



Equipper

Equipping God's people as we celebrate, teach, and share God's Grace.

May 2025



Pastor's Message

"Is Seeing Believing?"

John 20:28-29, (Where the Bible reports this interaction between the risen Lord Jesus and his disciple Thomas)... 28 Thomas said to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Is seeing believing? Or are there things that are very real, even very true, that we cannot see with our eyes? Our garage doors open by unseen forces at the touch of a button. We put our food and drinks into little rectangular devices and hit the button believing that, absent a heating element or a flame of any sort, microwaves will make our food or beverages piping hot. Even the most empirical of scientists has things which he/she believes long before they are tested or visible to human eyes. One could make the case that observable science, the very scientific method we cherish today, was based on a belief that God had created and ordered the world in such a way that it could be tested, and its laws could be counted on. You might say that even the scientist has to believe in certain things before he/she could really see them.

Faith in God is a bit like that. It's not that faith in God is totally absent of data or information, for the very words of God, the gifts of Baptism and the Lord Supper engender and strengthen faith. But there are aspects to faith that are beyond our control. We are the creature; God is the Creator. He is the Redeemer; we are the redeemed. Yet faith in the God of the Bible is not merely an academic exercise. Faith in the person and work of Jesus begins to help us see the big picture of our lives here, and our lives eternally. In a paper delivered at the Oxford Socratic Club, C.S. Lewis remarked: *"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen. Not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."*

https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/Christianity_Makes_Sense_of_the_World

The Founding Fathers of America believed in liberty because they believed that God had created humanity for such a life. With that faith, they began to structure a government that would honor such freedom. In many of the fundamental questions of life, *"Believing is seeing!"* The tension between *"seeing is believing"* and *"believing is seeing"* permeates our lesson for today. The text is about *"Doubting Thomas"* finally seeing Jesus as his living Savior. But it took the word of the risen Jesus presenting the very wounds of His crucifixion in order to engender such faith. But who was this Thomas character? What was he really like? Was he the skeptic that many claim him to be? Was he the pessimist? The doubter? Well, if he was, he was also tough, tenacious, and no wilting violet. When Jesus was going to journey into dangerous territory, Thomas didn't shrink back. Instead, he declared, *"Let us also go, that we may die with him"* (John 11:16). But it's also true that he was confused and distraught over Jesus' crucifixion. If someone tried to console him by claiming that Jesus didn't really die, he wasn't going to have any of that. He had heard about it from reliable witnesses, he felt it, He was overwhelmed by it, and no amount of wishful thinking would change that.

What he forgot was that the “*believing is seeing*” attitude of the believer doesn’t work because of our inherent power or our wishful thinking. It works because God’s gifts of Word and Sacraments deliver what they say. God’s promises are always true. God’s promises always come to fruition. Yes, in His time and in His way, but they always come true because He is trustworthy and true.

Maybe Thomas did you and me a favor. He wasn’t going to let wishful thinking be the foundation of faith. He wanted the fulfilled promises of Christ to be evident for all to see (e.g., John 10:17-18), even if he had to look a bit foolish for that to happen. In this Easter season, take a step back from the cultural craziness of our world, the rat race of your job, and your desires to make life what you wish it to be. Then try to see the big picture of your life with God in Christ. Because He has risen, your life is redeemed; it is eternal and it also has purpose now. If your life doesn’t look like that at the moment, why not take Christ’s word for it first and foremost? Begin to live in that resurrection reality with its eternal blessings right here and now. Then put the power of “*seeing is believing*” to work by reading and trusting in Jesus’s words. He is the resurrected one who did all of this for people like Doubting Thomas, and for people like you and me.

Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, teach us to see the depth of Your mercy for us, so that we might live faithful lives of grace and mercy for others. Amen.*

See you in worship,

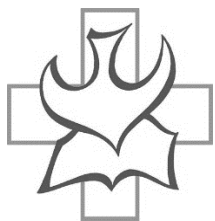
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Pastor John M. Taggatz



Welcome to our new families who have recently joined Grace this past month:

Lori & Maya Hegarty, Michael Vlach, Carl Branch, Scott Brenton, Linda Maldonado, Bailey & Liam Miles, and Hope Grams. We are so glad that you have joined Grace!!!



Congratulations to our Grace Lutheran Confirmation Students!

God’s blessings to **Levi Van Vlaenderen & Amberleigh Moog** upon their journey with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior that was started on the day of their baptisms and has continued to their Confirmation, which will be on Sunday May 4th! Congratulations to them as they have confirmed their Christian faith that God gave to them in their baptism!

