

Grace Lutheran



Yoked parish of faith and service: Bethel & Zion

c/o Zion Lutheran Church
41 Whitmarsh Avenue
Worcester, MA 01606-3296

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #205
WORCESTER, MA



NEWSLETTER MARCH 2026

TIME SENSITIVE

PLEASE DO NOT DELAY

*Our lives are formed by Word and
Sacrament, and we gather as the beloved
children of God around the means of grace
where our lives are in Christ.*

PASTOR'S COLUMN CENTERING

Does a gray day outside cause us to treat everything with less excitement, hope and graciousness than a clear, sunny one?

Think about this as a metaphor for news, bits and bytes as well and how they do or do not influence us.

Finding a center that cannot be moved is important; a way to be well and not causing collateral-damage from our flailing-about no matter what we are experiencing.

Jesus models centering by his life-actions. He leaves the hustle and bustle at times to find a quiet spot to breathe and have some God-time. When finished, he returns to the stream of life, refreshed and ready to continue revealing the True Humanity we can follow to best thrive in life!

The Lenten scripture reveals the realness of life that he did not shy away from, but met head-on to best reveal Grace and Mercy badly needed, and totally available 24/7 to everyone practicing faith *and* connection to The Source we come from and is best-attuned to feed us with what we need to be whole.

Centering through faith in God provides for our resonating with the Essence that is Love. In this *Way* of following, at the core of Jesus' teaching, the relational covenant flows more freely to become within us second-nature;

²⁹ *"The most important [commandment] is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. ³⁰" Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'* ³¹ *The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."* Mark 12
NIV

Let us be one with The One, and collaborators through the faith in bringing about the Kingdom of God more readily in our generation.

The journey is before us, life *IS* a gift, trust in the One whose Truth is sure!

In Jesus' holy name ✝,

Pastor Andrew

Grace *Lutheran Café*

Each Wednesday noon we serve a meal through Elder Services of Worcester at Zion!

Call the main office each week by 11 AM Mondays to register for a tasty/nutritious meal and some great social time!

Meals are FREE to anyone 50+, with a suggested donation of \$3.50/person.

MUSIC FOR MEALS

Community Musical Springfest

Friday evening March 20th 7:00 pm @ our Auburn campus. Outreach/Social Ministry is hosting the event to raise funds for the May 3rd Meal Lines. These are the "point persons" so far: Pam Sutton and John Leslie - program development, Judy Sampson (Bethel) - Bakers for the "Coffee And", Adam Hanks - Bells and Sound system, Randy Bloom - Grace choir, Pam Sutton - volunteer coordinator

EASTER LILIES

There is a sign-up in the Narthex if you want to purchase Easter lilies. They are \$18 per lily and can be given in honor/memory of someone. We have ordered 20 plants so sign-up ASAP.



Wow! Thanks you so much for your incredibly generous gift of hope and shelter to women and children in need!

Jenn

Abby's House

A generous gift was given to Grace from the photographer for Gateways Academy, Robert Spellman Jr. Thank you!

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! We're excited to share with you the impact your clothing shed made over the last year...

Zion

- 31,249 pounds of clothing were donated to your shed in 2025.
- This was enough to clothe an estimated 5,756 people all over the world.
- Based on this volume of clothing, your organization received \$1,250.

Bethel

- 67,134 pounds of clothing were donated to your shed in 2025.
- This was enough to clothe an estimated 12,367 people all over the world.
- Based on this volume of clothing, your organization received \$2,685.

Thank you so much for everything you , your volunteers, and your communities do to support the clothing shed program!

Sincerely,
The Team at
St. Pauly Textile, Inc.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Brian Zifcak - 03/01
Paisley Mullaly - 03/03
Allan Winiikka - 03/04
Gavin Bergman - 03/10
Nicole Barr - 03/12
Sara Sanborn - 03/14
Carrie Courteau - 03/14
Jeff Bylund - 03/21
Colin Costello - 03/21
Valerie Kosciusko - 03/22
Don Hanks - 03/26
Terry Hamilton - 03/29



MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

Kaitalyn & Tyler Mullaly - 03/31

PRAYER LIST

Donald Tremblay - Rose Marie Faragoli - Donna Brunnell - Mike & Cindy Dube - Russ Terrien - Tom Toepfner - Sandy Staples - Jim Mooney - Karen Carlson - Judy Garneau - Paul Josephson - Edla Bloom - Steve Hynes - Denise, Peter & George Kosciusko - Tony Genga - Henry Lewis - Glenna Brownell - Lois Kane - Roberta Briggs - Joan Bejune - Billy Rogan - Judy & Don Leomburno - Mark Glandville - Jack Fenton - Mark Stevens - Jill Ducat - Jim Mahoney - Amy Rumge - Heather Gregar - Kenneth Johnson - Beth Johnson - Bill Withers - Pr. Judy L. - Gary Kaufman - Betty Jane Weagle - Valerie Cotter - Kelly O'Brien Hartnett - Judy Sawicki - Anne Berberian - Carol Katagher - Julie Dawes - Louise Young - Elaine Peterson - David & Madeline Nevard

