GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH / 558 W. ST. HWY M-35, GWINN, MI

# GRACE NOTES

October 2026



**Worship Space**
Autumn may be one of the more beautiful seasons of the year, with its abundance of colors. One may be struck by orange and yellow leaves backed by the deep green needles of the Eastern White Pine or other evergreen trees native to your location. Likewise, the green of Ordinary Time continues to proclaim God's evergreen grace for us as we grow in discipleship.

## Worship Leaders for October

- 10/4 Pastor Tom Skrenes
- 10/11 Pastor Sharolyn Swenson
- 10/18 Pastor Chrys Levesque Hendrick
- 10/25 TBD

*IN THIS ISSUE*

Nakemiin, a final message from Pr Dave Van Kley

Update from our Transition Team

Calendar of youth events for '26-'27

Lutheran World Relief Projects

**Upcoming Events:**

Oct 8th: Feeding America Distribution at 4pm

Oct 10th: Confirmation Class at Bethany Lutheran Church

Oct 12th: Columbus Day - office will be closed

Oct 17th: Truck Loading at Messiah Lutheran Church in Marquette for Lutheran World Relief; 10am



# Nakemiin

Some years ago, I came to know a fellow pastor who was much older than me. Steeped in his Finnish heritage, he was experienced and wise. Although I didn't know him long enough to know him well, he became a friend and mentor to me.

One day, I was deeply saddened to hear he'd been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. The prognosis was poor and he'd declined treatment, choosing instead to die at home, comforted by his wife's care and the visits of friends. Upon hearing this, I decided to make a special trip to Duluth to see him. I will always remember that visit. His wife welcomed me to their modest home on the hillside. She'd prepared coffee, as per usual, along with something else for lunch. My friend managed to get to the table and eat a few bites. He told me that his days were proceeding, each in much the same way, with friends coming to visit. He talked openly about life's joys and disappointments, about living with his disease and prognosis, and about his confidence in God's promises. An hour passed; he tired and it was time for me to go. He followed me ot the stoop and we embraced. "Nakemiin," he said, using the traditional Finnish phrase for saying goodbye. As I walked down the sidewalk and got into my car, he stood there, waving until I was out of sight. That image - him standing there, waving - is imprinted on my brain and in my heart.

The phrase, "nakemiin," means literally, "until we meet again." It softens the blow of ending a visit with the promise of another meeting yet to come. But when it's obvious that a particular visit or meeting will be the last you will experience in this life, the phrase is something more than that. It is a confession of faith: that death is a gateway through which we all must pass into life which is new and whole. Faith holds to a promise that lies beyond the human imagination, as impossible to fully comprehend as are the distances of stars and galaxies in our vast universe. Yet, the promise is real and true. Because it is God's promise.

There are so many goodbyes to be said in this life. Almost every day we say goodbye to someone, in some way. Perhaps we should always say: "Nakemiin. Until we meet again." As we part, we look ahead to the next time. One day, I anticipate thousands of reunions, with people whose names and faces I've now forgotten.

As my interim role comes to an end here at Grace, several people have told me that they will miss me. I appreciate that with every change, there is some apprehension. This ending does not really mean goodbye. Arlene and I will be away for about a month, but plan to remain here with you, as members of the body of Christ.

The occasion does signal a change in leadership. I'm very pleased that Pastor Alex LaChappelle will be serving as our administrative interim pastor until Grace is able to call a full-time person. From this point on, your pastoral concerns will need to be directed to him, rather than to me.

As we enter the busy fall season, I'm confident Grace will be fine. We've learned - or re-learned - something during these thirteen months since saying "until we meet again" to Pastor Jack, Sydney, and Kit. The Spirit of God is here, remaining among us, giving us all that we need for ministry and mission in this place. Together.

*Nakemiin,*

*Pastor Dave Van Key*

## Update on Pastoral Vacancy at Grace

Beginning October 1, Pastor Alex LaChappelle, who is the pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Marquette, and the Director of Lutheran Campus Ministry at Northern Michigan University, will serve as Grace's interim pastor. As such, Pastor Alex will ensure that regular worship services continue, respond to emergencies as they arise, and work with the congregation council and Rebecca Herriman, our parish administrator, to cover basic administrative responsibilities at Grace. Pastor Alex also plans to preach and lead worship on occasion.