Public Hearing for Grace Lutheran Church – Monday, May 5th

We invite all members and supporters of Grace Lutheran Church and School to attend an important **Public Hearing on Monday, May 5th at 6:30pm** at the **Oak Creek Civic Center** (Lake Vista Room), located at **8040 S 6th St, Oak Creek, WI 53154**. This hearing concerns the **zoning approval for the new garage** on our school property. Your presence and support at the meeting will be greatly appreciated and will help us move forward with our plans to build this much-needed facility. **Please make plans to attend and show your support!**

Announcements

Please Note

Call the church office at 414.762.8990

- When a member of your family is admitted to the hospital, so a visit can be made by Pastor Taggatz.
- When your address, email, or your home or business phone number have changed, so church records can be corrected.
- When you are planning to move either out of town or locally.
- When you know you are pregnant so that we will be able to assist you in any way we can with prayers, encouragement and support.
- When a new baby arrives in your family and/or in the family of another church member.
- When you are planning a wedding, baptism or funeral.

For appointments or emergencies, call church office or Pastor's cell phone.

Pastor John Taggatz, cell: 715.467.1231

Monday 8:00 am-1:00 pm

Tuesday 8:00 am-1:00 pm

Wednesday 8:00 am-1:00 pm

Thursday 8:00 am-1:00 pm

Friday Pastor Off

Visitations: Monday – Thursday Afternoons

Heidi, Church Secretary

Church office: 414.762.8990

Church office hours: T-W-Th 9:00am – 12:30pm

REMINDER: If you have any announcements and/or additions you would like printed in the monthly *Equipper* please forward to the church office at church@graceoakcreek.org by the 17th of each month.

Look for the LARGE mite box to drop your change and dollars in to on May 1st and 4th



When you or your group plans to hold a meeting at the Grace Lutheran School campus, it must be cleared by Principal Steve Gettelman. His email address is: principal@graceoakcreek.org

ONLINE GIVING AT GRACE

You can now give to our Church online. It's easy, fast, and secure. If you're able, we also encourage you to set up recurring giving. Thank you for supporting our ministries here at Grace!!! Text the word: graceoc to 206-859-9405, use this QR Code or head to our web-site: graceoakcreek.org. You may give a one time gift or set up your regular weekly/monthly offering. Thank you for your generosity and support of the ministries at Grace!!!



Celebration for Mrs. Amy Pankow & Mrs. Lisa Hengst - Sunday, June 1st

Join us in celebrating Mrs. Pankow's 10 years of teaching at Grace Lutheran School and Mrs Hengst's graduation with a Masters Degree in School Administration from Concordia University Wisconsin! Worship with us at 9:00am on Sunday, June 1st, and then join us for a potluck meal in the school gym at 10:30am, served by our Grace Lutheran PTLS. Let's come together to celebrate Mrs. Pankow & Mrs. Hengst's dedication and service to our school.

You can sign up for the potluck for Mrs. Hengst & Mrs. Pankow at church in the narthex.

Your First Quarter Giving Statements are available to pick up in the church narthex. Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support for the ministries of Grace!!!

Grace Youth Group Stock Sale!!!

What better investment can you make than giving our youth an opportunity to praise Jesus? In July, many of the high schoolers in our congregation will travel to New Orleans, LA, for the triennial LCMS National Youth Gathering. There, they will have the opportunity to worship with about 25,000 other Lutherans from around the world.



How you can help: 1.) *Buy stock in our youth during the month of April - Any amount is appreciated. (Special envelopes are available in the Narthex at church).* 2. *Pray for us while we travel and participate in the gathering.* 3. *Follow our adventures on Facebook and Instagram.* 4. *Join us after we get back for a stockholder's luncheon so we can share our experiences with you.* We are grateful for your prayers, encouragement, and generosity as they prepare for this life-changing event. Thank you for being a blessing to our youth!

Grace PTLS is hosting their annual Panther Palooza on Friday May 16th

This event is fun for the whole family and members of Grace Lutheran Church & ECC are welcome to join our School families for this event!!! We will have multiple bounce houses, a bubble station for the littles, games, prizes, food, even a DJ and glitter stencils! We are also hosting a silent auction during the event with some amazing things to bid on. This event will take place in the evening of May 16th.

