

Grace Lutheran Church
11 East Dawes Avenue
Somers Point, NJ 08244
www.gracelutheranspnj.org

Church Office: 609-927-3082
office@gracelutheranspnj.com
Food Pantry: 609-927-9982

Fall Messenger October-November 2025



CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY

We would like to bring attention to our congregation about our current situation. We are doing well in connecting to our community through support groups, Food Bank and events like the Cookie Walk and Oktoberfest. We do well in participating in church activities such as worship, bible studies and committees. We are not doing well in supporting the church budget. We give as we are able. However, giving is down 21% and expenses are up 3%. Maybe there are fewer people in the pews or maybe life is a little harder.

We would like to hear your thoughts on how we should move forward with budgeting and spending in the upcoming year and how to best face this together.

In a few words tell us what you would do.

Please return at Congregational Meeting at 11 AM Sunday.

A Note from the Pastor's Desk...

The yard at the Trozzo house is mostly moss. It's lovely – it takes little maintenance, it's soft underfoot, it's intriguing to study, and it thrives in the shade and sugar sand of the Pinelands. As an eco-philosophy person but a brown thumb, I'm very grateful that this moss is letting me learn how to care for it month by month.

The same can be said of God's Word: handed down to us, we don't have to work to maintain it; it brings us comfort even as it invites us out of our comfort zones; and it thrives in any heart that desires it to do so. I don't have to be an expert to open my life to God's Word – it's available to me on the radio, in my phone, with my family, and in my soul. Like that moss, the Word keeps coming to us alive and ready to grow.

I am thankful every day for the moss in my yard, and I am thankful for the beautiful mystery of God's Word and of the ministry that we are called, together, to do in God's garden.

What do we as a congregation need, in order to see God's Word continue to come alive in our community? We need God's providing to rain down on us; we need God's Son to shine through us; we need the winds of the Spirit to blow through, guiding us through our seasons.

Further, we need a building – a center where we gather to worship, serve, bond, learn, and a center to which others can be invited, welcomed, and known. We need lights on and fresh air, we need our custodian and fire inspections and stair railings. We need electricity to light our sign out front that tells people that we, and God, are truly here and active.

We need people who fill specific roles at specific times – answering phones, writing checks, reaching out to families and elders, leading small groups, gathering musicians and picking songs, preaching and visiting hospital rooms.

We need to share beyond ourselves; to have a wider Church that sends missionaries and creates hymnals; to have a Bishop and events that a congregation cannot arrange alone; to feed the hungry through our Ecumenical food pantry; to have seminaries that train pastors for a changing world; and leaders of all kinds to pay attention to the needs of communities across our state, nation, and world.

We need communion cups and baptismal candles; we need chairs and tables and pens; we need email bulletins and internet livestreams. We need stamps for newsletters, a powerful copier, and phone lines and printed directories. We need plates for coffee hour and soap to wash our hands.

And so, of course, we need YOU! Your offerings support our ministries and give glory to God. You are stewards of our amazing community that, like my moss, brings joy and comfort, provides a soft place to land when life is hard and a safe place to gather and grow. Many people lack these good things, and we need to

invite them in too, so that they can see God at work where they hadn't noticed it before. Your offerings provide something that cannot be gotten anywhere else – an intergenerational community that shares forgiveness and hope, that gives room to learn without grading or competition, where everybody is welcome and Jesus is Lord.

That is why, this year, we are asking you to learn two skills:

Proportional Giving

Giving is a fundamental Christian practice, and like most things we practice, we get better by doing. When we give, we are honoring the life that God has given us, and as we increase our giving, we learn to trust that God will continue to provide for us.

Proportional giving means giving a percentage of your income, usually 5-10%, rather than focusing on a dollar amount. Proportional giving will change over time in two ways: it will move with your income, and you can seek to grow what percentage you choose to give.

Most experts recommend a balance of saving 10%, sharing 10%, and spending 10%. The best way to grow saving and sharing is to seek to increase each by 1% per year.

Estimating giving for the year ahead

Giving is tied to how each household manages their finances. Most people find that when they increase their patterns of giving, they are richer rather than poorer. This is not because giving more buys more of God's love! It is because giving in an organized way means that you are actively budgeting and this enhances wealth.

As you look at your budget and plan ahead for 2026, in November our congregation will ask you to estimate and write down (anonymously) how much you plan to give.

The act of writing out an "Estimate of Sharing" card is both a sign of your worship for God and is a planning tool for our Council.

