

JULY 2026

July
Newsletter



Grace Lutheran Church

America the Beautiful

As the calendar turns to July, we celebrate the birth of our nation: we sing of “purple mountain majesties above the fruited plains,” attend high school reunions, gather with family for picnics and fireworks. We bask in the warmth of a UP summer (we hope!) after a long, snowy winter. We give thanks for the privilege of living in this nation, with its freedoms and its bounty. Truly, America is beautiful!

This is usually what we do on July 4.

However, this year’s celebration has an added dimension, as we mark 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Controversy swirls on the national stage. UFC fights on the White House lawn somehow have become a symbol of American strength. Meanwhile, big name entertainers have pulled out of the July 4 celebration in DC, because they feel there is a political nature to it. And two *separate* groups—America250 and Freedom 250—are financing and spearheading different events.

If it seems to you that everything is politicized these days, you’re not the only one who feels that way!

Perhaps a bit of clarity about patriotism and politics, faith and religion will help.

What does it mean to be patriotic? To be patriotic means to love your country. To love your country means you want the best for your country. You pay your taxes. You vote. You may wear a T-shirt that says “USA” or fly a flag on your porch. You may have served your nation as a soldier. You are grateful for those who have served in the past, including especially those who lost their lives or sustained injuries in war.

To be patriotic means to love your country. Loving your country is a good thing. Loving your country is similar to loving yourself. If you love yourself, you have a positive self-image: aware of your gifts and talents, you are not afraid to use them. It has been said—and I think it is true—that it’s difficult to love others, if you do not also love yourself.

But loving yourself also means having the honesty and courage to recognize your shortcomings so as to make changes that are good for you and those around you. That’s true when it comes to our nation, too. Loving our country means celebrating its virtues but also recognizing our challenges and failures and sins. Loving our country means doing what we can to improve the lives of all people, within our borders and on the national stage.

If we are patriotic, we are not afraid to acknowledge that our country isn’t always right. While blessed, we are not so special as to deserve more wealth and power than anyone else. We do not have a divine right to exert our own will on other peoples and nations.

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Unfortunately, that perspective has not always prevailed. For example, our ancestors believed it was the “manifest destiny” of settlers to take control of this continent from “sea to shining sea,” even if the native Americans stood in our way. The story of the conquest and displacement and genocide and continued suffering of indigenous people is as much the American story as our Constitution and Bill of Rights.

We cannot whitewash our past.

In today’s charged and deeply polarized political atmosphere, some Christians would like to do that. They equate allegiance to God with allegiance to our country. They see the United States as the heir to Israel’s status as the “chosen people” and therefore, the one nation especially blessed by God to execute God’s will in the world. Therefore, they think America has been and always will be in the right and God is always on our side. To them, any admission of wrong is unpatriotic. Christianity is equated with American pride. There is no difference between the two.

That is neither authentic patriotism nor authentic Christianity.

“For God so loved the world,” not just us! Whatever the nature of the challenges they face, every person, community and nation is equally loved and blessed by God. God loves the whole world, the entire creation. And because every person, community, and nation stands in need of forgiveness and healing, Jesus Christ died for all. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, this same Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, is here and there and everywhere until he comes again.

As Christians in America, we love our country. Seeking to love our neighbors, we are called to work for equity, justice, and peace. Above all, we are called to love God. We may debate—and disagree—as to how to do that, but there is no debating our calling.

As we stand along parade routes and fly flags from our porches and ooh and aah at fireworks displays, let us celebrate—but also reaffirm that our first identity, our first allegiance is to the one who claimed us in baptism and calls us to follow him.

--Pastor Dave Van Kley

Preacher/Worship Leaders for the month of July

Sunday, July 5: Pastor Dave Van Kley

Sunday, July 12: Pastor Dave Van Kley

Sunday, July 19: Pastor Terry Cathcart

Sunday, July 26: Mr. Walter Scanlon

News at Grace Lutheran

Continuing the Conversation at Grace

On Sunday, June 14, sixty-one people attended the special “Breakfast Worship” in the fellowship hall. A huge thank you to the Transition Team (consisting of Jerry Jensen, Dave Marjonen, Dee Mattson, Art Ontto, Holly Paris, and Arlene Van Kley) for providing delicious food, hospitality, and direction for our time together!

We sang together, received the Lord’s Supper together, and listened to and reflected on the story of Samuel’s call from the Old Testament, seeking to understand how God might be calling us as a congregation during this time of transition. Did we solve the problems of the world? No. Did we chart out a course of action for our church? No. But the conversation around the tables was lively—we voiced our thoughts and listened to one another. God was here, in this place, among us. That is itself is very positive!