A Call Committee, comprised of Diane Koski, Karen Nelson, Art Ontto, Shane Ruokola, Soren Spickerman, and Sheryl Steimke has been established and will work with the Bishop and Assistant to the Bishop of the Northern Great Lakes Synod as potential candidates for the full-time position of Pastor at Grace emerge.Unfortunately, at this time, no such candidates are available, though that could change at any time. Please pray for Grace and for the right person to hear God's call to serve among us!
In the meantime, ministry at Grace will continue—for the risen Christ has assured us that he "will be with us now and until the end of the age." Let us continue the forward momentum of the last several years, as we live and serve together.

# News at Grace

## Congregational Conversations on Mission and Ministry

During the transition period at Grace, the Transition Team has led our congregation through a series of meetings, during which we enjoyed shared meals and conversation together. Attendance at these meetings was excellent—averaging around forty persons. While we didn't engage in a lengthy process yielding a new mission statement, core values, and a vision for future ministry, we did work toward identifying several priorities for ministry at Grace in the near term. There was a consensus around these priorities, in descending order:

#1—Focus on Young Adults, Families, and Intergenerational Ministry. What can we do to integrate people of all ages into the life our vibrant faith community?
#2—Developing new and utilizing existing means of publicity. How can we better tell the story of God at work through Grace Lutheran Church?
#3—Offering a midweek (or alternative to Sunday morning) worship service, with
a somewhat different and less formal style of worship.
#4—Expand our Building Usage—invite the community to use the building and outdoor area as a meeting space for a variety of purposes.

Other ministry initiatives identified as lesser priorities included encouraging individual members to participate in community events, so that Grace is more visible in the community and focusing ministry initiatives on seniors in our community, given the demographics of Gwinn and our current age profile at Grace. This information will be shared with the Congregation Council for reflection and implementation, as well as with pastoral candidates for call at Grace Lutheran
Church.

# Women of the ELCA (WELCA) at Grace

## Quilters

We will meet every Tuesday (except the second Tuesday) at 1:00 in the Fellowship Hall downstairs. Our quilts are made with loving hands, and once complete, are sent to the Lutheran WOrld Relief missions. New quilters are welcome - and no experience is required! 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 Hall downstairs at 2:00pm. We have a Bible study from the Gather magazine, followed by a coffee fellowship. This is for all women - come join us!

## Hope Circle

We will be meeting on the first Friday of each month in the Fellowship Hall downstairs. We will meet at 1:00pm. Our circle enjoys fellowship and we lead several donation drives throughout the year for different organizations.

## Community Outreach

October is our busiest month of the year with all kits for Lutheran World Relief being completed, packaged, and shipped. On October 11th during worship service, Pastor Sharolyn will offer a blessing of our quilts, school kits, and health kits. We will then pack and prepare them for shipping on October 17th at Messiah Lutheran Church in Marquette.

Lutheran World Relief has year-round projects across the globe. Distaster Response is one of their greatest outreaches throughout the world. With all fo the floods, tornados, hurricanes, and earthquakes; their need is great. We will continue to pray and assist this mission.

For the rest of September and up until October 18th, we will haVe a donation jar in the Narthex to collect monetary donations for Disaster Response. 100% of your donation will be sent to LWR. The Disaster Response uses 86% of those donations for the humanitarian assistance from natural disasters and conflicts. Their support goes to countries for:

- Immediate aid of blankets, clothing, health kits, and cooking utensils
- Cash transfer for fast, local relief for short term needs
- Clean water tanks and emergency shelters

All donations will be sent from Grace within the week following October 18th.

# Current Events around Grace

## The Fortune Lake Fall Fest 2026 VIRTUAL Auction is open!

Scoot on over to FLLC Fall Fest Virtual Auction to browse and bid on the 50+ one-of-a-kind beautifully handcrafted quilts and camp experiences (including a Week of Summer Camp 2027), purchase draffle tickets for your chance to win some fun, fantastic baskets, and sustain the ministry of Fortune Lake through your generous support!

Please help us spread the word to your friends and family from far and wide! We'll ship quilts and draffle items to winning bidders. **The VIRTUAL Auction is open now through Saturday, October 3 at 5 pm CT.** Bid early and often in support of Fortune Lake!

And, local friends, make plans to join us for the **LIVE Fall Fest and Quilt Auction on Saturday, October 3.** Continental breakfast, Country Store, and draffle sales begin at 9:30 am with the juried Quilt Auction starting promptly at 11 am CT.

Please call or email with questions: **906-214-2267** or **officemanager@fortunelake.org**.

