

Grace Lutheran



Yoked parish of faith and service: Bethel & Zion

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

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NEWSLETTER JUNE 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

As a pastor, people wonder how the workload is going and ask about this often, hoping I am not overwhelmed. I appreciate the kindness and assure them I take weekly "sabbath" to refresh!

Pastors also muse about how each other are doing with workloads. One question pastor's can ask each other, and non-pastor's also ask a pastor, when coming to the end of the school year and summer break is "Your schedule must be winding down about now?"

The gospel texts beginning in June focus on Jesus' constant ministry; there is a dizzying amount of activity in each week's offering. I mention this as I find the same applies to what I am called to be about; in other words, "I really don't find my schedule really ever winding down that much., thank you."

It's true that confirmation sessions take a hiatus from June through the end of August. But that's about it for any "winding down".

Yet, this is what I agreed to when I accepted the call to ministry. But it is *also* what any believer who lives into their faith accepts; that no matter what time of year, hour of the day or night, there is a need for us to be completely "on" when it comes to being authentically Spirit-led and meeting what we are moved to encounter and assist with.

In Matthew, chapter 9, we find in Sunday, June 7th's verses how Jesus invited the tax collector who would become a follower to dinner where various temple leaders were present and a discussion about faith began. But then, people show asking our Lord to hurry out and help with a young girl who has died, and as he is traveling a woman comes up and touches his robe, Jesus notes Power left him and finds and blesses the woman who is healed...a whirlwind of Grace and Mercy authentically unfolding!

So may we meet whatever comes with Grace and let the Spirit refresh us so that we aren't overwhelmed, but feel the blessing of being a blessing by God's direction in our lives!

In Jesus' ✝ name ,

Pastor Andrew

COTTAGE MEETINGS - PARISH VOTING > returning to being a PASTORAL TEACHING CHURCH

Following a couple months of deliberation, your Parish Council voted unanimously on May 17th to encourage our parish in returning as an internship site for training new pastors!

Both of congregations hosted pastoral interns (vicars) on multiple occasions in past years. The thought is to do so again beginning in 2027. *United Lutheran seminary is EXCITED that a yoked parish, such as ours, could be coming "online" to help train-up leaders for multi-congregational settings in the ELCA!*

Vicars are student pastors, learning "on the job" under the tutelage of the parish pastor, and in consultation with an ELCA seminary. Our parish would provide the Vicar housing and a stipend for the year that they are assigned to Grace.

MEETINGS TO DISCUSS AND THEN VOTE ON THE OPPORTUNITY

Wednesday, June 3rd after 5:30 PM Worship

Sunday, June 7th following each worship: 8 AM, 8:45 AM & 10:30 AM

BISHOP PIPHO IS COMING

Our Synod bishop makes every effort to visit all the parishes in New England and is booked most weeks to be a part of worship somewhere (when he is not traveling for meetings and conferences).

Mark your calendars! Bishop Pipho will be with us for both the 8:45 AM service in Worcester and 10:30 AM service in Auburn the last Sunday of July, the 26th! Each campus will host some "coffee-and" time following the worships so you may meet him directly.

**EXCERPT on PALESTINE from BISHOP
PIPHO'S ANNUAL REPORT to our SYNOD**

In January 2026, I was blessed to join a delegation of bishops and churchwide staff from the ELCA on an accompaniment trip to visit the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). The timing of the trip was intentional as it included the consecration at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Jerusalem of the Rev. Dr. Imad Haddad as bishop of the ELCJHL on Sunday, January 11, 2026.

Prior to going on this trip I had heard terms such as West Bank, illegal settlements, checkpoints, gates, wall, refuge camps, and settler violence. When I visited in January, apart from settler violence, I experienced these things for myself. I saw ...

- Israeli government backed illegal settlements (described by Lutheran Pastor Mitri Raheb as military colonies) being built right into the middle of Bethlehem and the West Bank – intentionally and strategically cutting off Palestinians from each other and from their lands they have farmed for centuries.
- 20-foot-high walls cutting off people in Bethlehem from the city of Jerusalem which prevented Christians in Bethlehem from ever visiting Jerusalem.
- a teargas canister, labeled “Made in the USA”, that had been thrown into a Palestinian refugee camp by Israeli soldiers in the middle of the quiet night in a cruel act of harassment
- our Palestinian hosts navigating checkpoints and permits as their travel was monitored and controlled by the Israeli government.
- the signs at the entrances to the West Bank warning Israelis “DANGER. YOU ARE ENTERING A RESTRICTED AREA. ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK” broadcasting a message that Palestinian people are dangerous, a threat, and not to be trusted.