We decided to meet on two more occasions: once, in July, to surface the specific needs facing the Gwinn and Sawyer communities, and to consider how our strengths at Grace interface with those needs, as well as those areas of our life and ministry we need to work on in order to be a blessing to our neighbors. We also will spend some time at that meeting dreaming, sharing our visions of what our congregation could be in five or ten years.

After that meeting, we would go home to pray and reflect on all of this, each of us seeking to identify a few goals or objectives we would like our congregation to pursue in the next years. When we meet the next time, in August, we will listen to each other and pull out of our conversation three broad priorities or objectives to share with the council, the call committee, and the candidate we might be interviewing for the pastoral position at Grace.

And yes, in both cases, food and fellowship will be part of the experience! How could it not be?

Please stay tuned as the Transition Team identifies dates and times for these important meetings.

***Save the Date* Blood Drive ***

There will be a blood drive here at church on Wednesday, August 19th, from 3:00pm-6:00pm. More Information will be made public as we near this date. Donating is now easier than ever; many previous Deferrals have changed. Please come and see if you are eligible to donate. There is a list of common eligibility requirements and myths posted on our bulletin board in the fellowship hall. The need is great!

News at Grace Lutheran

Outdoor Worship—July 12

Grace Lutheran Church will be part of a community ecumenical worship service at the Nordeen Park this summer on Sunday, July 12, at 11 AM. Please note: we will not be holding worship at the Grace campus on that day. Gwinn Methodist Church is handling the music—we are looking for people to be part of a choir for that day! If you are willing to lend yourself and your voice, please contact Catherine at 906-360-8643. Pastor Dave will be the preacher at this service. If someone would like to read a lesson or a portion of the liturgy for the day, please contact him. Following worship, there will be a potluck dinner—you are invited to bring something to share. Everyone is welcome to share this service of worship with the larger Christian community in a beautiful, outdoor, and public space.

Volunteer Needs for July 12:

- People to sing in a choir. Call Brian at 906-251-8160
- Bread buns for hot dogs/brats. Looking at 150 of these. Sign up in the Narthex.
- 2-3 people to help set up at 8:30
- Everyone - a dish to pass

Children's Remembrance Walk and Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Powwow

The annual walk to remember and pray for children taken to Indian Boarding Schools will be held at the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community next to the original site of the Assinins Boarding School and Orphanage on **Friday, July 24, at 10 AM**. The event begins with a brief ceremony. The walk which follows is one mile long and follows Highway 41 along Lake Superior to the KBIC powwow grounds.

Across the USA and Canada (and other countries where colonization took place), indigenous children were separated from their families and forced to attend boarding schools run by the government or Christian churches with the design of taking away their native identity, language, and religion. The impact on indigenous people was and continues to be tragic.

By joining with our indigenous neighbors in events like this, we who are part of the church today recognize our role in this history and pledge our support for native people in their quest for healing. For several years, Pastor Dave and Arlene have attended this event. We invite you to join us this year. Let us know if you are interested.

The annual powwow itself is a celebration of native identity, complete with food, crafts, music and dancing contests (it's sort of like a fair without the rides!). Non-native people are certainly welcome--its a way to come to a deeper understanding of our indigenous neighbors. Friday's Grand Entry begins at 7 PM; Saturday's Grand Entries are at 1 PM and 7 PM. Again, let the Van Kley's know if you are interested in going--or just show up at the powwow grounds.

If you are uncertain as to whether you'd feel comfortable or how you should act as a non-native person at a powwow, we have a sheet which offers helpful guidance! Thank you!

News at Grace Lutheran

Quilters

We will meet every Tuesday (except the second Tuesday) at 1:00 in the fellowship hall downstairs. Our quilts are sent to Lutheran World Relief in October. New quilters are welcome. No previous quilting experience necessary. Join us for a cup of coffee at 1:00 and see what we do!

Naomi Circle

Naomi Circle meets the third Thursday of each month in the fellowship room downstairs at 2:00pm. We have a Bible study from the Gather magazine, followed by a coffee fellowship. All women are welcome to join us!

Community Outreach:

Pie Sale

Thanks to all the bakers, slicers, packagers, sellers, and to all who helped in the set-up and take down! The funds from the park totaled \$1,070. There were 51 pies and 24 varieties!

The Outreach Committee decided to donate the funds to the Van Maintenance account. We found out how valuable our van is to our mission a couple of months ago when we were doing the meal kits. No one could find the key, so we had to use four personal vehicles to deliver the meal kits.