**LOOKING FOR A GROUP OF
LUTHERANS TO MEET WITH AND
SHARE SOME EXPERIENCES AND
HAVE FUN?**

**AS A SHARED MINISTRY WITH BETHEL/ZION,
WHY NOT GIVE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING A
TRY?**

MEN'S GROUP

Tuesday, March 10th. These dinners are open to anyone who would like to get together and socialize for an hour or 2. We meet on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 6 pm in Voosen hall. Dinners are \$15.00, and all the profits go into the Calumet scholarship fund. A sign-up sheet is in the Narthex so we have a general head count.

**WOMEN'S: DOLs
(Dine Out Ladies)**

The DineOut Ladies are going to lunch at 1:00 at The Draught House Bar & Grill, 42 West Boylston St., West Boylston, on Tuesday, March 10. Signup sheet in Bethel's narthex or call Leanne Carraher at 508-335-6421. Please indicate if you plan to carpool from Bethel's parking lot at 12:30 or meet us at the restaurant.

"BOOKIES" Book Club

Next meeting Monday March 30th at 2pm in the library. Book for discussion is "My Friends" by Fredrik Backman. An unforgettable funny and deeply moving tale of four teenagers whose friendship creates a bond so powerful that it changes a complete stranger's life 25 years later. Most anticipated book of 2025 by best-selling author of "A Man Called Ove". 476 pages All are welcome to come and share in our lively discussions!



**YOUTH FEED OTHERS DURING
SCHOOL VACATION**

On Monday, 2/16, Grace Lutheran's youth gathered with youth from Emanuel Lutheran Worcester to create 55 lunches that were then distributed to the WOO FRIDGES in Worcester.

They then relaxed and played games and had some lunch.

THANK YOU to all who participated and created the event, encouraging Jesus' hands, feet and heart becoming ALIVE in our midst!



Grace Notes - March 2026





Social Ministry / Outreach

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." ~ Ephesians 2:10

This winter has been tough on many but has been particularly challenging for those experiencing homelessness and food insecurity. As a way to increase safe places to meet these challenges, **St. John's Catholic Church, Xavier Center** at 20 Temple Street in Worcester opened their doors as a winter overflow shelter for overnight refuge, as well as providing food, clothing, and other essentials. Our team helped to meet some of their needs by purchasing requested food, drinks and hand warmers using the Target gift card given through the generosity of an anonymous donation.

Together with Emanuel Lutheran Church in Worcester, First Congregational Church in Auburn, and Gateways Academy, Grace will be running meal lines with **End Hunger NE** on Sunday May 3rd. Our goal this year is to make 20,000 meals to be distributed to local food banks and through Pastor Matthew Martin's outreach connections. There will be fundraising events to help raise the money needed for making the meals. Our team will be hosting a musical event, **MUSIC FOR MEALS: Community Musical Springfest** on Friday March 20th. This free-will offering event will include light refreshments and musical entertainment. All monies raised through free-will offerings at this event will help fund the meal lines. Plan on joining us for this event, as we welcome and celebrate the beginning of spring. Please speak with Pam if you wish to help.

And speaking of spring, as we head into March, it's time to be thinking about the **Community Garden**.

While the garden has been resting these past few months, beneath the wintery landscape is the promise of new life. This is the time we make plans for what we will grow in 2026, and what we learned from last year's garden from our successes and what we might do to make it even better. March is a time to start some of our seedlings, particularly tomatoes and peppers. Soil preparation will begin in April and May. We welcome all who would like to help with the garden. The harvest is shared with local groups including Auburn Youth and Family Services, and the Woo Fridges, as well as homebound members of our congregations.

For our Lenten project, we are doing a collection of diapers and baby wipes which will be delivered to **Marie's Mission Diaper Outreach Program** at St Michael's Episcopal Church after Easter. There are collection areas in the Narthex at both Bethel and Zion.

This past month we met with First Congregational Church and Auburn Youth and Family Services to begin planning for the fall **Auburn Walk for Hunger**. If anyone is interested in helping with organizing this event, please speak with Pastor Andrew, Judy or Marie. In the meantime we will continue our food gathering of non-perishable food for the **AYFS Food Pantry**.

**New England Synod
Bishop's Update
February 17, 2026**

Dear New England Synod,

On Friday, February 13, 2026, United States District Judge Dennis Saylor ruled in favor of the New England Synod and other plaintiffs and against the January 2025 order by the Department of Homeland Security allowing unlimited access to places of worship for immigration enforcement activities.

