

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 SEPTEMBER 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

THE RETURN

I never disliked schooling. If my mom were still alive, I don't believe she would recount many, if any, episodes where I refused to participate with the education process.

Or sure, some classes I liked better than others, such as architectural drawing, power mechanics, science and such. But, on the whole, I was, and still am, a friend of education.

After receiving my B.S. in Engineering, and once secure with extended, long-term employment, the company (Bose Corporation) encouraged us to participate in ongoing education. So, I accepted and completed three, separate certificate programs to "up" my capability for leading team efforts in a senior capacity.

And, when God began to "rip me away" from engineering and towards ministry, I completely embraced, and thrived, in the work of seminary! The processes all "filled me up", and satisfied my thirst to grow.

Church can also satisfy a person's thirst to grow, too. That is, if one is inclined to do so!

God never created humanity to be static. Life is dynamic, all the time! So, learning helps us become and remain at our best, keying-off of the "tool box" of talents and gifts we have each received at birth!

Graduate and undergraduate programs return to regularity as this column goes to print. And I know some participants might wish that the summer-time could continue! When our family would vacation in Maine it was always up until Labor Day weekend, so the fondness of friendships at the beach, the special foods enjoyed, enjoyment of sea air and seascapes, all these things were about to be set-aside for another year, so it could be a bittersweet transition.

However, back at home, into the rhythms of life, came satisfaction, even joy, at the pace of learning *and* participation with church in her programs and worships.

Are we all here on this page, anxious to move forward to continue our growth and thrive in life?

The practice of faith, the regularity of engagement with God and the fabric of church and world, strengthens us to become our best with increasing resilience against the world's chaos, and a calmness and wholeness, as chief benefits! It helps us be free to lean-onto educational and professional growth.

I look forward to the return of our entire flock, and their friends, as a new church year begins with vibrant worship and cultivated education opportunities designed to feed the hearts, souls and minds of every age!

Remember, RALLY DAY Sunday takes place on September 13th!!!

See you all soon, at the Table of Life, in the "courts of thanksgiving", at the "banquet tables" with pot-lucks and coffee hours, and in the sessions of learning, all growing the faith we are called to practice regularly in honor of God and in pursuit of the kingdom coming together here on earth through our help and support!

Blessings ✚,

Pastor Andrew

Adult Courses Fall '26

Wednesdays, 2 PM Library, Bethel Campus

Beginning September 16th

Historical elements relating to Jesus' life & times, and those of his mother. Reference books:

The Lost Mary, James D. Tabor, 2025, Knopf

The Jesus Discovery, James D. Tabor & Simcha Jacobovici, 2013, Simon & Schuster

October 7th

The purpose of scripture. Reference texts:

2 Timothy 3:16-16

Ephesians 2:4-8

Beginning October 14th

Exploring the sometimes "dark" moments of life and finding God still present, moving us towards something new. Reference book:

Gifts of the Dark Wood, Eric Elmes, 2015, Abingdon Press

The first 10 who sign up receive the book, free





SEPTEMBER 13TH

Sunday School, Full Choir and Bells @ Bethel, Zion's Coffee Hour

ALL return this day!

***Come to Bethel for 9:30 AM and help build lunches with the youth for the
WOO FRIDGES***

God's work. Our hands.



September 13, 2026



Ursula Bergman

Glen Bergman



SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Dave & Kate Valleli - 09/02

Ken & Mary Johnson - 09/07

Karen & Jim Baril - 09/26

PRAYER LIST

Donald Tremblay - Rose Marie Faragoli - Donna Brunnell – Russ Terrien - Sandy Staples - Jim Mooney - Karen Carlson - Judy Garneau - Paul Josephson - Edla Bloom - Steve Hynes - Peter 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 Nevard – Paul Valleli - Lina Dickey - Courtney Cronin - Theresa Adams - Cherry Harris - Kristen Woods - Diane Ela-Lauzon - Alan Wiinikka – Mark – Misty Johnson - Peter Karl - Jane Moir - Nancy & Paul Cater - Shirley Connor - Sheela Fisher – Bill - Judy Maritz – Stormy - Christine Miller

**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, September 8th. 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 Longhorn Steakhouse at The Shoppes at Blackstone Valley, Millbury, on Tuesday, September 8, at 1:00. Carpooling from Bethel's parking lot 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 Monday September 28th at 2:00pm in the library. As of this newsletter, our schedule has not been made for book selections 2026-2027. So please check the weekly e-notes for our September book. Or, you can ask any of our Bookie readers.....we would be happy to email a list of our books for the coming year. As always, everyone is welcome to join us for lively discussion every last Monday of the month or just drop in if a particular book on our list interests you. We serve snacks!