Thank you to everyone who donated items for our Grace Lutheran Youth Group Easter Breakfast that was held on Easter Sunday April 20th!!! We greatly appreciate the hard work of our youth group and their parents who put on this event as we celebrated the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thanks to our members who also donated items for this event. We appreciate your support of our Youth Group!!!

Important Date for Sunday School & Adult Bible Class Coming Up--This is a reminder that the last day of Sunday School & Adult Bible Class will be Sunday, May 18th. Thank you for having your children attend Sunday School this year, as they have had the opportunity to learn more about God's love for them in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord!



May Meeting

Saturday, May 10-10am-11:30am at school

- Bible study - Free to Serve from the 2025 Spring Lutheran Women's Quarterly (bring along a Bible)
- Dispersing monies to missions/ministries
- Election of Vice President & Secretary

2025 LWML Convention-Omaha

June 26-29, 2025

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen (2 Peter 3:18). More convention information is available at www.lwml.org/convention



*Thank you to all who donated items
for the advocacy program at
A Place of Refuge during our
Blessings for Baby event.*

Ladies Bible Study

Please join us on Wednesday mornings at Church at 9:30 a.m. Please join us on Wednesday mornings at Church at 9:30 a.m. We are studying, "Patience & Perfection: Finding Peace in God's Plan for You!" by Daniel Paavola. Join us!!!



Sunday Morning Bible Class from 9:15-10:15am in the School Library Luke: To All Nations

Luke's carefully written Gospel, compiled from both oral and written accounts, points to God's gracious salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. The peace that Christ has brought to the world enables us to break out in a liturgy of praise. The salvation story did not end with Christ's ascension, however; Christ's Church is called to go to "all nations"-men, women, children, the poor, the sick, and the disenfranchised-proclaiming the victory found only in Jesus Christ. We hope you can join us for our Adult Bible Class on Sunday mornings at Grace as we learn how Luke's Gospel speaks to us about:

- God's plan for bringing salvation to both Jew and Gentile;
- believers' unceasing joy upon hearing the Good News;
- the work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life and in our own;
- the enduring value and importance of prayer.



Rise & Sonshine Bible Study

ONE meeting in May

Saturday, May 10th 8:00am-9:30am

Location: The school library

All ladies welcome!

*We will be planning our summer
events and schedule.*

Updates will be forthcoming.



Opportunities at Grace

Volunteers Needed to Assist with Worship!

We are in need of additional people to assist as ushers and lay readers during worship services, especially for Sunday mornings at 8am and Thursday evenings at 6:30pm.

Ushers arrive early, greet people and hand out bulletins before service, gather offerings and assist with communion during service, and straighten up the church after service. Lay readers proclaim God's word to the congregation by reading the Old Testament and Epistle lessons during the worship service. If you are able and willing to help in either of these capacities, please sign up on the sheet in the back of church -- your assistance is greatly appreciated. Please feel free to approach the elder on duty with any questions you may have about these opportunities.

Ushers Needed

We are in critical need of ushers for both Thursday and Sunday services. If you have thought about being an usher but are concerned about the duties, please don't be. Here are some of the main duties: Arrive 20 minutes before service, Pass out bulletins, Collect offerings, Usher people for communion, Clean up after service

Greeting Card Ministry

The greeting-card ministry consists of volunteers mailing cards and notes of encouragement to people in nursing facilities, who are homebound, or otherwise can't be at church regularly. *'Think of your neighbor, love your neighbor.'* This is the way people answer that message, letting people know they haven't been forgotten. If you would like to share in this ministry, please take a card which is provided for you on the table in the narthex of the Church. Remember...you are giving joy to these people. If you are interested in taking part in this ministry, please contact Pauline Parker at: 414-807-6338 or paulinemom@aol.com.

Grief Share Group at Grace Lutheran School

No matter what the circumstances, grief recovery is a painful process. Have you or someone you know experienced the death of a loved one recently? Near the end of February we are starting a special seminar that we sponsor for people dealing with the loss of a family member here at Grace Lutheran. We understand how deeply grief and loss hurt people and families, and we simply wanted you to know about our Grief Share group. It's a place where many people have found they can begin putting their lives back together again with the Lord's help and with the love and encouragement of His Church. Our Grief Share grief recovery seminar and support group will meet on Monday evenings starting February 17th from 6:30-8:00pm in the school library and it will end on Monday May 19th. We will take off April 21st for Easter Monday. The cost for attending is \$20.00. Grace Lutheran School is located at: 8537 S. Pennsylvania Ave. Lori Kachelmeier and Jeanne Meyer will be the leaders for this Grief Share Group. Grief Share features nationally recognized experts on grief recovery topics. Seminar sessions include *"Is This Normal?"* *"The Challenges of Grief,"* *"Grief and Your Relationships,"* *"Why?"* and *"Guilt and Anger."* For more information or to register go to the website: www.griefshare.org and enter our zip code "53154" to the left of "find a group" box and do a search. It will bring up our Monday 6:30 pm meetings. For further questions please call Lori Kachelmeier at: 414-828-0290.

