

Grace English Lutheran Church
384 Oak Street, Berlin, WI 54923
*A Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America*

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THIS NEWSLETTER PREPARED ESPECIALLY FOR

Sunday Worship:
8:30 AM

Office Hours:
Monday - Thursday 9:00 am – 12:00 noon
Hometown Broadcasting: Sunday at 9:45 am
WRPN AM 1600 at 12:00 PM



Worship Services

Facebook: www.facebook.com/gelcberlin
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLbOerRk5PMk1QWI9qtZ5_g



- February 1 - Worship Service at 8:30 am (In person and online)
- February 8 - Worship Service at 8:30 am (In person and online)
- February 15 - Worship Service at 8:30 am (In person and online)
- February 18 - Ash Wednesday Service at 6:30 pm (In person and online)
- February 22 - Worship Service at 8:30 am (In person and online)
- February 25 - Lenten Service at 6:30 pm (In person and online)

Grace Lutheran's Mission:
We Gather to Worship, Grow, Care, and Share
“All Are Welcome In This Place”

February 2026

From the Pastor



In my morning devotions, I have been slowly reading through John's Gospel. One of the things that I have noticed is that Jesus doesn't wait for people to have it all together. In his encounters with Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, the man born blind, and so many others, Jesus meets people exactly where they are.

That feels especially hopeful to me right now.

Right now, the world feels loud and unsettled. There is so much happening and so much finger-pointing. Many people have shared with me their worry, anger, exhaustion, questions, and grief. At times, I've even found myself overwhelmed by my own emotions. Yet John's Gospel reminds me that Jesus meets us there, not with easy answers, but with a steady, faithful presence. Again and again, Jesus shows up right where people are.

Jesus shows us what real love looks like. It isn't candy hearts and flowers, though those can be sweet. It is love that is patient and kind. Love that stays present through the ups and the downs. Love that listens, tells the truth, and refuses to walk away. It is love willing to go all the way to the cross for the very people Jesus loves.

This month, we begin the season of Lent, a time often misunderstood as gloomy or heavy. But in John's Gospel, Lent is not about getting ourselves together. It is about walking honestly with Jesus. Walking with the One who meets us in our thirst and grief, in our brokenness and doubt, in our fear and failure, and who continues to choose love.

On Ash Wednesday, we will be marked with ashes, an honest reminder of our mortality and our need. But those ashes are not a mark of failure. They are a sign that we belong to Jesus, who knows us by name and meets us with mercy.

This is the promise John gives us: Jesus meets us where we are, and love is already present. As we move through Lent, I invite you to join us for midweek and Sunday worship—to pause, to listen, and to walk together with the One who meets us with mercy.

With you on the journey,
Pastor Rebekah

Lent Begins February 18

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18, and you are invited to join us as we begin this season together.

We will gather for worship at two times each week:

* **1:30 p.m. at First Lutheran Church**

* **6:30 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church**

Lent is not about having it all figured out. It is a season for honesty, prayer, and remembering that we are met by God's mercy again and again. Whether you come carrying questions, weariness, hope, or all of the above, you are welcome.

Midweek and Sunday worship throughout Lent will continue to walk with John's Gospel, reminding us that Jesus meets us where we are with love that does not let us go.

Grace English Lutheran Church Congregational Council Meeting December 8, 2025

Call to Order by Linda Reetz

Roll Call- Attending: Terry Wallace, Linda Reetz, Sandy Peschke, Heidi Schramer, Sue Shemanski, Bonnie Kline, Tim Koch, Bob Prellwitz and Pastor Rebekah
Absent: Anita Lind

Terry provided Opening devotion.

Approval of Agenda – Sue moved to approve the agenda as presented. Bonnie seconded. Motion carried.

Secretary's Report – Tim moved to approve amended November minutes as printed. Terry seconded. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report – Sandy reported that we did take \$8000 out of RBC in Nov. to cover Liability Insurance. We also took out another \$6000 in Dec. to cover payroll. Sue moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Second by Bob. Motion carried.