All of us who attended Bishop Haddad's consecration experienced the delay in its start as we learned that Bishop Haddad's own mother had been detained at a checkpoint and forced at gunpoint to get out of the car she was traveling in to her son's consecration.

In all these ways I saw for myself a death-dealing, death-speaking system of apartheid, ethnic cleansing, and genocide imposed upon the Palestinian people by the Israeli government, an intentional system that has created 85% unemployment among the Palestinian people and which has turned the West Bank into what some Palestinians call an “open-air prison.”

Yet, as a sign of the resurrection of Jesus, the people of the ELCJHL experiencing intentional and strategic

at dehumanization, criminalization, and harassment by the Israeli government, are nonetheless telling the story of Jesus, nurturing relationships, and working for racial justice. Lutherans of the ELCJHL in

Palestine are:

- educating children, providing therapy for children experiencing trauma, and led by Deacons are running a variety of programs responding to the needs of their neighbors.
- in relationship with their Muslim neighbors. The ELCJHL is recognized as having an outsized impact on Palestinian society as they intentionally live as the hands and feet of Christ in the world. calling for justice. They are not calling for revenge, retribution, or retaliation against Israel or the Israeli people. They are calling for justice and peace for all people in the Middle East.

Most importantly, they are inviting us as Christians in the United States to be people of justice by calling for adherence to international law that brings justice and peace for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Their hope is that we would use our platforms and privilege to share their stories which includes their pleas for Israel to adhere to international law. For the New England Synod to do racial justice is to amplify the voices of the Palestinian people calling for justice and adherence to international law.

With this invitation in mind, I will be attending the “Churches for Middle East Peace Summit” in Washington, D.C. the first week in May 2026. This is an opportunity for lawmakers to hear from Christians who are not Zionist and who do

Grace Notes - June 2026

not believe the Bible blesses the current state of Israel with the promise of Palestinian land. In response to the appeal of our Palestinian siblings, I go to share their stories in the halls of power in this country and to do racial justice for the sake of our Lutheran siblings in the Holy Land.

2026 GRACE COMMUNITY GARDEN



Here we go again! We have had a remarkable response from the Grace congregation. With funds from the collection jug we were able to purchase plants and soil and two new metal raised beds. Some of you brought soil in buckets from Auburn DPW to help fill them up before they were topped off with the finer store-bought soil. New soil was added to the former beds as well. The plants were fostered in your homes until we put them in the ground on last Thursday. Many thanks.

On Pentecost Sunday Pastor Andrew lead us in a Blessing for the 2026 Garden and for all who have and who will sign up to help water, weed, tend, harvest and deliver the bounty to those who may find themselves food insecure.

The sign-up sheets are in the Narthex. There are no assignments, just sign up for what you and/or your kids with you can reasonably do. The more folks who sign up, the easier it will be to keep the Garden growing strong towards a bountiful harvest! The water barrel is working great, the watering cans are there. When it rains, no need to water. When is hot and no rain, the town water is hooked up, the key to the faucet is available. Check with Ann in the office if you need it.

Thanks be to God in Christ. We, like Paul, planted the seeds, we, like Apollos, will water, but God, You will bring the increase [based on Christian Scripture I Corinthians 3: 6-8]

Sincerely,
Pam, for the Intergenerational Grace Garden Community Garden Team



MEAL LINES AT GRACE

On Sunday, May 3rd we hosted *The Outreach Program* and Pr. Matt Martin at our Auburn campus of Bethel for our annual work in building meal kits to help combat food insecurity.

This year, we *increased* our contribution from 16,000 to 20,000 people being fed, and ran 4 instead of 3, meal lines.

It was a *huge* success, with 91 cartons of meals created in just about 2 hours, ready to go to regional food pantries! This was accomplished with volunteers from Emanuel Lutheran - Worcester and First Congregational Church of Auburn, and together with donations from our parish we *exceeded* the \$8K required to purchase the materials for the meal build!