Grace Lutheran Knit-Wits

Our team has created many
nice items as give aways
for
The Central MA Conference
Table

of our New England Synod
at the Pride Worcester
Festival - September 9th
Downtown Worcester



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Dave Valleli - 09/02
Anderson Zifcak - 09/06
Maribel McKenzie - 09/09
Tina Henry - 09/10
Timothy Baril - 09/12

Nancy Berube - 09/17
Joseph Hight - 09/17
Cheryl Cronin - 09/20
Ruth Thompson - 09/22
Doug Ducat - 09/23
Hazel Townsend - 09/23
Stephen Van Dyke - 09/25
Henry Lewis - 09/26
John Leslie - 09/27
Preston Sturdevant - 09/27
Linda Bergman - 09/27
Stephanie Chapman - 09/28

GOD & CREATION

The dance is sacred, confirmed "good" at
Creation, a gift to be honored and shared.

Free-will to make choices, permitted with the
hope, that humanity might always care.

Out of Love for our race, many interventions
have revealed, that we are Loved and should do
the same.

But the lure of power, and desire for riches, has
twisted up the place.

The Word came down, in human form, to lead
by example and Grace.

We are called to a center, to know hope and
thrive, through the practice known as faith.

The Kingdom of God, can only come amongst us,
when we're in unity of heart and mind; earnest
about justice, and distributive Love, the *right* of
every kind.

Let us pray every day, for steadfastness and a
focus, to be led by the Spirit's Power.

May Love and Mercy, by the Grace of God, have
sway on earth and beyond, that Wisdom might
fill, every heart with Truth, and make straight
the Way for us to follow.

Pr. Andrew

VBS 2026

Kate Valleli from Grace Ministries and Amber Lundsten from Emanuel Lutheran Worcester co-lead a fun and busy VBS week in August!

The curriculum drew on the act of breaking bread together and its importance to people throughout time. It wove Bible stories together with modern stories from all over the world, highlighting the ELCA's active role in solving problems of today here and elsewhere. The kids learned about making bread from planting wheat seeds, learning about its growth and processing into flour, and finally making their own bread!

Pastor Andrew lead musical worship and taught us about how our organ works. We played fun games and painted "Welcome" signs to remind us how we are all welcomed, and therefor welcome others, into God's family!

Kate Valleli



LUTHERAN & CHURCH HISTORY SESSIONS These 2nd Sunday opportunities to learn what it means to be "Lutheran" and why the "church" in Jesus' name has so many versions of being church, will commence again on September 13th :)



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

As summer winds down, many are returning from vacations, travels, time with family and friends, and those much-needed moments of rest and re-creation. Wherever this summer has taken us, we give thanks that God has gone with us, meeting us with grace in the ordinary moments of our lives. Things naturally slow down in the summer months, but some of our activities have continued. **The Community Garden Team** has been busy watering, weeding and harvesting. This year’s garden has yielded an amazing and abundant crop which has been delivered to the **Woo Fridges and Auburn Youth and Family Services**. Thank you to this dedicated team for all the hard work in making this what may be the best harvest yet...with more to come.

The **Knitwits** have continued to meet on Mondays from 10:00 to 12:00. They have been busy knitting prayer shawls, lap blankets, prayer squares and scarves. Some of the knitted items will be sent to the **2026 Pride Worcester Festival** at the Worcester Common on September 12th. Some have been knitting scarves for **Seafarer’s Friend**, *a ministry that provides compassionate support, practical assistance, and essential services to seafarers, ensuring their well-being, dignity, and safety while they are away from home.* In the coming months we will be sharing more about Seafarer’s and some of the ways we can help support this important ministry.

We wish to thank all who generously donated school supplies for the children who will be

returning to school this fall. All the school supplies are being brought to AYFS.

On Sunday September 20th, we will be meeting in the kitchen between 9 and 9:30 to assemble bagged lunches for Worcester Fellowship. We will be applying for Thrivent seed money to cover the cost. If you are interested in helping make the lunches or delivering to All Saint’s Church in Worcester please let Marie or Judy know.

On Sunday September 27th we will be joining in the **Auburn Walk for Hunger** for the benefit of AYFS Food Pantry and Kateri’s Kitchen. This is a community event that begins at 1:00 at AYFS with registration at 12:30. The walk is approximately three miles. There will be a watering station and rest stop at Bethel. Thank you to those who have already volunteered to help. Sponsor sheets are available in the Narthex.

Our Social Ministry/Outreach team recently sent \$500 from our fund to ELCA Disaster Relief to be used where needed most. There have been recent earthquakes in Venezuela, and Colombia, devastating wildfires in Canada and flooding in Texas, as well as other natural disasters. Please continue to keep those affected by these disasters as well as those engaged in the recovery efforts in your prayers.