In his ruling, Judge Saylor identified three areas protected from immigration enforcement activity:

“places of worship,” i.e., churches themselves or other places regularly used to conduct religious services;

“adjacent protected facilities,” i.e., facilities “attached to or adjacent to” places of worship that are used to conduct activities central to member’ religious missions, such as a school;

“adjacent protected areas,” i.e., any property adjacent to a place of worship that is owned, occupied, or operated by the church, such as a parking lot, walkway, lawn, garden, playground, or cemetery.

The order strictly limits immigration enforcement activities in and around any of the above three categories of protected areas **unless**: (1) there are “exigent circumstances,” i.e., an immediate threat to human life or safety, or (2) the enforcement activity is authorized by an administrative or judicial warrant.

Further, the order prohibits immigration enforcement activities within 100 feet of any entrance to any of the three categories of protected areas **unless** (1) there are exigent circumstances, (2) the enforcement activity is authorized by an administrative or judicial warrant, or (3) the activity has been previously authorized by a supervisor at ICE or CBP headquarters in D.C. The order prohibits setting up a checkpoint or other barrier in order to target people on their way to or from any of the three categories of protected areas.

It’s important to note that Judge Saylor’s ruling goes into effect only for plaintiffs in the lawsuit once the plaintiffs have supplied a list of places of worship, adjacent buildings and adjacent properties. I will be working with our lawyers, and may be contacting you for information, as we compile this list by the February 27th deadline set forth by the judge.

It’s also important to note that our lawyers understand this ruling to cover all activity within our worship spaces and adjacent facilities and areas whether the activity is of the congregation or not. Therefore, other Christian communities renting space and worshipping in our worship spaces and adjacent facilities and areas; schools, day cares, after school programs meeting and gathering in our worship spaces and adjacent facilities and areas; and all other outside community groups who rent, meet, or use space in our worship spaces and adjacent facilities and areas are also protected by this ruling.

While I, and many in the New England Synod, celebrate this ruling as a matter of human decency and protection for our communities, I have heard from some members of the New England Synod opposed to our participation in the lawsuit. To these members I have said three things:

Grace Notes - March 2026

We participated in this lawsuit guided by the New England Synod Assembly's overwhelming adoption (over 90% voting in the affirmative) in June 2025 of a resolution calling on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to participate in such lawsuits on behalf of our neighbors in need. While the ELCA Churchwide organization declined to participate in this lawsuit, ELCA Legal Counsel encouraged synods to participate if they chose to do so. In consultation with Synod Council Vice-President Cassandra Wilson and the Synod Council Executive Committee, we looked to the Synod Assembly's action as evidence of broad-based support for participating in this legal action.

There was broad-based support for participating in such lawsuits because members and congregations of the New England Synod have been directly impacted by enhanced immigration enforcement activity. We did not participate in this lawsuit because we hate the President or his policies. We participated because we love our Christian siblings impacted by these policies. This is not a "theoretical" problem happening elsewhere, but a real problem happening to us. We are impacted. Members of the New England Synod are living in fear because of this order. Let me be clear: people here legally are hiding and living in fear of racial profiling and stereotyping leading to harassment and detention by ICE. In his ruling, Judge Saylor noted my observation that not only does decreased worship attendance harm those who stay away from church in fear, but also those who can attend, who are not blessed in relationship with those who stay away. Our Christian community is diminished when not everyone participates. We cannot be fully the body of Christ unless all are able to participate fully in Christian community.

This lawsuit does not challenge the government's right and ability to enforce immigration law. This lawsuit responds specifically to the January 2025 Department of Homeland Security order allowing immigration enforcement activity within places of worship. That order reversed a policy in place under both Republican and Democratic administrations, including the first Trump administration. Prohibiting immigration enforcement activity in churches preserves the ability to worship God who understands no borders within God's kingdom.

Let me state clearly that we need comprehensive immigration reform in this country. We need immigration laws that are fair and just and reflect the rich history of the United States as a country of immigrants. No one is served by laws, policies and rhetoric that demonize and scapegoat immigrants, rip families apart and turn churches and sacred places into battlegrounds for immigration enforcement activities. Even as the judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in this lawsuit, difficult questions about immigration laws, policies and enforcement remain. My hope is that this ruling offers protection to the New England Synod so that our places of worship and adjacent buildings and areas may be places where all children of God may gather to hear the Gospel and experience for themselves the hospitality, welcome and mercy of Jesus Christ. From a place of shared love and humanity, may we then engage the complex and difficult questions about immigration policy and enforcement.

I will keep you posted if there are any further updates. Please contact the Synod Office if you have any specific questions or concerns.

I wish you a blessed and sacred Ash Wednesday and Lenten journey.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Piph

LIVING FAITHFULLY – FROM LIVING LUTHERAN

THE GOOD EARTH

Earth Day “is widely recognized as the largest secular observance in the world, marked by more than a billion people every year,” according to Earthday.org. It may not be a religious holiday, but the date—April 22—is related to Easter, and we can draw on Easter’s theology to enrich our participation in Earth Day.

