

# Voice of Grace

*We are called to proclaim the Word and celebrate the sacraments.*

*We gather in Christian community for nurture and support. We are sent out in service to others.*



Global Refuge, formerly known as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, has been re-settling refugees in the United States for 86 years, including Swahili-speaking Aline and her six children, who spent six years in a refugee camp before relocation to Fargo, North Dakota. They were received by the community at St. John's Lutheran Church as part of the organization's Circle of Welcome program. For more information, visit [www.globalrefuge.org/get-involved/circleofwelcome](http://www.globalrefuge.org/get-involved/circleofwelcome).

**Worship - Sundays 10:30 a.m.**



**Spring 2025**

# Pastor's Message

Our full-communion partners, I learned just this week, in the Presbyterian Church (USA) have a burgeoning movement called the Matthew 25 initiative.

Rooted in Jesus' teaching on the judgment of the nations in Matt. 25:31-46, it seeks to build congregational vitality, work to dismantle structural racism and eradicate systemic poverty.

When my PCUSA colleague shared this in a recent weekly Zoom study on the Narrative Lectionary, the conversation among pastors from the ELCA (including — but not only — myself), PCUSA, United Methodist Church and United Church of Christ (we are halfway to our full compliment of ELCA full communion partners! We just need an Episcopalian, a Reformed Church of America minister and a Moravian...) turned to some lament that these issues would be controversial within the Body of Christ.



Plain as day, Jesus uplifts the feeding of the hungry, the welcome of the stranger, the clothing of the naked, care for the sick and visitation of the prisoner as service to Christ himself and the Kingdom of God. Neglect of these same populations he condemns in no uncertain terms.

The events of a year 2025 not even half-complete call for a Matthew 25 moment but remind us we are called by the Scripture to a Matthew 25 *movement*. We need not be working within the structure of the Presbyterian church to be wide awake to the subtext in this passage. The proverbial sheep and goats alike ask Jesus when they did or did not do these things. That indicates these behaviors arose from ingrained attitudes. With our hearts set in the right place, we share Christian love without a second thought. With our hearts in *curvatus in se*, that is “curved in on themselves” as Martin Luther described the nature of human sin, we don't even notice we've stopped caring for the least among us.

In just shy of four years here as the one called to Grace Lutheran Church as Minister of Word and Sacrament, I have never seen such energy as filled the room at Christian Education hour after our Feb. 16 worship service. I entered the room to lead an informational session for background on why Lutherans were suddenly in the news as the result of a re-tweet by Elon Musk, the de facto head of the new “Department of Government Efficiency.” Musk had earlier in the week shared a post from former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn. It referred to the “‘Lutheran faith’... use of ‘religion’ as a money laundering operation (that) must end.”

This opened the door to a release of pent-up emotion among our congregants present caused by many unjust actions and words of the newly inaugurated White House administration. While I share many of these concerns, I tend to tread carefully and deliberately. But it became abundantly clear to me that there is a consensus, if *not* unanimity, in wanting to take action to prevent further targeting and scapegoating of immigrants, failure to protect constitutional and basic human rights, slashing of services the poor rely upon under the guise of “eliminating waste,” proposed elimination of medical care to vulnerable populations and detainment and deportation to foreign prisons without due process.

You know... Matthew 25 stuff.

This is a well from which we may draw congregational vitality. When we stand because we can do no other and our courage in doing so is our witness.

We at Grace have been represented at meetings of the fledgling Jefferson Interfaith Action Council. This is a group that on Feb. 18 inaugurated discussion of creating a “sanctuary network” among faith communities to protect immigrants living in this county. It is a work in progress in which I am proud to say we were there for the groundbreaking.

But there is new reason nearly every day for concern around these and other serious justice issues based on executive orders from President Donald Trump. There are rulings and injunctions on federal court challenges from the Trump administration and its opponents almost every day that change the state of the playing field for ministry with marginalized groups.

It is important to stay informed and yet find balance in not becoming overwhelmed by these issues. It is my hope that some of the articles presented here from ministry partners as well as a call to action from our own Sharon Dembro can help to inform our discernment. Discernment about what we as a community of Christ followers are called by the Holy Spirit to do to defend and care for our neighbors in this tumultuous time.

Urgent crises do arise, yes. Yet from a broader perspective this is a marathon, not a sprint. We should remain vigilant and we should also continue to pray for President Trump and leaders at all levels of secular government, at home and abroad. We need not agree with our leaders to petition God for them to govern with compassion and understanding for all whom they are elected to serve, nor to ask that they be protected from political violence, of which we have seen all too much for the better part of a decade now in this country.

I believe we are also wise to heed the words composed from centuries of commentary on the work of the late-first/early-second century Rabbi Tarfon in the *Pirkei Avot*, or “Chapters of the Fathers,” a compilation of ethical teachings and sayings from Rabbinic Jewish tradition. It is itself a commentary on Micah 6:8:

“Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.”

In other words, may we be formed in the Spirit to become... the *sheep*. By our very nature, concerned with the welfare of the least of the brothers and sisters of the Christ and observant in them of the reflections of God’s own face.