Courtesy of Jillian Stierwalt

I'M A LUTHERAN: JILLIAN STIERWALT

St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Portsmouth, Va.
Personal care assistant

St. Andrew was my mom's first call as pastor. She's been there for 10 years! The church has changed and grown into something beautiful since I started attending at age 15. Community outreach has always been one of my favorite ways to spread God's love. For example, during COVID-19, the local community would refer to us as the "feeding church" because we had a well-stocked food pantry that was accessible to everyone. I would go in and help stock, organize and clean the food pantry, or put together care packages for unhoused neighbors.

St. Andrew has also been a place where I can always come in and play my instruments as part of worship, which has led to me being a more versatile musician and feeling a deeper connection with my own expression of faith and worship through song. It's important to me to be involved because sometimes people in the community outside the church doors need a safe space to come and sit or share their story, and helping to provide that safe space for *everyone* makes my heart full.

I was a music education major at Norfolk (Va.) State University (NSU). That was an interesting journey for me and didn't work out the way I wanted—but, of course, God had different plans.

I am a 2026 graduate of ECPI University (Virginia Beach)—a technical and vocational school with satellite campuses up and down the East Coast—with a degree in medical assisting.

PCAs (personal care assistants) work with nurses and do most of the intake and sample collection for testing. I do phlebotomy, perform [electrocardiograms], take vitals and assist with mobility and other basic needs of the patients. I always tell people, "I'm a carer at heart." Helping others be happy, safe and well makes me happy. Medicine is just that.

God calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Medicine calls its practitioners to do no harm. To me, these are one and the same. I can come into a room with a patient who I probably would never see eye to eye with and still use my hands and mind to do God's work and help the patient as best as I can.

I want to end up working in some iteration of motorsports medicine, like helping drivers recover from traumatic injuries. But to get there, I'll need to start in emergency medicine. I find that to be just as exciting because that's where the real difference is made on a day-to-day basis.

I serve on the ELCA Church Council and the Virginia Synod Council. I am very thankful for that experience. I've learned so much about what goes on in the ELCA and parliamentary procedures by being there. My Virginia Synod experience has been a wonderful means of connection and giving back. I attended all the youth events we offer, from fifth grade to post-high-school graduation, and now attend adult faith-formation events. Being of service on the council lets me share my experiences, why they were so important to me and why they're important to continue for future generations.

Grace Notes – September 2026

I am on the Faith, Society and Innovation Committee of the ELCA Church Council. We look for ways to make sure the church is connected to itself and the world, and for ways to make sure *all* people can experience God's grace and love. I'm on a subcommittee working to ensure youth and young adults have more voice and vote in the ELCA. I get to share my Virginia Synod experiences with others who didn't have anything similar when they were my age and hopefully help expand some perspectives.

I have a lot of volunteer work under my belt. I have served at Oasis Social Ministry soup kitchen in Portsmouth off and on since I was around 6 or 7. I've helped in the kitchen with preparing meals, and as I got older, with serving them. My experience at Portsmouth Volunteers for the Homeless was similar, ensuring everyone had enough to eat and had blankets and resources, as well as a safe space to share their stories.

I also served in a hypothermia shelter when I lived in northern Virginia, where churches would trade off each week hosting a large amount of our unhoused community and feed them, give them counseling, haircuts, interview practice, bus and grocery cards and more. I would help in the kitchen then and sit with people, swapping stories.

One of my favorite people to talk to every week at that shelter was a man named Robert, who was an electrician. He liked to play piano, so we would sit at the one in the fellowship hall and play together for everyone. Several volunteers asked about him, and when they found out he was an electrician, he was able to get work through our church for a while until he passed.

God calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Medicine calls its practitioners to do no harm. To me, these are one and the same.

I currently volunteer for a nonprofit organization called Autism Congo, which is working to build a school in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to help the community better understand autism. The school will provide housing and safe facilities for women to learn trades and skills, and for the children to get an education and coping skills.

I was in marching bands from ninth grade until I left NSU, and I'll still occasionally get called to fill spots for field shows. In high school, with the Nansemond River Magnificent Marching Warriors, I'd gone to the Macy's holiday parade in Orlando and marched down Disney World's Main Street, U.S.A. I'd done local parades and played in middle schools for recruitment. I'd done the Sugar Bowl and marched in front of a few hundred thousand people, and I remember thinking "I've peaked." I was wrong.

The Norfolk State University Spartan Legion didn't travel much my rookie year, but the impact we had through YouTube clips surpassed everything I thought it would. One video of the band marching into an event has 5.2 million views and comments from all over the world. Later we would get invited to march in the [Rose Parade]. That one week in California, I saw more impact than I'd seen in four years at Nansemond. Thinking back to how so many people from all over the country were adopting our HBCU (historically Black college and university) that they had never heard of before as a source of connection was so powerful and encouraging.