Are You Interested in Serving on a Church Board?

Elections are coming up for various boards at our Church at our June Voter's Meeting. Do you feel called to serve in leadership here at Grace Lutheran Church? Please consider contacting the Church Office and we will let you know what responsibilities each board position has. We will also connect you with the current board members who are serving so that you can ask them questions pertaining to their current board responsibilities. The term of service is three years, and your service would begin in July of 2025. Please call the Church Office for what board positions are currently available for the next term.

Worship Services at Willow Crest Nursing Home

Volunteers Needed! Grace Lutheran Church members have helped out with leading worship services at Willow Crest Nursing Home on Sunday mornings. We have started leading these worship services again and could use some volunteers to help out with this ministry. The worship services are roughly 30 minutes long and are held at 10:00am on Sundays at Willow Crest Nursing Home located at: 3821 Chicago Ave., South Milwaukee, WI 53172. You may end up leading a worship service at Willow Crest once a month, or every 5 to 6 weeks, depending on how many people are willing to volunteer in leading worship services at Willow Crest. We would also provide you with resources to help you lead worship services at Willow Crest. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Jeanne Meyer at: meyorch@sbcglobal.net or 414-719-2257 or Lori Kachelmeier at ilkachel2@gmail.com or 414-828-0290. You would also be able to shadow a current Willow Crest Worship Leader if you are wanting to learn more information about this ministry.

Special Voters Meeting – Sunday, May 18th

*We are calling a **Special Voters Meeting** for **Sunday, May 18th**, following the late service. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss and vote on **Teacher Calls for our Lutheran School**. A quorum is required, so **please plan to attend**. Your participation is important as we prayerfully make these decisions together. Thank you for your commitment to Grace Lutheran Church, School, and ECC. God's blessings!!! **Tony Mirenda, Grace Church President**.*

Giving Tree

Giving Tree in our Church Sanctuary begins on Memorial Day Weekend!!! The *Giving Tree* from our Board of Stewardship will be up soon in our Church Sanctuary. Proceeds from the *Giving Tree* this year will go to support our *Church's Good Samaritan Fund*, which helps out those in need from our Church, School, and Early Childhood Center, and the Oak Creek Community. Thank you for your generosity and support for those who are in need!!!

Portals of Prayer Devotional

Over the years the church has provided the Portals of Prayers devotional book to our members. Throughout these years the church has carried this expense. To help offset that burden we now have envelopes available in the narthex for our members to designate funds to this devotional book. It is our goal to continue to provide this amazing tool to our members in their faith journey.

GIVING TO GRACE THROUGH THE THRIVENT CHOICE PROGRAM

When you're ready to make an impact on the causes and nonprofits you care most about, we're here to help. Through our Thrivent Choice® program, you can make a personal donation or direct Thrivent Choice Dollars® to more than 40,000 churches and non profits. Eligible members can recommend where Thrivent distributes a portion of its charitable funding by directing Choice Dollars®. Members become eligible for Thrivent Choice based on insurance premiums, contract values and Thrivent volunteer leadership.



*****Special notice regarding the Thrivent Choice Program*****

Thrivent members wishing to continue their automatic withdrawal to the charity of their choice will have to let Thrivent know either by e-mail or phone. All you have to do is call this 1- 800 number in order to see if you have Thrivent Choice dollars to give. To continue to direct your Choice Dollars to the charity of your choice call: 800-THRIVENT(800-847-4836) and state " *Thrivent Choice.*"

For More information on the Thrivent Choice Program please go to:

<https://www.thrivent.com/what-we-offer/generosity/thrivent-choice.html>



Military Bible Sticks Campaign

Thursday, May 22nd through Sunday, July 6th.