Amen.  
Pastor Sean

## **Global Refuge Decries Reported Termination of Humanitarian Protections for Afghan Allies in the U.S.**

Global Refuge, formerly known as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, expressed deep alarm April 21 following reporting by *The New York Times* indicating that the Trump administration has terminated Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for nationals of Afghanistan, a decision that puts more than 9,000 individuals at risk of deportation as early as May.

“TPS exists for a reason: to protect people whose return to their country would place them in grave danger. Afghanistan today is still reeling from Taliban rule, economic collapse, and humanitarian disaster. Nothing about that reality has changed,” said Krish O’Mara Vignarajah, President and CEO of Global Refuge. “Terminating protections for Afghans is a morally indefensible betrayal of allies who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with us to advance American interests throughout our country’s longest war.”

TPS for Afghanistan was first designated in 2022 following the fall of Kabul, and extended in 2023 due to ongo-

ing armed conflict, lack of access to basic services and widespread displacement. The Department of Homeland Security’s decision to terminate the designation would mark a stark departure from previous bipartisan commitments to safeguard Afghan allies and vulnerable civilians.

“For Afghan women and girls, ending these humanitarian protections means ending access to opportunity, freedom, and safety,” continued Vignarajah. “Forcing them back to Taliban rule, where they face systemic oppression and gender-based violence, would be an utterly unconscionable stain on our nation’s reputation.”

Global Refuge, one of the largest nonprofit refugee resettlement agencies in the U.S., is asking the administration to reverse course and urges Congress to take swift action by protecting the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program or passing a reintroduced Afghan Adjustment Act — bipartisan proposals that would provide pathways to lawful status for Afghans evacuated to the U.S.

“We cannot claim to be a nation that honors its promises while abandoning those we pledged to protect,” concluded Vignarajah.

## Who Will Protect Us?

*By Sharon Dembro*

Our country's founders were very aware that the U.S. could backslide into the authoritarian morass they had just fought to escape. All too wary of the possibility of another "king" usurping power, they put in place a structure to put checks on the executive branch. That structure has worked mostly but for it to function as the founders envisioned, the executive branch of government must accept and respect the balance of power written into the Constitution. This administration is moving fast to undermine the other two branches of government that could provide a check on its ambitions.

Out of fear/opportunism/greed the Congress has become impotent— at least until the next midterm.

The justice system is being overwhelmed by a flood of lawsuits seeking to rein in the administration's actions. Although prosecutions are likely to succeed, these suits will drag on for months or years while our democracy crumbles.

When governmental constraints envisioned by the founders are flouted, protection of our rights and those of the most vulnerable, salvation of the economy and the very soul of our country falls to civil society; to those forces outside the government strong enough to stand up for us.

The church writ large could well be the most important of those institutions. All people of faith, aside from those hijacked by the so-called "Christian" nationalists, share basic tenets: protect the most vulnerable, respect and care for creation, treat the neighbor with compassion and uphold the dignity of the individual.

So what is stopping us?

When the media refers to "the church," it is invariably to those groups whose agendas are the opposite of what the Gospel proclaims; those focused on hate instead of love, exclusion instead of inclusion, division instead of cohesion, greed instead of sharing.

This is largely because churches that proclaim the Gospel have run from confronting the misrepresentations of an ignorant press, and have been so fearful of losing members/donors that as institutions they have grossly failed to stand up and proclaim the beliefs they profess on Sunday.

**THIS MUST CHANGE.** The church — and I refer now to the ELCA — cannot afford to sit this one out, to tsk tsk from the sidelines. It would be nice if we could depend

on church leadership to stand up for us but we're dealing with humans just as adverse to confrontation as we are; unlikely to step up unless there is pressure from below.

We must be that pressure. As congregations, we must demand of our synod that its leaders seek opportunities in our local and regional press to proclaim what Christianity truly requires of us; to differentiate our churches from those failing to live up to the demands of the Gospel.

We must seek to join with other people of faith to form a united front against the flood of actions whose cascade will reach even those of us in our Port Townsend bubble.

Like-minded local congregations must be vocal in our local and regional media with the hope that we can inspire action beyond Port Townsend. The ultimate goal is pressuring the national churches to unite to form the desperately needed barrier to the evils hurtling toward us.

How to proceed? Some thoughts:

We need to raise and discuss these concerns within our congregation, leading to the formation of a group of like-minded members to strategize our responses

We need to identify those faith leaders in Port Townsend who are equally concerned and form an interdenominational group — pastors and congregation members — willing to develop a strategy to address, both locally and regionally, the public and media's false perception of what people of faith stand for

We should participate as part of an interfaith group in demonstrations, complete with banners and signs identifying our faith tradition. Congress and the administration pay attention to the numbers.

Our synod is about to elect a new bishop.

We must make sure this person has the courage to lead us in our Christian response to attacks on the vulnerable, gutting of environmental protections and the fallout from decisions disrupting the economy. This leader must be capable of publicly representing the verities of our Christian faith in the media and of pressuring the ELCA Churchwide to stand with our faith partners in opposition to administration actions contrary to the Gospel. This is crucial. United we are strong; divided we are much more vulnerable.

If we still claim to be inheritors of Martin Luther, we can do no less. The time is now.