Thank you all again for your support!

Grant Proposal

We are writing a grant proposal letter to the ELCA World Hunger organization. Please pray that our letter is accepted, and we receive the blessing of a grant to help us with meal kits, emergency food baskets, and other outreach opportunities.

Hope Circle

We will be meeting once more for a luncheon/dinner, then we will be off for the summer! Meetings will resume again in the fall.

News at Grace Lutheran

FORTUNE LAKE RETREAT OPPORTUNITIES

For Adults age 55+



An all inclusive program for adults age 55+. This program is **“Choose Your Own Adventure,”** meaning participants partake in the activities of interest to them. Enjoy **three nights/four days** of interactive presenters, pontoon rides, paddle sports, pickle ball, Tai Chi, campfires, card games, meaningful worship experiences and as much social time as you want!

2024 was the first year for Evergreen Camp, and participants had a fantastic time! Now our staff can't wait for our Evergreen campers to return and bring their friends for our third consecutive year.

For Adults 18+



Looking for some time to rest, rejuvenate, and step away from your busy schedule? Fortune Lake invites you to do exactly that at our Nature Inspired Wellness Retreat set for **September 10th-13th, 2026**. This retreat has both 2-night and 3-night options, meaning participants can choose to attend Friday through Sunday or Thursday through Sunday for an extended retreat experience. Fortune Lake is thrilled to once again partner with Pam Roose of [Inspiring Roots, LLC](#) to bring you this year's program. Pam will explore the theme ***The Peace Connection*** with the group, inspired by the peaceful surroundings at Fortune Lake. Our schedule will provide opportunities to learn about the importance of **digestive wellness** and the health of our **gut microbiome**. Together we'll delve into **nutrition**, learn about the benefits of incorporating **fermented foods** into our diet, practice **healthy movement**, and explore how to **fuel our bodies** through stress. We will also lean into ***The Peace Connection*** by grounding ourselves in the **beautiful nature surrounding** Fortune Lake and centering peace in our **devotions** and **discussions**. Other highlights will include **yoga** sessions, optional **massages**, delicious **food**, **crafting**, nature **hikes**, **swimming** and **kayaking**, hot **saunas**,

Our adult retreats feature a **“choose your own adventure”** model, meaning that participants are encouraged to attend sessions that resonate with them and enjoy the amenities of Fortune Lake when that's what they need from their retreat experience. The schedule from the 2025 retreat has been included below to provide a look at the flow of the retreat. Though we have some new surprises in store for this year, our schedule will look very similar to this one.

News at Grace Lutheran

Save the Date: Synod Women's Organization Convention and Retreat

SWO convention and retreat will be from September 18th-20th at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp. Friday will be the convention, and the retreat will be the 19th-20th. This year's theme is "Living Waters". More information will be made available in upcoming weeks!

Blessings, Lynnette

UPCOMING EVENTS:

July 12 - Worship in the park; Peter Nordeen Park in downtown Gwinn

July 15th - Kids' Café meeting, 10am in Fellowship Hall

July 22nd - Council meeting, 10am in Gathering Room

August 6th - Feeding America. Volunteers arrive around 3:00, distribution starts at 4pm

August 13th-15th - Youth Ministry Leader Retreat at FLLC (we have some congregants attending)

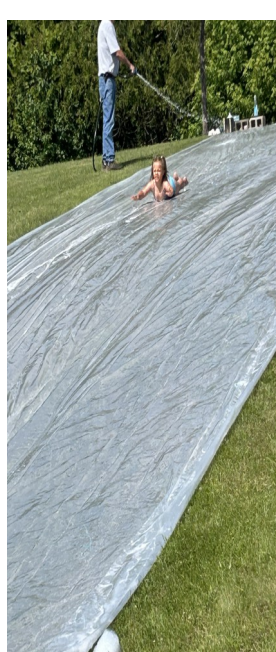
August 19th - Community Blood Drive, 3pm-6pm, Fellowship Hall



News at Grace Lutheran

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL - HIGHLIGHTS

Huge thank you to all of our helpers that made VBS 2026 a huge success! The kitchen staff knocked it out of the park with their awesome snacks, lunches, and an amazing cookout! The teachers were so energetic and loving, and our visiting friends from UMC and Rock were such a blessing! More pictures will be posted to our Facebook page and our website. The many, many hours of preparation were well worth it.