In late October, you will receive a yellow "Estimate of Sharing" card, and so I ask you, as your spiritual leader and as the CEO of our not-for-profit, to make time this month to look at your budget. My personal process is to total my income, see what a tithe (10%) of that would be, and draw up my household budget for the year; since I did this last year, it's easy to update that info for this year and future years. I've been through childcare, student loans, buying a car, setting up a Roth IRA, teen orthodontics and now I prepare for the adventure of two kids in college. I know, hopefully as well as you, that money doesn't fall from the sky, and that money can be a major stressor.

It is in that spirit that I ask you to plan a budget that puts giving first, saves for your future, and provides for a good life. I also ask you to consider what your budget would look like if you tried to increase your giving by at least 1% this year. The next letter will include budget examples you can work with.

Weekly Gift Amounts - Examples

Income	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%
\$ 200,000	\$38	\$77	\$115	\$154	\$192	\$231	\$269	\$308	\$346	\$385
\$ 175,000	\$34	\$67	\$101	\$135	\$168	\$202	\$236	\$269	\$303	\$337
\$ 150,000	\$29	\$58	\$87	\$115	\$144	\$173	\$202	\$231	\$260	\$288
\$ 125,000	\$24	\$48	\$72	\$96	\$120	\$144	\$168	\$192	\$216	\$240
\$ 100,000	\$19	\$38	\$58	\$77	\$96	\$115	\$135	\$154	\$173	\$192
\$ 75,000	\$14	\$29	\$43	\$58	\$72	\$87	\$101	\$115	\$130	\$144
\$ 50,000	\$10	\$19	\$29	\$38	\$48	\$58	\$67	\$77	\$87	\$96
\$ 25,000	\$5	\$10	\$14	\$19	\$24	\$29	\$34	\$38	\$43	\$48

I write this letter with great affection in my heart for you, joyful hopes in my mind, and a prayer that you will hear all that I say with trust in my recognition that money is both a blessing and a challenge, and is a lifelong balancing act – but one in which God is ever-present and providing. May you find that this season of stewardship is one that blesses your spiritual growth and is as comforting and lively as the moss in my yard.

Peace,
Pastor Wendolyn Trozzo

Thank you, Church!

Following our Pastor's letter mailed in early August, your giving increased by an average of \$500 per week. Over the course of a year that could add up to \$26,000! You are making a difference in the life of our community - your Church Council thanks you very much!

INFORMATIONAL MEETING for the CONGREGATION

Sunday, October 5 at 11:00 AM

This meeting will follow a shortened worship service to discuss finances and stewardship. Coffee and tea will be available. Consider bringing a dessert to share.

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

The Grief Support Group has resumed their meetings every **1st and 3rd Monday of the month at 6:30 PM in the lounge**. All who are grieving the loss of a family member, friend, pet, job, etc. are welcome and encouraged to attend. You do not have to go through this alone. Meet with others who are on this difficult journey. Share your stories, discuss and share resources, coping strategies, and support each other.

WELCA

WELCA will be collecting hats, gloves, and mittens again this year to be given to a local elementary school in January for children who lose these items or simply don't have them. There will be a basket in the narthex for these donations. They are much appreciated!

Sponsorships for Altar Flowers and Other Worship Items

The 2025 sponsorship charts are available for sign-up on the downstairs bulletin board across from the elevator. You may sign-up or call the church office and let us know what dates and items you would like to sponsor. The items and cost are as follows:

Flowers (\$30), Candles (\$10), Wine (10),
Bulletins (\$15), Music (\$50), and Messenger (\$50)

October Worship Assistants:

10/5 Edna Cordery
10/12 June Jordan
10/19 Kevin Thomas
10/26 James Ehrhardt

November Worship Assistants:

11/2 Ruth Bowden
11/9 Shirley Blankenship
11/16 Meg Markkanen
11/23 Meg La Spina
11/30 Stephen Gring

NAVIGATING SENIOR LIVING WORKSHOP

Sunday, October 12, at noon at Grace Lutheran Church. Lunch will be served. This workshop discusses different types of care communities, things to consider when contemplating a move as well as the emotions behind living in care communities. Learn about communities in South Jersey. Walk away with 5 key items to look for when choosing a retirement or healthcare community.

Please RSVP 609-927-3082.

OKTOBERFEST 2025

Oktoberfest will be on October 17 at Grace Lutheran Church from 5:00-7:00 PM.

Order tickets early because this year sales are limited to one hundred guests. There will be intimate seating, great quizzes, and lots of prizes, with great German Music! The menu will be: Bratwurst, hotdogs with rolls, soft pretzels, sauerkraut, spaetzle (German homemade egg noodles), German potato salad, German red cabbage and homemade apple strudel. We will also be serving Oktoberfest Beer, wine, soft drinks and water. It will be a great time to enjoy the company of your church family and friends. What a better way to enjoy the Fall season! Tickets will be \$33 for adults and \$15 for children under age 12. Tickets may be purchased using the following QR code to your cell phone or they may be purchased at the church office.



