverly Proeschel:*** (Prayers for healing of a broken ankle)
- ***Tom Schamel:*** (As he deals with repeated falls)
- ***Iva-Laura Sherry:*** (Diagnosed with melanoma-having procedure)
- ***Dean & Mary Shetter:*** (as they deal with heart issues, individually)
- ***Jon Tucker:*** (At Home & doing well - recovering from a stay in the hospital)
- ***John Woesner:*** (Gary Woesner's brother – health issues)

LONG-TERM PRAYER LIST: Linda Lambert, Becky Haws, Charlie, Tracy, Jim Carlisle, Dave O'Shea, George & Barb Suggs, Mark & Jary Tannehill, Jackie Steiner, Connie Martin, Maggie Risko, Rhonda Paige Atkinson, Amy & Bryan Jackson, Andy Proeschel, Judy Newkirk, Mike & Judy Schamel, Suzan Pauley, Tom Schamel, Amanda & Shayla Dell, Fran Kester, Teddi & Mike Watkins, Jenifer Combs, Doug Davis, Pastor Dean & Sandy Haferman, Dave Brumbaugh, Scot Emig, Barbara Worley, Carolyn MacFadyen, Judy Jay, Will Suggs, Earl House, Barbara Lakes, Becky Hoskins, Kayli Johnson, Joe McHenry, Tom Barnes: and those serving in the military: Maj. Love Hartman; Brad Newkirk; Lt. Col. Kyle Hundley, Travis Deck & family

Great Commission Outreach Partners:
World Mission Prayer League—Chris & Emily and family, Lutheran Military Veterans and Families, Abundant Grace, West Chester



On Saturday, **November 7, 2026** we will be making Christmas cards for our homebound, military personnel, First Responders, and anyone struggling and needing a 'pick-me-up'

If you would like to help out, we'll meet from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

We have many supplies to work with, but if you'd like to bring your own, feel free to do so!

Also, bring a snack to share and we'll munch while we work!



Pick up your boxes in the Narthex!

Boxes will be due back to Church by Sunday, November 15, 2026.

Place filled boxes on the bench in the Narthex.

PACK A SHOEBOX

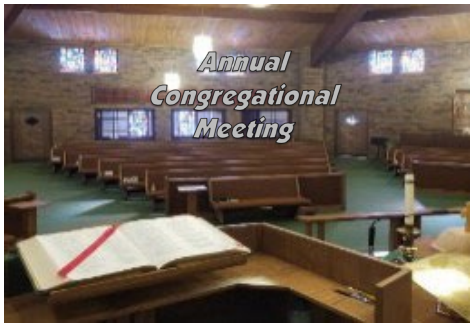
Scan or visit **samaritanspurse.org/occ** to learn more about how God can use a gift-filled shoebox given in Jesus' Name to transform a child, their family, and their community.

VIEW SOLICITATION DISCLOSURE INFORMATION FOR SAMARITAN'S PURSE ONLINE AT SAMARITANSPURSE.ORG/DISCLOSURE.

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08-31-2134



The Annual Congregational Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, November 15, 2026 following 9:30 a.m. worship in the Sanctuary.

The Agenda will include:

- Approval of May 2026 Congregational Minutes
- Election of new council members for 2027
- Approval of 2027 Budget
- As Well as Other Items for Consideration/Authorization



Grace's Homestyle Thanksgiving Dinner

Thursday November 26th

This year we will be hosting a Homestyle Dinner in the Fellowship Hall

We want to extend a **Special Invitation** to those who may not have family to share a meal with or cannot prepare an entire meal. We will cook the Turkey and are asking everyone to bring a Special side dish or dessert that reminds them of Thanksgiving's past.

This year we are asking for help in the kitchen . . . set-up/clean-up, etc.

Cooking will start early in the morning with dinner is planned to be served at 1:00 p.m.

Friends and Family are welcome to join us as this is truly a Family Celebration as we are all Family in Grace!

A Sign-up Sheet is available in the Narthex.
Come early as we will have activities planned and the Thanksgiving Day Parades to watch on TV.

What better way to Celebrate than with your Grace Family!



LET'S DECK THE WALLS, etc.!!!!!

On Saturday, November 28th

Let's meet to decorate the sanctuary and around the church We'll get together at **10:00!**

Many hands make light work!

So come, and bring your family and friends!

All Saints' Sunday; 11/1/2026; Grace Lutheran Church; Pastor Dwight Hanson

(Opening litany-Revelation 22:1-5); Revelation 7:2-3, 9-17; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12

Children's message: We call this Sunday "All Saints' Sunday." But what makes a "saint"? That sounds like a hard question. So, let's think it through together. Do all people need God's Son, Jesus? *Yes*. So, what makes a "saint"? Someone who knows their need for the Lord, who admits when they're wrong, who receives forgiveness as the gift that it is, and who gets right back up, refreshed in heart, to continue following and serving the Good Shepherd. Maybe it wasn't such a hard question, after all? Jesus loves you and cleanses your heart. Honor him all your days. Let's pray…

His Future

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

When you count your blessings, *how do you do it*? This may go down as perhaps the easiest question I've ever asked! They're counted the same way they've always been counted, by giving thanks for all the good things that have happened in the past. It's the harvest approach—*all is safely gathered in*.