The relationship to Easter was simply strategic at first. Organizers of the first Earth Day were looking for a springtime date that avoided conflicts with Easter and Passover, and they wanted to make sure college students would be in class and available for teach-ins. In 1970, April 22 fell in that sweet spot.

The date stuck, ensuring that Earth Day will always occur within the great 50 days of Easter and every so often fall during Holy Week. On every Earth Day we’ll know—in a future that climate scientists tell us will call for profound courage and solidarity—the church will be telling its resurrection stories and singing the songs of Easter.

This year, the Sunday following Earth Day is Good Shepherd Sunday, which gives us the image of God as a shepherd leading us to green pastures, beside still waters. The enduring power of this imagery speaks to our deepest hopes on Earth Day—that our bodies will be protected from harm and find a home on the good earth, near clean waters.

The garden tomb in the Gospel of John evokes a restored Garden of Eden—Mary even perceives Jesus as a gardener. The garden imagery isn’t some ancient form of “greenwashing,” covering up injustice and suffering with gauzy images of springtime. Rather, in the Gospels, when Jesus testifies to the truth of the resurrection, the testimony he offers is his wounded body.

The first Earth Day began not in a pristine garden but at the site of a wound: the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, then the largest in U.S. waters and still one of the biggest in U.S. history. [Sen. Gaylord Nelson](#) (1916-2005) witnessed this wound engulfing the waters, the coastline and their creatures, and set in motion a process that, just a year later, brought more than 20 million Americans into the streets—10% of the population.

Within months of that first Earth Day, the Environmental Protection Agency was created and the [Clean Air Act](#) was dramatically strengthened. Within two years the [Clean Water Act](#) was passed. Millions of people are alive today because of environmental protections that trace their origins to the first Earth Day and that wounded coastline.

On Good Friday, the haunting text of the suffering servant expresses the awful reality of the sins of many being laid on one: “Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases. ... He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. ... He was oppressed, and he was afflicted. ... By a perversion of justice he was taken away” (Isaiah 53:4-8).

Today, the mainstream environmental movement is beginning to come to terms with the Good Friday truth to which those at the margins of power have long testified: that the environmental sins of the world are heaped disproportionately on the bodies of the poor, immigrants and people of color. Easter is an exposure of this perversion of justice and a celebration of the sacred power that rises up and overthrows it, out of love for vulnerable bodies and the good earth.

Earth Day landed—almost by accident—in the church’s Easter season. It’s not a church holiday, and corporations sometimes use Earth Day to greenwash their reputations and minimize environmental injustice. But on the Sunday before Earth Day this year, we remember with vivid clarity that humanity has “killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses” (Acts 3:15).

And so we sing during our Easter season, “Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy at the presence of the Lord” (Psalm 98:7-9).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BENJAMIN M. STEWART

Benjamin M. Stewart is the Gordon A. Braatz Associate Professor of Worship and director of the Zygon Center for Religion and Science at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. He is author of *A Watered Garden: Christian Worship and Earth’s Ecology*.

Grace Notes - March 2026



MISSION STATEMENT

"To boldly share God's Love and Grace universally in and through our communities."

VISION STATEMENT

Modeling the welcoming nature of God, we are humbly called and driven by the Spirit to witness, engage and walk with each other authentically, as Jesus' hands and feet, providing spiritual, emotional and physical nourishment.

Through evolving partnerships with ecumenical and other social service organizations we affirm justice and wholeness under the "agency of Grace" that feed the needs and hope of all.

The Rev. Andrew H. Borden, Pastor
pastor_andrew.b@verizon.net

Ann Spinner, Parish Administrator
bethelauburn@verizon.net
Main Office: 508-832-3427
grace-lutheran-elca.org

Randy Bloom – Minister of Music **Lois Toepfner**, Deacon – Minister of Music Emeritus
Shannon Papandrea - Sexton **Garret Peters** - Treasurer
Kate Valleli – Christian Education Coordinator **Adam Hanks** – Bell Director
Ann Spinner, Kate Valleli – Financial Secretaries
Louisa Klaven, AIM – Licensed Lay Minister

Parish Council

President – **Dave Valleli (B)** Co-Vice-Presidents – **Jennifer Courtney (Z), Jessica Caminero (B)**
Council – **Dave Spinner (Z), Ruth Thompson (B), Joan Parker (B), Leanne Carraher (B)**
Virginia Carlson (Z), Adam Hanks (B), Patrick Jones (B)

Worcester Campus - Zion Lutheran Auburn Campus - Bethel Lutheran
41 Whitmarsh Avenue, 01606 90 Bryn Mawr Avenue, 01501