Officer and Standing Committee Reports

- President-Linda shared:
 - Our Constitution informs us that the Pastor and Council President do end of year staff evaluations so Linda and Pastor have been doing this.
 - Linda handed out a Pastor evaluation for us each to complete and bring back to the Jan mtg for discussion.
 - Linda announced that the following people have asked that their memberships be removed from Grace rolls: Alison Gerth, Sue & Bill Bartlett and Jan and Bill Krebs.
 - Annual committee reports are due to the office by Jan. 1, 2026
- Pastor's Report- Pastor provided a written report. Her report described the activities she has participated in this past month including meeting with a family re: baptism, planning for Christmas, staff reviews at both churches and various meetings at church and in the community. She also announced that she will be on vacation Dec. 29-Jan.4 and Feb. 19-22 and has two of her lay ministers lined up to lead services at both First and Grace.
- Committees –
 - Fellowship and Caring – Bonnie shared that they will be meeting this Sunday to put together Christmas bags for shut-ins. They will also be serving Fellowship after the Cantata on Dec. 21st.

Building and Grounds – Bob reported that the North entrance heater is here but not installed yet. It has been discovered that the new oven is heating at 60 degrees lower than set and Krumenauer's has been contacted. The lights in the sanctuary have stopped working and Lundt Electric is coming tomorrow. It was suggested we ask if they could come back (or suggest someone) to change all the lightbulbs to LED. Also, Alliant Energy may have a program to replace bulbs with more efficient ones? Snow removal is going well.

Christian Education- Sue shared that we had up to 12 kids in Sunday School a couple times now. Paper Bag Pageant will be Dec. 14th. A mtg date needs to be scheduled to plan for 2026 events.

Worship and Music – Heidi stated they will be requesting a quote on services for the projector in sanctuary that is not working properly and the hearing aid sets. The change from Revised Common Lectionary to the Narrative Lectionary began when Advent started. The Cantata will be Dec. 17 and 21. On Dec. 21st at 6:30PM will be the Blue Christmas service. Christmas Eve service will be at 4PM at Grace.

Mission and Outreach – Tim reported that the children of Ukraine will be the Mission in Jan. 2026. He updated the bulletin board.

Finance Committee – Terry handed out the Minutes of the Nov. Finance Comm Mtg. noting that a lot of work has been done on the budget and a decision to increase the amount drawn from RBC monthly to \$4000 (vs \$3154 where it has been since the first withdrawal over 10 years ago). Note that the fund has continued to make money despite the withdrawals.

Investment Committee – Terry provided an account summary of all accounts showing an approximate \$22,955 total gain in the last month.

Outside the Box Outreach Committee- Heidi reported that hats and mittens have been donated to the Boys & Girls Club and after the Cookie bake, \$170 in donations was given to the Food Pantry.

Unfinished Business-

Safety Plan- Ryan Dobbs asked for a map of the building and will have a safety plan draft for us to review at our next meeting

Had leaking in the ceiling of the sanctuary again-not sure why this is happening, but Terry is trying to figure it out.

New Business

- Request to approve monthly RBC draw to \$4000- Motion made by Terry. Second by Heidi. Motion carried.
- Terry moved to approve Pastor's 2026 compensation package (for a total of \$117,071 split 55/45 with First Lutheran). Second by Heidi. Motion carried.
- Reviewed the budget for 2026. We are looking at a 3% increase overall. The budget will have to be finalized for the Annual mtg and presentation to the Congregation. It was decided that staff job descriptions would be sent out to Council members for our review and for discussion at the Finance Comm mtg this coming week (in relation to the budget).
- Audit Committee- presently consisting of Tom McCarthy, Ryan Gravunder and Mary Lou Neubauer serving 3 year terms. Terry made a motion to add Dave Olsen. Second by Sandy. Motion carried.
- Scholarship Committee- Terry moved and Sandy seconded to recommend Dina Dretske be added to the Scholarship Committee. No term limits on this committee.

Closing Prayer – Recited Lord's Prayer together.