## **A Word from Jefferson Interfaith Advocacy Coalition on Protecting Sacred Spaces**

At a meeting on April 29, 2025, JIAC joined a growing groundswell of opposition to the Trump administration's decision to break with the time-honored American tradition of affording places of worship freedom from intrusions by police or other forms of governmental oversight, in keeping with the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion.

We signed onto a declaration penned by the Program Council of Olympia's Interfaith Works to oppose Trump's announcement in January that there will be no place of sanctuary from assault by government agents.

"These agents have been instructed that it is now acceptable to pull the faithful from prayers, children from classrooms, and the sick from hospital beds and

emergency rooms," the Covenant reads. "We do not, must not, and will not accept this."

The document is a promise of mutual aid, making the declaration that "We will treat any invasion of one of our sacred spaces as an invasion into the sacred space of every one of us."

In signing onto the declaration, JIAC joins with the dozen congregations in Olympia that form Interfaith Works along with many other individual signatories.

The Covenant closes with these words: "Our faiths call us to compassion, justice, and the protection of the most vulnerable, and we will not falter in this sacred duty. May our collective resolve serve as a beacon of hope and a shield against injustice, ensuring that no house of worship is turned into a place of fear.

A link to the full text of the Covenant can be found at <https://www.jeffersoninterfaithaction.org/services-2-1>.

## **Global Refuge Condemns Official Termination of Protections for Afghans in the U.S.**

Baltimore — The new administration's termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Afghanistan was officially posted May 13 in the Federal Register. Though news reports and comments from White House and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials had suggested this outcome for more than a month, the official announcement represents a crushing blow to Afghan allies who were promised U.S. protection.

Afghanistan was first designated for TPS by the Biden administration on May 20, 2022, based on the ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary and temporary conditions in Afghanistan that prevented nationals of Afghanistan from returning in safety. The Biden administration extended and redesignated TPS for Afghanistan in September 2023, citing the worsening country conditions under the Taliban regime.

The new administration's unprecedented and abrupt termination decision is expected to impact 11,700 Afghan nationals who currently hold TPS, including those who entered the U.S through Operation Allies Welcome, many of whom await processing of their immigration benefits applications with U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. According to the Federal Register Notice their TPS protections and work authorization are set to end July 12, 2025.

"Without TPS, thousands of our Afghan allies and neighbors now face deportation back to unimaginable circumstances," said Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, President and CEO of Global Refuge. "Country conditions in Afghanistan have continued to remain unsafe over the last three and a half years of Taliban rule. Afghans still endure violence and repression at the hands of the Taliban, particularly reprisals against those who aided the United States. Women and girls still cannot work, travel on their own, or get an education. This decision contradicts U.S. intelligence and human rights assessments, and in doing so, will jeopardize thousands of lives."

Global Refuge calls upon the administration to reverse course by issuing at least a six-month extension of TPS for Afghanistan, as required by law due to the lack of a timely decision on the designation. Global Refuge also urges members of Congress to defend protections and pathways for Afghans. Lawmakers should reintroduce and pass a version of the Afghan Adjustment Act so Afghans can seek a more stable status.

"We promised to protect our Afghan allies and those who were forced to flee," concluded Vignarajah. "This is not just an egregious rescission of that oath — it may be a death sentence."

## Some Information about JCIRA

Jefferson County Immigrant Rights Advocates (JCIRA) remains committed to building a supportive and safe community for immigrants to live and thrive.

Our mission is to support the rights of immigrants and their families. We give priority to those who live or work on the Olympic Peninsula and to immigrant detainees in Washington state. Through our services, we:

- Deliver access to free or low-cost legal aid.
- Give emergency cash grants for living expenses like rent, food, school fees and more.
- Offer support to families and assistance finding resources.
- Stand witness to demonstrate our commitment.
- Provide community education.
- Present workshops on legal rights.
- Advocate for local, state, and national immigrant issues.

The JCIRA Multicultural Center at 2328 Washington Street gives us the opportunity to do more together for our community. Immigrants and asylum seekers can get help finding resources, and everyone can benefit from the variety of programs available.

At the center, you can:

- Get help completing forms and finding community resources.
- Use our computers free of charge.
- Check out our classes, including Spanish and English language classes.
- Enjoy special events and meeting new friends.

As of May 21, hours are 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Mondays and Fridays; 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays.

For more information, call 360-232-6070 or visit [www.jcira.org/get-involved.html](http://www.jcira.org/get-involved.html)

### What You Can Do To Help Now

Worried about how you can help our neighbors and friends who are immigrants in today's world? Or perhaps you are an immigrant and want to know what you else you can do. Here's how to make a difference: First, you can donate to or volunteer with JCIRA. You can make sure you and your friends know your right under the U.S. Constitution, regardless of immigration status. Come to the JCIRA Multicultural Center to pick up your own copy of Know Your Rights.

Stay informed on current legislation and contact your elected representatives to support bills that aid immigrants.

If you want to do more, support other organizations that help immigrants with legal issues and other assistance:

- Kitsap Immigrant Assistance Center (KIAC)
- Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP)
- La Resistencia
- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

And for organizations that help immigrants, see: Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN)  
In addition, you can:

- Support local officials who stand up for immigrant rights.
- Boycott companies that embrace cruelty to immigrant communities.
- Speak up. Encourage friends to avoid media that spread misinformation and dangerous lies.
- Know the myths about immigration.
- Be kind to all who are in under-represented communities.

