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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ELCA

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 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 CORNER

My morning walk takes me close to DCR land and watershed by the Wachusett Reservoir. I've been using the route for decades, at one time jogging religiously through the area.

There used to be more wildlife visible. It wasn't uncommon to come across deer and wild turkeys, with or without their young, maybe a fox. These days, the critters in view are on the end of a leash with their tenders in tow…

Sure, squirrels and rabbits are frequent sharers of the space with me. But the turkeys???

This conjures up thoughts about Thanksgiving, and gatherings with family, friends and congregations to give THANKS for the bounty and blessings that come from the *holding by the Divine* in our lives!

As of late, some discussions within clergy groups have focused about the people we minister to and meet and confusion at times just what it means to "be free" in the holding of God. Some people interpret it as representing freedom from all troubles and such, so that when that doesn't work out, after some prayer, the attitude turns towards God not being real or trustworthy followed by a walking away from faith, temporarily or permanently.

As I've said many times before in preaching: *God is NOT a Pez dispenser from which to get exactly what we pray for.* Our prayers are to lift up what is happening and ask God to take it all and work what is best.

Let us head directly into scripture for the *inspired* Word to meet us with Truth:

PSALM 46

[1] God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
[2] Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea; *[3] though its waters rage and foam, and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.*
[4] There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.
[5] God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken; God shall help it at the break of day.

And,

PSALM 34

[8] Taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are they who take refuge in God!
[9] [Respect] the LORD, you saints of the LORD, for those who [respect] the LORD lack nothing.

The writers note a Truth that *is* God; the One who is always present to hold us, our refuge, from within which Grace and Mercy can work in us healing and resurrection from those things which can knock us down.

Thanksgiving is time in which we can recall times in which we are, or have been, in refuge, to come out the other side with an increased appreciation for the holding that is God.

Thanksgiving is a time in which the gift that is life may be celebrated and prayers of appreciation raise to the One who is always present, from Whose bounty we enjoy the fruits of the earth on the table, in our bellies and filling our hearts!

From John 8: *[Jesus tells us]… "If you adhere to my teaching you really are my disciples, and you'll know the Truth, and the Truth will liberate you."*

So, may we be liberated over and over again as the Word that became flesh dwells within and grounds us in Love, hope and thankfulness!

In Christ ☩,

Pastor Andrew

ADVENT MIDWEEKS BEGIN – 12/2!

JOIN US FOR WEDNESDAY POTLUCKS & WORSHIP!

5 PM MEAL IN VOOSEN HALL in AUBURN

6 PM SERVICE IN THE BETHEL NAVE

THE GIFTS OF ADVENT

SIGNUP SHEETS WILL BE PRESENT IN BOTH CAMPUS NARTHEX LOCATIONS

ADVENT ADULT STUDY SERIES – Wednesdays @ 2 PM

Begins 11/25 thru 12/16

Wait Training – Heaven is the Road, from Darkwood Brew

Video guided studies by Rev. Dr. Eric Elnes with guests:

Week 1 - Greg Glover, Week 2 - Alexandrer Shaia,

Week 3 - John Shelby Spong & Week 4 - Janet McKenzie

ELCA RELEASES PAPER ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CONSIDERATIONS

Editor's note: *This post originally appeared on* Covalence*, the online magazine of the Lutheran Alliance for Faith, Science and Technology.*

The ELCA has released a theological foundation document with the aim of expanding the dialogue on the growing implications of artificial intelligence (AI). According to the authors, the document applies current social teachings to provide insights to the church.

While the paper, *Artificial Intelligence (AI) and ELCA Social Teaching*, does not represent new social teaching, it does outline ethical concerns surrounding the transformational technology that has found its way into the business world, congregations, laboratories and, increasingly, daily life.

The paper is not the ELCA's final teaching but rather the beginning of a conversation, as Lutheran ethicists plan to explore AI further at the group's meeting in January 2027.

The six-page paper provides a multipronged framework that looks at humanity's innovation, sin, respect for creation, promotion of societal well-being, social justice concerns and wise discernment of AI's use. The work comes on the heels of Pope Leo's first encyclical, released earlier this year, *Magnifica Humanitas*, which explores the relationship between Catholic social doctrine and the rapid expansion of AI.