## Garden announcement

We will be harvesting the Grace garden on Monday, October 5th with the Kid's Cafe kids. We will be digging potatoes and pulling onions and carrots. Anyone who would like to help will be greatly appreciated. We will begin around 4:00 p.m. with a meal with the kids and after the meal we will head out to harvest. Or show up around 4:30 if you just want to assist in the garden.

## Gift Planning & Estate Care Luncheon

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Eagle River, WI, is hosting a free "Gift Planning & Estate Care" Luncheon on Thursday, October 15th, from 11:30-1:30 CST. Some topics covered will be: Tax-Wise Giving including CDs and IRAs; Gift Planning presentation, speakers from Law and Finance, and others. There will be a complimentary catered lunch and you can also meet the NGLS Gift Planner! **We would like a representative from Grace to attend this event**, and provide feedback to the congregation as to whether an event of this nature could/would benefit our community. If you are interested in attending, please contact our office at 906-346-3156 and RSVP by calling 906-228-2300.

# Current Events Around Grace

## Feeding America

Volunteers are still needed for the last Feeding America Food DIstribution for 2026, which is on Thursday October 8th (not the 1st as originally reported). Please sign up if you are able to help; sign-up sheets are in the Narthex. As usual, the distribution is scheduled for 4pm so volunteers should arrive between 3 and 3:30, and park on the grass. Cheryl Ziszik volunteered to supervise the distribution since Arlene Van Kley will be out of town. Please direct questions to Cheryl, and than you in advance for your cooperation.

A big thank you to Jerry and Marla Jensen on the lovely new sign! It is a great addition!

## Synod Women's Conference - September

Grace had three women attend the SWO conference at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp. Cheryl Ziszik, Mary Stefanski, and Pat Seger traveled together down to Crystal Falls. The ladies reported that they thoroughly enjoyed the conference, seeing old friends from around the Synod, and making new ones. The music and worship were enjoyable as always. We are looking forward to next year's conference!

## Fundraising Efforts - Youth Ministries

Our Youth Ministries team held a fundraiser at Texas Roadhouse on September 20th from 11am-3pm. They were accepting cash donations, as well as 10% from receipts on patrons who saved and donated them. The final numbers are not in yet, but they will be posted as soon as they are received.

## Social Media Update

Our church's Facebook page is still "out of order". Rebecca is working with someone who specializes in IT to get it back up and running. We apologize for any issues or miscommunication this has caused.

# Youth Ministry

The Synod's Youth Ministry events are for youth currently in Middle or High School. If you know of any youth who would be interested in going to any of these events - please RSVP to our office at 906-346-3156.

### Saturday, October 10 – Load the Semi-Truck for Lutheran World Relief

Youth (and adults!) are invited to help load quilts, school supplies, and baby kits onto the semi-truck for Lutheran World Relief between 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. CST. The morning will include a Blessing of the Hands, and donuts will be available for the down time between truck arrivals. Bring a water bottle!
Location: Zion Lutheran Church – 2714 James Street Marinette, WI *NOTE THE NEW LOCATION*
Time: 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Central Standard Time

### Saturday, October 17 – Grand Get-Together at Larry's Corn Maze - Multi-Conference Event!

Youth between 6th-12th grade are invited to join multiple Conferences for an afternoon of fall fun at the Larry's Corn Maze in Rock, MI (formerly Hayes Corn Maze). Dinner will be provided and carpooling from various Conference locations is available. Please contact our office to RSVP and receive details about carpooling and cost.
Location: Hayes Corn Maze – 3474 Saint Nicholas Rd. Rock, MI
Time: 2:30 – 5:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (add additional time for carpooling)

### Sunday, November 22 - Friendsgiving and Service Event

Youth between 6th-12th grade are invited to join us at Bethany Lutheran Church in Ishpeming for a "Friendsgiving" celebration and a service event. A service event is something we do as a group to help others; like a small mission! Please RSVP by November 17th if you'd like to join us and if you are able, please bring a dish or a treat to pass.
Location: Bethany Lutheran - 715 Mather Ave., Ishpeming, MI
Time: 5:00pm - 7:00pm

### Friday - Saturday, December 11-12 – Lock-In at Messiah Lutheran Church

Youth between 6th-12th grade are invited to one of the most fun events of the year - the annual Lock-In at Messiah Lutheran Church in Marquette! There will be lots of games, music, snacks, laughter, friendship... but not much (if any) sleep!
Location: Messiah Lutheran Church - 305 W. Magnetic St., Marquette, MI
Time: Drop off 6pm on Friday Dec 11th; Pick up at 8am on Saturday Dec 12th

***Must RSVP to these events 1 week prior***

# Youth Ministry

## Have you heard about our Kids' Café that we have on Mondays during the school year?

Our Kids' Café program is similar to that of a Sunday School meets youth group meets fellowship meal! Mondays after school, youth between the ages of 4 (pre-K) thru 12 (or 5th grade) meet at Grace. We share Bible Stories, play games and do activities, and enjoy a nice meal together. There are often crafts that they can take home, songs to sing, and lots of love to share. PLENTY of laughs as well!