Let us stand together to uphold our most cherished values! Active links to the resources mentioned above can all be found at [www.jcira.org/what-you-can-do-now](http://www.jcira.org/what-you-can-do-now).



### Faith practices for tough times

“Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea.... Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken” (Psalm 55:1, 22, NIV).

In this psalm, we hear from someone who long ago experienced distress, fear, isolation. Then, he also had that moment when God's word resonated and reminded him that the Lord would sustain us. The Lord will never let the righteous stumble. Turning to God in times of struggle helps us survive. Participating in faith practices – daily reading of scripture, personal prayer, and quiet meditation – will not remove our fears or feelings, but they can provide hope.

I encourage you to think about what spiritual practices are part of your daily life. Find moments where you can feel God's presence and hear God's voice. Knowing that God is with us strengthens my resolve to get through one more day, to tell myself to be patient, to seek out connections with people, and to continue to live as if the gospel is true.

*This message is excerpted from “Participating in faith practices offers hope” by Jennifer Michael from the June 22, 2020, blog of the Women of the ELCA*

## Update: Refugee Resettlement Services Suspended at LCSNW

Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW) refugee resettlement teams gathered in early April in Tacoma, Vancouver and Portland to commemorate more than 50 years of helping refugee families build new lives in the United States.

Teams in Tacoma and Vancouver planted specially chosen rhododendrons, Washington's state flower. In Portland—the City of Roses—they planted a rose. Beside the flowers, memorial plaques were placed to honor LCSNW staff and volunteers who, over the past several decades, have welcomed more than 50,000 refugees.

The plaque reads: *“Your compassion builds bridges, transforms lives, and shapes our future. Welcoming one strengthens us all.”*

The events were a bittersweet occasion. LCSNW is pausing our refugee resettlement program indefinitely starting in April, due to the new presidential administration's decision to terminate all resettlement contracts. We intend to return to this important work as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, LCSNW will continue providing critical services to immigrants, refugees and asylees through our other programs. Services include behavioral health care, legal assistance, employment support, housing assistance, case management and unaccompanied minor services.

During the plaque-dedication events, resettlement staff members reflected on their work, sharing memorable stories of challenges, struggles and achievements helping families rebuild their lives.

Siddiq Kakar, Tacoma's program manager, expressed gratitude for the team and highlighted its unique strength: “Many of our staff members began their journey as LCSNW clients. LCSNW invests in its clients and career growth by recruiting them and enabling them to deliver services to the next generation.”

Program Director Daryl Morrissey also reflected on the team's dedication and compassion: “In my three years as director of the LCSNW refugee resettlement team, the thing that has impressed me most is how much this team runs on heart. We were able to help so many thousands of newcomers arrive and get started in their new lives here because of the enormous amount of heart, caring and energy that the members of this team have poured into their jobs, and into the lives of our clients.”

Peter Vogelaar, Senior District Director for Multicultural Community Services (MCS), also acknowledged the team's enduring impact: “What an achievement! This

team has been the heart and soul of the MCS family for nearly 50 years. Although the program is currently on pause, I know that wherever our team members go, they will continue to be a shining example of Health, Justice, and Hope.”

For more information about the ministry of LCSNW, visit [LCSNW.org](http://LCSNW.org). To donate, you may send a check to:

LCSNW Donations  
PO Box 94492  
Seattle, WA 98124-6792

Or call 206-901-1685 or 253-271-4865 to provide a credit card or e-check information.

## Blind Faith

*Submitted by Kari Albrecht*

Years ago, while on a backpacking trip with our church, I had the opportunity to learn something about trust.

We were in our sleeping bags under a sky lit only by stars and framed by pine trees. We were talking about what to expect the next day when I felt a stab in one of my eyes. The pain was incredible and both eyes slammed shut at once. Someone held the eye open and flushed out a pine needle. Unfortunately the damage was already done and I was faced with hiking six miles through the wilderness the next day with my eyes shut. We couldn't even pry them open.

So there I was, blind as a bat, with a 30-pound pack. Staying behind wasn't an option. Someone volunteered to carry my sleeping bag for which I was grateful. Then I was relieved of my water bottles, sleeping pad, group food and my heavy 35mm camera. We got onto the trail and I had one camper behind me in case I fell, and another in front to alert me to obstacles and to get over or around them if needed. After several hours, I was finally able to open my eyes again. What a miracle! But there was another miracle. We had been talking about how God wants us to share, to give, to love, to support. And these kids, from both wealth and poverty, worked together to get me through a rough day, not just rough for me but for the whole group. What the group did that day showed me that we can do so much together when we believe that Christ strengthens us. Now that's a miracle!

Jesus, thank you for the strength you give us to live every day: the days that are joyfully easy and the days that are heartbreakingly difficult. We ask that you continue to bless us with your strength and love every day.

Amen.

# *A Message From Bishop Jaech*

Dear Friends in Christ,

On Easter Sunday, our songs and voices rise to celebrate Christ's victory over death. The gift we receive on Easter is the gift of life and hope returning to our seemingly hopeless world. When the three women went to the tomb early that first Easter, their hope had died. They were certain that Jesus was in the tomb; the stone was in place; Pilate and the religious authorities were now firmly in control; death had won. It seemed foolish to hope for more.