Tim moved to adjourn the meeting. Second by Bonnie. Motion Carried.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Sue Shemanski
Secretary

Linda Reetz – President		920-279-7899	linda.reetz0726@gmail.com
Terry Wallace – Vice President		920-344-1523	tw9696@outlook.com
Sandy Peschke – Treasurer		920-290-1551	kspeschke1950@gmail.com
Sue Shemanski – Secretary		920-361-4506	shemanski5@yahoo.com
Heidi Schramer– Music/Worship		920-361-4097	schramer@charter.net
Anita Lind – Christian Education		920-290-1374	anita_lind@charter.net
Open – Fellowship/Caring			
Tim Koch – Mission Outreach		920-789-8358	timkoch18@gmail.com
Bob Prellwitz – Building and Grounds		920-361-0669	bobprellwitz@yahoo.com

Lenten Soup Lunches & Suppers



During Lent, join us for simple meals and shared fellowship before worship.

- 12:30 p.m. at First Lutheran – Soup Lunch
- 5:45 p.m. at Grace Lutheran – Soup Supper

Soup Suppers will start with Ash Wednesday worship on February 18. Please check the kiosk to sign up for providing soups, desserts, and serving and clean-up.

Women of Grace Annual Bakeless Bake Sale



The month of February means it is time once again for the Women of Grace's annual Bakeless Bake Sale.

This sale allows our busy women to contribute to the needs of others without having to bake a thing!

All monies raised by this Bakeless Bake Sale will be used to support the many projects of the Women of Grace.

A more detailed letter containing envelopes for the Bakeless Bake Sale and the Thankoffering Service will be mailed out the first part of February.



The Grace Book Club has chosen “**Settler’s Valley**” by **Jerry Apps** as their book for February. Wisconsin author Jerry Apps, who passed away in December at age 91, wrote more than 50 fiction and nonfiction books including children's books on topics such as barns, mills, cheese, breweries, the circus, one-room schools, along with rural history, country life, and the environment.

“**Settlers Valley**”, one of his fiction titles is the story of C.J. Anderson, a young veteran with PTSD who begins working a small farm plot at the suggestion of his grandfather. As he begins to heal, he contacts a few wounded Army friends to join him in Settler’s Valley. They build a collective calling themselves “The Back to the Land Veterans” and while they think they are doing a good thing, not everyone in Settlers Valley thinks this is a good idea.

With rich storytelling and deep affection for places, Jerry Apps crafts a timely and resonant tale about the power of community, the wisdom of the land, and the healing that can happen when people slow down long enough to truly listen.

We will meet to discuss “**Settlers Valley**” on Tuesday, February 10th at a location to be determined. If you would like to read this book, please contact Cindy Wallace for a copy. If you have already read this book and would like to join us on February 10th for discussion, please do, we would love to have you.



The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held immediately following worship on Sunday, February 8, 2026.

Please bring the annual report with you

Mission of the Month - Scholarship Program

The mission for the month is Grace's Scholarship Fund. As the cost of higher education increases it becomes a greater burden for our youth and their families. This fund is designed to support our youth as they strive to become more productive members of society.

One of the requirements to receive this scholarship is the student's involvement at Grace. We are trying to encourage our youth to serve in some level here at Grace and develop habits that will support their continued involvement with God and their church.

Hopefully with all our support we can encourage their growth in their relationship with God.

Any graduating seniors, college students, or graduate students who are members of Grace English Lutheran Church may apply for a scholarship.

Pick up an application in the Church office or call 920-361-1820 to request an application mailed to you. **Deadline for applying is April 1, 2026.**



Winter Bingo Food Pantry Fundraiser! Join us for Winter Bingo on Saturday, February 7, from noon–3:00 at Grace for an afternoon of fellowship, fun, and giving back.

Enjoy Bingo, a 50/50 raffle, silent auction, and basket raffles, all while supporting a meaningful mission. All proceeds from the day will benefit the Berlin and Poy Sippi Food Pantries, helping care for our neighbors in need. As Scripture reminds us, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these... you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

A \$5 lunch will be available and includes your choice of a hamburger or hot dog, plus chips, dessert, and a drink... a great way to enjoy fellowship while supporting the cause! Come enjoy good food, good company, and a joyful opportunity to share God’s love in our community!