Our kids also harvest our garden upstairs in the fall! How wonderful that they're learning about planting seeds, nurturing them, and watching them grow! I'm thinking of a mustard seed parable... are you?

If you know of any school-aged youth who would like to join us - please visit our website, **www.graceingwinn.org**, our Facebook page, or **use the QR code below** to register! Also please spread the word as we will welcome all children, as Jesus taught us to!

We are always looking for helpers on Mondays! You can signup for **one** Monday or **multiple** Mondays. If you have a special talent (music, crafts, games, storytelling), please share that with our office when signing up. If you can volunteer from 3-6 - WONDERFUL! If you can volunteer only from 5-6... ALSO WONDERFUL!

With the new additions of a **CLEAN CRAFT ROOM** (thank you to our volunteers!), a **large screen TV** used for videos and music (thank you Herriman family), and **all new items for our "Quiet Corner"** (thank you Memorial Committee)... we are **BLESSED BEYOND MEASURE** and so very excited for this year. Our first Kids' Cafe last Monday the 21st went quite well and the children left with a game, lots of smiles, and hopefully a little tired!

KIDS CAFE

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, Gwinn

## Volunteers at Grace Lutheran

### Readers:



October 4th: Arlene Johnson
October 11th: Sharon Groff
October 18th: Sandra Kronner
October 25th: Lynnette Broxson

### Communion Assistants:



October 4th: Ray Richard
October 11th: Mary Connors
October 18th: Kathy Keskimaki
October 25th: Arlene Johnson

### Fellowship Servers:



October 4th: Sue DeGroot & Dee Mattson
October 11th: LuAnne Krueger & Kim Mooday
October 18th: Karen Beaumier & Holly Paris
October 25th: Robin Howard & Deanie Lemoine

### Greeters:




October 4th: Sharon Groff
October 11th: Dee D'Ambrosia
October 18th: Sandra Kronner
October 25th: ***NEEDED***

## In Our Prayers and In Our Hearts

Please pray for our friends and family:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Gerry Stille | Marlys Pickett | Sally Weingartner |
| Darlene Faucher | Donald Hakala | Gloria LaFave |
| Lois Blank | Harold Zaborowski | Edna Roberts |
| Charlie Blank | Deb McNabb | Louise Spickerman |
| Arlene Keskimaki | Jackie Kangas | Sarah Johnson |
| Richard Erickson | Sandee Kangas | Mike Stefanski |
| LuAnne Seger | Dave Kangas | Mary Stefanski |
| Alice Harbin | Chris Mitchell | Shannon McNabb |
| Elanor Rose Beauchaine | Kelly Kienert | Dana Pelkola |
| Amanda Noel | Pastor DJ Rasner | Hannah (grandaughter) |
| Family of Bill Hatch | Family of Glenda Reed | Family of Jason Dutiel |
| Mike Heidtman | Pete Polini | Beth Jaremczek |

## October Birthdays

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Shirlee Leppaluoto | Oct 1 | Gary Ruhinen | Oct 1 |
| David Marjonen | Oct 2 | Arlene Keskimaki | Oct 4 |
| Deb Hurkman | Oct 8 | Bill Kangas | Oct 9 |
| Arlene Van Kley | Oct 18 | Gary Howard | Oct 20 |
| Darlene Faucher | Oct 21 | Edna Roberts | Oct 22 |
| Karen Beaumier | Oct 23 | Bob Koski | Oct 27 |
| Hazel Herriman | Oct 28 | | |