Yet God broke through the power of hopelessness and death with new life. Jesus rose from the dead and called forth a new community and a new reality filled with God's own Spirit of life.

In our church calendar, Easter is not a one-day event. The Easter season continues for seven weeks leading up to Pentecost Sunday, which this year is on June 8. It strikes me that these seven weeks of Easter are a good time to practice and nurture the hope that Jesus brings to us on Easter Sunday.

Like the women going to the tomb, many of us struggle with hopelessness as well. The disorder and violence in the world seem relentless. The problems we face in our personal lives feel insurmountable. The hope God brings to us can soon wither in the face of huge problems. Hope is both a gift and a choice. Like a musical instrument, we must practice hope each day to keep it alive.

Here is a spiritual practice that I have found useful for strengthening hope. When Jesus visited his disciples the evening of the first Easter and saw that they were still feeling frightened, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:22) In the spiritual practice that I describe below, we are following Christ's example and breathing God's powerful hope into the places of our hopelessness. Here are the steps:

1. Find a comfortable and quiet place to sit for five minutes.
2. Think of a problem or issue about which you feel particularly hopeless. This might be a personal issue, such as health, work, family/relationship or a spiritual struggle. It might also be a world concern, such as hunger, warfare or political turmoil.
3. As you consider your feelings of hopelessness around this issue, sense where in your body you experience this feeling. For example, many people feel hopelessness especially in the area of their heart. Others will sense hopelessness centered in other places in their body.
4. Now begin to take slow, deep breaths and visualize your breath going to the place in your body where the hopelessness dwells. Breathe into the hopelessness. With each breath, visualize that you are also breathing in the power of God that raised Jesus to life. Like the disciples in the upper room, breathe in the gift of hope and let it fill the place of your hopelessness. There is no need for you to make anything happen in that moment. Simply be receptive to God's promise of resurrection.
5. Breathe steadily and deeply for three more minutes. Do this once a day for the next 30 days.

By using this spiritual practice of breathing hope into our hopelessness, Jesus comes to us with his Holy Spirit and strengthens us where we need it most. May God bless you throughout this coming Easter season and may God come to you each day with the gifts of hope and new life.

In Christ,

Bishop Rick Jaech

# Letters From Uganda

## Dear Congregation at Grace:

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! I hope that you and your families are doing well.

Please allow me to share this opportunity to wish you a happy Easter full of joy and happiness, and as we celebrate Easter, I remember Jesus' experience on the earth to save humanity wasn't easy! It teaches me that life will never be easy for any of us, and to do good to humanity, there must be a dedicated person to champion the cause. I have a feeling that it is exactly what our Lord did, and as we know, Jesus' experience on the earth included His crucifixion, resulting in His death at the cross, but it didn't stop there! He resurrected to accomplish the mission. Sometimes this experience teaches me that what we are doing today is going to yield joy and peace for many generations, but for that to happen, we must do it now! Despite the challenges, we should be encouraged to push forward the good causes. The scriptures describe Jesus' experiences before death to have been not an easy one, but in the end, our Lord was a victor, which translates into the happiness and joy we are experiencing today. In all that I do, I try to emulate our Lord's perspective by following His teaching

My experiences are nowhere comparable to our Lord's experience, as I am just following His footsteps to do as He taught us, "Love your neighbor as yourself." I am so grateful to people like you, at Grace, for having stood by my side all these years, as I stand for the deserving students in their education through Wide Smiles Charity. I continually pray to the Lord to bless you, all my friends, as he guides, and bless my work for His children. In Jesus' experience, I learned that with focus and perseverance, we can attain our objectives for good causes.

Please pray for me so that I can realize the dream I have for my people in my lifetime. I am thankful to the Lord for having entrusted me with the responsibility through you to care for His children. I think it is also human to feel as though some situations are so challenging, but I keep encouraged to move forward. I want to grow 3,000 Coffee plants this season as another project to support my programs. Say hello to all Coffee lovers.

Thank you for allowing Jesus to use you by helping me serve His children. HAPPY EASTER to all our friends

God bless you so much,  
Kenneth

## A Letter to Dee Dee

*submitted by Dee Dee Norman*

Dear Dee Dee,

Your message brought such warmth to my heart, thank you for your kind and uplifting words. It's always a joy to hear from you, and I'm deeply touched by the love and support you continue to show me across the miles. I can feel your spirit cheering me on, and that means the world to me.

By God's grace, I plan to graduate in December 2025. It's been a long journey filled with both challenges and growth, but I am grateful to have made it this far. Your encouragement has played a big role in keeping my spirits lifted over the years. Thank you for walking with me in spirit through every step of the way.

I was recently blessed with a job as a financial officer at Ebenezer Medical Center. It is a great opportunity, and I am learning a lot. It feels rewarding to finally apply the knowledge I've been gaining in school to real-world responsibilities. It's a new season for me, and I am doing my best to embrace it with diligence and gratitude.

Yes, I still farm, though not as intensively as before due to work commitments. Farming remains close to my heart—it keeps me grounded and connected to nature and to the rhythm of life that I've always loved.