News at Grace Lutheran

Prayer Concerns

Gerry Stille	Karen Octaluk	Sally Weingartner
Darlene Faucher	Marlys Pickett	Gloria LaFave
Alice Harbin & family	Paul Juidici	Edna Roberts
Wendy (Sharon's sister)	Donald Hakala	Bill Hatch
Louise Spickerman	Harold Zaborowski	Jackie Kangas
Sarah Johnson	Deb McNabb	Sandee Kangas
Mike Stefanski	Arlene Keskimaki	Dave Kangas
Mary Stefanski	Richard Erickson	Chris Mitchell
Shannon McNabb	LuAnne Seger	Elanor Rose Beauchaine
Kelly Kienert	Sharon Groff	Marie Hall
Charlie Blanck	Lois Blanck	Hannah (Granddaughter)
Dana Pelkola	Brian Seger (Pat's nephew)	Family of David Wills

JULY BIRTHDAYS

Reegan Pelkola	7/2	Ray Richard	7/3
Gerald Stille	7/6	Marie Hall	7/8
Jordyn Pelkola	7/16	Kristen LaRock	7/17
Carol Salzwedel	7/21		

News at Grace Lutheran

July Sunday Worship Volunteers

Readers:

July 5th: Lynnette Broxson

July 12th: Sharon Groff

July 19th: Bill Kangas

July 26th: ****NEEDED****

Communion Assistants:

July 5th: Ray Richard

July 12th: **Park Service**

July 19th: Mary Connors

July 26th: Kathy Keskimaki



Fellowship Servers:

July 5th: Dee D'Ambrosia & Lynn Marjonen

July 12th: **Park Service**

July 19th: LuAnne Krueger & Barb Myers

July 26th: Shane Ruokola & Theresa Hruska



Greeters:

July 5th: ****NEEDED****

July 12th: Sharon Groff

July 19th: Kathy K. & Mary C.

July 26th: ****NEEDED****



News at Grace Lutheran

Grace Lutheran Church

Church Council

6/16/26

Present: Interim Pastor Dave Van Kley, Paul Makela, Bill Kangas, Ruth Forgette, Sharon Groff, Dee D'Ambrosia, Karen Nelson

Meeting called to order at 9:56 a.m. by Paul Makela, President. Pastor Dave lead with prayer.

Motion by Ruth, second by Dee, to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Reviewed May Council minutes. Motion by Ruth, second by Sharon, to approve. Motion carried.

Paul reviewed the financial reports. He made a motion to approve the reports as written. Second by Ruth. Motion carried.

No correspondence to review.

Pastor's report reviewed. Pastor Dave noted Gary Baldini was received by transfer of membership from Trinity Lutheran Church in Ishpeming, MI, and Gary Connors, Daisy Banasiak, Sheryl Ziszik, and Scott Paris have been received into membership by Affirmation of Faith. They will be welcomed at worship at a later date. Motion by Ruth, second by Karen, to receive these individuals and receive the Pastor's report. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE and TEAM REPORTS

Personnel: Pastor Dave reviewed the updated policy draft for Office Administrator. Motion by Bill Kangas, second by Dee, to approve. Motion carried.

Finance: Paul is planning to schedule a meeting for next week to review our CD.

Transition Team: Ministry Site Profile completed by the Transition Team reviewed. Let Pastor Dave know if we have any changes by Thursday so he can get this back to them and then the Call Committee can commence. Event on Sunday was well-attended, and 2 more will be scheduled.

Kid's Café: Continue with meetings, plans. Rebecca and Diane working diligently on this.

VBS: Have between 20-30 kids signed up.

Worship and Music: Ongoing monthly.

Stewardship: Ruth reported the committee is planning a dinner after commitment Sunday in the fall.

Property: Bill Kangas reported there are questions re: the fire alarm system and extinguishers -- suggested we have our Fire Dept do an inspection. Reviewed the new church maintenance schedule. TKE missed an inspection and we were found noncompliant by an inspector -- contacting TKE for follow up. Will obtain more signage for handicap parking. Will look at tattered church signs and remove and/or replace. Going to replace poles in front of culvert and add reflectors.

News at Grace Lutheran

OLD BUSINESS

Local Assistance Fund: Exploring different options.

"Worship in the Park": Sunday, July 12, at 11:00.

Bylaw changes, including Personnel and Finance Committees: Paul distributed our current Bylaws to start reviewing.

NEW BUSINESS

Next Feeding America: August 6

Blood Drive: Scheduled for August 19 at 3:00.