"God's creativity is expressed in both the long-standing structures of nature and the contributions humans may make using the gift of innovation," the foundation paper reads. "AI is one means, a breathtaking means, of humanity's power to innovate in ways that may promote the well-being of creation and human society."

Yet, the paper cautions that the evaluation of AI's use should include consideration of human rights and the freedoms of individuals, including those in our most vulnerable communities. The inclusion of humans in every application of AI remains important, as does accountability. The paper also touches on the topic of data center buildouts, which have been proliferating as the need for computing power continues to grow amid the increasing use of AI agents and generative AI tools.

The paper concludes, "the ELCA endeavors to limit harm from the use and development of AI even while seeking its potential goods that strive to respect and promote the flourishing of the community of life and its inhabitants."

NOTE: We can provide a copy of this paper by request through the office.

BISHOP CURRY ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE DEATH PENALTY

Yehiel Curry, presiding bishop of the ELCA, has issued a statement about recent incidents related to the death penalty in the United States.

"My heart was troubled by the recent proposal to livestream an execution in the United States," the statement read, in part. "I am thankful that this plan has now been cancelled. The deliberate taking of a human life should never become a public spectacle. Such actions risk deepening the wounds of victims' families, loved ones and communities while further desensitizing us to violence. Our society is diminished when violence is conflated with entertainment. Because of our ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:16-21), this church opposes the death penalty and the recent plans for public display of the execution of Nidal Hasan."

Curry continued: "As a church, we are not strangers to the mournful effects of violent crime. Our congregations minister to victims, to offenders and to communities that experience the ripple effects of its trauma. We recognize the need to protect people from violence, to call perpetrators to repentance, and to seek restoration for victims. United in our resistance to hate and in our joy over the good news of God's grace, we minister to an often-vengeful society with words and actions of hope, justice and healing.

"The 1991 ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted the social statement 'The Death Penalty,' demonstrating this church's early opposition to capital punishment. That opposition is grounded in a long tradition of Christian theology and teaching. The social statement calls the church "to respond to violent crime in the restorative way taught by Jesus (Matthew 5:38-39) and shown by his actions (John 8:3-11)." It states that the death penalty's continued use perpetuates cycles of violence, undermines the possibility of repentance and restoration, and binds our society more deeply to brutality rather than reconciliation. It fosters suffering rather than ends it, as we saw in the attempted execution of Christa Pike.

"The statement affirms that God ordains government to be a source and guarantor of safety and justice. Abundant research shows that the death penalty does not give us safety or justice. It does not provide healing to victims' families or safety for the broader community. It does not deter future crimes. It does not serve the ends God calls government to serve, nor does it reflect the kind of society we are called to be.

"We hold in prayer all who are impacted by violent crime, including victims, families, workers in law enforcement and corrections, and those accused or convicted of violent crimes. We give thanks for prison chaplains and ministries that accompany people through suffering and that witness to the possibility of redemption."

Curry concluded by inviting readers to talk with those in their communities about the death penalty. "Let our churches continue to be spaces for respectful, faithful dialogue about moral issues," he said. "Study the ELCA's social statements 'The Death Penalty' and 'The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries' together. Be part of the whole church's witness in society to urge public officials to work toward abolishing the death penalty, including support for the Federal Death Penalty Prohibition Act. Together let us build a society that keeps us safe from violence, reflects God's compassion, honors the dignity of every person and demonstrates that God is always working for and toward abundant life."



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Pam McGovern - 11/02
Lisa Ferreira - 11/04
Dick Kneeland - 11/06
Judy Hodgerney - 11/07
Gary Townsend - 11/07
Marie Sturdevant - 11/09
Miriam Bove - 11/09
Jose Caminero Sr. - 11/11
Jane Jakusik Hurd - 11/12
Ann Spinner - 11/12
James Ponce De Leon - 11/13
Carolyn Nelson - 11/14
Ashley Ponce De Leon - 11/19
Jessica Caminero - 11/20
Zoey Caminero - 11/20
Jose Caminero Jr. - 11/20
Garret Peters - 11/26
Bethann Valentine - 11/27
Joan Parker - 11/28