Your description of spring sounds so beautiful. I can imagine the colors of tulips and daffodils waking up the earth. It must be a wonderful sight. I'm glad you're enjoying the season and preparing for Easter. I agree—it is a time that renews hope and reminds us of God's everlasting love.

Wow, 9,775 miles! What an incredible journey you had last year. I'm sure it must have been both exhausting and enriching. Spending time with loved ones you haven't seen in decades must have been so special. I pray your upcoming trip to San Diego and hopefully to Utah will be full of joy, good health, and peaceful moments.

You and Jim are a true inspiration. Age is clearly just a number when one's heart remains young and active in faith. Congratulations on turning 70! May this new chapter of your life be full of peace, joy, and new discoveries. I admire your commitment to reading through the Bible again—it truly does reveal something new each time. I'm sure your Sunday School students will be blessed to learn from you.

Thank you for your prayers and for sharing my greetings with your loved ones. It's comforting to know that I am thought of and prayed for. Please extend my love and greetings to Jim and your entire family. I pray that you continue to be surrounded by strength, good health, and the peace of God.

May God bless you richly, Dee Dee. You are a treasure in my life, and I thank Him for your friendship.

With love and warm regards,  
Abraham

### **Dear Members of the Port Townsend Community and Beyond:**

My name is Kevin Namburirwa. I am honored to write to you all to thank the musicians for always coming to perform on our concert every year. Please, thank you for using your talents to benefit us. I also want to thank all of you friends who spare the time to come and support these many concerts.

As for me, my only parent on the planet—my mother—has all the time been battling with mental illness to the point she is not even aware I am her daughter. You have been parents to me and I always feel comforted and surrounded by your love. It is important to know that I will go to school like any other student. It feels so special that there are such special persons in your life who make things happen for you.

Thank you so much performers on the May 18 concert—your art is so special. Attendees, thank you so much.  
Yours faithfully,  
Kevin Namburirwa

### **Dear Members of Grace:**

I feel so blessed that I am writing to you. My name is Dagalous Luggya Solomon, a medical student at Mbarara University of Science and Technology, pursuing a bachelor degree in Medicine and Surgery, currently in my first year.

Words seem to fail me when I try to express my sincere gratitude. I am writing to you today not just as a medical student but as someone whose dreams have been kept alive because of your kindness and generosity. I was just a young boy at primary level when Grace Lutheran Church extended a helping hand, offering me a sponsorship which has been a source of hope for all these years.

When I was growing up, my family faced numerous hardships. I witnessed my mother's tireless efforts as a single mother. We even used to struggle hard to meet the most basic needs. What you are giving me is more than just financial aid, it is a lifeline that fills my life with hope and determination. It allows me to focus on my studies, to dream without limits and to believe in a future that I couldn't even imagine.

My life is filled with joy when I witness myself becoming a doctor. You have not only given me a chance to pursue my education, but also an opportunity to become a role model inspiring young people who see that I have got this far, who see my academic journey as a miracle.

I promise to make you proud by excelling in my studies and inspiring others like me. You are the reason I can say "I am still in school." You are our heroes.

With love from Dagalous Luggya Solomon,  
Doctor in Training



# Death and Resurrection

## The Things That Count

*Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919)*

Now, dear, it isn't the bold things,  
Great deeds of valour and might,  
That count the most in the summing  
up of life at the end of the day.  
But it is the doing of old things,  
Small acts that are just and right;  
And doing them over and over again,  
no matter what others say;  
In smiling at fate, when you want to cry,  
and in keeping at work when you want to play -  
Dear, those are the things that count.  
And, dear, it isn't the new ways  
Where the wonder-seekers crowd  
That lead us into the land of content,  
or help us to find our own,  
But it is keeping to true ways,  
Though the music is not so loud,  
And there may be many a shadowed spot  
where we journey along alone;  
In flinging a prayer at the face of fear,  
and in changing into a song a groan -  
Dear, these are the things that count.  
My dear, it isn't the loud part  
Of creeds that are pleasing to God,  
Not the chant of a prayer,  
or the hum of a hymn, or a jubilant shout or song,  
But it is the beautiful proud part  
Of walking with feet faith-shod;  
And in loving, loving, loving through all,  
no matter how things go wrong;  
In trusting ever, though dark the day,  
and in keeping your hope  
when the way seems long -  
Dear, these are the things that count.



Ash  
Wednesday

## To Live in the Mercy of God

*by Denise Levertov*

To lie back under the tallest  
oldest trees. How far the stems  
rised, rise  
before the ribs of shelter  
open!  
To live in the mercy of God. The complete  
sentence too adequate, has no give.  
Awe, not comfort. Stone, elbows of  
stony wood beneath lenient  
moss bed.  
And awe suddenly  
passing beyond itself. Becomes  
a form of comfort.  
Becomes the steady  
air you glide on, arms  
stretched like the wings of flying foxes.  
To hear the multiple silence  
of trees, the rainy  
forest depths of their listening.  
To float, upheld,  
would hold you,  
once you dared.  
To live in the mercy of God.  
To feel vibrate the enraptured  
Waterfall flinging itself  
unabating down and down  
to clenched fists of rock.  
Swiftness of plunge,  
hour after year of century,  
O or Ah  
uninterrupted voice  
many-stranded.  
To breathe  
spray. The smoke of it.  
Arcs  
of steelwhite foam, glissades  
of fugitive jade barely perceptible. Such passion -  
rage or joy?  
Thus, not mild, not temperate,  
God's love for the world. Vast  
flood of mercy  
flung on resistance.