# Church Council Updates

## 9/15/26

Present: Interim Pastor Dave Van Kley, Paul Makela, Bill Kangas, Bill Koski, Sharon Groff, Jean Armatti, Ruth Forgette, Dee D'Ambrosia, Karen Nelson GUEST: Rebecca Herriman
Meeting called to order at 9:58 a.m. by Paul Makela, President. Pastor Dave lead with a devotion.
Motion by Jean, second by Dee, to approve the agenda.Motion carried.
Reviewed August Council minutes. Motion by Ruth, second by Bill Koski, to approve. Motion carried.
Rebecca Herriman reviewed the Kids' Café updates.She reported the needed background checks were completed and approved. Exploring using QR Code for giving. She also noted that the blood drive went well. No further questions for Rebecca and she was excused.
Paul reviewed the financial reports. He noted again that we do not pay sales tax and to make sure to let the business know. Paul made a motion to approve the reports as written. Second by Ruth. Motion carried.
Correspondence: None
Pastor's report reviewed. Pastor Dave reported the Synod will request an administrative interim pastor. He shared some observations/suggestions to continue to build relationships and be supportive to the interim given the marked limited hours. He also noted that being a new pastor is a hard job and will need support. He reminded us that a climate of support both ways is important. Motion by Ruth, second by Dee, to accept report. Motion carried.

## COMMITTEE and TEAM REPORTS

Personnel: Ruth reported a meeting will be held with Julie, our cleaner, to see how things are going for her and if she has any needs.
Finance: No meeting.
Transition Team: Joint meeting with Call Committee to be held Thursday, 9/1.
Christian Education:Kids' Café first event is 9/21.
Worship and Music:Ongoing monthly.
Stewardship: Annual emphasis has begun, recommending a QR Code for giving be in the bulletin weekly. Motion by Ruth, second by Dee, to have QR Code for giving in our weekly bulletin. Motion carried.
Property: Bill Kangas reviewed the quote from Code Electrical.We now do not need the work done in the Classroom #4 Community Outreach Room and that brings the quote down to $1700.00 for the work to be done in the Main Electrical Room. Motion by Bill Kangas to approve this $1700.00 quote and to have the work completed. Second by Sharon, motion carried.
TKE contacted us that the inspection is due. We had communicated to TKE that we were not continuing with them after October and do not need to pay the bill given their breach of contract (Metro had come in and completed the needed work). There is a chance that we will have to pay TKE per contract until October.

# Church Council Updates

He also reported that there was a badly cracked/broken light globe in the stairwell, which he moved to the basement hallway temporarily as all 4 are the same. He tried to get a replacement and none exist as they are about 40 years old. Motion by Bill Kangas, second by Jean, to replace both lights/globes in the basement hallway. Motion carried.
Community Outreach:Dee reported school/health kits will be assembled the second week of October. The kits, along with quilts, will be delivered to Messiah on October 17.41 families were served meal kits.Samaritan's Purse, Christmas Shoeboxes will be prepared for the congregation to take and fill. "Thank You" dinner for Community Outreach volunteers and drivers will be September 30.

## OLD BUSINESS

Call Process Update: Meeting 9/17.
Range Visit/Security Issues: Waiting for more information.
Bylaw/Continuing Resolution Changes: Pastor Dave reviewed some Bylaw change suggestions in Chapter 13, Congregation Committees and Teams section. Motion by Ruth, second by Dee, to approve those changes and bring to our annual meeting.Motion carried.
Feeding America: Next distribution event is 10/1. This is our last one for the year. Cheryl Ziszik will provide leadership as Arlene will not be there.

## NEW BUSINESS

Appointment of Audit Committee Members for 2026: Motion by Pastor Dave, second by Jean, to have Jeanne Soyring and Paul Makela to be on the Audit Committee for 2026. Motion carried.
New Member: Will welcome a new member this coming Sunday. Pastor Dave talked with some others about joining Grace and they declined at this time.

Council Member Comments: Sharon is having difficulty with the meeting being in the morning. Will add to next month's agenda changing meeting time for last few months of this term.
Closed meeting with Lord's Prayer.
Motion by Ruth, second by Jean, to adjourn at 11:45.Motion carried.

**Next meeting: Tuesday, October 20, 10:00 a.m.**

Submitted by Karen Nelson

## 9/20/26

Present: Pastor Dave-Interim Pastor, Ruth Forgette, Bill Koski, Paul Makela, Jean Armatti, Dee D'Ambrosia, Gary Howard, Sharon Groff, Karen Nelson
Meeting called to order at 11:13 a.m. by Paul.
Pastor Alex LaChappelle has accepted the call to be our Administrative Interim Pastor beginning 10/1/26. He noted that this is contingent upon approval by his current parish, Prince of Peace in Harvey. Paul reviewed the duties and compensation. Motion by Paul, second by Jean, to accept Pastor Alex as our Administrative Interim Pastor. Motion carried.
Meeting adjourned at 11:21.

Submitted by Karen Nelson