Our congregation has faithfully supported this mission for many years. We prayerfully ask you for this support again this year. The change this year is that Military Bible Sticks will be paired with a new mission from Faith Comes by Hearing. This new effort is called Vision 2033. Vision 2033 involves partnering with other missions, such as Lutheran Bible Translators, to translate the Bible into mission languages. These Bible sticks would have native speakers reading the Word and would be given to the missions in countries all over the world. That way people would be able to hear the Good News in their own languages. We are looking forward to being able to be a part of this new mission by Faith Comes by Hearing. Envelopes will be available for donating to Military Bible Sticks in the narthex on the white board. A video will be shared with the congregation soon to share this mission's vision. For more in-depth information please go to:

<https://www.faithcomesbyhearing.com/> Here is an interview on the history of Military Bible Sticks:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-6mwlc1Bvo>

Save the Date!

CALLING ALL GRADUATES!!! Graduation is coming up for our 8th Graders at Grace Lutheran School, but also for those in our congregation that are graduating from High School and College. On Sunday May 18th we will be acknowledging those in our congregation that are graduating from 8th Grade, High School, and College. We are asking that any High School or College age students of our congregation that are graduating would join us for this event. They may also wear their cap and gown to be recognized for their graduation. Please let us know what school they are graduating from, and if it is from college, what is their major? We will publish this information in the church's bulletins on Sunday May 18th. Please email this info to our Church Secretary Heidi at: church@graceoakcreek.org



STARTS MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

We will be switching to our Summer Schedule here at Grace starting Memorial Day weekend. This means that our Sunday morning worship time will be at 9:00am starting on Sunday, May 25th and this will go through Labor Day Weekend. There will not be Sunday School and Adult Bible Class during the summer. Thursday evening worship at 6:30pm will remain the same throughout the summer. We look forward to seeing you in worship!!!



Sign up for Grace Lutheran's week-long VBS Scheduled June 9-13 from 9:00am to 12:00pm, each day!!!

Mrs. Amy Pankow, our VBS Director, already has a team of very talented and enthusiastic helpers to make this year's VBS at Grace a memorable and exciting experience as we learn about Jesus our Savior and Lord. We have camp Graceland running before and after VBS if needed on those days. Texas Roadhouse in Oak Creek will be partnering with us on the last day and SO much more exciting things! Get those kiddos signed up! And for middle schoolers and high-school kids (come on back Grace alumni!), there are great ways to volunteer and help out! If you want to help out (even a day or so) sign up!!

Thank you, Mrs. Amy Pankow, for all your hard work on this!!! **Here is a description of this year's VBS:** *Guide kids on the ultimate Alaskan adventure where northern lights glow over majestic mountains, racing rivers, and glistening glaciers. As kids trek the tundra, they'll explore how easy it is to lose sight of what's true in our wild world today. Pointing them toward Jesus, True North VBS shows them that he is a faithful friend we can always trust. He's our True North!*

To sign up for VBS at Grace Oak Creek please follow this link: <https://vbspro.events/p/graceoakcreek>



“By the Mercies of God”

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Rom. 12:1)

These words from Romans 12:1–2 set stewardship in its rightful place. Here, St. Paul shows us stewardship in its proper relationship to the Lord, and what stewardship should look like in our faithful service to Him. These are good words for the faithful steward to consider on a regular basis.

Notice from whence comes the appeal! The mercies of God are the defining factor, shaping both the steward and all subsequent actions. It all begins with the mercies of God. This beginning is not some esoteric, philosophical consideration either. The mercies of God, poured out upon the faithful steward, find one anchor point in human history. The mercies of God are on full display at the cross.

On Calvary, our Lord Himself, bearing human vesture and carrying our sins and griefs, lowered His holy, crown-encircled brow. But Christ’s death on the cross should not be taken as a sign of defeat. Rather, by the mercies of God, Christ’s death grants fallen sinner/stewards like us new life! We trace this journey each year through the season of Lent and Easter. Amid the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, the injustice of the kangaroo court in Jerusalem, the ruthless and spineless acquiescence of Pilate, and the gore of Golgotha, we see exactly what the mercies of God look like.

Everything Jesus endured should have been ours. When Jesus is forgiving and promising paradise even as He is being forsaken for us, we see true mercy! This mercy is what redefines who we are, a redefinition which happens when we are baptized. Once dead and deserving of condemnation, in Baptism we are given new life in Christ. This new life in Christ changes how we see ourselves. It also changes how we see the world.