When I do have free time, I'll spend it with my niece and nephew or cooking, making art out of Legos, or popping up at either band room, where I'll always have a community. If I go to Nansemond, I work with the woodwinds on musicality and often end up answering questions about college.

I've seen a lot of beautiful things in my life, but Bishop [Yehiel] Curry's installation takes the cake. I sat in the second row, and I cried almost the entire time. There were people of all ages and stages of life, of all nationalities and economic statuses, deaf, blind and differently abled. We were all just there for God and to welcome Bishop Curry.

I am biracial, so growing up in the Lutheran church meant that, yes, I went to church, but not the same kind of church my peers went to—or I'd have to be comfortable being the only person of African or Arab descent in the room. It led me to being more secure in my identity. But to witness so many people that aren't of European descent gathered in one place at the installation service, in the traditional way I grew up with, sharing the peace and communing together, was very empowering. It felt like a literal embodiment of Pentecost and the tongues speaking in all languages, like the global church wasn't just an idea but a reality.

I often find myself praying for peace and guidance. We live in really confusing times, and it's hard to be in your 20s right now. It seems like everything changes for me weekly, whether it's the way student loans will work, the job market and its demands, or the housing market. God always has a plan for me, and I will be where I need to be when I need to be. Knowing that and praying for help and guidance helps me stay calm and focused on the now rather than the turmoil in the "5 minutes from now" or the week ahead.

I'm a Lutheran because going out into the world to spread the good news through word and deed—and challenging my own beliefs so I can grow (and help others grow)—is my jam!

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.



AUBURN WALK FOR HUNGER



For the Benefit of
Auburn Youth and Family Services Food Pantry
and Kateri's Kitchen

Sunday, September 27th

Walk begins @ 1:00 at 21 Pheasant Court, Auburn, MA 01501
with registration @ 12:30

Please bring a non-perishable food item for the food pantry.

Scan the QR code to make an online donation



Grace's Bethel campus will be a "watering" spot for walkers on the day of the walk.

If you don't wish to walk, but instead staff the table out front of the church, please let Marie Sturdevant or Judy Sampson know!

Grace Notes - September 2026

GENERAL WEEKLY CALENDAR

Grace Lutheran Office Hours: Monday-Thursday, 9 AM – 3 PM

Gateways Academy: Monday – Friday, 6 AM – 5:30 PM

MONDAYS

10 AM - Knit Wits (Knitting Group) @ *Bethel campus*

Last week of the month **2 PM** - "Bookies" BOOK CLUB @ Library, Bethel

6:30 PM – Auburn Festival Choir @ Bethel Nave

TUESDAYS

Second Weeks **1 PM** – Dine-Out-Ladies

2:30 – 4 PM – Pastoral Office Hours @ McDonalds, Auburn

Second Weeks **6 PM** - Men's Group Dinner @ Voosen Hall, Bethel

Beginning 10/6 **7 PM** – Ecumenical Adult Studies @ Zoom

Watch for series info and login in upcoming weekly E-NOTES

WEDNESDAYS

NOON – Grace Café Meal @ Palmer Room, Zion

Refer to series info **2 PM** – Adult Study Series @ Bethel Library

5:15 PM – Worship @ Bethel Nave, Pr. Andrew

1st & 3rd Weeks **6:45 PM** – Confirmation @ Bethel Library

THURSDAYS

2:30 – 4 PM – Pastoral Office Hours @ Park Avenue Panera, Worcester

5:30 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal @ Bethel Voosen Hall

7:00 PM Adult Choir Rehearsal @ Bethel Choir Room

7:30 PM - Recovery Group, Voosen Hall, Bethel

FRIDAYS

Last week of month **5:30 PM** – Serving Evening Meal @ Dismas House, Worcester

See Jackie Walsh for details

SATURDAYS

9 AM - Recovery Group @ Voosen Hall, Bethel

SUNDAYS

8 AM – Worship @ Bethel Nave, Adam Hanks

8:45 AM – @ Zion Nave, Pr. Andrew

9:30 AM – Sunday School: pre-K thru Grade 6 @ Bethel campus

10:30 AM – Worship @ Bethel Nave, Pr. Andrew

11:45 AM - Coffee Hour @ Voosen Hall, Bethel



Weekly Worship: *Wednesdays 5:30 PM (B), Sundays 8 AM (B), 8:45 AM (Z), 10:30 AM (B)*

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

Shannon Papandrea - Sexton
Kate Valleli – Christian Education Coordinator
Ann Spinner, Kate Valleli – Financial Secretaries
Louisa Klaven, AIM – Licensed Lay Minister

Garret Peters - Treasurer

Adam Hanks – Bell Director

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