THANK YOU to ALL who helped contribute to this important work and Dave Valleli who took on all of the coordination!!!



ECUMENICAL HAPPENINGS - There is an *energy* taking place, the **Spirit** is moving! Coming off of the recent healing service held at Salem Covenant, our ecumenical clergy have planned three more services for this year:

Sunday, August 23rd - Summer Ecumenical Service (time & location TBA)

Sunday, November 22nd - Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service: 4 PM @ The Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester

Thursday, December 17th - Ecumenical Blue Christmas Service: 7 PM @ our Zion campus in Worcester

Come, share the Spirit, never just for Pentecost :)

I'M A LUTHERAN: MARTY J. UHLE

Messiah Lutheran Church, Fairview Park, Ohio
President and CEO, **Community West Foundation**

My wife, Laura, and I are active at Messiah Lutheran and have many friends there. We lean toward a traditional service setting, and I especially enjoy the music program. We also have a mission called Laundry Love, which I'm able to support through the charitable foundation where I serve as president and CEO.

I briefly moved out of the Cleveland area around 2002, and my father, ELCA pastor John Uhle, retired while we were away. He joined Messiah, which was only a few miles from his church, Bethany English Lutheran, in order to give the new pastor space to get going. We followed him to Messiah upon our return in 2004.

I enjoy our church community very much. There is diversity of backgrounds and experiences, and we operate a pre-K-5 school, which is pretty unique for an ELCA church.

I have done many things at Messiah since 2004, including running a capital campaign to purchase a building and expand our footprint, serving as president of the church council, serving on the investment committee and managing the Pierstorf College Fund for seven years.

The Pierstorf brothers, Ervin and Clarence, were very successful pharmacists with many other business endeavors. They had no heirs when they died. Their gifts to an endowment eventually totaled over \$25 million, benefiting the Pierstorf College Fund and Ohio Northern University pharmacy students. Each year, over \$1 million in zero-interest loans are made to Lutheran students in Ohio by Messiah through the fund. It is truly one of a kind in the ELCA.

I began serving on the Community West Foundation board of directors in 2009. I have a personal policy to only serve on boards that start their meetings with a prayer. Our mission is based on [Matthew 25](#), and we are faith-forward in our work. When I was asked to assume the president and CEO role in 2020, it allowed me to take a position that reflects my personal beliefs and benefits the least of our brothers and sisters right in the area where I live and grew up. Absolutely a dream job.

The foundation has three major areas of focus, and I am very active in all three, along with our nine other talented teammates. We support the very successful Fairview Hospital and Lutheran Hospital and were created out of their merger with the Cleveland Clinic health system in 1996. Our team runs many fundraisers annually, and I serve on the boards of both hospitals in my role. We make grants to "Matthew 25" agencies in our service area from our historical unrestricted endowment—in 2025, we helped 102 agencies with grants totaling a little over \$4.5 million. And we help philanthropic individuals put their resources to work with donor-advised funds, charitable gift annuities and more.

It's hard to describe being a funder focused on basic needs. We do not have to raise money to pay our bills, but millions of dollars come in annually to take advantage of our thorough vetting of agencies. Helping people be philanthropic is something very unique, and we don't have to charge any fees to do this work.

I cannot think of any other kind of work I could do with my business and finance background that would be more reflective of my faith.

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I was honored to serve on the Wittenberg University board for 12 years, ending around 2021. My father (Wittenberg '59, Hamma Divinity '61), my brother and I, and my two sons all benefited from a Wittenberg liberal arts education. Most smaller residential universities are going through difficult restructurings to reflect current times, but I am confident Wittenberg has a successful future ahead. The largest number of living alumni is here in the Cleveland area, so I see many graduates along the way.

I come from a generation that did not know the phrase "work-life balance"! I am trying to catch on to that concept by enjoying my wife of 41 years, my sons, my daughter-in-law and my two grandchildren. Everyone is about 10 minutes away from each other, and we are able to see each other often. I claim to play golf, but my friends appreciate that at least I play fast, if not well.

Grace is given, not earned, and even though my work is faith-inspired, it does not define my faith relationship. It is truly enlightening when we can accept that God died for us and we do not have to earn this gift.