By viewing ourselves and the world in this new way, we can start to live out St. Paul’s oxymoronic call to be “living sacrifices.” We know from the Old Testament that sacrifice means something dies. The bulls and goats, lambs and rams came at a high price. In the waters of Holy Baptism, something also dies — the old Adam. In our Baptism, we have already died and have been raised. This is how the mercy of God works on us. In the dying and rising, we can be a daily sacrifice that has been made holy and acceptable to God. This is not by our action, but by His!

Paul talks about this as our “spiritual worship.” The Greek word here is *leitourgos*, which is where we get the word “liturgy.” It is this view of the mercies of God that forms our daily stewardship, and our daily worship. The mercies of God define all you do in the course of a week as a steward of the Gospel worship. It is not limited to the Divine Service. In fact, the mercies you receive in the Divine Service are what you carry out to share with the world as your living sacrifice. After spending time with Jesus, you bear His image and His glow out into the world that is full of darkness and death. You have been made holy and acceptable to Him for the purpose of showing His mercy to others. This is what makes our “daily liturgy” so important. As we live and serve, and as we seek and share forgiveness and life with those around us, we are walking billboards of God’s mercy in Christ.

This is what your stewardship puts on display. None of it is about you. It is about Jesus in and through you. You can’t get to this by your own efforts. It is only about the mercies of God. These mercies are the treasure that you steward in your daily life of worship!

Blessings on your Stewardship journey!

I Began to Feel God's Love Again



Recently, I was teaching at a Stephen Ministry event where someone introduced me to "Megan". A woman in her early 30's who wanted to tell me her story about receiving care from a Stephen Minister during a difficult transition in her life. Megan prefers to remain anonymous--but she gave me permission to share her story with you so you'll know about the powerful difference Stephen Ministry made in her life.

It all began soon after I moved to a new city to live near my family. I had just ended an eight-year relationship and was depending on them to be my support system. But a few months after I arrived, they unexpectedly had to move away----so I felt very ,very alone. Not long after they moved, my grandfather passed away. It was one of the hardest times on my life. I knew I needed to talk to someone, but I hadn't lived in the city long enough to develop close, comfortable friendships that I could depend on. My new church had Stephen Ministry. When I found out what Stephen Ministry was, I talked to my pastor about getting a Stephen Minister.

It started off a little bit slow. I wasn't sure how I'd feel about sharing deep, personal things with someone I didn't know very well. But her consistency, compassion, and care for me, really came through. I realized that my Stephen Minister was a safe person who wasn't going to share what I told her with anyone else. From there we developed a deep relationship until I felt like I could truly share anything with her. We met weekly. Sometimes she'd come to my house and we'd sit and talk, and other times we'd go walking together. During our visits, she just let me talk while she listened. As I was talking through things, I realized that it was helping me to make sense of everything that had happened and how I was feeling. She accepted my feelings, including the ones that seemed risky to share and that was really helpful.

I actually didn't need advice from her---I needed acceptance and affirmation. I had a lot of loneliness, a lot of hurts, a lot of uncertainty inside. I needed to be validated and not put down. My Stephen Minister did a wonderful job of creating a warm, caring space for me to process my emotions and work through my issues. It was a few months into our relationship, and I began to trust my Stephen Minister with some of my most difficult issues. As we were walking around a track, with the wind blowing in my face, I suddenly realized that she was literally walking right beside me as I journeyed through my pain. I'd been struggling with some spiritual wounds that were pretty intense and needed healing--thing I didn't want to share with family and friends. But on that visit, as my Stephen Minister walked next to me, I felt safe and comfortable. So I shared my deepest hurts with her--some really painful things that I feared she might judge me for and that made me wonder if God could possibly love me.

After I told her those things, I was really nervous and dreading her response. I was worried that she would think I was an awful person. But instead, she put her arms around me and said, "I am sorry you had to go through that." And that was a turning point for me. To go from fear of judgement to a positive affirmation of care, empathy--and even sorrow for what I'd been through--it was so meaningful. That's when I began to feel God's love again. The fact that God is invisible makes it hard for me to experience him sometimes; I'd been through some very negative experiences in life that caused me to question whether God even existed, and, if he existed, whether he loved me. I truly wondered, after all the things I'd done and the mess I'd been through, if God could still love me.

I somehow knew that I needed a person that I could see and touch. When my Stephen Minister was able to share her concern and her sorrow over my experiences, God was there loving me through her. I experienced God's sorrow and God's compassion and God's love-- and it made all the difference for me.