Donation Challenge to the Berlin Food Pantry

With the need for more food items at the Berlin Food Panty to serve those in need, the Women of Grace have challenged the congregation to get involved.

In November 121 boxes of cereal were donated, in December 75 pounds of protein items were donated.

January’s challenge is canned soups and looking forward to February the challenge will be pasta and pasta sauces.

Thank you to everyone for the donations. It truly has made a difference!

Put Your Thrivent Dollars to Work (Without Opening Your Wallet)

If you're a Thrivent member, you've got something powerful sitting there unused, and no, it's not that mystery drawer in your kitchen. It's **Choice Dollars®** and **Thrivent Action Teams**, and both are simple ways to support the ministry of Grace Lutheran without spending a dime of your own money.

Choice Dollars®: Easy Yes, Big Impact

If you're eligible, Thrivent allocates Choice Dollars to you each year. You decide where they go. When you direct them to Grace Lutheran, those dollars support our ministry. No bake sales. No awkward asks. Just a few clicks.

And Choice Dollars expire, which is basically money waving goodbye if we don't act. So, take a moment today and designate your Choice Dollars. This is one of those rare moments where generosity is easy and faith-filled at the same time.

Thrivent Action Teams: \$250 + Your Idea = Ministry in Motion

Action Teams are another gift Thrivent offers—and they're fantastic. Thrivent provides \$250 seed money on a debit card to be used for projects or events.

Think:

- Soul Food meals
- Items for Layettes, School kits, Care Kits, and Quilts
- Soup Suppers, Palm Sunday Brunch
- Bingo prizes or raffle baskets
- A family learning event
- Help a family after a house fire
- Other projects

If you've ever thought, "*Someone should do something about that,*" congratulations—you're someone. And this is how you start. You come up with an idea, find a few helpers, and Thrivent provides the funding.

Need Help? We've Got You

If you're not sure whether you're eligible, how to direct Choice Dollars, or how to start an Action Team, just ask Sandy in the church office. We're happy to help you through it.

This is one of those beautiful moments where faith, generosity, and community line up. Let's not leave good gifts sitting on the table. Thanks for being part of what God is doing through Grace Lutheran—one click, one project, one act of love at a time.



**SUMMER
CAMP**
2026
Registration
is Open!

Crossways Bible Camp

offers programs for all ages and families.

Online registration is live at CrosswaysCamps.org. Sign up today.

Flowers

- February 1 - Open
- February 8 - Open
- February 15 - In Memory of her husband David, family & friends by Joyce Voeltner
- February 22 - In Memory of Lynn by Gene Hess

Radio Ministry

- February 1 - Open
- February 8 - Open
- February 15 - Open
- February 22 - In Memory of Lynn by Gene Hess

Bulletins

- February 1 - In Memory of Stan by Sue Shemanski
- February 8 - Sponsored by Bob and Meg Roggow
- February 15 - In Memory of Tim by DeAnna Lueptow
- February 22 - In Memory of Lynn by Gene Hess

Fellowship

- February 1 - Sue Shemanski
- February 8 - Penny Bahn
- February 15 - Michelle Klawitter
- February 22 - Open

Greeter

- February 1 - Bev Chadwick
- February 8 - Open
- February 15 - Open
- February 22 - Sue Shemanski



Berlin Community Blood Drive

To be held at Grace Church on February 24, 2026 from 10:30 am – 5:30 pm.
For an appointment call Nancy at 920-361-2679.
Walk-in's are always welcome!