Possible CPR/AED/First Aid Training: Reviewed a training option which is quite costly. Karen will check with American Heart Association and Red Cross for possible trainings.

Council Training: There is a training opportunity, "Equipping the Councils," available on 3 dates this year if anyone is interested. Rebecca emailed us the information.

Council Member Comments: None

All said Lord's Prayer.

Motion by Ruth, second by Karen, to adjourn at 11:22. Motion carried.

Next meeting: Tuesday, July 21, at 10:00 a.m.

Submitted by Karen Nelson

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH - FINANCIAL SUMMARY
JANUARY - MAY 2026

<u>RECEIPTS</u>	<u>GENERAL FUND</u>	<u>RECEIPTS</u>		<u>RECEIPTS</u>
	<u>BUDGET</u>	January - May		January - May
	<u>Jan - Dec 2026</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>2025</u>
Loose	5,700.00	1,771.00	3,929.00	2,421.00
General Budget	134,100.00	52,013.96	82,086.04	47,696.21
General Budget - Vanco Online Giving	7,000.00	3,000.00	4,000.00	3,005.00
Ash Wednesday/Lenten Services	700.00	712.00	-12.00	721.00
Thrivent	700.00	577.00	123.00	456.00
Christmas/Advent Services	1,000.00	10.00	990.00	75.00
Miscellaneous	700.00	130.00	570.00	283.00
Interest Income - CD Edward Jones	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Dividend - Honor CD	4,500.00	1,850.94	2,649.06	1,969.07
Dividend - Honor Acct 117	<u>1,600.00</u>	<u>683.89</u>	<u>916.11</u>	<u>807.11</u>
TOTAL RECEIPTS	156,000.00	60,748.79	95,251.21	57,433.39

<u>DISBURSEMENTS</u>	<u>GENERAL FUND</u>	<u>DISBURSEMENTS</u>		<u>DISBURSEMENTS</u>
	<u>BUDGET</u>	January - May		January - May
	<u>Jan - Dec 2026</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>REMAINING</u>	<u>2025</u>
Parish Extension	7,600.00	3,130.88	4,469.12	3,134.00
Salaries	43,603.00	17,275.51	26,327.49	50,436.39
Parish Administration	19,522.00	6,658.59	12,863.41	3,162.31
Education	2,450.00	341.43	2,108.57	1,609.05
Office Operations	6,800.00	3,297.39	3,502.61	1,707.00
Property	<u>40,525.00</u>	<u>13,898.97</u>	<u>26,626.03</u>	<u>13,414.58</u>
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	120,500.00	44,602.77	75,897.23	73,463.33

EXCESS REVENUES (EXPENSES)	<u>\$35,500.00</u>	<u>\$16,146.02</u>	<u>(\$16,029.94)</u>
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FUNDS ON DEPOSIT AS OF MAY 31, 2026

<u>GENERAL FUND</u>		<u>May 31, 2025</u>
Honor CU - Checking - 001	2,341.63	2,113.17
Honor CU - Shares - 000	5.00	5.03
Honor CU - Savings - 117	72,794.41	40,529.00
Honor CU - Certificate of Deposit - 330	<u>110,319.13</u>	<u>105,925.25</u>
GENERAL FUNDS ON DEPOSIT AS OF MAY 31, 2026	<u>185,460.17</u>	<u>148,572.45</u>

<u>DESIGNATED FUNDS</u>	
Building Maintenance	67,644.41
Community Outreach	3,000.06
Feeding America	990.76
Fortune Lake Campership	1,081.67
Kitchen Fund	2,372.89
Memorial Fund	3,705.96
Van Maintenance/Replacement	4,021.67
WELCA (Naomi)	751.91
Youth Fund	4,052.84
Housing Allowance	<u>7,682.18</u>
Housing Allowance - CD - Edward Jones	<u>128,000.00</u>
DESIGNATED FUNDS ON DEPOSIT AS OF MAY 31, 2026	223,304.35

JULY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		Quilters 1:00pm	1	2	3	4
5 Bible Study 8:45am Worship 10:00am	6	7 Meal Kits 10:00am Stewardship meeting 9:00am	8	9	10	11
12 Bible Study 8:45am Worship In The Park 10:00am	13	14 Quilters 1:00pm	15 Kids' Café meeting 10:00am	16 Worship & Music Meeting 3:00pm	17	18
19 Bible Study 8:45am Worship 10:00am	20	21 Council Meeting 10am Quilters 1:00pm	22	23	24	25
26 Bible Study 8:45am Worship 10:00am	27	28 Quilters 1:00pm	29	30	31	