What I needed the most was her love---to know that no matter what I shared with her, no matter what I'd done, she cared for me. Her care showed God's love for me. I needed to that there was one person in the world who knew everything there was to know about me--the good and the bad, the ugly--and still loved me. It was a tangible expression of God's love in my Stephen Minister that changed my life.

My Stephen Minister helped me get to a place where I was able to deal with my issues without her. As that happened, our visits tapered off from weekly to every other week to every three weeks. We decided to meet for the last time on my birthday, and that was a very special day for me.

Stephen Ministers do a lot of listening and ask really good questions that help you talk through your thoughts and emotions. Stephen Ministers are there for you when it seems that no one else is. The most important thing my Stephen Minister did for me was to provide spiritual care that led to spiritual healing. Doctors can take care of our physical needs, and counselors can help with our emotional needs. Pastors focus on spiritual needs, but can't possibly care for every person in their congregation who needs it. So sometimes there's a real gap when it comes to meeting spiritual needs. God used my Stephen Minister to really fill the spiritual gap.

God's love is always there, but sometimes it can be really hard to feel it, especially when you're going through a crisis. That's probably when people doubt God's presence the most, when their faith is the most vulnerable. Stephen Ministers express God's love in a tangible way that care receivers can feel. Stephen Ministers help those they care for experience God during those times in life when they might be wondering, Is God even there?

Asking for a Stephen Minister is the best thing I could have done for myself. As a care receiver, you'll grow so much through your Stephen Minister's care, concern and compassion for you. And you'll be a lot better off for it.

I would encourage anyone who is suffering, discouraged, or going through a difficult time to ask for a Stephen Minister. And if someone offers a Stephen Minister to you, say "Yes!" It is really life changing.

Stephen Ministry is a way congregations can provide high-quality care and outreach to hurting people in the congregation and community. Stephen Ministers are congregation members who have gone through 50 hours of training (and on going training monthly) to provide one-to-one, Christian-centered care. Each Stephen Minister is matched with a hurting person--men are paired with men, and women with women--and meets weekly with that person to listen, care, pray, and encourage. Stephen Ministers care for those dealing with grief, divorce, job loss, hospitalization, financial struggles, loneliness, convalescence, terminal illness, and many other life difficulties.

If you or someone you know could benefit from the care of a Stephen Minister, or if you are interested in being a Stephen Minister, you can talk to Pastor Tagatz or to one of our Stephen Leaders, Jeanne Meyer or Lori Kachelmeier.



*Grace Lutheran Church,
School & Early
Childhood Center
Oak Creek, WI*



gracelutheran_oakcreek



We use these social media platforms to share the special things going on at church, school and the Early Childhood Center.

Most importantly, we share on social media the Gospel of God's redeeming love!

We enjoy using technology to continue the work of spreading the Good News of God's Riches at Christ's Expense!

LIKE our page, and make sure you SHARE these messages with others too!

Introducing RaiseRight -- the new name for Scrip **The same program and process, just a different name.**

What is RaiseRight? It's a no-cost fundraiser that helps support the ministries at Grace. We purchase gift cards at a discounted rate and sell them at face value. Each merchant sets their own discount. The discount percentage is on the form.

How does it work? You complete an order form to purchase gift cards through a RaiseRight coordinator. Forms are on the table in the Narthex, in the church office or from a RaiseRight Coordinator. Return the completed form and payment to a RaiseRight Coordinator, who will be in the Narthex after each service or to the church office. You receive the face value of the cards you ordered. If the card you ordered is in our stock, you will receive it immediately. Otherwise, we will order the card and you will receive it the following week. The difference between the face amount and the discounted amount is used to support the ministries at Grace for our church, school and ECC.

An added benefit to parents of students at Grace School, ECC or Martin Luther High School

You will receive half of the discounted amount we receive toward the tuition you pay. If you do not have tuition to pay, you can indicate on the form to "Support a Student" and have half of the discount go toward a student who needs help with their tuition. For example: You purchase a \$100 gift card for Woodman's. You pay \$100 and receive a \$100 gift card. We receive a 5 percent discount, so pay \$95 for the card. You will receive \$2.50 toward your tuition. The more cards you purchase, the more tuition credits you receive.

Help with the process The RaiseRight coordinators are: Gail Nowakowski, Donna Dotson, Beth Jackson and Marlene Voss. You can call Gail Nowakowski at any time at 414-791-4075 with questions, or talk with one of the coordinators in the Narthex after each service.