Children's tickets can only be purchased at the church office until further notice.

The Oktoberfest Committee needs help in preparing a few items for the event. We are looking for people to make German Potato Salad and Apple Studdle. We will provide the recipes and the food containers, but we need volunteers to prepare these dishes. Our homemade food is what makes this event so special. There will be a sign-up sheet in the narthex to volunteer for this and to pick up a recipe and food container. You may also drop by and see Corinne in the church office for the recipes and containers.

GRACE PLACE FOOD PANTRY

Grace Place Food Pantry is continuing strong in its mission of providing food for our neighbors in need who live in the communities of Northfield, Linwood and Somers Point!

St. Joseph's Catholic Church is having their food drive on Saturday, November 15. **The food pantry needs volunteers at Grace Lutheran Church November 15 from 10:00 AM –12:00 PM**, to help receive the donations from them and stock the shelves!

The food pantry will be accepting donations of turkeys again this year, for families in need during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Your donations make a difference and are greatly appreciated!

FEED THE NORTHEAST

We are excited to once again participate in Feed the Northeast Food Drive to help combat food insecurity for local families with Thrivent Member Network-Northeast Region! If we are one of the first 100 to collect 500 items for our Grace Place Food Pantry, Thrivent will give a \$500 check to our food pantry in addition to the items collected. This is a great way to help them keep their shelves stocked for those in need, especially through the holiday season!





SEAMAN'S INSTITUTE-CHRISTMAS AT SEA

The Grace Stitchers are working hard to make essential items for the men & women working at sea during Christmas. This Christmas at Sea Donation Drive will take place during the month of October, and your donations are very much needed and appreciated!

Items Needed for Seafarers:

Warm hats & scarves	Shaving Cream	Shampoo
Work socks, work gloves	Playing cards	Combs
ChapStick	Hand lotion	Pens & small notebooks
Nail clippers	Toothbrush, toothpaste	Mini-sewing kits
Puzzle books	Deodorant, bar soap	Hard/boxed candy, gum,
Razors	Hand warmers	cough drops

CAPE SHORE CHORALE ANNUAL FUNDRAISER AT GRACE

From Ragtime to Swingtime, Featuring the VINTAGE JAZZ BAND

Saturday, November 8 from 6:00-9:00 PM

Before and after the concert, there will be beverages, appetizers, and desserts that are included in the \$50 ticket price.

*for more information and to reserve,
contact Claire Theis @ (609) 214-5323
or clairetheis@hotmail.com*



COOKIE WALK

Saturday, December 13, 2025

9:00 AM-12:00 PM or until sold out

Start gathering your favorite holiday cookie recipes, stocking up on those ingredients, and getting ready to bake, bake, bake!
We need cookies galore!

If you have any Christmas items you no longer need or want, please donate them to be sold at the white elephant table at the Cookie Walk. We nearly sold out last year, so inventory is low!



October

10/4	David Condliff
10/10	Greg Goff
10/15	Corinne Rhodes
10/16	Roberta Blumenthal
10/18	Bob Grant
10/19	Joyce Bianco
10/23	Vickie Costello
10/23	Helen Fenske
10/25	Marge Wigglesworth
10/26	Ellie Hull
10/27	Phyllis Phelps
10/27	Joe Ruffenach
10/27	Karl Suckiel

November

11/6	Stephen Ferguson
11/7	Patricia Ogrodnek
11/8	Andrew Ehrhardt
11/9	Mary Lou Brown
11/9	Kevin Thomas
11/19	Scott Breiner
11/19	Helen Flamm
11/22	Barbara Hendrix
11/22	Gail Rink
11/24	Nancy Bilello
11/28	Mary Ann Gring
11/28	Michael Piskun, Jr



October

10/9	Robert & Mary Ellen Bartholomew
10/10	Tom & Marge Wigglesworth
10/21	Kevin & Lise Heffron

November

11/18	Stephen & Mary Ann Gring
11/18	Karl & Aud Suckiel
11/24	Joseph & Donna Martin
11/27	Frank & Linda Corradetti
11/27	Bruce & Elizabeth Hoelter

Staff at Grace

Rev. Wendolyn Trozzo, Interim Pastor
 Scott J. Breiner, Music Director
 Corinne Rhodes, Administrative Assistant
 Heidi Toth, Church Treasurer
 Sandy Piskun, Financial Secretary

Joseph Martin, Church Council President
 Jim Dolan, Church Council Vice President
 Chris Dennis, Church Council Secretary
 Alison Toth, Social Media Consultant