I'm a Lutheran because God's grace is given and we are able to meet all people wherever they are in life's journey without judgement and rebuke. Seeing the dignity in all people is a hallmark of my work and personal life. I don't believe ELCA Lutherans shun people or groups from their presence.

If you'd like to nominate someone for "I'm a Lutheran," email livinglutheran@elca.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOHN POTTER

John G. Potter is content editor of *Living Lutheran*. He lives in St. Paul, Minn., where he is a member of Como Park Lutheran Church.

PRAYER LIST

Donald Tremblay - Rose Marie Faragoli - Donna Brunnell - 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 - 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 - Pr. Judy L. - Gary Kaufman - Betty Jane Weagle - Valerie Cotter - Judy Sawicki - Anne Berberian - Carol Katagher - Julie Dawes - Louise Young - Elaine Peterson - David & Madeline Nevard - Lina Dickey - Courtney Cronin - Theresa Adams - JoAnn Van Dyke - Cherry Harris - Kristen Woods - Diane Ela-Lauzon - Alan Wiinikka - Mark - Misty Johnson

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL - Wow, we are entering our 3rd year back in providing this wonderful, summer opportunity!

Mornings, the week of August 3rd @ our Auburn Campus of Bethel

We are working in partnership with Emauel Lutheran - Worcester and First Congregational Church of Auburn!

**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.

**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, June 9th. 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 having lunch at 1:00 on Tuesday, June 9th, at Barber's Crossing, 861 N. Main Street, Leicester. Carpooling from Bethel at 12:30 or meet us there. Signup sheet in Bethel's narthex or call Leanne Carraher at 508-335-6421. Please indicate if you plan to carpool.

"BOOKIES" Book Club

Bookies will be meeting in the library at 2pm on Monday June 29th. Book for discussion is "The Letter Carrier" by Francesca Giannone. A beautiful crafted story of love, marriage, family, religion and social issues taking place in a little town in Italy. A female letter carrier, unheard of in 1934, becomes the invisible thread connecting the town as she delivers the mail. A novel, 416 pages



Come join us for lively discussion and snacks!



JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- Jackie Walsh - 06/03
- Dave Berglund - 06/07
- Janice Shuler - 06/07
- Lori Brennan - 06/07
- Ronan Bennett - 06/08
- Anthony Mullaly - 06/09
- Christine Gauthier - 06/13
- Phyllis Elolampi - 06/13
- Colleen Bouckaert - 06/14
- Caitlin Hersey - 06/15
- Lauren Kneeland - 06/21
- Beverly Sampson - 06/24
- Dave Sutton - 06/26
- Courtney Cronin - 06/27
- Kaitalyn Mullaly - 06/28



JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

- Cheryl & Tim Cronin - 06/01
- Scot & Lynn Winiikka - 06/12
- Roy & Janet Benoit - 06/18
- Nancy & Don Bjorkman - 06/19
- Dave & Pam Sutton - 06/21
- Brian & Carrie Courteau - 06/22
- Julie & Christopher Bowen - 06/25



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

Having a place to call home is not only a blessing, but a necessity. The vision of the **Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance** is – *“A world where everyone has a safe, stable, and healthy place to call home.”* This is accomplished by helping families stay safe and secure, empowering families in crisis, transforming houses into homes, and restoring hope after hardship. The CMHA hosted the 41st Annual WALK to End Homelessness on Sunday, May 17, 2026, at Elm Park in Worcester. This annual 5K walk and community event helped raise vital funds to help families and individuals in Worcester County secure and maintain safe, affordable housing. Our Grace Lutheran Church team's goal this year was \$500, and thanks to all who generously donated, we raised \$580. Four members represented Grace in this year's walk; Judy, Patrick, Marie and Preston.



The team page is still open for donations:

https://pro.gofundme.com/team/820307?is_new=true

The raised beds were prepared, and the planting has been done. This year's **Grace Community Garden** has tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, pole and bush beans,

potatoes, and squash. Thank you to Preston for setting up the rain barrel, and to Jess, Judy, Pam, Marie and the Sunday School children for getting the garden ready and planted for another growing season. There is a sign up sheet on the garden table in the Narthex for those wishing to volunteer in tending the garden by watering, weeding and harvesting. Vegetables will go to the Woo Fridges, AYFS and other designated places to help those experiencing food insecurity.





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)**

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