December Income**December Expenses**

Weekly Income	19,237.63
RBC Earnings	3,824.94
Bulletins/Radio Ministry	360.00
Thrivent Choice Dollars	125.00
Shared Ministry	4,204.27

Wages and Payroll Expenses	\$16,580.60
Building & Grounds /Utilities	2,532.73
Worship Licenses/Supplies	410.00
Radio Ministry	300.00
Office/Miscellaneous	987.68
Caring Ministry	133.44
Christian Education/Sunday School	46.84
Postage	312.00
Benevolence to ELCA	600.00

TOTAL \$ 27,751.84

TOTAL \$ 21,903.29

Missions (In/Out) \$ 2,305.97

Missions (In/Out) \$ 2,456.93

Good Samaritan Fund	135.00
Soul Food	55.56
Women of Grace	765.00
Men of Grace	65.00
Christian Education/Youth	0.00
Scholarship Fund	0.00
Endowment Fund	0.00
Outside the Box Outreach	0.00

Good Samaritan	0.00
Soul Food	0.00
Women of Grace	0.00
Men of Grace	0.00
Christian Education/Youth	0.00
Scholarship Fund	0.00
Endowment Fund	0.00
Outside the Box Outreach	1,592.85

Beginning Balance January 2025**Ending Balance December 2025****Investments:****Investments:**

Leonard Jones Fund	\$	1,361,456.39
Capital Improvement Fund	\$	321,917.64
Endowment Fund	\$	123,890.51
Auxiliary Fund	\$	29,841.29
Scholarship Fund	\$	5,903.55

	\$	1,494,760.24
	\$	340,519.14
	\$	135,983.58
	\$	31,382.89
	\$	6,611.633

February Birthdays

- 1 Luke Johnson
- 2 Douglas Kline
- 3 Kathleen Krentz
- 5 Matthew Dretske
- 5 Thomas McCarthy
- 8 Amber Rozek
- 9 Cary Eckstein
- 12 Brandon O'Brien
- 14 Mark Labbus
- 19 Mara Ferron
- 19 Mark Goffard
- 19 Sue Shemanski
- 19 Sydney Renik
- 21 Sophia Falk
- 23 Emily Carpenter
- 28 Edward Carpenter
- 28 Lois Mattice



**Happy Birthday
&
Happy Anniversary**

February Anniversaries

- 14 Kristin Koch & Tim Seaman
- 20 Steven & Connie Smits
- 23 Scott & Karen Schweigert

If any birthdays or anniversaries were missed, please let the office staff know.



February

2026

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1 8:30 am Worship - with Communion and Sunday School	2 4:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting	3 9:00 am Staff Meeting 9:00 am LWR Quilting 3:00 pm Bible Study at Grace	4 8:30 am Chair Yoga Class 6:30 pm Confirmation Class 7:00 pm Choir Practice	5 11:45 am Soul Food St John's Hosts	6	7 11:00 am Bingo Fundraiser
8 8:30 am Worship - with Communion and Sunday School Annual Meeting Following Worship	9 7:00 pm Council Meeting	10 9:00 am Pastor Conference Meeting 12:00 pm Book Club 3:00 pm Bible Study at Grace	11 8:30 am Chair Yoga Class 3:00 pm Outside the Box Outreach 6:30 pm Confirmation Class 7:00 pm Choir Practice	12 11:45 am Soul Food Grace Hosts	13	14 8:00 am Men's Breakfast at Grace Lutheran 9:00 am - 4:00pm Craft Day at First Lutheran
15 8:30 am Worship with Communion and Sunday School 6:30 pm Mutual Ministry at First	16 6:30 pm Parish Council at First Lutheran	17 9:00 am Staff Meeting 9:00 am LWR Sewing 10:00 am Finance Meeting 3:00 pm Bible Study at Grace 5:00 pm Lay Preaching at Grace	18 8:30 am Chair Yoga Class 5:45 pm Soup Supper 6:30 pm Ash Wednesday Worship Service	19 11:45 am Soul Food River Shores Hosts	20	21
22 8:30 am Worship with Communion - no Sunday School	23	24 9:00 am Staff Meeting 3:00 pm Bible Study Grace 10:30 am – 5:30 pm Berlin Community Blood Drive	25 8:30 am Chair Yoga Class 5:45 pm Soup Supper 6:30 pm Lenten Service 7:00 pm Choir Practice	26 11:45 am Soul Food All Saints Hosts 1:30 pm Berlin Ministerial at Grace	27	28