Copyright Credit: Denise Levertov, "To live in the Mercy of God" from  
*Sands from the Well*

## A Short Testament

Anne Porter

Whatever harm I may have done  
In all my life in all your wide creation  
If I cannot repair it  
I beg you to repair it,  
And then there are all the wounded  
The poor the deaf the lonely and the old  
Who I have roughly dismissed  
As if I were not one of them.  
Where I have wronged them by it  
And cannot make amends  
I ask you  
To comfort them to overflowing,  
And where there are lives I may have withered around  
me,  
Or lives of strangers far or near  
That I've destroyed in blind complicity,  
And if I cannot find them  
Or have no way to serve them Remember them. I beg you  
to remember them,  
When winter is over  
And all your unimaginable promises



## The Last Touch

*DeLana R.A. Dameron*

There is a dead mother  
and a living daughter and the ritual  
of washing hair. I was too young to think  
anything heroic about her heavy head  
in your hands before the funeral.  
What an intimate farewell: you  
waiting at the house of a friend,  
the funeral home – agreeing to your request –  
delivers great-grandma Georgia  
so that yours could be the last touch.  
How you moved your fingernails  
between her wet follicles, shielded  
her eyes, careful not to splash  
shampoo because you remember  
being chided about the burn. You denied  
the embalmer's offer to dress her;  
denied her their orange lipstick, but  
gave her the best dress and a heel –  
having been a while since she could walk  
after diabetes snatched half a leg.  
This intimate farewell: you rubbing  
her down in baby oil, whispering  
Mama, singing her those thousand hymns  
every ready in your mouth.

© 2009 *How God Ends Us*, *DeLana R.A. Dameron*

## *little prayer*

*Danez Smith*

let ruin end here  
let him find honey  
where there was once a slaughter  
let him enter the lion's cage  
& find a field of lilacs  
let this be the healing  
& if not let it be

*From Don't Call Us Dead (Graywolf Press, 2017).*  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 22, 2025



## **NCC Statement on the Budget Vote**

***Woe to those who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes,  
to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right,  
to make widows their spoil, and to plunder orphans!***

**Isaiah 10:1-2 (NRSVue)**

Washington, D.C.– In the early morning hours today, the House of Representatives, by a razor thin margin, voted to pass a budget bill that will take healthcare away from millions of people and cut billions from essential food aid to those in need. The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) decries this legislation and the ways it will harm those who are most vulnerable.

Enacting this budget plan will result in millions of people going hungry and getting sick or worse due to a lack of food and access to medical care. States and non-profit groups do not have the capacity to close the gaping hole that would be left in the social safety net.

Our Christian faith mandates that we care for the most vulnerable among us. This budget does the opposite and will have devastating impacts that reverberate through families, churches, and communities across the nation.

Members of Congress who voted for this bill or did not bother to cast a vote have made it clear where their values lie by supporting tax cuts for the wealthy at the expense of the poor and most vulnerable. With the bill passing the House by just one (1) vote, we urge members of the Senate to show moral courage and stand up for those most in need by defeating this bill. The lives and well-being of millions depend on it.

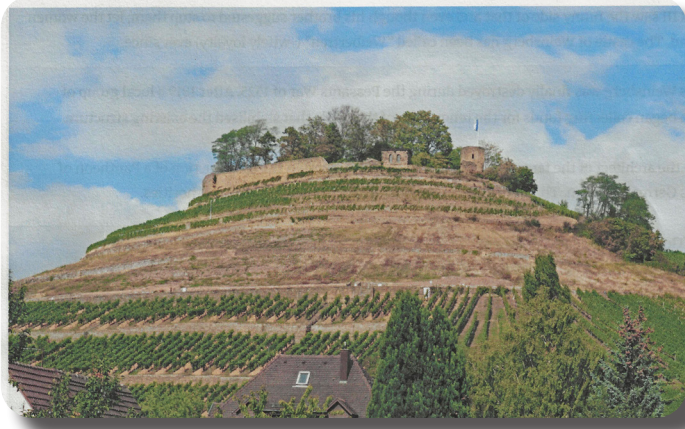
Serving as a leading voice of witness to the living Christ in the public square since 1950, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA brings together 37 member communions, including the ELCA, and more than 30 million Christians in approximately 100,000 congregations in a common expression of God's love and promise of unity.

The purpose of the NCC is to live as a community of denominations called by Christ to visible unity and sent forth in the Spirit to promote God's justice, peace, and the healing of the world.

The NCC fostered the multi-denominational research effort that produced the Revised Standard Version, New Revised Standard Version and New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition translations of the Bible, the main versions used by Bible scholars and mainline churches since the 1952 release of the RSV.

## The True Wife

Submitted by Linda Gaenicke



I was told this amazing story years ago while harvesting wine grapes. It is a true story that is still told and celebrated every year.