5/1 Vayda Flower
5/1 Alyson Hengst
5/1 Barb Huber
5/1 Matthew King
5/3 Paige Vitek
5/7 John Penn Sr.
5/8 Amanda Perez
5/9 James Pieper
5/10 Elizabeth Jackson
5/10 Joanne Jaeger
5/10 Darlene Pethke
5/10 Courtney Salzer
5/11 Kayla Flower
5/11 Jared Ziemetz
5/14 Patricia Abelt

5/15 Mark Miliaca
5/15 Suzie Mirenda
5/18 Rachel Goodle
5/18 Lisa Hengst
5/18 Karen Puetz
5/20 Jennifer Lau
5/20 Alexandria Umaske
5/23 Kristopher Vangali
5/28 Nicole Staral
5/30 Connie McKeag

HAPPY
Birthday!

May God bless you with an
abundance of peace, joy, and
love this coming year.

realsuchthings.com

Happy
Anniversary!

5/4 Jacob & Trista Patten
5/11 James & Sue Block
5/11 Greg & Gail Nowakowski
5/13 Craig and Jennifer Lau
5/19 James & Janine Pieper

5/22 Lance & Susan Kopperud
5/23 Keith & Jill Nowak
5/23 Rick & Melissa Swainston
5/27 Dick & Joanne Schaefer
5/30 Bill & Kathy Szefflinski



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 6:30pm Divine Worship	2 5:30pm - 8:30pm Family Dance	3 8:00am - 9:30am Rise & Sonshine Bible Study
4 Confirmation Sunday 9:00am Divine Worship 9:15am Adult Bible Class 9:15am Sunday School 10:30am Divine Worship	5 6:30pm - 8:00pm Grief Share 6:30pm Public Hearing at OC Library	6 7:00am Men's Bible Study & Breakfast (OC Diner) 6:30pm - 8:30pm Stephen Ministry Meeting	7 9:30am Ladies Bible Study 6:30pm All Board's Meeting	8 6:30pm Divine Worship	9	10 8:00 Rise & Sonshine 10:00am Ladies Guild
11 9:00am Divine Worship 9:15am Adult Bible Class 10:30am Divine Worship	12 6:30pm - 8:00pm Grief Share	13 7:00am Men's Bible Study & Breakfast (OC Diner)	14 9:30am Ladies Bible Study 6:30pm Council Meeting	15 6:30pm Divine Worship	16	17 8:00am - 9:30am Rise & Sonshine Bible Study
18 9:00am Divine Worship 9:15am Adult Bible Class 9:15am Sunday School 10:30am Divine Worship 11:30am Special Voter's Meeting	19 6:30pm - 8:00pm Grief Share	20 7:00am Men's Bible Study & Breakfast (OC Diner)	21 9:30am Ladies Bible Study	22 6:30pm Divine Worship	23	24
25 9:00am Divine Worship	26	27 7:00am Men's Bible Study & Breakfast (OC Diner)	28	29 6:30pm Divine Worship	30	31 8:00am - 9:30am Rise & Sonshine Bible Study

Radio Worship Service

"*The Lutheran Hour*" can be heard anytime on the internet at lhm.org – scroll down the page and click on, "*listen now*." You can also listen to any of these local radio stations on Sunday mornings:

WTMJ Milwaukee, WI 103.3 FM Sunday at 6:30 am

WTMJ Milwaukee, WI 620 AM Sunday at 5:30 am

WTMJ Milwaukee, WI 620 AM Sunday at 6:30 am

"*The Lutheran Hour*," which began in 1930, is the world's oldest continually broadcast Gospel radio program. This weekly half-hour program, now heard on more than 1,200 radio stations, pro-claims the message of Jesus Christ to a world-wide audience.



Prayer Hot Line

In order to request prayers by members of Grace, please contact one of the following people. Your request will be made known to all members of our Prayer Line. Prayer requests for worship service should be directed to the church office or Pastor Taggatz.

10AM – 3PM

Carol Thurber, 762-9615

3PM – 9PM

Pauline Parker, 764-5574

Internet Prayerline

Pauline Parker

paulinemom@aol.com

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, SCHOOL, ECC



CHURCH & ECC

3381 E. Puetz Rd.
Oak Creek, WI 53154

SCHOOL & CHURCH OFFICE

8537 S. Pennsylvania Ave.
Oak Creek, WI 53154

WEBSITE

<https://graceoakcreek.org>

Pastor John M. Taggatz

PH: 414.762.8990

Thursday Worship 6:30 pm
Sunday Worship 8:00 am and
10:30 am