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 – Billy Rogan – 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 - Anne Berberian - Carol Katagher - Julie Dawes - Louise Young - Elaine Peterson – David Nevard – Lina Dickey - Courtney Cronin - Theresa Adams - Cherry Harris - Kristen Woods - Diane Ela-Lauzon - Alan Wiinikka – Mark – Misty Johnson - Peter Karl - Nancy & Paul Cater - Shirley Connor - Sheela Fisher – Bill - Judy Maritz – Stormy - Christine Miller - Tiggy White - Jackie Blais - Lisa Johnson – Judy Leombruno - Jackson - Kathryn Sirven - Lisa Morrissey – Dave Sutton – Miriam Bove – Michael Ames

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, November 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 having lunch at 1:00 on Tuesday, November 10, at Avvio Ristorante at The Shoppes at Blackstone Valley Mall in Millbury. 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 next meeting will be held in the church library on Monday, November 30th. The book for discussion will be "A Girl Called Samson" by Amy Harmon. This is an historical fiction/romance of a young women who disguised herself as a man in order to fight in the American Revolutionary War. Our own Judy Sampson has found through her ancestral history that she is a descendant of the heroine of this story. 300 pages. Multiple copies of this book have been ordered from the Auburn Library. Contact Jackie Walsh if you would like to reserve a copy. All are welcome!





NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Stephen & Glenna Van Dyke - 11/05
Gary & KathyTownsend - 11/11
Jill & Doug Ducat - 11/18
Horace & Ruth Ames - 11/19

Holiday Open House

Herbert E. Berg Florist

November 29, 2026
12PM – 4PM

20% off all fresh arrangements and plants
50% off all permanent arrangements and gifts

Our annual raffles will be held and
A Grand Prize – 1 monthly arrangement for a year
Coffee and light refreshments

Back by Popular demand

Swedish and Polish kitchen towels
www.bergflorist.com, 508-755-5888
19 Blackstone River Rd, Worcester, MA 01607
Quinsigamond Village

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.



REFORMATION OKTOBERFEST Great food, nice turn out, lots of fun! THANK YOU to Kate and Jack Valleli for their preparation!!!





Confirmation of Mira Valleli & Chase Hunt.



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**

The Community Garden has been put to rest for the coming winter months. We had an incredibly abundant harvest this year thanks to the special care given by our dedicated garden team. Vegetables were distributed to the **Woo Fridges**, and **Auburn Youth and Family Services,** and some were made available during Sunday morning coffee hour. Thank you again to all who helped make this year's garden so successful.

On Sunday September 20th, members of our congregation gathered in the kitchen to assemble bagged lunches for **Worcester Fellowship Sunday Worship**. Thirty lunches, water and men's and women's socks were delivered to All Saint's Church in Worcester that morning. Funding came from Thrivent Financial. Thank you to all who helped make this event a success.

Despite our best efforts in planning the **2026 Auburn Walk for Hunger**, Mother Nature had other plans and delivered us a nor'easter that forced us to cancel the walk. Even though the actual walk was canceled, it was still considered successful as it brought awareness of the food insecurity issue in our local community and money was raised to help the food pantries at **Auburn Youth and Family Services** and **Kateri's Kitchen at North American Martyr's Church**. This was a community event that involved support from our local churches and organizations. Of the $1,685.89 raised, ten percent will be sent to Kateri's Kitchen with the remaining going to AYFS. On behalf of the Walk for Hunger Committee we wish to thank all of you for your generous support. A total of $629.89 was donated from members of our congregation. A wrap up meeting will be held on Monday November 9th where we will set next year's date including a rain date.

We have a tradition at Grace Lutheran of designating the month of November as a time of remembering our Veterans. At both Zion and Bethel campuses there are collection bin for socks, underwear and tee-shirts, as well as food for Thanksgiving. On Sunday November 22nd, the above items will be delivered to **Veterans Inc.** in Worcester in time for Thanksgiving.

This year the youth of our congregation will be joining with youth from other congregations to shop for Christmas gifts for local children. If you with to help by making a donation, please see Pastor Andrew. For Christmas our Social Ministry/Outreach team will be collecting hats and mittens for distribution to AYFS and homeless care kits.

As temperatures drop and snow begins to fall in the coming months, let us all be mindful of the needs of our neighbors and the most vulnerable members of our community, including our home bound. Please let Pastor Andrew or a member of our team know if you are aware of a particular need.