Henry the Proud was the leader of the town of Weinsberg in about December 1140 when this is reported to have taken place. He was deposed as the Duke of Bavaria and Saxony. He had voted against the election of Konrad III, of the Hohenstaufen dynasty, as King of the Romans and future emperor. Henry the Proud was placed under an imperial ban. This political ruckus caused a civil war. One of the strongholds was the castle of Weinsberg, now near the town of Heilbronn. King Konrad seized the castle and this meant certain death to those who sheltered there. As it was winter, King Konrad just wanted it to end and negotiated for a truce.

One of the items in the truce was that the women could be freed and allowed to leave the castle. The women were told that they were allowed to leave with their dearest possessions. When the castle drawbridge was let down, out came the women with their dearest possessions on their backs. Their husbands.

Instead of becoming angry, Konrad III saw how funny the situation was and let the women pass to freedom. Today the castle is called Weibertrau: True Wife (or Loyal Wife).

The castle was finally destroyed during the Peasants War of 1525. Today the ruins can be seen on the hill where the battle took place. The ruins of Weinsberg still owned and managed by the Frauverein (Women's Association) founded in 1819.

I must say that the wine grown there is some of the finest wine that Germany produces. The people proudly say that there is none to be exported as they drink all of it! I am proud to have been part of the yearly harvests. It was hard work from early morning until late afternoon. I remember working in the rain and constantly slipping down the 45 degree hill and landing in mud. Lunch was served in the vineyard over a campfire. Homemade brats and rolls

were served. After a long day working, workers went to the farmer's home and were served more wonderful homemade food and *kuchken* and wine. Singing and laughter were also part of the evening. Of course, the next morning it was right back to work. Oh yes, we were invited to work with no pay. It was an honor to be asked to work.

## A Prayer

*Reprinted from Voice of Grace Sept 2019  
Submitted by Carol Kong,  
originally submitted by  
Pastor Coe Hutchison and  
attributed to a 17th-century  
Mother Superior*



Keep me from getting talkative, and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking that I must say something on every subject and on every occasion.

Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs. Keep my mind from the recital of endless details – give me wings to come to the point.

I ask for grace enough to listen to the tales of others' pains. But seal my lips on my own aches and pains – they are increasing, and my love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. Help me to endure them with patience.

I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility and a lessening cocksureness when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally it is possible that I may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet. I do not want to be a saint—some of them are so hard to live with – but a sour old woman is one of the crowning works of the devil.

Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places, and talents in unexpected people. And give me, O Lord, the grace to tell them so.

Make me thoughtful – but not moody; helpful, but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all, but thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

Amen



President's Day demonstration at County Courthouse



Grace speaks out

### Mark Your Calendar

Worship: Sundays at 10:30 a.m.  
 Quilting: Mondays at 10 a.m.  
 Prayers Against Cancer: Last Thursdays of the month, 2 p.m.  
 Men's Bible Breakfast: Fridays at 8 a.m., Highway Twenty Roadhouse, 2152 W. Sims Way  
 Council: 3rd Tuesdays of the month (excluding July) at 3:30 p.m.

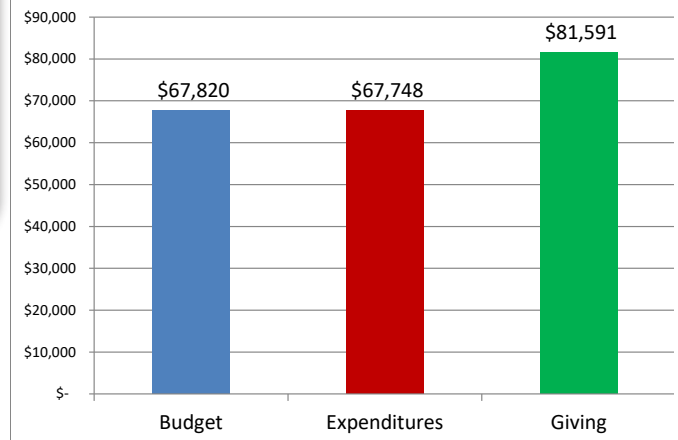
### Grace Council

**President:** Al Smith  
*alsmithinpt@gmail.com*  
**Vice President:** Lois Sherwood  
**Secretary:** Stacy Toner  
**Ministers:**  
**Resources (Treasurer):** Dennis Struecker  
**Facilities:** Steve Brantner  
**Social Concerns:** Don Fristoe

## Grace Financials

### Grace Lutheran Church

#### Year to Date through April 30, 2025



Quilts ready to be boxed up and sent off to Lutheran World Relief

### Grace Staff

**Pastor:** The Rev. Sean Janssen  
*revseanjanssen@gmail.com*  
**Office Manager:** Crissy Dunlap  
*gracelutheranpt@gmail.com*  
**Organist/Pianist:** Elise Sinclair  
**Choir Director:** Jeannie Oneppo  
**Editor, Voice of Grace:** Mary Ronen,  
*maryeronen@gmail.com*  
**Facebook:** [facebook.com/GraceLutheranPT](https://www.facebook.com/GraceLutheranPT)

Photos of church events may be published in print or online. If you do not want your picture included, please contact the office at [gracelutheranpt@gmail.com](mailto:gracelutheranpt@gmail.com) or (360)385-1595.