November reminds us to do this helpful and faithful thing. Our thoughts drift back to olden days when the evidence of God's hand of blessing showed up in the corn crib, the grain bin, the canning room, the root cellar, and the wood shed. Finished work. Another year of gratitude under the providence of God. Such a simple recipe. We could use more of it.

But then we hear the beautiful but confusing language of Matthew, chapter five, the Beatitudes. Why did Jesus insert the future tense where the past has always been? And why did he identify the "blessed" as those whom the world would clearly judge as the opposite?

Before we plunge into this mystery, we acknowledge that on this All Saints' Sunday great comfort can be found in the traditional manner of counting our blessings, looking back and lifting up memories of those who have walked by faith before us, the backward glance of gratitude. But in the end, is that enough? As it turns out, we really do need those mysterious words proclaimed on that Galilean mountainside.

Now, at first, an honest soul might have to admit that the words of Jesus sound like riddles. In fact, what he said could be taken as so counter-intuitive that a lawyer could probably make a strong case against them based on the evidence at hand.

In reality's courtroom, it's all about the facts, right? Well, the evidence indicates that the poor in spirit are *not* blessed, but rather, the rich in spirit, those who seem to have an almost unending supply of energy and purpose, who never seem to get down for long, always reaching for new possibilities. Aren't these the happy, the blessed ones?

Go right down the list. Aren't the blessed ones those who have rarely had to grieve, or who have been so fortunate that nothing tragic has ever occurred to them or their loved ones?

And what's this in verse five about the "meek"? Are we not confronted once more by plain earthly fact? The strong conquer the earth. They point and click and get what they want. Boldness sets out to shape its dominion, great or small, with an unyielding will. Like beams of steal, blessed are the strong. Is this not what the evidence shows beyond reasonable doubt?

How about hungering and thirsting for righteousness? Wouldn't it be better to say: Blessed are those who have never fallen into one of sin's traps, whose consciences have never suffered, who have a sufficient level of righteousness on their own? Aren't they the ones?

Then we come to the apex of the case, verse ten. Clearly, the blessed ones are those who have never had to face persecution, who haven't been forced to defend their deepest convictions. Skipping merrily along, these are the happy ones, right? The unbruised, the unexhausted, the unopposed, blessed are they. And with that, the lawyer rests his case.

But what kind of court are we talking about in church? Jesus, himself, will come in the end to judge the living and the dead! This truth changes the fundamental nature of the case.

We're here today because our Lord, risen and overflowing with grace and wisdom, knew exactly what he was saying on that windswept mountainside so many years ago. In fact, his words abide. They've been echoing across the fields, and through the canyons, and down into the valleys of life, wherever real people have walked for two thousand years. The living words of Christ have made their way to our very ears this morning.

There's a reason that Jesus called them "blessed" who bore the heavy yoke of earthly trouble. After all, *he intended to bless them*! The King of Heaven breaks into the news cycle with something entirely different. A proud world will be brought to its knees. The humble, who look to the Lord, *will* be uplifted.

Even though we hear these Beatitudes almost every year, if we listen closely, we have to be shocked over and over. After all, thinking about the future is often the source of great anxiety and concern. It's too elusive, often defying our predictions and our ability to control it. Yet, Christ goes there. He calls the future blessed precisely because *he has the power to make it so*!

Faith is not mere optimism. Nor is it this bizarre new concept of "manifestation" where the universe is somehow supposed to bend to my wishes and give me all that I want. Nor is faith based on the occasional lucky roll of the dice. Faith gains its strength

directly from a promise, generated within the heart of the Redeemer. He speaks to your bruised, battered, and exhausted heart. It's by this Light that we move forward, day by day, until the final earthly day.

When Jesus looked out over his disciples and that great crowd of faces, then used the word "blessed," he was *not describing*. He was *in the act of blessing*. That's a crucial difference. And so it is when he turns to see you. *In Christ*, every day is walked on a path illuminated by an everlasting Light. What, therefore, can't you face?

Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness, not because persecution is good, but because standing firm for Kingdom truth is more important than falling in line for earthly pressure or temptation.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, not because it's good that we've all fallen short of the glory of God, but because we've been allowed to see it and confess it, and because Jesus has given himself for the forgiveness of our sins in the bread and the wine, the foretaste of the feast to come. They shall be filled.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, not because it's somehow good to be downcast all the time, but because, in our empty-handed poverty, Jesus provides the Holy Spirit to lift our wilting human spirit. Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

And yes, on this All Saints' Sunday, blessed are they who mourn, not because there's something inherently good about the terrible pain of losing a loved one, but because, in our grief, we're open to the comfort that only Jesus can give, he who rose from the dead, reigning forever. In him, we call to mind the picture from Revelation, that great multitude from every nation, tribe, and language, gathered around the throne of God in worship, truly happy, free, and blessed.

So, to sum it up… There's nothing wrong with the traditional direction of thankfulness, looking back at the blessings provided. Faith is *strengthened* by doing that very thing. But on this day, we're reminded that faith is also *stretched* forward. It "presses on" according to the promise. God holds all time in His mighty hands. He holds us and our loved ones in them, too. Peace to you in the risen Lord until travelling days are done. Thanks be to God. Amen.