PROPOSED STATEMENT OF FAITH – **to be ratified by vote on Sunday, November 8th**

Welcome to our yoked parish of faith! Our two congregations are an intentionally Grace-oriented collection of people from all walks of life who seek discernment of God's intention for our lives that help mend, and weave together, the fabric of God's Kingdom on this earth.

We worship and give praise to God, from which came forth the Cosmos and all of Creation, Who deemed all that was made "good", including humanity made in *Their* (God's) own image. Jesus, as the *Logos* of God, present from before Creation in this current epoch of time, the Spirit as intercessor and God as Chief Architect and Engineer, represent Grace and Mercy through Love and distributive justice as the Essence of the Divine.

Our parish focus is upon continuing enlightenment, lived-out witness by Grace, led by the Wisdom of God, manifest in the person of Jesus, by the Power of the Spirit, understanding Jesus' saving act was in accepting time in human form to love us (humanity) from the "inside out" into our best selves; his resurrection after crucifixion proving the Power of God available to save each of us from ourselves and chaos!

We represent a heterodoxy of tradition; grounded in (as the ELCA lifts up in her Constitutional structure) the inspired Word present within the biblical canon *and* discovered through the *lens* of Christ (Grace and Mercy), while *also* fully respecting science as helpful in confirming and revealing truths regarding God's Presence and guiding "hand" in and through all things.

Therefore, we accept the Phoenix Affirmations as a covenant of practice in the current age, expanding upon the Ten Commandments from Sinai, and emphasizing inclusion of all peoples into the family of God who practice faith in the One from whom all things have their being.

Affirmation 1: Walking fully in the path [*the Way*] of Jesus, without denying the legitimacy of other paths [*faith expressions*] God may provide for humanity.

Affirmation 2: Listening for God's Word which comes through daily prayer and meditation, through studying the ancient testimonies which we call scripture, and through attending to God's present activity in the world.

Affirmation 3: Celebrating the God whose Spirit pervades and whose glory is reflected in all of God's Creation, including the earth and its ecosystems, the sacred and secular, the Christian and non-Christian, the human and non-human.

Affirmation 4: Expressing our love in worship that is as sincere, vibrant, and artful as it is scriptural.

Affirmation 5: Engaging people authentically, as Jesus did, treating all as creations made in God's very image, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental ability, nationality, or economic class.

Affirmation 6: Standing, as Jesus does, with the outcast and oppressed, the denigrated and afflicted, seeking peace and justice with or without the support of others.

Affirmation 7: Preserving religious freedom and the church's ability to speak prophetically to government by resisting the commingling of church and State.

Affirmation 8: Walking humbly with God, acknowledging our own shortcomings while honestly seeking to understand and call forth the best in others, including those who consider us their enemies.

Affirmation 9: Basing our lives on the faith that, in Christ, all things are made new, and that we, and all people, are loved beyond our wildest imagination — for eternity.

Affirmation 10: Claiming the sacredness of both our minds and our hearts, recognizing that faith and science, doubt and belief serve the pursuit of truth.

Affirmation 11: Caring for our bodies, and insisting on taking time to enjoy the benefits of prayer, reflection, worship and recreation in addition to work.

Affirmation 12: Acting on the faith that we are born with a meaning and purpose; a vocation and ministry that serves to strengthen and extend God's realm of Love.

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
5:30 PM – Worship @ Bethel Nave, Pr. Andrew
2nd & 4th Weeks **6:30 PM** – Confirmation @ Bethel Library

THURSDAYS
2:30 – 4 PM – Pastoral Office Hours @ Park Avenue Panera, Worcester
5:15 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal @ Bethel Voosen Hall
6:45 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 Grace 6 @ Bethel campus
10:30 AM – Worship @ Bethel Nave, Pr. Andrew
11:45 AM - Coffee Hour @ Voosen Hall, Bethel

Grace Lutheran

Yoked parish of faith and service: Bethel & Zion

Weekly Worships: ***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 ***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**
41 Whitmarsh Avenue, 01606

Auburn Campus – **Bethel Lutheran**
90 Bryn Mawr Avenue, 01501

ReconcilingWorks
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION

NST
Refugee Accompaniment

Outreach

Fridge Door

Grace Lutheran Café

LWF

JOURNEY FORWARD

ELCA